

# AFTER A FIRE

## INFORMATION MANUAL





Dear Citizens:

The Hollywood Fire/Rescue Department strives to serve the Community of Hollywood by saving lives and property. Firefighters are familiar with the devastation and trauma resulting from fire. Those who experience a fire often are not. The difficult period directly after a fire is confusing and traumatic. We recognize this and have created this manual to assist you through this difficult and tragic period.

While firefighters are on scene they will attempt to assist you and your family as they best can. After they have left, many questions may be left unanswered. By referring to this booklet, many of your concerns may be answered. A listing of important resources and telephone numbers have been included to speed your recovery from this unexpected event.

If your electricity has been shut off by the Fire Department in Fire Suppression Operations, you will need to contact the Electrical Department of the Hollywood Building Department, at 954-921-3335.

If there are further questions, please do not hesitate to call the Fire Marshal's Office at 954-967-4404.

# **HOW YOU CAN HELP WHEN FIREFIGHTERS AND/OR RESCUE PERSONNEL ARE AT YOUR HOME**

1. If it is a fire, stay away from the house or apartment on fire.
2. Tell firefighters if there are any other persons in the structure.
3. If an animal is still in the structure, tell the firefighter that an animal is inside the home. Avoid saying only the animal's name or a special term used for the animals. This leads to, confusion resulting in firefighters looking for a human.
4. Remain as calm as possible. Stay with friends or other family members, but please do not leave the fire location to accompany a rescue vehicle.
5. If you accompany a rescue vehicle to a hospital via a private car DO NOT speed or go through any red lights. The rescue drivers are trained, licensed and signal equipped for this. Another accident on the way to the hospital will not help a victim. Remember --- they are in qualified, caring, professional hands.
6. If it is a rescue call, state as clearly as possible any medications or medical problems the patient might have. If you do not know the answers, say so! You are helping speed care by being clear and truthful.
7. If you have been directed not to enter a structure after a fire, heed this warning. Remaining smoke is a killer, along with the possibility of structural weakness and possible collapse in the building.
8. As much as you may wish to physically assist emergency personnel, please avoid the temptation. This is a team effort at your service. Only a limited number of specially trained persons can make it work. Follow the previous steps, stay on the fringe and we will assist you in the caring, professional manner that we are equipped and trained for.

## **ASSISTANCE**

Contact your local disaster relief services agency such as The American Red Cross or the Salvation Army if you are in need of temporary housing. They have other services to help fire victims. Give them a call to see if they can assist you in any way.

(Phone Numbers on page 14 & 15)

If you are insured under a package homeowner's or tenant's policy, a section of your coverage may pay for temporary housing.

## **IF YOU MUST LEAVE**

This may be your decision or that of the Fire Department or building inspector that the building is unsafe. If you must leave:

- Contact the local police so they can keep an eye on the property during your absence.
- Try to locate the following items to take with you:

All important identification  
Vital medicines such as insulin, or heart medication  
Eyeglasses, hearing aids or other personal aids  
Valuables such as money, insurance policies, credit cards, jewelry, check book, etc.  
any pets.

If you feel you will be out of your building for an extended period of time, you may want to notify the following of your relocation:

Post Office to forward mail to new address  
Your Bank(s)  
Utility Companies  
Social Security Administration  
Insurance Company  
Fire Department-if the fire is under investigation  
Newspaper and magazines you may subscribe to.  
Relatives / Friends

If there is structural damage to your building, check with the city building department to see if there is a need for a permit before attempting repairs. (954-921-3335)

## **INSURANCE**

### **INSURED**

The first thing to do after a fire is to contact your insurance company or agent as soon as possible. If you are renting the property, you must contact the owner also. Your insurance agent may be able to help you in making immediate repairs or help in securing your home. If you cannot reach your agent and need professional assistance in boarding up your home, a general contractor or fire damage restoration firm can help. Check your yellow pages.

Remove as many valuables as possible if you must stay elsewhere. Be sure to inventory the property you remove. Also, check for important papers which may have been damaged.

Mobile home insurance coverage is similar to other forms of homeowner's coverage. Check with your agent for your coverage.

### **UNINSURED**

If your property is not insured or if your insurance will not cover all your losses, contact your family lawyer. You may have to depend on your own resources and help from other agencies to recover your fire loss.

