

Georgina Fire and Rescue Services

After a Fire

Resources to assist recovery



georgina.ca/fire

A message from Georgina Fire and Rescue Services

Recovering from a fire may be one of the most difficult things you ever have to do. Nothing will prepare you for the devastation and loss which can occur, and the feelings of fear and anxiety you may experience.

This information booklet was designed to assist you and hopefully make the process of recovery a bit easier by providing information on the following:

- Resources on emergency housing
- Recovering lost documents
- Salvaging furniture and appliances
- Dealing with your insurance company
- Food and medicine
- Cleaning up

Although this booklet may not answer all of your questions, it will hopefully give you a starting point. Your road to recovery will take time and it is important that you seek help from others to assist you along the way. Take things one step at a time to prevent being overwhelmed.

Georgina Fire and Rescue Services hopes this booklet will be of benefit to you on your journey to recovery.



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Step 1: The first step of recovery

Completing these steps prior to leaving your property is recommended:

If you need help with emergency shelter, food or clothing, inform a member of Georgina Fire and Rescue Services as you may be eligible for immediate assistance. We have many humanitarian organizations available to us and can connect you with the assistance you may need.

To access an emergency shelter

You can call York Region Central Intake. It is a contact for people at risk of or experiencing homelessness to request an emergency housing bed, receive diversion supports and information about Cold Weather Alerts 1-877-464-9675, ext. 76140

If you rent or lease

Contact the building owner or building manager.

Request the landlord/property manager to secure your property. If you own your own home, then you are responsible for your home's security:

- Board up broken windows and doors
- Cover holes in the roof or exterior walls
- Drain water lines if your home will not be heated for a period of time (or ask a contractor to do this for you)
- Your insurance company will also be able to provide you with a few reputable contractors, or you can search for services yourself listed under 'fire and water damage restoration' at yellowpages.ca



If you are insured

Contact your insurance company right away as many policies are set up to temporarily provide you with food, shelter and clothing while your home is being repaired.

If your insurance company requires you to obtain a fire report/incident report from Georgina Fire and Rescue Services, email your request to fireadmin@georgina.ca (fees may apply).

If Georgina Fire and Rescue Services agrees that it is safe for you to enter your home, we will accompany you so that you are able to remove any essential items:

- Important legal documents, passports, birth certificates
- Important medicines
- Insurance policies, money, credit cards, cheque books, sentimental items, cell phones
- Eyeglasses, hearing aids

Step 2: Getting settled elsewhere

Housing

If you cannot live in your home due to fire damage and you cannot stay with family or friends, a temporary home will be needed for you and your family. It may be best to keep all family members together for mutual support and in order to communicate openly to permit an outlet for the stress/trauma of the incident.

Pets

If a pet is lost or escapes during the fire, try walking through the neighbourhood and calling out your pet's name since they may be injured and/or hiding in an adjacent property. You can also try calling your local animal shelter or veterinarian, place an ad in your community newspaper and distribute flyers to your neighbours.

Georgina Animal Services

1-877-979-PAWS (7297) | animalservices@aurora.ca
georgina.ca/AnimalServices

Others to consider notifying

Even if you are away from your home for a short period, you may wish to contact the following to report a temporary change of address:

- Family and friends
- Employer
- Canada Post (for mail redirection)
- Bank (report cheques/credit cards/debit cards left in residence)
- Schools
- Newspapers, magazines, other subscriptions
- Utility providers (hydro, gas, telephone, internet, cable)

Step 3: Getting back home

Prior to re-entering the home, you must obtain permission from Georgina Fire and Rescue Services (if still on scene). Entry will not be permitted during an ongoing fire investigation. If the building remains unsafe, you may not receive permission to enter.

Be aware that fire can produce cancer-causing toxins and other harmful chemicals. Be sure to protect yourself when entering a home damaged by fire and throughout the clean-up process.

If you have received permission to enter your home

You may require some of these pieces of equipment to help you: flashlight, N95 facemask, safety glasses, first aid kit, hardhat and gloves, hard-soled shoes, camera, video recorder, crow bar, hammer, hacksaw and trash bags.

