

What to do after a fire



Emergency: 9-1-1

District of West Vancouver Fire & Rescue
760 16th Street, West Vancouver

firedepartment@westvancouver.ca

Non-emergency: 604-925-7370

westvancouver.ca/fire   /WestVanFireDept

westvancouver



City of North Vancouver Fire Department
165 East 13th Street, North Vancouver

fire@cnv.org

Non-emergency: 604-980-5021

cnv.org/fire   /NVCFD

city
of north
vancouver



District of North Vancouver Fire & Rescue
1110 Lynn Valley Road, North Vancouver

fireadm@dnv.org

Non-emergency: 604-980-7575

dnv.org/fire  /dnvfrs  /DNorthVanFire

DISTRICT OF
NORTH
VANCOUVER



Squamish Nation
320 Seymour Blvd, North Vancouver

communications@squamish.net

Non-emergency: 604-980-4553

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Tsleil-Waututh Nation
PEOPLE OF THE INLET



Office of the
Fire Commissioner
Emergency Management BC



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NORTH SHORE
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AFTER A FIRE—INTRODUCTION

A fire in your home can significantly impact you and your family.

Often, the hardest part is knowing where to begin and who to contact. There are agencies in your community that can work with you through the crisis.

This booklet can help you start the process. It takes you, one step at a time, through the tasks you may need to do.

IMMEDIATE NEEDS FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

Contact your insurance representative, Emergency Support Services, or First Nation representative to help you with your immediate needs, such as:

- emotional support
- temporary housing
- food
- medications
- eyeglasses
- clothing & other essentials

Ask your insurance representative what expenses you are entitled to, and for how long. Keep all receipts for any money you spend.

! See page 17 for contact numbers.

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM FURTHER LOSSES

The first thing to do after a fire is to secure your home and protect yourself from further losses.

- ! While the Fire Department is investigating the fire, you will not be able to remove any items from your home. Nobody, including the property owner, is permitted on the site without the approval of a fire investigator.**

While the fire investigation is in process, a police officer or security guard will be posted on site and the property will be secured to ensure that no one enters until the investigation has concluded. Upon conclusion of the investigation, the fire scene will be turned over to you, your representative, and/or your insurance company.

You may need to engage a remediation company to remove water and debris and protect lightly damaged or undamaged property.

Renting or leasing?

If you are renting or leasing the property, you must contact the owner or landlord. The property owner's insurance and/or your insurance company may be able to assist you in making immediate repairs or help to secure your home.

SALVAGE WHAT YOU CAN

After the investigation has concluded and the site is released and deemed safe to enter, the homeowner should ensure that the doors and windows are secure. You may want to remove valuables from your home including:

- personal identification
- keys
- any disability aids such as eyeglasses, hearing aids, walkers, canes, etc.
- medications (*check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking any medication that was in the fire as it may not be safe*)
- phone and charger, work computer
- credit cards
- important legal documents
- insurance policies
- jewelry and other valuables
- keepsakes

IF YOU ARE INSURED

Note that contents and building insurance are not the same—if you live in a condo or rental, you must have separate contents insurance. Inform your insurance representative of the loss as soon as possible. Ask the representative about:

- covering doors, windows, and other exposed areas
- pumping out any remaining water
- whether you need to make an inventory of damaged personal property, with a description of each item and how much you paid for it

Starting the claim process

- Call your insurance representative or company. Most insurers have a 24-hour claims service. Be as detailed as possible when providing information.
- List all damaged or destroyed items. If possible, assemble proofs of purchase, photos, receipts, and warranties. Take photos of the damage and keep damaged items, unless they pose a health hazard.
- Keep all receipts related to cleanup and living expenses if you've been displaced. Ask your insurance representative about what expenses you may be entitled to and for what period of time.

DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE INSURED BY?

If you do not know the name of your insurer, contact the Insurance Bureau of Canada's Consumer Information Centre at 1-844-2ASK-IBC. They are also available to answer questions about your home insurance.

Possible questions for your insurance representative:

- When will you be on site?
- Once on site, who will help me with repairs?
- When will the contractor be on site?
- What do I do with food in my refrigerator and freezer?
- How long will the repairs take?

If you're displaced:

- Do I pay and keep the receipts or will the insurance company pay upfront?
- If I can't access cash or credit cards, what should I do?
- Does my insurance cover the costs of keeping my pets in a kennel?
- Am I eligible for additional living expenses to cover an increased cost of living while not at home?
- When can I move back home?

INSURANCE INFORMATION

company:

contact information:

policy number:

IF YOU ARE NOT INSURED

Organizations that may be sources of help include:

- Emergency Support Services
- non-profit crisis centres
- your local emergency coordinator
- local religious organizations
- Salvation Army

EMERGENCY SUPPORT SERVICES

Emergency Support Services (ESS) helps preserve the well-being of British Columbians during or immediately following an emergency. Coordinated by your local government, volunteers with the ESS program help people affected by large emergencies, but may also assist during smaller emergencies such as house fires or disasters affecting a few members of a community.

