

The First 72 Hours

The first 72 hours of a major emergency are the most critical. Fire and water damage restoration steps must be taken immediately to salvage what can be salvaged.

The more time you waste, the more property you will lose. It is important to have a trained emergency repair and restoration expert to minimize the potential fire and water damage which can occur on your property.

Here are a few tips for keeping safe from fire and water damage, mitigating the damage, and getting your property back into shape while waiting for a restoration professional:

Be Aware of Your Surroundings

- Before re-entering your home, look for structural damage to walls, roofs, stairs, ceilings, and floors.
- Keep out of rooms where ceilings are sagging.
- Be aware that water damage is often less obvious than fire damage.
- If in doubt, wait for a professional to assess the structural integrity of your property before reentering.

Be Cautious

- Make sure to look for damage to electrical wiring.
- Be cautious of slippery surfaces.
- Be aware that water coming out of your tap may be contaminated.
- Be aware that wet materials can be very heavy.
- Do not attempt to clean any electrical appliances that may have been close to fire, heat or water.
- Do not turn on ceiling fixtures if ceiling is wet
- Don't use any canned or packaged food or beverages that may have been close to fire, heat or water.

Don't Cause More Damage

- You should immediately report the loss to your agent or insurer, protect your property as much as possible from additional damage.
- Take photos and preserve the evidence of the damage.
- Don't start throwing things away until your insurer and your own experts have completed their inspections.
- Document the value of what you lost and how much it's going to cost to put you back where you were.

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RESTORATIONS

After A Commercial or Residential Flood

- Remove excess water by mopping and blotting.
- Remove lamps & tabletop items before wiping excess water from wood furniture.
- Remove and prop wet upholstery and cushions.
- Place aluminum foil or wood blocks between furniture legs and wet carpeting
- Turn air conditioning on for maximum drying in summer.
- Remove colored rugs from wet carpeting.
- Don't leave books, magazines or other colored items on wet carpet or floors.
- Don't use your household vacuum to remove water.
- Don't use television or other household appliances.

After A Commercial or Residential Fire

- Limit movement in the damaged area to prevent soot particles from being embedded into upholstery and carpets.
- Keep hands clean so as not to further soil upholstery, walls and woodwork.
- Place rags or old linens on high-traffic areas of rugs, upholstery and carpet.
- If electricity is off, empty freezer and refrigerator and prop doors open.
- Clean and protect chrome with a light coating of petroleum jelly or oil.
- Wash houseplants on both sides of leaves.
- Tape double layers of cheesecloth over air registers.
- Don't attempt to wash any walls or painted surfaces or shampoo carpet or upholstery.
- Don't send garments to an ordinary dry cleaner. Improper cleaning may set smoke odor.
- Use a HEPA vacuum to ensure all small particulates of soot, debris and fire extinguisher residue are captured.
- You can use fans to expel dust, soot and other fine dusts which can cause respiratory distress, but make sure all small and large debris is removed first.

Additional Tips

- Save all receipts for any money you spend related to loss. The receipts may be needed later by the insurance company and to prove any losses claimed on your income tax.
- Check with an accountant or the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) about special benefits for people recovering from a property loss