Walk around your property to check for any problems or hazards. If there are loose power lines or electrical wires, stay away from them. If you smell a natural gas odour (similar to rotten eggs) or hear natural gas (hissing/blowing sound) do not go in the house – call 9-1-1.

If it is safe to enter the home, walk around carefully and use caution when checking for hazards.

If it is safe, try to locate your main electrical box to ensure that the power has been shut off. If you must walk through water to reach the box, refrain from doing this. Instead, call an electrician.



Remember: water and electricity are a fatal combination.

If your utilities have been disconnected, do not attempt to reconnect it yourself – you must call the appropriate utility company to have them reconnected.

Hazardous materials should be disposed of if they have been exposed to flames, heat, moisture or smoke. Hazardous material can be properly disposed of at the Georgina Transfer Station Household Hazardous Waste Depot at 23068 Warden Ave. (just north of Ravenshoe Road).

Step 4: Dealing with food and medicine

Any food that survived the fire will need to be closely assessed – if in doubt, throw it out! Heat, smoke and toxic fumes will cause food and medicine to spoil, making them extremely dangerous to consume. Any perishable foods or pre-packaged foods and food/medicine exposed to smoke, water, heat or fumes needs to be discarded.

Any foods in canned jars should be discarded, as there is a chance that the seal may have been broken due to the heat.

Any canned food that is bulging, badly dented or rusted should be discarded. Cans that have not been exposed to direct heat can be cleaned in a solution of 45 ml of bleach mixed with four litres of water.

If power to your refrigerator or freezer was disrupted, discard all food (if you are not sure, throw them out). Food that has remained frozen should be fine, unless your freezer was exposed to intense heat.

Check with a pharmacist or doctor prior to taking any medicine that has been exposed to heat, water, smoke or fumes. Make sure to dispose of the medicine properly if it is necessary.

Step 5: Cleaning up after a fire

Before you begin

Contact your insurance agent since your home policy might cover the cost of a fire restoration specialist, saving you time, stress and money.

- Keep any ruined furniture, appliances and personal belongings aside (storage facility/garage) for insurance purposes
- Decide ahead of time what is worth saving, since items can take numerous cleanings to rid them of soot and smoke
- You may need extra space to clean your belongings and to store them
- Some cleaning solutions are hazardous – use rubber gloves and goggles, and never use these solutions near children, pets or an open flame (i.e. water heater)
- Make sure to open windows so that you have adequate ventilation – or clean outdoors
- Keep soiled rags and cloths in a metal container with a tight fitting lid
- Never mix cleaning solutions

Tips for cleaning up on your own:

- Smoke, odours and black soot may require many cleanings – try placing small dishes of vinegar, vanilla or activated charcoal around your home to absorb odours. If you are having difficulties with this, consult the advice of a professional (fire and water damage restoration)
- Vacuum all surfaces with a dry and wet vacuum
- Have your heating ducts cleaned by a professional
- Seal your rooms with plastic sheeting so that soot will not travel from room to room
- Walls and wallpaper can be cleaned with Tri-sodium Phosphate (available at your local hardware and paint supply stores) chlorine bleach or a mixture of a cleanser (Lysol) diluted with water
- Wash from the floor up, leaving the ceilings for last
- Wallpaper is often not salvageable – if you discover that yours is worth saving, heat and ventilate the room for several days to dry the paper and plaster and then clean from the bottom up
- Wooden furniture should be cleaned without chemicals
- Clean dirt and then remove all drawers so that they completely dry (to avoid warping)
- Scrub surfaces with a stiff brush and cleaning solution for wood (like Murphy's Oil Soap) and then let the pieces dry (do not place in the sun as it may warp/bleach the wood)
- If your furniture developed mold, clean with a solution of boric acid and water (as per the package instructions)

