

After The Fire

A guide on what to do next



DORSET & WILTSHIRE
FIRE AND RESCUE

We know that your home is your world and that the emergency you have just experienced, whether it was a fire, flood or other disaster, will have left you feeling unsettled and distressed.

This booklet offers advice to help you get back in your home safe and sound, as quickly as possible.

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- What do I do first?
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- Emergency Response Support Services
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- Your bedtime checklist



Is it safe?

Cooling down

After a fire has been extinguished it will take several hours for the building to cool down.

Structurally

The building may expand and contract while the brickwork and plaster cools down, parts of the structure may become dislodged and fall. Do not enter unless you have to and not without seeking professional advice first.

Often walls must be breached to ensure that no 'hidden' fires are still burning. This may mean that after the fire, the damage may appear excessive and you may need to wear protective clothing and a hard hat to enter the property.

Are you connected?

The fire and rescue service may have isolated your gas, electric and water supplies.

You must not attempt to reconnect these until checked by a registered gas engineer, electrician or plumber.

Failure to do so could result in a fire or flood



What do I do first?

Your health

If you feel unwell after a fire seek immediate medical assistance. Visit your GP or go to your nearest hospital accident and emergency department, especially if you suffer from respiratory problems and/or you have inhaled smoke.

Security

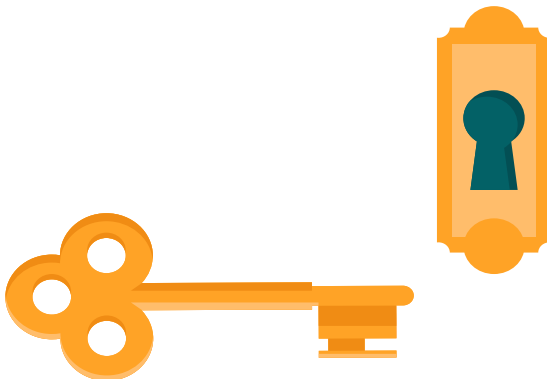
When the fire service leaves, the building becomes your responsibility.

If you cannot stay in your property, remove all valuables and secure all doors, windows and access to your garden.

You may need a glazier to help board up your property. If you are a council tenant, contact your housing department who will arrange this for you.

In some situations, the crews may use a salvage sheet/tarpaulin at an incident. If the salvage sheet needs to remain at the property after we have left, there could be a charge to the occupier to replace it.

If you are leaving your home unoccupied, inform your local police station and ask neighbours to keep an eye on your property.



Accommodation

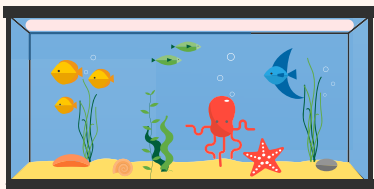
If your home is not habitable and you can't stay with family or friends, it may be necessary to make alternative arrangements.

Your insurance policy may cover the cost of a bed and breakfast or hotel accommodation. Please check this with your insurance company and make arrangements following their advice.

The housing department of your local authority may be able to assist, see their website for more details.

Pets

Accommodation for your pets can be arranged through your local boarding kennels.



Insurance

Contact your insurance provider as soon as possible to check your level of cover.

Seek advice before you commit yourself to any expense, such as the bill of staying in a hotel or getting your property boarded up by a contractor.

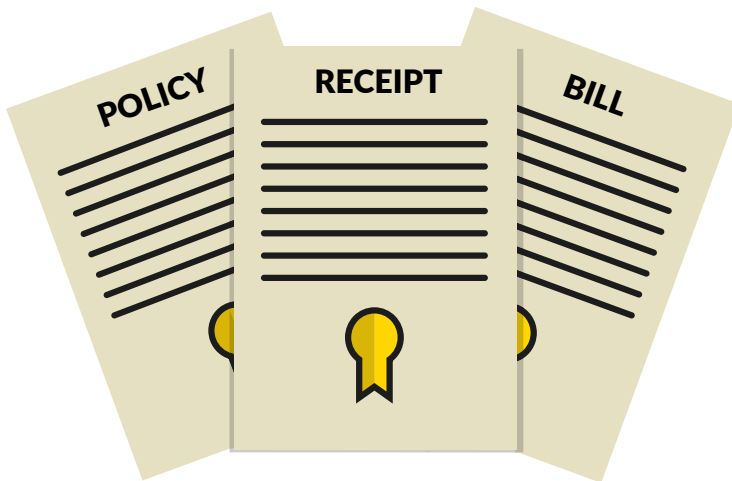
Your policy may include accommodation and cleaning costs.

Check your policies

You may have two separate policies with different companies, one for structure and one for your contents insurance. Ensure you contact them both.

