

Silver Creek Fire Department

After the Fire – Salvage Hints



Professional fire and water damage restoration businesses may be the best source of cleaning and restoring your personal belongings. Companies offering this service can be located in the phone directory.

Topics Covered

Clothing
Cooking Utensils
Electrical Appliances
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Locks & Hinges
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Clothing

A word of caution before you begin: test garments before using any treatment, and follow the manufacturer's instructions. Several of the cleaning mixtures described in this section contain the substance Tri-Sodium Phosphate. This substance can be purchased under the generic name TSP. Tri-Sodium Phosphate is a caustic substance used commonly as a cleaning agent. It should be used with care and stored out of the reach of children and pets. Wear rubber gloves when using if you have sensitive skin. Read the label for further information.

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

- A. 4 to 6 Tablespoons Tri-Sodium Phosphate
- B. 1 Cup household cleaner or chlorine bleach
- C. 1 Gallon warm water
- D. Mix well, add clothes, rinse with clear water. Dry thoroughly.

An effective way to remove mildew from clothing is to wash the fresh stain with soap and warm water, rinse, and then dry in the sun. If the stain has not disappeared, use lemon juice and salt or a diluted solution of household chlorine bleach.

Cooking Utensils

Your pots, pans, flatware, etc., should be washed in soapy water, rinsed and then polished with a fine-powdered cleaner. You can polish copper and brass with special polish; salt sprinkled on a piece of lemon; or salt sprinkled on a cloth saturated with vinegar.

Electrical Appliances

Don't use appliances that have been exposed to water or steam until you have a service representative check them. This is especially true of electrical appliances. In addition, steam can remove the lubricant from some moving parts.

If the Fire District turned off your gas or power during the fire, call the electric or gas company to restore these services – do not try to do it yourself.

Food

Wash your canned goods in detergent and water. Do the same for food jars. If labels come off, be sure you mark the contents on the can or jar with a grease pencil. Do not use canned goods when the cans have bulged or rusted. Do not refreeze frozen food that has thawed.

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

Rugs & 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 cause the rug to rot. For information on cleaning and preserving carpets, call your carpet dealer or installer or a qualified carpet cleaning professional.

Leather & Books

Wipe leather goods with a damp cloth, then a dry cloth. Stuff purses and shoes with newspaper to retain shape. Leave suitcases open. Leather goods should be dried away from heat and sun. When leather goods are dry, clean with saddle soap. Rinse leather and suede jackets in cold water and dry away from heat and sun.

Wet books must be taken care of as soon as possible. The best method to save wet books is to freeze them in a vacuum freezer. This special freezer will remove the moisture without damaging the pages. If there will be a delay in locating such a freezer, then place them in a normal freezer until a vacuum freezer can be located.

A local librarian can also be a good resource.

Locks & Hinges

Locks (especially iron locks) should be taken apart and wiped with oil. If locks cannot be removed, squirt machine oil through a bolt opening or keyhole, and work the knob to distribute the oil. Hinges should also be thoroughly cleaned and oiled.

Walls, Floors & Furniture

To remove soot and smoke from walls, furniture and floors, use a mild soap or detergent or mix together the following solution:

- A. 4 to 6 Tablespoons Tri-Sodium Phosphate
- B. 1 Cup household cleaner or chlorine bleach
- C. 1 Gallon warm water

Wear rubber gloves when cleaning with this solution. Be sure to rinse your walls and furniture with clear warm water and dry thoroughly after washing them with this solution.

Wash a small area at one time, working from the floor up. Then rinse the wall with clear water immediately. Ceilings should be washed last.

Do not repaint until walls and ceilings are completely dry.

Your wallpaper can also be repaired. Use a commercial paste to re-paste a loose edge or section. Contact your wallpaper dealer or installer for information on wallpaper cleaners. Washable wallpaper can be cleansed like any ordinary wall, but care must be taken not to soak the paper. Work from bottom to top to prevent streaking.

Wood Furniture

Do not dry your furniture in the sun. The wood will warp and twist out of shape.

Clear off mud and dirt.

Remove drawers. Let them dry thoroughly so there will be no sticking when you replace them.

Scrub wood furniture or fixtures with a stiff brush and a cleaning solution.

Wet wood can decay and mold, so dry thoroughly. Open doors and windows for good ventilation. Turn on your furnace or air conditioner, if necessary.

If mold forms, wipe the wood with a cloth soaked in a mixture of borax and hot water.

To remove white spots or film, rub the wood surface with a cloth soaked in a solution of ½ cup household ammonia and ½ cup water. Then wipe the surface dry and polish with wax or rub the surface with a cloth soaked in a solution of ½ cup turpentine and ½ cup linseed oil. Be careful – turpentine is combustible.

You can also rub the wood surface with a fine grade steel wool pad dripped in liquid polishing wax, clean the area with a soft cloth and then buff.

Money Replacement

Handle burned money as little as possible. Attempt to encase each bill or portion of a bill in plastic wrap for preservation. If money is only half-burned or less (if half or more of it is still in tact), you can take the remainder to your regional Federal Reserve Bank for replacement. Ask your bank for the nearest one. Or you can mail the burned or torn money by "registered mail, return receipt requested" to:

Department of the Treasury
Bureau of Engraving and Printing
Office of Currency Standards
PO Box 37048
Washington, DC 20013

Mutilated or melted coins can be taken to your regional Federal Reserve Bank or mailed by "registered mail, return receipt requested" to:

Superintendent
U.S. Mint
PO Box 400
Philadelphia, PA 19105

If your U.S. Savings Bonds have been destroyed or mutilated, you must obtain Department of Treasury Form PD F 1048 (I) from you bank or www.ustreas.gov and mail to:

Department of the Treasury
Bureau of Public Debt
Savings Bonds Operations
PO Box 1328
Parkersburg, WV 26106-1328

Tax Information

Check with an accountant, tax consultant or the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) about special benefits for people with limited financial needs after a fire loss.

Information from "After the Fire!" printed by FEMA.