



# PICKING UP THE PIECES

WHAT YOU CAN DO AFTER A FIRE AT YOUR HOME



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Fire & Emergency Services**



Department of **Fire & Emergency Services**

If a fire has damaged or destroyed your home you may feel shocked and confused. There are a number of things you can do to help you get back on your feet.

This brochure will help you know your options, how you can get replacement clothing and work out where you will go if you cannot stay home.

## **I don't have anywhere to stay tonight. What will happen to my family and me?**

If your home is insured, call your insurance company as you may be covered for emergency accommodation through your policy. There are usually after-hours phone numbers available online.

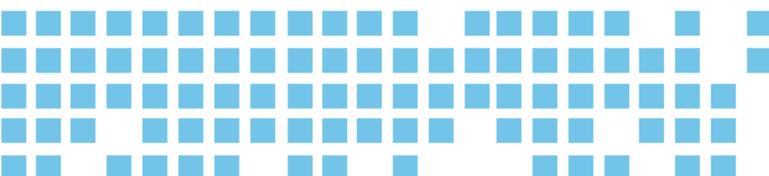
If you can't get through, think about staying with family or friends. If you live in a Department of Communities public housing or GROH property, please call Housing Direct on 1300 137 677.

You can call the Department of Communities Disaster Relief Hotline if you need immediate support or to talk to someone.



**Department of Communities  
Disaster Relief Hotline**

**1800 032 965**





## How does my insurance company become involved?

If you are the owner of the property you need to notify your insurance company as soon as possible. They will send a representative to estimate the cost of damage and determine a settlement figure.

If you are a tenant and have contents insurance, in addition to telling your landlord or agent about the fire, you should also contact your insurance company.

## What if I am not insured?

You will need to organise repairs to your house but remember to rely on family and friends to help you.

## What about my house, will it be secure overnight?

If you are the owner of the property, you are responsible for organising security of your house while you are waiting for the insurance assessment. Your insurance company will provide you with advice and if a representative is in attendance, they can organise a contractor to make your home secure. If you have any queries, talk to your local Police.

If there are areas that may be damaged more by being left out in the open, the State Emergency Service (SES) can fix tarpaulins and tie down loose items. Ask the fire officer in charge or Police Officer to organise this, or call SES on 132 500.

## Everything has been lost in the fire. How will I feed and clothe my family?

If you are insured, check with your insurance company as they may be able to help with food and clothing through your policy.

If you are not insured or your insurance does not cover you for this, the Department of Communities Disaster Relief Hotline can work with you to help with your immediate needs and supports.

You will need to get an **incident number** from the attending officer in order to access clothing and food. Please ask the fire officer in charge to provide you with an incident number before they leave.



**Department of Communities  
Disaster Relief Hotline  
1800 032 965**

**Salvation Army  
13 72 58 or 08 6210 3288  
(Mon - Fri 8:30am - 4:30pm)**

## Can I remove personal items?

If parts of your house have not been destroyed and the fire officer in charge or the Fire Investigation Officer tell you it is safe to enter, you may want to get the following items:

- Identification
- Credit cards
- Laptop and charger
- Legal documents
- Insurance information
- Medications
- Eye glasses
- Hearing or personal aids
- Precious items such as jewellery, medals, photo albums
- Other valuables

**However it is best to check with your insurance company before removing any items.**

## The fire has made a mess of my house. When can I clean it up?

Firefighters generally use water under pressure to put out a fire. They make every effort to limit the damage and protect household goods and furniture so you can get back into your home quickly.

If the fire has impacted the inside of your house, some cleaning will probably be required. Check with the fire officer in charge, Fire Investigation Officer or Police Officer as to when the clean up process can start. If there is an investigation or evaluation occurring, there may be some areas you cannot clean to begin with. You should also check with your insurance company to see if your policy allows for commercial cleaners.

## What is the Fire Investigation Officer's role?

When the fire officer in charge of an incident cannot find out what started the fire, they may call in the Fire Investigation Officer. If someone has been seriously injured or died in the fire, the Police will also attend.

It is the responsibility of the Fire Investigation Officer or Police Officer to make sure your house is secure while the investigation is occurring. They will put barrier tape around your home, so people do not enter as it may not be safe and could compromise the investigation.

If you need to go into your home in this situation, a Police Officer or the Fire Investigation Officer may go with you. Once the investigation is finished, they will give control of your house back to you.

## What is the role of the Police Arson Squad?

The Police Arson Squad will attend if requested by the Fire Investigation Officer. They regularly work in conjunction with the fire services and will go to a fire if the cause is considered to be suspicious or deliberate, cannot be determined or if someone has died.



## Did the power, gas, and water get turned off? How can I have these reconnected?

The fire officer in charge may have needed to disconnect power, water and gas for safety reasons during the fire.

If you are insured, your insurance company can arrange for these services to be reconnected. If you are not insured, you will need to organise it yourself by phoning each supplier and tradesperson.

The suppliers of your power, water and gas will need to send qualified tradespeople to inspect and repair any damage to your services, and arrange for them to be reconnected.

## Why are the media here?

The media often report on fires in their news bulletins. If a reporter approaches you for an interview, you can decide if you want to speak to them or not. If you agree to be interviewed, you can discuss with them beforehand the kind of questions they will ask so you know what to expect. You can also ask a fire officer to help you or act as facilitator.

If you feel uncomfortable about any part of the interview, let the reporter know you do not want to continue.

If the cause of the fire has not yet been found and is still under investigation, it is best not to discuss anything with the media.

## I need to talk to someone, who can I turn to?

A house fire is a traumatic experience that may cause you mental and emotional distress.

It is important that you ask for help and talk to someone, such as family, friends or a counsellor, about what you are going through. There are a number of organisations that have round the clock helplines you can call.

### 24 Hour Support Numbers



#### The Samaritans Crisis Line

08 683 839 850  
(Main line)  
1800 198 313  
(Country Toll Free)

#### Lifeline

Support for anyone  
in a crisis situation

Phone: 13 11 14  
Lifeline Crisis Text Service  
Text 0477 13 11 14

#### 13YARN

13YARN or 13 92 76

### Incident Information:

The DFES Incident Number is:

Your fire officer in charge is

They are from

Fire Station

on  shift.

Their phone number is

Notes

# YOUR CHECKLIST



## If you are insured:

- Contact your insurance company

### Your insurance company will look after:

- Emergency accommodation
- Emergency food and clothing
- Contacting a company to clean up the damage
- Getting water, gas and electricity checked and reconnected

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### Your insurance company will provide advice on:

- Who to contact to secure your home
- When the insurance assessor will come to your home
- When you can contact tradespeople to fix your home

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## If you are not insured or your policy does not provide cover, contact:

- Emergency relief / crisis support agencies for accommodation, food and clothing
- A company to secure your house
- Counselling and support agencies
- A company to clean up the damage
- An electrician to repair damage and reconnect electricity
- A plumber to repair damage and reconnect water and gas
- A company to fix your home

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