They may wish to inspect your property or contents before anything is removed or disposed of.

If you incur expenses – keep all your receipts.



Drying out and cleaning up

Storage

If your home is not habitable then you may wish to put furniture and belongings into a local storage unit, while your home is being repaired.

Drying out

Do not use liquid petroleum gas (LPG), heaters as they create additional water vapour.

You can hire dehumidifiers, which will remove water from the atmosphere.

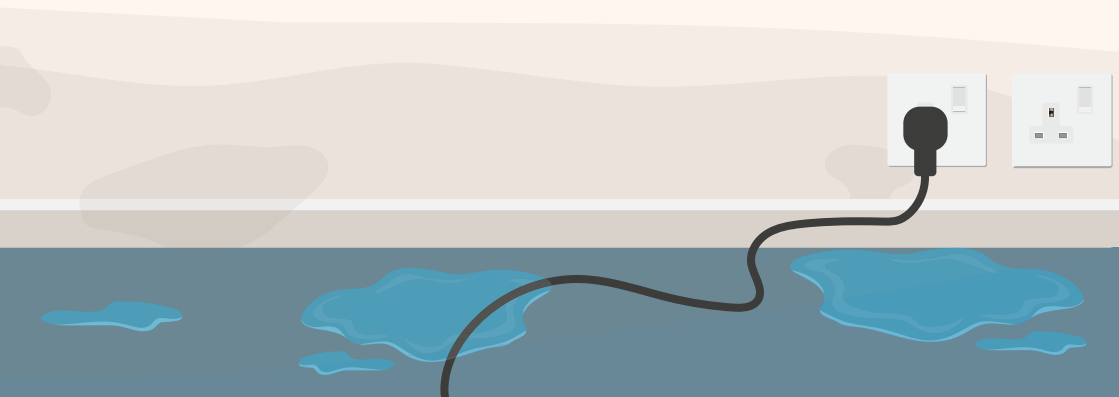
Your home will need to be thoroughly heated and ventilated with open windows for several days. This will also help remove odours.

Maintain your home's security during the drying out stage.

Electrical hazards

If water has come into contact with electrical wiring or appliances, we advise you to isolate the electricity supply and have the circuit checked by a registered electrician.

Remember, water conducts electricity and can kill if not used correctly.



Fridge freezers and food

For a short period of time food will remain safe in your fridge or freezer if kept closed.

Consider transferring food to a neighbour's house.

If in doubt – throw it out

Clothing and bedding

Before attempting to clean your home yourself or professionally, always read the care label for instructions.

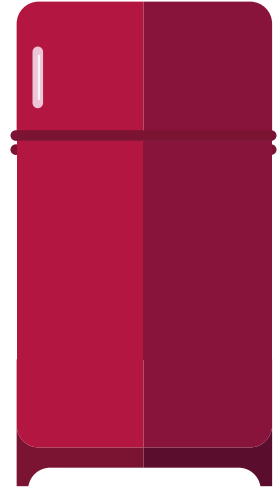
Walls and ceilings

Painted surfaces and vinyl wall coverings may be carefully washed using mild soap or detergent.

Take extra care when washing around electrical switches and sockets. Preferably isolate the electrical supply first.

Children's toys

Your child's toys may need to be cleaned professionally before being used again. Always read the label.



Books and photographs

Books can be dried by placing them on end, separating the pages and placing unmarked dry paper between the pages. Press to avoid crinkling and distorting.

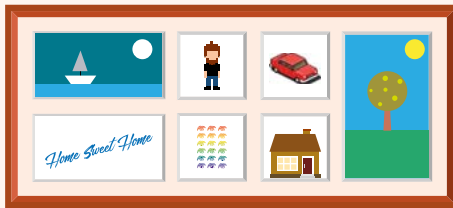
Single sheets or photographs can be dried using a hand-held hair dryer. Take care not to scorch the surface. Afterwards, press flat between the pages of a heavy book.

Furniture

Upholstered furniture may be soiled, stained and wet.

Allow your items to dry in a well ventilated place after removing drawers and stored items.

Contact a specialist cleaner in your area to clean your carpet, curtains and upholstery.



Replacing lost or damaged documents

Please note: there may be a charge for the supply of some duplicate documents.

Bank details, debit and credit cards

If these are destroyed or damaged, contact your branch who can issue replacements.