Check with the American Red Cross or Salvation Army, local church groups or civic organizations such as Rotary, Exchange or Sertoma for assistance.

Some losses due to fire are tax deductible for your federal income tax. Be sure to keep receipts of money spent for repairs or replacing damaged property and in covering your living expenses. These receipts will be helpful in calculations the loss for your yearly tax return.

Check with your local Internal Revenue Service office for PUBLICATION 547 TAX INFORMATION ON DISASTERS, CASUALTY LOSSES AND THEFTS. A quick refund is possible if you file form 1045, OPERATING LOSSES. Check with the I.R.S. first.

## **PERSONAL INJURY**

If as the result of the fire you, a friend, or a member of your family is injured and the injuries require more than immediate first aid, contact your health insurance agent for further directions. Be sure firefighters are aware of your needs so that immediate care can be administered.

## **MONEY REPLACEMENT**

### **PAPER CURRENCY**

NOTE: Handle burned money as little as possible. Attempt to encase each bill or portion of bill in plastic wrap for preservation.

If the money you've kept in your home is only half burned or less, you can check with any local commercial bank or take the remainder to the Federal Reserve Bank, or you can mail the remainder of the money (in plastic wrap) via First Class Mail to:

U.S. Treasury Department  
Main Treasury Building, Room 1123  
Washington, D.C. 20220

### **COINS**

Mutilated or melted coins can be taken to the Federal Reserve Bank or mailed via First Class Registered mail to:

U.S. Mint  
5<sup>th</sup> and Arch Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19015

### **SAVINGS BONDS**

If your U.S. Savings Bond(s) have been mutilated or destroyed, write to:

U.S. Treasury Department  
Bureau of Loans and Currency  
537 W. Clark Street  
Chicago, IL 60605  
Attention: Bond Consultant

Be sure to include name(s) and address on bonds, approximate date or time period when purchased, denominations and approximate number of each.

## RECORDS AND DOCUMENTS

Documents and records are very important to your well-being and can be damaged or destroyed as a result of a fire. For this reason, the Hollywood Fire Rescue Department provides the following list of records and documents that should be located and/or replaced. Locating these documents will speed up the process of recovering from a fire.

<b>Items</b>	<b>Who to Contact</b>
Driver's License	954-497-1570
Bank Books	Your local bank
Insurance Policies	Your insurance agent
Broward County Records/Revenue	954-357-7283
Federal Information Citizen Center	1-800-333-4636
Birth Certificates and Death Certificates	Broward County Vital Statistics 954-467-4431
Marriage License	State in which ceremony was performed or Locally: (Broward County or Florida) 954-267-0386
Divorce Papers	Circuit Court where decree was Issued Locally: 954-831-6610
Social Security Card Credit Cards	1-800-772-1213 Issuing companies
Titles to deeds	Records Dept. of City or County In which property is located Locally: 954-831-4000

Stocks	Issuing company or broker
Wills	Your lawyer
Medical records/prescriptions	Your physician or pharmacist
Warranties	Issuing company
Income tax records	1-800-829-1040
Auto registration/title	1-800-333-4636
Citizenship papers (Immigration)	1-305-536-5741

Welfare clients should notify their care workers if their I.D. card for check cashing or food stamp card has been destroyed.

Broward County Human Services 954-357-6385  
 Aging and adult services 954-357-6765

Note: It is wise to store all important documents and records in an approved container that is specifically designed for such purposes.

### **SALVAGE HINTS**

The following salvage information was furnished by the Fire Center of the University of Minnesota as reprinted by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Fire Administration.

These hints are meant as an economical way to clean up or salvage items after a small fire. Be sure to contact your insurance company to see exactly what they will cover. Also, consider taking pictures of the damage.

## CAUTION

Several of the cleaning mixtures contain the substance Tri-Sodium Phosphate. TriSodium Phosphate is caustic substance used commonly as a cleaning agent. It should be used with care and stored out of reach of children and pets. Wear rubber gloves when using. Read instructions before you start. (Tri-Sodium Phosphate can be purchased in your local hardware or paint store, such as Home Depot, or Lowe's.

The use of rubber gloves and goggles is suggested.