Tips for cleaning up on your own

- To remove water or smoke film, clean with a cloth soaked in an equal mix of water and household ammonia, dry and then wax
- Fine antiques or reproductions should be referred to a professional
- Subfloors that have absorbed water may warp
- Remove tiles, hardwood planks, linoleum etc. and let the floor dry thoroughly before you replace the flooring
- To clean your hardwood floors, tiles or linoleum, use a good quality floor cleaner and clean them multiple times to remove heavy soot or stains
- Strip wax if necessary and re-stain
- Rugs and carpets will require immediate drying since moisture left in the fabric can lead to rotting
- Lay rugs flat and expose them to warm, dry air – try aiming a fan directly at them. After they dry, rugs can be swept, beaten, vacuumed and shampooed if necessary
- Wall-to-wall carpets can be cleaned with a commercial steam-cleaning machine to remove dirt and water
- A mix of one-part white vinegar to two parts water in the cleaning machine can help to minimize odours
- Mattresses and pillows are usually not worth saving, however, if you must use your mattress, dry it thoroughly in the sun and cover with plastic sheeting before using
- Clothing stained with soot and smoke sometimes never comes clean, however, you can try:
 - Soaking clothes in household ammonia (125 ml) mixed with eight litres of water and then rinse in 250 ml of vinegar
 - Dry-clean wool, silk and rayon
 - Remove mildew by washing with soap and

Tips for cleaning up on your own

- water, then rinsing and drying well
- Soak badly stained garments in 125 ml of household bleach and three litres of warm water or sprinkling with salt and applying the juice of one squeezed lemon
- Wet or damaged appliances should be checked by a professional technician prior to use
- Appliances like stoves and fridges can be cleaned with a solution of baking soda and water or a mixture of vinegar or household ammonia with 4.5 litres of water
- Place an open box of baking soda inside fridge to absorb odours
- Cooking utensils can be cleaned with hot, soapy water, rinsed and then polished with a fine powdered cleanser
- Copper and brass can be polished with a specialty polish – salt sprinkled on a lemon or salt sprinkled on a cloth saturated with vinegar
- Books and documents can be dried by standing them up with the pages fanned open
- Wet pages can be dried by sprinkling them with cornstarch or talc and then brushing the pages clean later. When books are dried, pile and press them to prevent pages from crinkling
- Important documents should be sharp frozen (look in Yellow Pages for meat-cutting businesses that offer flash-freezing services)
- Leather goods can be wiped with a clean cloth and then dried with a dry cloth
- Stuff bags and shoes with newspaper to help them retain their shape, and when dry, they can be cleaned with saddle soap
- Locks and hinges should be taken apart, cleaned with kerosene and then oiled

Step 6: Dealing with critical incident stress

- Critical incident stress is any incident that makes you experience unusually strong emotional reactions
- The incident may even be long over before you feel the strong emotional/physical reactions
- The feelings are normal, especially when you are dealing with the situation honestly and realistically
- Sometimes, the aftershocks can occur right after the traumatic event, or they can occur days, weeks, or years later
- Depending on the severity of the event, these symptoms can appear and disappear quickly or last a long time
- Sometimes, the trauma has been so painful that you may require professional help from a counsellor trained to deal with this type of stress
- Some common signs and signals of a stress reaction: Fatigue, nausea, loss of appetite, rapid heart rate, twitches, headaches, blurred vision, vomiting, dizziness, fainting, chills, chest pain, difficulty breathing, elevated blood pressure, anxiety, nervousness, anger, grief, denial, panic, fear, depression, uncontrolled emotions, irritability, loneliness, helplessness, sleep disturbances, increased alcohol consumption



Tips on dealing with stress:



- Take care of yourself and your loved ones since you are going through a very difficult time and you may experience unpleasant emotions
- If you can, reduce your responsibilities so you can give yourself enough recovery time
- Get enough sleep – nightmares are common and may disrupt your normal sleep patterns
- If your sleeping difficulties last longer than a week, consult a doctor
- Exercise can help calm your mind and help you sleep at night
- Be sensitive to how children may react – they may become clingy and fearful - in any traumatic experience they need your reassurance that everything will be okay
- When the time is right, empower your children by giving them the information they need to protect themselves
- Community Mental Health and Addictions Crisis Response Service: A 24/7 service for people living in York Region who are having a mental health crisis 1-855-310-COPE (2673) TTY number: 1-866-323-7785
- Call Telehealth Ontario for general health information or advice at 811