If you are forced to leave your home in an emergency, the ESS program may direct you to a reception centre or group lodging facility.

Reception centres

A reception centre, often located in a community centre, recreation centre, church, or school, is a safe place where people can go to receive:

- information about the emergency
- assistance meeting basic needs
- help planning recovery from the disaster

ESS may be offered for up to 72 hours, but it can be available for longer, depending on the emergency.

Services: food, clothing, lodging & other support

ESS may provide:

- meals if you are without food or food preparation facilities
- clothing, blankets, and toiletries
- temporary lodging if you are unable to find lodging yourself
- assistance finding and re-uniting with loved ones

Specialized services: health services, child-minding & transportation

Depending on the type of emergency, staff at reception centres may provide specialized services, including emotional support, first aid and other health services, multicultural services, pet care, and transportation.

Group lodging

Group lodging is a safe place where people can go to sleep, eat and receive other support services.

Lodgings are often located in community centres, recreation centres, churches, or schools depending on what is available in the community.

Whether or not group lodging is opened depends on many factors including the size of the emergency, the availability of commercial lodgings, and the number of responders.

PSYCHOLOGICAL CARE

Fear and anxiety are natural reactions to stressful events, such as fires, and can stir up past traumas. To help yourself and your loved ones:

- accept offers of help, and seek counselling or spiritual guidance
- focus on positive memories and the skills you've used to get through other hard times
- watch how children are reacting—reassure them and encourage them to express themselves
- give yourself and your loved ones permission to grieve
- practice cultural or spiritual customs that bring you comfort

Warning signs

With support, most people recover within a few weeks; however, some will need more time and help to heal. Watch for warning signs of extended anxiety and contact a medical professional or trusted community leader if symptoms such as these last more than two to four weeks:

- trouble with eating and sleeping
- feeling depressed or hopeless; showing low energy or crying often
- being anxious and fearful
- trouble focusing on daily activities
- recurring thoughts or nightmares
- avoiding activities or places that are reminders of the event

Seek help

Don't be afraid to seek help after a traumatic event, such as a fire and related evacuation.

- **BC's Mental Health Support Line** is open 24-hours a day at 310-6789 (no area code)
- counselling is also available through the **First Nations Health Authority**. Visit www.fnha.ca or call the KUU-US Indigenous Crisis Line at 1-800-588-8717

FIRST NATIONS MEMBERS

Contact your band office. They will be able to tell you about your options and additional support services.

! See page 17 for contact numbers.

IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO STAY IN YOUR HOME

Homeowners may temporarily be denied access to certain belongings, areas, or their entire home until the scene is studied and released by the fire investigation staff. This does not imply suspicion; it is policy to attempt to find the cause of all fires.

Check your residence for important legal documents and valuables that may be salvageable.

If your home is uninhabitable, it's important to notify your municipality. A building inspector, if available, must also be called. After the building inspection is complete, a permit must be obtained prior to making repairs. Contact your local building department for information on applications and permits.

Changing your address

If you move and need to change your mailing address and phone number, notify:

- municipality
- Canada Post
- newspaper delivery
- bank and credit card company
- school district
- your employer
- family and friends
- Services Canada and Service BC
- ICBC

WHO TO NOTIFY IN THE EVENT OF A FIRE

- if you are renting—the building manager, building owner, or landlord
- child’s school or daycare, especially if the child will be absent from school due to stress, anxiety or trauma resulting from the incident
- if you have pets—their veterinarian; if your pet has been lost during the incident, contact the SPCA, animal control, or Emergency Support Services for assistance
- employers or employees who may be expecting you at work
- restoration companies for cleaning or damage repair
- banks, credit unions, or mortgage brokers who hold your mortgage
- dry cleaners to remove smoke, odour, and stains from clothes, drapes, and fabrics
- building inspector—if any structural damage has been caused, permits will probably be required to rebuild

HEALTH AND SAFETY FOR YOUR PETS

After a fire, don’t assume that your pet has not been affected just because it looks fine. Smoke can damage the lungs of a dog or cat in minutes, and sparks can cause painful burns that will stay hidden under the fur. Take your pet to a veterinarian as soon as possible.