- Vacuum all surfaces
- Change and clean air conditioner filters
- Seal off the room in which you are working with plastic to keep soot from moving from one location to another. Try to keep window closed.

## WALLS AND CEILINGS

To remove soot and smoke from painted walls, mix together:  
4-6 tablespoons tri-sodium phosphate  
1 gallon water

Wash small area at a time working from the floor up. Do ceilings last. Rinse thoroughly. **DO NOT REPAINT UNTIL COMPLETELY DRY!** It is advisable that you use a smoke sealer (available at paint store) before painting.

Wallpapered walls usually cannot be restored. Check with your wallpaper dealer.

## WOOD FURNITURE

Do not use chemicals on furniture. A very inexpensive product called FLAX SOAP (available in hardware and paint stores) is a most efficient product to use on wood, including kitchen cabinets. If you do not have Flax Soap;

- Wipe off with borax dissolved in hot water to remove mildew
- To remove white spots or film; rub the surface with a cloth soaked in ½ cup water and ½ cup vinegar solution. Then wipe dry and polish with wax

You can also rub the wood surface with 4/0 steel wool in liquid polishing wax, wipe with soft cloth and then buff.

NOTE: Wet wood can decay and mold, so dry well BUT DO NOT DRY IN DIRECT SUNLIGHT as the wood may warp and twist out of shape.

## **WOOD AND VINYL FLOORS**

Use Flax soap on wood and vinyl floors. It will take 4 to 5 applications. Then strip and re-wax. When water gets underneath linoleum, it can cause odors and warp the floor. If this has happened, remove your linoleum. Call your linoleum dealer for suggestions on how to loosen the adhesive without damaging the floor covering. Be sure to let the floor dry thoroughly before replacing it.

## **CARPETS**

Rugs and carpets should be allowed to dry thoroughly. Throw rugs can be cleaned by beating, sweeping, or vacuuming, and then shampooing. Rugs should be dried as quickly as possible. Lay them flat and expose them to a circulation of warm, dry air. A fan turned on the rugs will speed drying. Make sure the rugs are thoroughly dry. Even though the surface seems dry, moisture remaining at the base of the tufts can quickly rot a rug. For more information on cleaning and preserving carpets, call your carpet dealer.

## **MATTRESSES**

Reconditioning an innerspring mattress at home is nearly impossible. Your mattress can probably be renovated by a company that builds or repairs them.

If you must use your mattress temporarily, put it out in the sun to dry, then cover it with plastic sheeting. The foam and feathers hold the odor in.

## **LOCKS, HINGES, TYPEWRITERS, SEWING MACHINES AND OTHER SMALL APPLIANCES**

Steam from a fire removes lubrication from these items. They should be taken apart and oiled. It is suggested that these items be taken to a repair shop. If locks cannot be removed, squirt machine oil through bolt opening or keyhole and work the knob to distribute the oil. Hinges should also be thoroughly cleaned and oiled.

## **COOKING UTENSILS**

Your pots, pans flatware, etc., should be washed with a fine-powered cleanser. You can polish copper and brass with special polish, or salt sprinkled on a cloth saturated in vinegar.

## **REFRIGERATOR AND FREEZERS**

To remove odors from your refrigerator or freezer, wash the inside with solution of baking soda and water or use one cup of vinegar or household ammonia to one gallon of water. Some baking soda in an open container or a piece of charcoal can be placed in the refrigerator or freezer to absorb odor.

### **CAUTION**

*When cleaning or discarding any refrigerator or freezer be sure the doors are removed or secured against closing on a young child!*

### **FOOD**

If your freezer has stopped running, you can still save the frozen food:

- Keep the freezer closed. Your freezer has enough insulation to keep food frozen for at least one day, perhaps more.
- Move your food to a neighbor's freezer or a commercial freezer firm. Wrap the frozen food in newspaper and blankets, or use insulated boxes.

If your food has thawed, observe the following procedures:

- **FRUITS** can be refrozen if they still taste and smell good. Otherwise, if the fruits are not spoiled, they can be eaten.
- **VEGETABLES** should not be refrozen if they have thawed completely. Refreeze only if they have ice crystals in the vegetables. If your vegetables have thawed and cannot be used soon, **THROW THEM OUT!** If you have any doubts whether your vegetables are spoiling, **THROW THEM OUT!** Don't wait for a bad odor.

