

## Fire Damage – Initial Do's and Don'ts

If you have experienced damage to your home or business as a result of fire or smoke infiltration, please do not enter the damaged property without clearance from the fire department. Fires have been known to rekindle from residual heat or smoldering embers.

### When relocation is necessary, make sure you:

- Ask your insurance company what steps you are required to follow. Is there any immediate action you must take to prevent further damage? Policies differ widely, so it is important to ask your agent or company how you should address the immediate needs of extracting water, covering exposed areas and handling the soot and odor issues.
- Take an inventory of all damaged property, complete with description and purchase price information. Your insurance company will require this information. For a free downloadable home inventory program, go to the Insurance Information Institute at [www.iii.org](http://www.iii.org).
- If the damage is extensive enough to require that you leave your property, make sure to notify the police and request immediate assistance from your insurance company in making arrangements to board up any openings.
- Contact area disaster relief organizations such as the American Red Cross, Salvation Army, and your local church for help with immediate needs. Keep all receipts for necessary purchases from the time of the fire: meals, clothing, accommodations, replacement medicines and personal care items, etc.

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In the event of fire/smoke damage, there are a number of issues that you need to address immediately to help contain the damage while **AFTERDISASTER**<sup>®</sup> is on the way.

### DO'S:

- **In the event of significant fire/smoke damage, make sure the fire department and your utility providers have determined it is safe to reconnect water, electricity or gas.**
- **Upon re-entering your property, look for structural damage to ceilings, roof and walls that may be compromised and subject to collapse.**



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## More DO'S:

- In the event of contained fire/smoke damage, **IMMEDIATELY** turn off your heating/cooling system to prevent airborne soot particles from infiltrating through out your home. Change the furnace filter.
- Open windows for ventilation.
- Contain the damage by shutting doors in the affected area and placing towels under the door to prevent the airborne soot particles and odor from spreading.
- Tape double layers of cheesecloth over air register and returns.
- Limit your movements within your home or business as much as possible. Airborne soot particles will become impregnated in carpets and upholstery. Try to avoid inhaling the soot. A respirator is advised.
- Wipe off and protect the chrome on plumbing fixtures and appliances by applying a light coating of Vaseline or oil. This will help to prevent the metal from pitting due to the acidic nature of the soot particles.
- Keep hands as clean as possible. Soot, combined with the oil in your hands, can further contaminate walls, woodwork and upholstery. This makes the cleaning process more difficult.

**DON'TS:**

- **Do not consume any canned or packaged food, beverages or medicines until the level of exposure to heat, smoke and soot has been determined. They may have been contaminated.**
- **Do not throw away any damaged goods until an inventory has been taken.**
- **Do not attempt to wash any walls, ceilings or other absorbent surfaces without consulting a professional first.**
- **Do not attempt to shampoo carpet or upholstered furniture without consulting a professional first.**
- **If the ceiling appears wet, do not turn on any ceiling fixtures.**
- **Do not use any electrical appliances until they have been cleaned.**
- **Do not take clothing, draperies, linens, etc. to a normal dry cleaner. These items require special equipment and procedures to fully remove soot and smoke odor.**

The above suggestions may not apply in every situation. The most important thing to be aware of is the potential danger that can exist and take appropriate precautions.