CLEAN-UP AND SALVAGE TIPS

Professional fire and water damage restoration businesses are the best source for cleaning and restoring belongings. Exposure to smoke, soot, and other chemicals may have long-term health effects. We strongly recommend using professional restorers. If you are insured, your insurance provider may cover this. If you wish to undertake some restoration yourself, consider the following:

Clothing with soot and smoke odour

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

- 4 to 6 teaspoons tri-sodium phosphate (*from a paint store*)
- 1 cup Lysol or any household chlorine bleach
- 4.5 litres of warm water
- mix well, add clothes, rinse with clean water, and dry well

OR

- 1/2 cup ammonia to 9 litres of water (*use rubber gloves*)
- rinse in vinegar

Refrigerator and freezer odour

- defrost/wash all surfaces with water and dish-washing detergent
- rinse with 2 tablespoons baking soda per litre of water, and re-rinse with clear water

OR

- wash with solution of 1 cup vinegar to 4.5 litres of water

What to do if your freezer stops running

If your home freezer has stopped running, you can save the frozen food by placing dry ice inside and keeping the freezer door closed.

Open food and canned foods

- do not use any canned foods if the can has bulged, is badly dented, or rusted
- discard any food products exposed to heat or smoke as they are likely contaminated

IF IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!

Cooking utensils/dishes

- wash pots, pans, and flatware with soapy water, rinse and then polish with a finely powdered cleaner
- polish copper and brass with polish, salt sprinkled on a piece of lemon, or salt sprinkled on a cloth saturated with vinegar
- wash and rinse dishes in hot, soapy water or use a dishwasher

Heating, appliances, and utilities

- if your electricity or natural gas supply has been disconnected, contact a licensed contractor for assistance
- do not use appliances, electrical outlets, switch boxes, or fuse-breaker panels until they have been checked by a qualified electrician
- have your central heating system checked by a licensed contractor before use; replace any parts that have been damaged or affected by smoke
- replace filters and insulation inside furnaces, air conditioners, water heaters, refrigerators, and freezers if they have been damaged—you may need to consider replacing the whole appliance, depending on the severity of the damage; consult with a professional electrician or with the manufacturer

Leather and books

- wipe leather goods with a damp cloth, then a dry cloth
- stuff purses and shoes with newspaper to retain shape
- leave suitcases open

- dry leather goods away from sun and heat; once leather is dry, clean with saddle soap
- treat wet books as soon as possible; the best method is to freeze them in a vacuum freezer to remove moisture (*a normal freezer can also be used*)

Painted walls: to remove soot and smoke from walls

- use rubber gloves and goggles
- mix together 4-6 tablespoons tri-sodium phosphate and 4.5 litres of water
- wash a small area at a time working from the floor up; do ceilings last; rinse thoroughly
- repaint when completely dry; use a smoke sealer (*purchase from a paint store*) before painting

Wallpaper

- heat and ventilate the room for several days to dry the plaster and paper
- if mildewed paper is washable, wipe it with a cloth wrung out of thick soapsuds; rinse clean with clear water
- re-paste edges or loosened sections
- when washing wallpaper, work quickly so paper does not become soaked
- work from the bottom to the top to prevent streaking floors
- use flax soap on wood and linoleum floors; it will require 4 or 5 applications
- strip and re-wax if necessary

Carpet

- a wet/dry vacuum or water extractor carpet cleaning machine can be rented at many supermarkets and drugstores

Rugs

- let rugs and carpets dry out thoroughly by laying them flat and exposing them to warm, dry air
- clean by sweeping or vacuuming, shampoo with a commercial rug shampoo

Mildew

- to remove mildew, wash with soap and water; rinse well and allow to dry
- if stain remains, use lemon juice and salt, or a solution of a tablespoon of perborate bleach to a pint of lukewarm water, or dilute with a solution of household chlorine bleach; test coloured garments before using any treatment

Mould

- exercise caution in cleaning and disinfecting mould because it releases spores when disturbed
- never mix bleach with ammonia as fumes from the combination are toxic
- if you suspect any mould on any furniture that has been wet, contact a professional for advice

Locks and hinges

- take locks apart (*especially iron locks*), wipe with kerosene and oil
- squirt machine oil through the bolt opening or keyhole and work the knob to distribute the oil if locks cannot be removed
- thoroughly clean and oil hinges

Medication

- keep an up-to-date list of all medications you and your family take; make sure you record medication strength, the amount, and time the medication is to be taken
- do NOT take any medicine that was not completely sealed in a container
- check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking any medication that was in the fire; it may not be safe if was exposed to heat
- discard any medication that has been contaminated by heat or smoke from a fire; most pharmacies offer a medication disposal service

IF IN DOUBT, THROW IT OUT!

CONTACT NUMBERS

Emergency Support Services/North Shore Emergency Management

(Mon–Fri, 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m., closed on public and statutory holidays)
778-388-6300

After-hours emergency use only—778-338-6302

Squamish Nation Band Office

(Mon–Fri, 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m., closed on public and statutory holidays)
604-980-4553

Tsleil-Waututh Nation Administration Office

(Mon–Fri, 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m., closed on public and statutory holidays)
604-929-3454



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The City of North Vancouver, the District of North Vancouver, and the District of West Vancouver acknowledge that our communities are located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Squamish, Tsleil-Waututh, and Musqueam Nations.