

AFTER AN EMERGENCY

A message from the North Middlesex Fire Department



After An Emergency



A personal disaster typically affects one household. A house fire is one of the most common examples. Often, a personal disaster can occur with very little or no warning. Recovering after a fire, flood, severe storm or any other type emergency, may be one of the most difficult things you ever have to do. Nothing will prepare you for the devastation and loss which can occur and the feelings of fear and anxiety that you may experience. This information was compiled to assist you and hopefully make the process of recovery a bit easier by providing information and resources on emergency housing; recovering lost documents; salvaging furniture and appliances; dealing with your insurance company; food and medicine and cleaning up. It takes you through the many tasks you need to do step-by-step to restore your life and home back in order. Your road to recovery will take time and it is very important that you seek out help from others to assist you along the way. Take things one step at a time to prevent being overwhelmed. North Middlesex hopes this information will be of benefit to you on your journey to recovery.

The First Steps



- Completing these steps prior to leaving your property is recommended:
- If you need help with emergency shelter, food or clothing, inform a member of the Fire Department as you may be eligible for immediate assistance. There are many humanitarian organizations available to us and we can connect you with the assistance you may need (i.e. Salvation Army, Red Cross, Victim Services, etc.). If you rent or lease, contact the building owner or building manager. If you are insured, contact your Insurance Company right away as many policies are set up to temporarily provide you with food, shelter and clothing while your home is being repaired.
- If your insurance company requires you to obtain a report from the Fire Department, please direct them to contact the Fire Administrative Assistant at 519-294-6244 ext. 3221.
- If the Fire Department agrees that it is safe for you to enter your home, we will accompany you so that you are able to remove any essential items such as; important legal documents, passports, birth certificates, important medicines, insurance policies, money, credit cards, cheque books, sentimental items, cell phones, eyeglasses and hearing aids.

The First Steps (Cont'd)



- If you rent the home, request the landlord/property manager to secure your property. If you own your own home, then you are responsible for your home's security. Board up broken windows and doors, cover holes in the roof or exterior walls, drain your water lines if your home is not heated for a while (or contact a contractor to do this for you). Your insurance company will also be able to provide you with the names of contractors, or you can search for services yourself listed under 'Fire and Water Damage Restoration' at yellowpages.ca. If other tenant's units are damaged by smoke or water, they should also notify the building manager and insurer if they have one.
- As soon as possible, prepare a detailed list of items that were destroyed or damaged. Include how much you paid for them; how old they are and what it might cost to replace them. Preserve any documentation you may still have to prove their value.

For Those Who Are Not Insured



Financial recovery from a fire loss will be based on your own resources and help from the community. Some organizations might be able to offer short-term assistance.

- The Salvation Army (24/7) 519-661-0343
- Canadian Red Cross 519-332-6380
- Ailsa Craig and Area Food Bank and Thrift Store 519-293-3637
- Places of worship and community service clubs.

Next Steps



Housing:

- If you cannot live in your home due to fire damage and you cannot stay with family or friends, a temporary home will be needed for you and your family. It may be best to keep all family members together for mutual support and to communicate openly to permit an outlet for the incident's stress/trauma.

Pets:

- If a pet is lost or escapes during the fire, try walking through the neighbourhood and calling out your pet's name since they may be injured and/or hiding in an adjacent property. You can also try calling your local animal shelter or veterinarian, posting to social media and distributing flyers to your neighbours.

Other Things to Consider:

- Even if you are away from your home for a short period of time, you may wish to contact the following to report a temporary change of address: family and friends, employers, Canada Post (for mail redirection), your financial institution (to report cheques/credit cards/debit cards left in the residence), your children's schools, newspapers, magazines and other subscriptions, Utility Providers (Hydro, Gas, Telephone, Internet, Cable).

Returning Home After a Fire



- Prior to re-entering the home, you must obtain permission from the Fire Department (if they are still on scene) If there is an ongoing fire investigation, you must obtain the permission of the designated fire investigator with the Ontario Fire Marshal's Office.
- If you have received permission to enter your home, you may require some of these pieces of equipment to assist you: Flashlight, Dust Mask, First Aid Kit, Hard Hat and Gloves, Hard Soled Shoes, Crowbar, Hammer, Hack Saw, Garbage Bags.
- Walk around your property to check for any problems or hazards. If there are loose power lines or electrical wires, stay away from them. If you notice a natural gas odour (similar to rotten egg) call your gas company right away, and do not enter your home.
- If it is safe to enter the home, walk around carefully and use caution when checking for hazards. If you smell or hear natural gas or propane (it can make a hissing/blowing sound) leave the building immediately and call 911.

Returning Home After a Fire (Cont'd)



- If it is safe to do so, try to locate your main electrical box to ensure that the power has been shut off. If you must walk through water to reach the box, refrain from doing this. Instead, call an electrician. Remember: water and electricity are a fatal combination.
- If your utilities have been disconnected, do not attempt to reconnect it yourself – you must call the appropriate utility company to have them reconnected.
- Hazardous Materials should be disposed of if they have been exposed to flames, heat, moisture or smoke. northmiddlesex.on.ca/services/water-recycling
- If you find evidence of money/bonds that have been partially destroyed by fire, gather up all evidence of the notes, any ashes and the container that they were originally in. Even the smallest amount of evidence will assist in determining the amount of money. Provide a letter with all of the specific details (amount of money/bonds you believe were destroyed) and how it occurred. Send your letter to: Mutilated Notes Services, Bank of Canada, 234 Laurier Ave. W., Ottawa, ON K1A 0G9. For further information phone 1-800-303-1282.

