

# After the Fire

A helpful guide including key information you may need to know after your home has been involved in a fire event.



## Honesdale Fire Department

PO Box 385, Honesdale PA 18431

[www.HonesdaleFireDepartment.com](http://www.HonesdaleFireDepartment.com)

### What to Do After the Fire

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- Safety** - Check with the fire department to make sure your residence is safe to enter. Be watchful of any structural damage caused by the fire. DO NOT attempt to reconnect utilities yourself.
- Acquire Temporary Housing** – If the fire department deems the structure unsafe contact your local disaster relief service, such as The Red Cross, if you need temporary housing, food and medicines. Your insurance may cover temporary housing expenses.
- Contact your Insurance Company** – If you are insured, your insurance will be the most important single component in recovering from a fire loss. Inform your insurance company immediately after the fire and discuss whether it is okay to begin repairs or secure your property.
- Secure your Property** – The owner of a building is responsible for making sure that openings are secure and unapproved access to the site is restricted.
- Create an Inventory** - Conduct an inventory and take photos of damaged property and items. Do not throw away any damaged goods until after an inventory is made.
- Recover Valuable Documents** - Try to locate valuable documents and records. If any items were destroyed, refer to the Replacement of Documents and Records section on the other side of this sheet.
- Track your Expenses** - Begin saving receipts for any money you spend related to fire loss. The receipts may be needed later by the insurance company and for verifying losses claimed on income tax.
- Notify your Mortgage Company** – Your mortgage company will have a list of steps to take in order to satisfy their requirements.
- Provide your Contact Info** – Consider notifying these people to let them know of your relocation so that they can contact you: Employer, Schools, Post Office, Your Insurance Company, and The police.

## Replacing Valuable Documents and Records

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You will want to replace many of the following documents if they were destroyed or lost in the fire.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Driver's License           | <input type="checkbox"/> Passports             | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Security Cards    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Auto Registration          | <input type="checkbox"/> Birth Certificates    | <input type="checkbox"/> Medicare Cards           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bank Books                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Death Certificates    | <input type="checkbox"/> Credit Cards             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Insurance Policies         | <input type="checkbox"/> Marriage Certificates | <input type="checkbox"/> Titles to Deeds          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Military Discharge Papers  | <input type="checkbox"/> Divorce Papers        | <input type="checkbox"/> Stocks and Bonds         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wills                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Medical Records       | <input type="checkbox"/> Warranties               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Income Tax Records         | <input type="checkbox"/> Citizenship Papers    | <input type="checkbox"/> Prepaid Burial Contracts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Animal Registration Papers | <input type="checkbox"/> Mortgage Papers       |   |

## Frequently Asked Questions

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### How did the Fire Start?

Depending on the type and size of the fire, the Fire Department may be able to determine the cause. If unable to determine, a Fire Marshall will perform one or two investigations to determine the cause.

### When can I go back into my residence?

Do not enter your home until you receive permission. The fire department will determine the safety of the structure and whether to allow anyone inside.

### Can I remove items from my residence?

Do not remove any items from your home until you receive permission from the Fire Department. Removal of items could potentially hinder any investigations.

### Can I live in my residence?

This will vary largely on damage to the structure and access to Utilities. Contact your local zoning official for guidance.

### Why did firefighters break windows and cut holes in the roof?

As a fire burns, it moves up, down and across, growing very fast. Breaking windows and cutting holes in the roof is called ventilation. This slows the fire's growth. It helps get rid of dark smoke that makes it hard for firefighters to see. It helps them fight the fire more quickly. In the end, ventilation can help save lives and property.

### Why do firefighters cut holes in walls and ceilings?

Firefighters may cut holes in the walls or ceilings to make sure that the fire has been extinguished completely and is not hidden in the walls.

### How can I get a copy of the fire report?

Contact the Fire Department to request a copy of the fire report. Reports can usually be provided within 1-2 days. The Honesdale Fire Department can be contacted at [www.HonesdaleFireDepartment.com](http://www.HonesdaleFireDepartment.com)

### A family pet has perished in the fire, what should I do next?

Contact your Veterinarian for advice.

### Is my food safe to eat?

Discard any foodstuffs, beverages, or medicines exposed to any heat, smoke, or water damage. Do not re-freeze frozen food that may have thawed during the incident.

### Can I use my home appliances?

Don't use equipment, particularly electrical appliances, that have been exposed to water until you have an authorized service technician check them.