

Smoke and fire damage – What to do



After you've suffered a fire in your home, follow these tips to begin getting your life back to normal and minimize further damage.

What to do when the fire is out

Close doors to localize smoke odors in damaged rooms. Open windows and ventilate those rooms if possible. Call PEMCO to report the fire, make arrangements to have the damage inspected, and get a list of professional cleaning companies that specialize in fire damage.

Don't attempt to:

- wash walls, ceilings, or other painted surfaces;
- shampoo carpets or upholstery; or
- clean personal garments (ordinary dry cleaning can set the smoke odor in clothes permanently).

Ensure the safety of your family

Don't turn on ceiling fans or use electrical outlets where the ceiling or walls are wet. The wiring may be wet or damaged. If you suspect an electrical hazard, call an electrician to investigate. Call an authorized repair service before cleaning or using any TVs, radios, or other electrical appliances that may have been close to fire, heat, or water. Throw away beverages or canned or packaged foods that were near the fire, heat, or water. They may be contaminated and could make you sick. If the electricity is off, remove all items from the freezer and refrigerator. Open doors to allow the appliance to dry out. Secure or remove the door to make sure it can't be closed (eliminating the chance children might play in it, get locked in, and suffocate).

Contain the mess

Use a brush vacuum or blow off loose soot particles from upholstery, drapes, and carpets. Don't scrub them. Place clean linens or old towels on rugs and traffic areas to keep the mess from being tracked around the house or ground in to the carpet. Confine movement and activity in your house to prevent soot particles from permeating carpets and upholstery. Cover upholstery with sheets if you're going to use the furniture. Keep your hands clean because soot on hands or gloves can be transferred to other surfaces. Change your furnace filter. Tape double layers of cheese cloth over air registers. If the heat is off during cold weather, pour RV or environmentally safe antifreeze in sinks, toilet bowls, and tubs to prevent pipes from freezing and bursting. Clean and protect chrome on all faucets, trim, and appliances with a light coating of petroleum jelly or oil. Wash the leaves on both sides of houseplants.

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