General information and referral numbers

211 Find help Information Services

211Ontario.ca

Bank of Canada

Money that has been partially destroyed by fire

bankofcanada.ca/banknotes

Canada Savings bonds

Bonds that were partially destroyed by fire

canada.ca

Canadian Red Cross

Provides emergency lodging, food, clothing and personal services for 72 hours

1-800-850-5090

Enbridge Gas

1-866-763-5427 (24/7)

Georgina Animal Services

Call 1-877-979-PAWS (7297)

animalservices@aurora.ca

Georgina Building Division

905-476-4301, ext. 2283

Georgina Community Food Pantry

905-596-0557

Georgina Fire and Rescue Services

905-476-2332 | fireadmin@georgina.ca

Hydro One

Customer Service: 1-888-664-9376

Insurance Bureau of Canada

Contact your insurance broker or company directly, or call the Insurance Bureau of Canada – provides impartial information and direction for inquiries about property and auto insurance

1-844-227-5422

consumercentre@ibc.ca

Salvation Army Georgina

905-722-4613

Service Canada

Replacing passport, social insurance number or permanent resident card

1-800-622-6232

TTY: 1-800-926-9105

servicecanada.gc.ca

Service Ontario

1 Church St. Unit 15, Keswick | 905-476-8484

128 High St., Sutton | 905-722-3222

Telehealth Ontario

General health information or advice 811

York Region Public Health

Monday to Friday: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

1-877-464-9675

TTY: 1-866-512-6228

Email: accessyork@york.ca

Where can I replace my important documents and money?

Birth certificate Saved: Replace: Done:

Death certificate Saved: Replace: Done:

Marriage certificate Saved: Replace: Done:

Where to replace:

Ontario government-issued certificates: Birth/death/marriage
Toll-free 1-800-461-2156

Driver's licence Saved: Replace: Done:

Vehicle registration Saved: Replace: Done:

OHIP Saved: Replace: Done:

Where to replace:

Service Ontario Office

Insurance policies Saved: Replace: Done:

Where to replace:

Contact insurance agent

Citizenship papers/permanent residency cards

Saved: Replace: Done:

Where to replace:

Government of Canada: canada.ca

Passport Saved: Replace: Done:

Where to replace:

Service Canada

Income tax papers Saved: Replace: Done:

Where to replace:

Revenue Canada

Wills Saved: Replace: Done:

Where to replace:

Contact your lawyer

Medical information Saved: Replace: Done:

Where to replace:

Contact your doctor

Social Insurance cards

Saved: Replace: Done:

Canada Pension Plan

Saved: Replace: Done:

Employment Insurance

Saved: Replace: Done:

Where to replace:

Service Canada office: 1-800-622-6232

Service Canada Centre, 18183 Yonge St., East Gwillimbury, ON

Children's Services York Region

Saved: Replace: Done:

Where to replace:

Your case worker or Children's Services: 1-888-703-5437

Land titles

Saved: Replace: Done:

Titles to deeds

Saved: Replace: Done:

Where to replace:

Land Registry office: 905-713-7798

Pet registration and licensing

Saved: Replace: Done:

Where to replace:

Animal Services: 1-877-979-7297

Action log:

Agency contacted: _____

Contact name: _____

Date: _____ Phone: _____

Comments: _____

Vital information

Date of fire: _____

Time of fire: _____

Location of fire: _____

Vehicle identification number for cars:

Other vehicles destroyed (trucks, motorcycles, ATV, snowmobile):

Georgina Fire and Rescue Services: 905-475-5167

Fire Incident Report number issued:

Fire Marshal or fire investigator:

Connect with us

Georgina Fire and Rescue Services hopes this booklet and the information provided has been useful to you. Do not hesitate to use the resources available. If you have any further questions, concerns or require any assistance, please connect with us.

165 The Queensway South, Keswick, ON, L4P 3S9
905-476-5167

firesafety@georgina.ca | Twitter: @georginafire