

Fire's Out, Now What? Tips For Dealing With The Damage Of A Home Fire

Even after a fire is extinguished, the damage continues. Smoke residue and water from fire hoses, or even humidity, can significantly harm your belongings. To minimize loss, know what to do right from the start. Prompt action can lower overall cost, as well as save valuable possessions that might otherwise be lost.

The Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification (IICRC) offers the following tips on what to do in the aftermath of a home fire.

Contact your insurance company immediately.
It is your responsibility to begin loss mitigation, including steps to prevent the damage from getting worse. Take inventory of damaged goods before discarding anything and save receipts for money spent relating to the fire loss.

Avoid falling structural components.
Although fire authorities may allow you to enter the house, the area still could be hazardous. Look for structural damage that will need repair, like charred beams and sagging ceilings.

Stay away from electrical shock hazards.
Check for exposed wiring. Also, be careful of damage inside walls and electrical lines not normally visible.

Keep people with allergies out of the home.
People with severe allergies or respiratory problems should stay out of the area until initial cleanup is complete. Weather permitting, ventilate the home to remove soot residues.

Wipe down durable surfaces.
Smoke residues combine with humidity to form acids that can stain grout, paint, bath fixtures, kitchen counter tops and may appliances. Immediate clean up of durable surfaces with household cleaners can dramatically limit your loss.

Call a professional.
The IICRC recommends hiring a certified professional to provide advice and repair damage to your home after a fire. Fire restoration experts can help you get your home and furnishings back to a "pre-loss" condition.

Remember, in many cases, attempting the clean-up process yourself will only make matters worse. IICRC-certified technicians have the experience, training and knowledge to assess the damage and restore your belongings.

Visit the IICRC Web site at www.iicrc.org