



STRUCTURE FIRE

When a fire strikes, the lives of you, your family members and pets are turned around. The first rule is to **Be Safe! and Be Smart!**

Cautions

- Do not reenter the damaged structure! The fire may rekindle. The structure may be weakened and subject to collapse.
- Normally, the Fire Department will ensure that utilities are either safe or disconnected before they leave the scene. Do not attempt to turn the utilities on yourself.
- Food, beverages, and medicine exposed to heat, smoke, soot and water should not be consumed.
- In some cases, you may need to board up openings such as doors and windows. Ask the Sheriff's Office to keep a close patrol on the structure.

If it is safe to do so (the Fire Department and/or Fire Marshall will notify you of the integrity of the structure), try to locate the following items:

- Social Security Cards
- Drivers License
- Insurance contracts
- Medication information
- Eyeglasses, hearing aids, ambulation devices such as canes and walkers, CPAP machines, dentures, etc.
- Valuables such as credit cards, jewelry, cash, bank books, etc.
- Cell phones

After the Fire

The American Red Cross provides for basic needs such as shelter, food, clothing, medications and medical equipment. You should contact the Red Cross immediately so their representative can complete an assessment. If you need assistance in contacting the Red Cross, ask the Fire Department or Sheriff's Office to notify Victim Services of your circumstances. If you need to take your pets with you into shelter provided by the Red Cross, let the Red Cross representative know so arrangements can be made.

You may need to contact the following entities:

- American Red Cross - for shelter, food, clothing, medication, medical equipment
- Insurance company - to begin claim process
- Mortgage company - works closely with your insurance company
- Physician - to reorder any prescriptions and/or schedule a physical evaluation
- Employer

- Child's school - many schools and associated organizations such as PTA will offer replacement school supplies and/or other resources for children who have suffered loss in a structure fire
- Local Post Office - for mail delivery options
- Utility companies

Beginning immediately, save all receipts of expenses related to the fire. These are important in negotiations with your insurance company. They also verify losses claimed on your income tax.

Do not discard any damaged goods until a complete inventory is made. All damages/losses are important in relation to your insurance claim. Do not contract for clean-up or repairs until you have negotiated this with your insurance company. If needed, you may contact the Fire Department or the Fire Marshall for a copy of the fire report.

If you are uninsured you may need to rely upon your own resources or help from community resources such as religious organizations/ministries, civic organizations, state and municipal emergency services, state and municipal social services, and nonprofit organizations.

Regardless of whether or not you have home insurance, a fire can be devastating and even traumatic. If you feel that you or your family would benefit from additional resources in the form of general support, counseling services, or agency referrals, please contact Victim Services at (512) 854-9709.

Available Resources

Austin Fire Department: (512) 974-0130
www.ci.austin.tx.us/fire

Austin Fire Marshall: (512) 854-4621
www.co.travis.tx.us/fire_marshall/default.asp

American Red Cross – Central Texas: (512) 928-4271 or Toll-free: (800) 928-4271
www.centex.redcross.org

First Call For Help (Capital Area United Way): Dial 211
www.211centraltexas.org

Provides callers with information and referral to non-profit agencies and participating businesses based on individual resource needs

"Be Safe! Be Smart!" Tips obtained from the US Fire Administration: <http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/citizens/atf> on January 4, 2011.
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