- MEATS may be frozen (if ice crystals remain) but cook very thoroughly before tasting. If odor is poor or if you question these foods, THROW OUT, as bacteria multiply rapidly.

## **CLOTHING**

Smoke odor and soot can sometimes be washed from clothing. The following formula will often work for clothing that can be bleached:

4-6 teaspoons tri-sodium phosphate  
1 cup Lysol or any household chlorine bleach  
1 gallon warm water  
Mix well--add clothes, rinse with clean water--dry well

To remove mildew, wash the fresh stain with soap and water. Then rinse and dry in the sun. If the stain isn't gone, use lemon juice and salt, or diluted solution of household chlorine bleach.

***Never, ever mix an ammonia solution or any other cleaner with a chlorine product, for it may form toxic vapors.***

Take wool, silk or rayon garments to the dry cleaners as soon as possible.

## **LEATHER AND BOOKS**

Wipe your leather goods with a damp cloth, then with a dry cloth. Stuff your purses and hoes with newspapers to retain their shape. Leave your suitcases open. Leather goods should be dried away from heat and sun. When leather goods are dry, clean with saddle soap. You can use steel wool or a suede brush on suede. Rinse leather and suede jackets in cold water and dry away from heat and sun.

Books can be dried by placing them on end with the pages separated. Then they should be piled and pressed to prevent the pages from crinkling. Alternating drying and pressing will help prevent mildew from foaming until the books are thoroughly dry. If your books are very damp, sprinkle cornstarch or talc between the pages, leave for several hours, then brush off. A fan turned on the books will help them dry.

## TELEPHONE DIRECTORY

Broward County Animal Care & Regulation.....	(954) 359-1313
Broward County Human Services.....	(954) 357-6385
Broward County Records/Revenue.....	(954) 831-4000
Broward County Call Center/Vital Statistics.....	(954) 831-4000
Broward County Transit Authority (Bus).....	(954) 467-4413
Broward County Customer Call/Call Center.....	(954) 357-7283
American Red Cross.....	(954) 763-9900
Auto Registration.....	(954) 765-5050
Driver's License.....	(954) 497-1570
Dept. of Children & Family Administration.....	(954) 467-4298
Internal Revenue Service.....	1-800-829-1040
Marriage License.....	(954) 267-0386
Federation Information Citizen Center (Passports).....	1-800-333-4636
Salvation Army.....	(954) 961-7523
Social Security.....	1-800-772-1213
Humane Society of Broward County.....	(954) 463-4870
Hollywood Building Inspector.....	(954) 921-3335
Hollywood Fire and/or Police (Emergency).....	911
Hollywood Fire and/or Police (Non-Emergency).....	(954) 967-4357
Hollywood Fire Department (Administration).....	(954) 967-4248

Hollywood Fire Department  
Public Information Officer – Rescue.....(954) 967-4404

Hollywood Police Department (Administration).....(954) 967-4300

Voters Information.....(954) 357-7050

Veterans Center.....(954) 356-7926

Hollywood Sanitation.....(954) 967-4200

**UTILITIES**

Bell South.....1-888-757-6500

Hollywood Water Department.....(954) 921-3241

Florida Power & Night.....(954) 797-5000

Teco/Peoples Gas Company.....1-877-832-6747

## FIRE PREVENTION TIPS

1. Install and maintain smoke detectors. Follow manufacturer's directions on locating your detector. These are best installed on the ceilings adjacent to sleeping areas. Check batteries annually. If detector beeps periodically, the battery may need to be changed.
2. Avoid overloading electrical outlets. This condition can cause fires due to an excessive amount (3 or more) of appliances in an outlet.
3. Have an escape plan for every person in the house. Two escape routes, either through a door or window, are recommended per room.
4. Have a meeting place to go to if escaping a fire. For the children's sake call it "home base" or "safe zone" because they respond to this as well as identify with the concept. This should be a place away from the home, preferably a mailbox, neighbor's porch, etc.
5. If a fire occurs, **get out!** Call the fire department. Fires grow quickly! Within seconds a small fire can, become a raging, choking inferno. Leave it to the professionals to extinguish the fire. Also, often there will be less damage than if you and neighbors attempt extinguishment.
6. Post your address and telephone number by the phone for baby sitters, guest and even yourself to use in case of emergency. 911 is uncomplicated, however you may even forget your own name and address under extreme stress.
7. If a pan fire occurs, put a lid or cover on it. Tip the lid so it shields your arm from the flames as you place it. Turn off the heat.
  - Avoid: Water or application of any towel, wet or dry, on a pan fire, this may intensify and spread the fire. Call the fire department.

