

# After a Fire

## Why are there broken windows and doors, or holes in the roof?

Fire produces temperatures well over 1200 degrees Fahrenheit, along with smoke and hot gases. At times it is necessary to eliminate heat, smoke, and hot gas by ventilation before firefighters can enter to extinguish the fire. Ventilation must be done quickly to help reduce fire spread. Often firefighters must forcibly open walls and ceilings to find any "hidden" fires, allowing for complete fire extinguishment.

After the fire is out, this type of damage may appear unnecessary. However, without the use of these firefighting techniques, extinguishing the fire would be much more difficult and smoke and fire damage would be more extensive.

## Property Insurance

Contact your local company or agent as soon as possible. If you are renting or leasing the property, you must also contact the owner. Your insurance adjuster may be able to assist you in making immediate repairs or help to secure your home. If you are unable to contact your agent and need professional assistance in boarding up your home, a general contractor, or a fire damage restoration firm can help. Check the yellow pages.

If your property is not insured or if your insurance will not cover all of your losses, contact your family lawyer for directions on what to do.

## If you are unable to stay in your home...

1. The home owner may temporarily be denied access to certain articles, areas, or the entire structure until the scene is studied and released by the Meadow Lake Fire Department. This does not imply suspicion; rather it is our policy to attempt to find the cause of all fires and to identify any hazardous conditions, such as structural instability.
2. If access to part of the building is granted, remove as many valuables as possible. Be sure to write down and photograph what is removed.
3. Once the building is released to your control, take steps to secure it, by boarding up openings and barricading any hazardous areas
4. Check your residence for important legal documents which may have been damaged. Refer to the "Care of Documents and Books" section below for more information.
5. Try to locate the following items to take with you: personal identification, eyeglasses, hearing aids, credit cards, cheque books, insurance policies, jewelry, vital medicines,

such as blood pressure regulating medications or insulin. Please check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking any medication that was exposed to smoke or heat.

6. For those individuals in need, assistance from the Salvation Army or Red Cross is available. Temporary accommodations, emergency financial assistance and grocery assistance may be obtained. The fire department or RCMP can help you get in touch with one of these agencies.
7. **If the building is structurally damaged** and not habitable, a Building Inspector must be called at 306-236-0213. After the building inspection is complete, a permit must be obtained prior to making repairs.
8. **If the building is determined by the City to be damaged beyond repair**, then the property owner must obtain a demolition permit and have the building, including all debris and contaminated soil, removed.
9. If you move:
  - notify Canada Post
  - notify your bank
  - notify credit card companies
  - notify City Hall at 306-236-3622
  - check with local school district

## Utilities

Often the Meadow Lake Fire Department will have the utility services shut off or disconnected as a safety precaution and to prevent further damage to the structure and its contents. Below are procedures for re-establishing utility services.

### Electricity

An Electrical Inspector must check the wiring to be sure it is safe before the power can be reconnected. (Call a local electrician, or SaskPower at 306-310-2220).

Do not operate wet or damp appliances. Have a service technician check them first.

### Water

This utility may be turned back on by the resident, unless water service has been disconnected by the City. Use caution because the fire may have damaged the plumbing which may cause water damage to occur when the pipes are filled again.

### Gas

DO NOT turn the gas back on. A Gas Inspector must check the piping, etc. to be sure it is safe before you restart gas appliances. (Call a local technician, or SaskEnergy at 1-888-700-0427)

## Telephone

SaskTel Business Office - 1-800-727-5835

## Counselling Support

After a fire, you may experience some of the following reactions: anxious feelings, depression, difficulty concentrating, sadness, anger, fatigue, hopelessness, fearfulness or nightmares. These are common responses to a traumatic event. There are agencies in our area that can help you work through the crisis. The Meadow Lake hospital can direct you to suitable counselling services, dial 306-236-1500. The provincial HealthLine can be reached by dialling 811.

## Care of Documents

Documents are very important to your well-being and can be damaged or destroyed as a result of a fire or other disaster. Locating these documents will speed up the process of recovering from a disaster.

- Birth Certificates
- Drivers License
- Bank Books
- Insurance Policies
- Military Discharge Papers
- Passports
- Social Insurance Cards
- Marriage Papers
- Divorce Decree
- Credit Cards
- Title to Deeds
- Stocks and Bonds
- Wills
- Medical Records
- Payment Books
- Warranties
- Income Tax Records
- Auto Registration
- Citizenship Papers
- Burial Contracts
- Animal Registration
- Death Certificates
- Health Services Card
- RSP Papers

It is wise to store all important documents in a container that is specifically designed for such purposes. (i.e. Fireproof container)

If paper documents are wet, freeze them immediately! When copies are needed, simply allow to thaw, lift off each page as it thaws, and photocopy. Contact any of the meat cutting firms listed in the yellow pages of the phone book for sharp (quick) freeze service.

## **Pets**

After a fire strikes, don't assume that your pet has escaped unscathed just because it looks alright. Smoke can damage the lungs of a dog or cat in minutes, and sparks can cause painful burns that will stay hidden under the fur. As soon as possible, take your pet to a veterinarian. If your pet has been lost in the chaos contact the Humane Society at 306-246-2201

## **Salvage Hints**

### **Safety First!**

Never attempt to salvage belongings that could put your health at risk. Heat, smoke and other contaminants are very hard to remove. Be especially cautious about food, medications, clothing and bedding that have been exposed to heat. When in doubt, throw it out!

Smoke and soot are toxic. Keep children and pets away from the area until restorations work is complete. Protect yourself by using safety glasses, respiratory protection and rubber or nitrile gloves when handling contaminated items or surfaces.

A professional disaster restoration service can conduct the work of cleaning and refinishing your house safely and with good results

### **References:**

Canadian Red Cross, [Guide to Fire Recovery](#)  
FEMA, [After the Fire](#)

*Disclaimer: This "After a Fire" brochure was prepared as an aid to fire victims. There are no warranties made in connection with this publication and the City of Meadow Lake shall not be held responsible for any damages (consequential, special or otherwise) arising from its use.*