

# *After the Fire*



This resource was developed to assist you following a fire. In the event you cannot find the help you need, please call the El Centro Fire Department at 760-337-4530 and we will assist you in locating the appropriate individual or agency.

***If you are insured:***

- Contact your insurance company or agent as soon as possible.
- If you are renting, you must also contact the property owner or management company.

Your insurance adjuster may be able to assist you in making immediate repairs or help in securing your home. If you are unable to contact your agent and need professional assistance in boarding up your home, you may contact a general contractor or a fire damage restoration firm (usually listed as Contractors – General or Fire & Water Damage Restoration).

***If you are not insured:***

If you are not insured and need assistance, the American Red Cross is available to assist families who have been displaced from their homes through any type of disaster. They are available around the clock, every day of the year, with food, clothing, and housing. If your property is not insured or your insurance will not cover all of your losses, you may be eligible for casualty loss; check Publication 547, Tax Information on Disasters, Casualty Losses and Thefts, available from your local Internal Revenue Service Office.

***If you must stay elsewhere:***

If you cannot find a place to stay, such as with family or friends, consult with your insurance company to see if you are covered for additional living expenses. The Red Cross may be able to provide temporary shelter until you can arrange to rent a place to stay.

If you must leave your home, try to locate the following items to take with you:

- important legal documents
- identification
- vital medicines
- eye glasses
- hearing aids
- valuables
- credit cards
- checkbooks
- insurance policies
- money
- jewelry
- photos

(Note: Let safes cool down before opening.)

The Fire Department will notify the Community Development Department (CDD) if your home has sustained damage as a result of fire. CDD staff will conduct an inspection of your home to assess the extent of the fire damage and to determine what permits are required to repair the home. Before attempting any repairs, please contact CDD at 760-337-4508.

Often the Fire Department must have the utility services shut off or disconnected as a safety precaution and also to prevent further damage to the structure and its contents. The utility companies cannot restore your utilities until the repairs are approved, and clearance has been issued by CDD.

### ***Change of Address:***

If you move, notify the US Postal Service, banks, utility companies, credit card companies, magazines/newspapers, etc., of your new address.

### ***Pets:***

Smoke can damage the lungs of a dog or cat in minutes and sparks can cause painful burns that may stay hidden under your pet's fur. As soon as possible, take your pet to a veterinarian. If your pet is lost in the confusion, call the El Centro Police Department Animal Control for direction. 760-336-8981 or 760-352-2111. You can also call the Humane Society of Imperial County to see if they have your lost pets 760-352-1911.

If you need to temporarily board your pet you can contact Dee Forbey at 760-554-6305.

### ***Counseling Support:***

After a fire, you may experience: anxious feelings, depression, difficulty concentrating, sadness, anger, fatigue, irrational fears and nightmares. These are common responses to a traumatic event. If you or your family members need support, call the American Red Cross or seek a counselor. Some employers and/or health insurance carriers provide coverage for counseling services.

### ***What About Odors?***

Sometimes there is a residual smoke odor from a small fire that is annoying and lingering. Remember that the smoke odor is also inside the heating and cooling ducts and you get a fresh blast every time the air system activates.

If insured, consult your insurance company for assistance. You may want to contact a cleaning service specializing in restoration of fire damaged property.

They have the equipment to scrub out the duct work and deodorize everything in the house.

### ***Cash or Negotiables?***

If burned, handle with extreme care and as little as possible. Attempt to encase each crisp sheet in a plastic wrap in order to salvage as much as possible.

### **Mutilated Currency Division Mailing Address and Contact Information**

#### **USPS Delivery:**

Bureau of Engraving & Printing  
MCD/OFM, Room 344A  
P.O. Box 37048  
Washington, DC 20013

#### **Non Postal Couriers, i.e. FEDEX/UPS:**

Bureau of Engraving & Printing  
MCD/OFM, Room 344A  
14th and C Streets SW  
Washington, DC 20228

#### **Telephone Contact Numbers:**

(866) 575-2361 (toll-free)  
(202) 874-2141

### ***What About Perishables?***

Any food, beverages and/or medicines exposed to heat or smoke should not be consumed. Medicines, especially, can change strength by exposure to heat. Please check with your doctor first before taking these medicines. If food was in tightly closed or sealed containers, or in airtight refrigerators or freezers, they may be salvageable. It is cheaper to replace the material than to jeopardize your health by taking a chance. When in doubt, throw it out!

### ***Vehicle Fires:***

If insured, contact your insurance agent who can explain coverage and will assist with your claim. If your vehicle is damaged in a structure fire, contact both your home and auto insurance agents. If you are uninsured, you will need

to determine if the vehicle is repairable. If your vehicle is a total loss (beyond repair) it may have some value to a salvage yard. A list of vehicle salvage companies can be found in a phone directory under Automobile Salvage. Occasionally, fire crews will have to force entry into the vehicle to check for fire extension and extinguish the fire. To ensure that the fire is completely extinguished, it may be necessary for fire crews to:

- 1.** Cut and/or disconnect battery cables to prevent electrical shorting of wires where insulation of wiring has been damaged.
- 2.** Complete removal of padding from seats, especially where cotton padding is used.
- 3.** Forced entry into the passenger compartment, engine compartment, and trunk of a vehicle to extinguish, check for extension, and gain access to battery cables.

*Checklist for After the Fire....*

**Fire**

**Incident #:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date of Incident:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ECFD Contact Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Contact Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Insurance**

**Company:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Insurance**

**Agent:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Landlord**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Other Contacts Made:**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Organization:** \_\_\_\_\_

### *Checklist (continued)*

- Contact Red Cross for temporary housing, food, clothing, medicines, etc. or arrange to stay with friends/family.
- If you are insured, contact your insurance company for detailed instructions on protecting your property, conducting inventory and contacting fire damage restoration companies.
- Check with the fire department to make sure your home is safe to enter. Be watchful of structural damage.
- The Fire Department will ensure that all utilities are either safe to use or disconnected before they leave. Do not attempt to reconnect them yourself.
- Conduct an inventory of damaged property and items prior to throwing them away.
- Try to locate important documents and records such as a driver's license, social security cards, bank records, insurance policy, etc.
- If you leave your home, contact El Centro Police to notify them that your home will be vacant at 760-352-2111.
- Save all receipts related to the fire loss. They may be needed later by the insurance company or the IRS for losses claimed.
- Notify your mortgage company of the fire.
- Check with an accountant or the IRS about benefits for those recovering from fire loss.
- Notify others of your temporary situation including family, friends, schools, employers, post office, and utility companies.

***Helpful Phone Numbers:***

Fire Department Emergency	9-1-1
Fire Department - Administration	760-337-4530
American Red Cross	760-352-4541
Humane Society of Imperial County (lost pets)	760-352-1911
El Centro Animal Control	760-336-8981
Community Development Department	760-337-4508
CA DMV El Centro Office	800-777-0133
Police Department Emergency	9-1-1
Police Department Information	760-352-2111

***Utilities:***

Water Department	760-337-4510
IID (electric)	760-335-3640
SoCal Gas	800-427-2200
Telephone Provider	
Cable Provider	
Internet Provider	