Cleaning up After a Fire



- Before you begin, contact your insurance agent since your home policy might cover the cost of a Fire Restoration Specialist, saving you time, stress and money.
- Keep any ruined furniture, appliances and personal belongings aside (storage facility/garage) for insurance purposes.
- Decide ahead of time what is worth saving since items can take numerous cleanings to rid them of soot and smoke.
- You may need extra space to clean your belongings and to store them.
- Some cleaning solutions are hazardous – use rubber gloves and goggles, and never use these solutions near children, pets, or an open flame (i.e. water heater).
- Make sure to open windows so that you have adequate ventilation – or clean outdoors.
- Keep soiled rags and cloths in a metal container with a tight-fitting lid.
- NEVER mix cleaning solutions.

Dealing with Food & Medicine



- Any food that survived the fire will need to be closely assessed – if in doubt, throw it out! Heat, smoke, and toxic fumes will cause food and medicine to spoil, making them extremely dangerous to consume. Any perishable foods or pre-packaged foods and food/medicine exposed to smoke, water, heat or fumes needs to be discarded.
- Any foods in canned jars should be discarded as there is a chance that the seal may have been broken due to the heat.
- Any canned food that is bulging, badly dented or rusted should be discarded. Cans that have not been exposed to direct heat can be cleaned in a solution of 45 ml of bleach mixed with 4 litres of water.
- If power to your refrigerator or freezer was disrupted, discard all food (if you are not sure, throw them out anyway). Food that has remained frozen should be fine, unless your freezer was exposed to intense heat.
- Check with a pharmacist or doctor before taking any medicine exposed to heat, water, smoke, or fumes. Make sure to dispose of the medicine properly if it is necessary.

Coping with Critical Incident Stress



- Critical incident stress is any incident that makes you experience unusually strong emotional reactions.
- The incident may even be long over before you feel the strong emotional/physical reactions.
- The feelings are normal, especially when you are dealing with the situation honestly and realistically.
- Sometimes 'aftershocks' can occur right after a traumatic event, or they can occur days, weeks, or years later.
- Depending on the severity of the event, these symptoms can appear and disappear quickly or last a long time.
- Sometimes the trauma has been so painful that you may require professional help from a counsellor trained to deal with this type of stress.
- Some common signs and signals of a stress reaction:
- Fatigue, nausea, loss of appetite, rapid heart rate, twitches, headaches, blurred vision, vomiting, dizziness, fainting, chills, chest pain, difficulty breathing, elevated blood pressure, anxiety, nervousness, anger, grief, denial, panic, fear, depression, uncontrolled emotions, irritability, loneliness, helplessness, sleep disturbances, increased alcohol consumption

Coping with Critical Incident Stress (Cont'd)



Tips on Dealing with Stress:

- Take care of yourself and your loved ones since you are going through a very difficult time and you may experience unpleasant emotions
- If you can, reduce your responsibilities so that you can give yourself enough recovery time
- Get enough sleep – nightmares are common and may disrupt your normal sleep patterns
- If your sleeping difficulties last longer than a week, consult a doctor
- Exercise can help calm your mind and help you sleep at night
- Be sensitive to how children may react – they may become clingy and fearful.
- In any traumatic experience, children need your reassurance that everything will be okay
- When the time is right, empower your children by giving them the information they need to protect themselves
- Call Telehealth Ontario for general health information or advice at 1-866-797-0000

Local Contacts



- Enbridge Gas 1-866-763-5427 (24/7)
- Hydro One (all areas outside of Parkhill) 1-800-434-1235 (24/7)
- Entegrus Powerlines (in Parkhill only) 1-866-804-7325 (24/7)
- OCWA – water and wastewater – after hours emergency contact 519-494-0312
- Execulink – internet, cable TV, telephone – 1-866-706-1991
- Bell Canada – 1-866-310-BELL (2355)
- Waste and Recycling/Roads – Public Works Manager – 519-294-6244 ext. 3251
- Building Services – Chief Building Official – 519-666-0190 ext. 5260
- Service Ontario – Replacing Driver's License, Health Card or Ontario Photo Card, 229 Parkhill Main Street, Parkhill 519-294-0351

General Information & Referral Numbers



- Insurance Bureau of Canada – Contact your insurance broker or company directly, or call Insurance Bureau of Canada – provides impartial information and direction for inquiries about property and auto insurance 1-800-387-2880 www.consumercentre@ibc.ca
- Service Canada – Replacing passport, Social Insurance Number or Permanent Residency Card 1-800-622-6232 TTY 1-800-926-9105 www.servicecanada.gc.ca
- Service Ontario – Replacing Driver’s License, Health Card or Ontario Photo Card, 229 Parkhill Main Street, Parkhill 519-294-0351
- Telehealth Ontario General health information or advice 1-866-797-000 TTY 1-866-797-0007
- Copies of wills and power of attorney papers – your lawyer.
- Copies of medical records and prescription drugs – your family doctor.
- Copies of deeds and titles – Ontario Land Registry Office – onland.ca/ui/
- Income tax information – Revenue Canada 1-800-959-8281
- If you have a mortgage, notify your mortgage company as soon as possible and keep them informed about efforts to restore the property.

Lodging



- Mainstreet Motel, 234 Parkhill Main St, Parkhill 519-518-6886
- Holiday Inn Express, 28610 Centre Rd, Strathroy 226-242-5190
- Strathroy Motor Inn, 28540 Centre Rd, Strathroy 519-245-4480
- Oakwood Inn, 70671 Bluewater Hwy, Grand Bend 519-238-2324