Passport

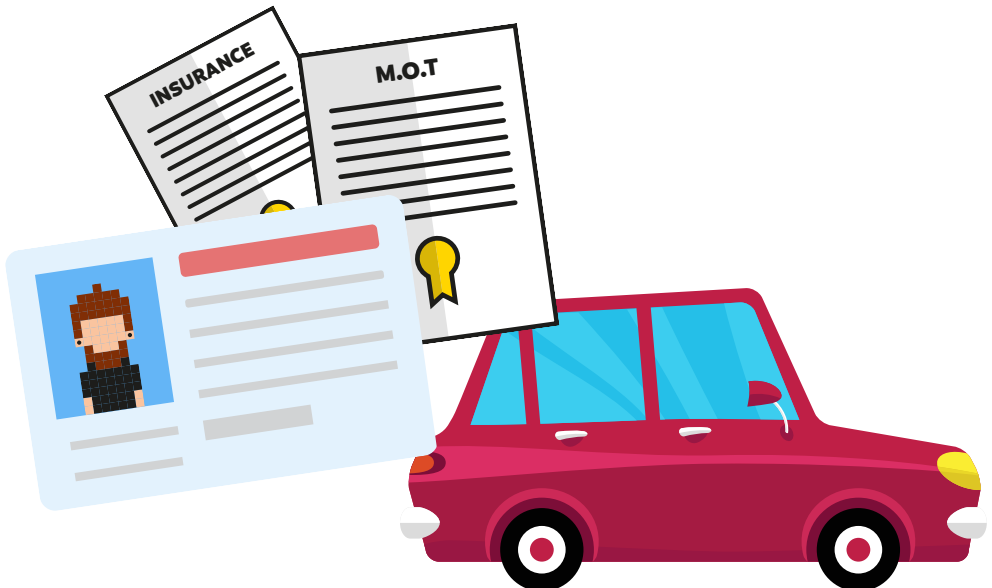
You can replace your passport by filling in a form online at www.gov.uk

Driving license and vehicle documents

Your driving license can be replaced by the DVLA online at www.gov.uk

Your insurance company will provide a duplicate vehicle insurance certificate.

You will need to contact the garage which issued your last MOT certificate, for a replacement or have the vehicle retested.



Birth, marriage and death certificates

Contact the original Office of Registration who can provide duplicates.

Divorce decree

Contact the court office where the decree was made, they will assist in providing a duplicate.

Deeds

Contact your solicitor.

Income tax records

Your employer will know which Tax Office to contact or visit www.gov.uk

Medical records

Original documents will be held at your doctor's surgery.

Money

Take burnt money to your bank. They will send it to the Bank of England for verification and then credit you the amount agreed.



Emergency Response Support Services

The British Red Cross offer a support service designed to meet the needs of people who have suffered damage to their home following a fire, flood or similar incident.

It's a free service delivered by specially trained volunteers who work closely with the local fire and rescue service.

The volunteers can provide emotional support and care for those affected while the emergency services manage the incident.



Red Cross: 0115 965 8558 or
ep&rteam@redcross.org.uk



Want more advice?

We're offering you free safe and well advice, tailored to your needs and lifestyle choices.

You may also be entitled to a free safe & well visit. This will help to reduce the risk of fire in your home and to keep you safe and well.

We will provide free of charge:

- Custom-made information
- Install new and check existing smoke alarms
- Advice on where to get help if needed

Go to: dwfire.org.uk/safety/safe-and-well-visits/



Smoke detectors save lives

They will wake you up, give you that essential early warning and time to escape, but only if they are fitted and working correctly.

Fit at least one smoke alarm on each level of your home, ideally in every room except for the kitchen and bathroom.

Test your smoke alarms regularly and replace the batteries once a year. Sealed detector units will have an expiry date on and will need to be replaced entirely.

Always follow the manufacturer's details and keep them free from dust by cleaning at least twice a year.



In the event of a fire

Get out, stay out, call 999

- Shut the door on the fire if possible and leave your home
- Don't delay to save valuables or look for pets
- Crawl on the floor if there is smoke – the air is cleaner
- Before you open doors, feel them with the back of your hand. If they're warm, don't open them – the fire is on the other side

If your clothes catch fire



1. Stop,

Stop what you are doing

2. Drop

Drop to the ground

3. Roll

Roll to smother the flames

Bedtime Checklist

- Close downstairs doors at night to stop fire from spreading
- Turn off and unplug electrical appliances** unless they are designed to be left on - like the freezer
- Check your **cooker** is turned off
- Check your **washing machine** or **tumble dryer** is off
- Turn **heaters** off and put up **fireguards**
- Put **candles** and **cigarettes** out properly
- Keep door and window keys accessible
- Make sure all **exits** are kept clear



Stick me to your fridge! ↓





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For free safe and well advice or to check your eligibility for a safe & well visit, please see our website: dwfire.org.uk/safety/safe-and-well-visits/

Alternatively call our safe & well administrator on freephone 0800 038 2323 during office hours or leave a message on our answer phone.

 safeandwell@dwfire.org.uk

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CHANGING & SAVING LIVES