A final note – The Hollywood Fire/Rescue Department is here for you in your time of need

Both advanced life support and basic life support are available. This allows for direct communication with hospitals and physicians during rescue. Full drug and advanced life saving techniques are available at your call.

We are here to serve. Our greatest concern and commitment is for the safety and well-being of all the citizens of Hollywood.

## **CAUTIONS**

Household wiring which may have been water damage should be checked by licensed electrician before the current is turned back on.

Be watchful for any structural damage caused by the fire. The Fire Department will secure property we believe to be a safety hazard.

Any food or beverages that had contact with smoke, soot or heat should be discarded. Wash your canned goods and jars in soapy water. If the labels come off be sure to remark them with a black marker only if you know the contents! Don't use canned goods when can have bulged, are dented or show rust. **IF YOU ARE UNSURE...THROW IT OUT.**

Any medications that had contact with smoke, soot or heat should also be thrown out. If you are uncertain about the re-usability of the medications, **DISCARD IT.** Notify our physician and /or your pharmacist for replacement.

If your power has been turned off **KEEP DOORS TO REFRIGERATOR AND FREEZER CLOSED!** Refrigerators and freezers left unopened will hold their temperature for a short time. If your food becomes spoiled or thawed **THROW IT OUT!** (for more information on saving foods, see salvage hints).

If you have a safe **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO OPEN!** Wait until the safe has cooled; otherwise, there is a chance the contents of hot gases could burst into flames when the door is opened, due to the introduction of fresh air into the safe.

The Fire Department will see that the utilities (water, electric, or natural gas) are either safe to use or are disconnected before we leave. The utility companies will not make repairs on the customer's side of the meter; therefore, a private contractor will have to be contacted to make repairs. All repairs of this nature require permits and inspection by proper building department. The utility companies will not restore your utilities until the repairs are approved by the building department. DO NOT ATTEMPT TO RECONNECT UTILITIES YOURSELF!

## **SECURING THE SITE**

The Fire Department will remove as much water and debris as possible from the fire building before turning the building over to the owner. It is the responsibility of the owner to see that the property is secure after the Fire Department leaves the scene. In the event the Fire Department feels the building is unsafe, we will secure the property as best as we can.

## **ABOUT OUR OPERATIONS**

Here are a few common questions people have about our operations:

**1. WHY ARE WINDOWS BROKEN OR HOLES CUT IN THE ROOF?**

As a fire burns, it moves upward then outward. Breaking the windows and/or cutting holes in the roof (called ventilation) stops that damaging movement and enables firefighters to fight more efficiently, resulting in less damage to the structure in the long run.

**2. WHY DOES A HOLLYWOOD FIRE ENGINE RESPOND TO MEDICAL EMERGENCIES WHEN THERE IS NO FIRE?**

This allows faster response to an emergency, better use of manpower, and most importantly, expeditious care to patients. This program allows the nearest engine to quickly respond to a medical emergency, yet always backed up by an ALS Unit.

**3. WHY DO WE CUT HOLES IN WALLS?**

We have to be absolutely sure that the fire is completely out, and that there is no fire inside the walls or other hidden places. We will do the least amount of damage necessary to insure everything is safe.

**4. IS IT POSSIBLE TO OBTAIN A COPY OF THE FIRE REPORT?**

Yes. A fire report is a public document and is available on the City's Website [www.hollywoodfl.org](http://www.hollywoodfl.org), go under Government and then City Clerk's Office and select submit/view record request. If you need further assistance please contact the Fire Marshal's office at 954-967-4404, 7-10 business days after the incident.

**5. WHO ARE PUBLIC ADJUSTERS?**

Public adjusters are independent agents who offer their services in an effort to expedite your insurance claim. They work on a commission basis and handle the majority of the paperwork and research involved with filing your claim with your insurance company.