



**Miami Beach Fire Department
2300 Pine Tree Drive
Miami Beach, Florida 33139**

RECOVERING FROM A FIRE

Recovering from the damage caused by a fire or other disaster may take a long time and many of the things that you will have to go through will probably be new to you. This information is being provided in the hope that it will assist you in recovering from your losses. The Miami Beach Fire Department realizes this can be a trying experience and hope this information will help you return to a normal lifestyle as soon as possible.

THE FIRST 24 HOURS

Take care of yourself, and your family. If anyone involved in the incident experiences any signs or symptoms of illness or injury seek medical attention immediately. During the rebuilding phase remember fire and or disaster scenes can still be hazardous. Check with the Fire Department to make sure your home is safe to enter. If the Building Department has placed a placard on your home, get more information from the Building Department before entering your home. If your home is uninhabitable, arrange for temporary housing at the home of a relative, friend, neighbor, or hotel. Temporary housing assistance may also be available from the Red Cross or Salvation Army. These organizations may also be able to assist with food, medicines, clothing, eyeglasses, and other essential items. The American Red Cross also offers many free publications with tips that may help you recover from a fire or other disaster on their website <http://www.redcross.org>.

Protect your home from further damage by taking reasonable precautions against further loss such as removing excess water and covering holes in the roof or walls if it is safe to do so. You may have to board up openings to your home to discourage trespassers or looters. If your home or business will be unoccupied contact the Miami Beach Police Department and let them know.

If you are a tenant contact the manager, the management company, the owner, or the owner's insurance company as soon as possible.

If you were not insured your recovery will most likely depend upon your own resources. Assistance may be available from the local Red Cross or Salvation Army. Members of your place of worship or local civic groups such as the Lions, Rotary Club or Miami Beach Fire Fighters Local 1510 may also be able to help. Keep all receipts for temporary living expenses and repair costs; you may be able to claim your expenses and losses on your Federal Income Tax. Contact your accountant or the IRS for more information.

UTILITIES

Electricity- If the electricity has been shut off, you must contact the Miami Beach Building Department and Florida Power and Light to find out the steps necessary to restore your electricity. Often a licensed electrician must inspect your home, obtain a permit, and make any necessary repairs to your home before Florida Power and Light will turn your power back on.

Natural Gas- If the gas service has been shut off, you must contact the Miami Beach Building Department and TECO Peoples Gas to find out the steps necessary to restore your gas service. Often a licensed gas appliance technician must inspect your appliances and gas lines, obtain a permit, and make any necessary repairs to your appliances before TECO Peoples Gas will turn your gas service back on.

Water Service- If the water service has been shut off, you must contact the Miami Beach Water and Sewer Department to find out the steps necessary to restore your water service. Often a licensed plumber must obtain a permit, and make any necessary repairs to your home before the Water and Sewer Department will turn your water service back on.

INSURANCE INFORMATION

If you are insured contact your insurance company as soon as possible to begin the recovery process. If possible do not disturb or remove any items until after you have spoken with the insurance representative. Keep detailed records including phone logs, photos and or videos of the damage to your home, personal property, and any items removed after the fire. A helpful program to organize the photos of the damage room by room is available for free at the Insurance Information Institute <http://www.iii.org> click on the “Know Your stuff” link. Keep all receipts for temporary living expenses and repair costs; your insurance company may reimburse you.

Coordinate with your insurance company/adjuster before contracting for any services to repair or replace your damaged home and personal property.

Make an inventory list of all damaged personal property showing in detail the description, quantity, original price, purchase date, damage estimate, and replacement cost. Cooperate with the insurance company/adjuster by making the damaged property available for examination. Do not rush through this process. It may take days or even weeks before you realize that some of your personal property has been lost or damaged. Make sure that your inventory list is as complete as possible.

SALVAGE TIPS

Professional fire and water damage restoration companies may be of great help in cleaning and restoring your damaged belongings: contact your insurance company adjuster or check the phone book for a list of companies. Your local dry cleaners may also be able to help with removing smoke from your clothing. If you must do the cleaning and restoration yourself the following tips may be useful.

Books-Wet books must be taken care of as soon as possible. Place wet books in a vacuum freezer to remove moisture without causing damage to the pages. If there is a delay in locating a

vacuum freezer place the books in a plastic bag in a normal freezer until a vacuum freezer can be located.

Canned Foods and Beverages-Wash canned foods in soapy water. If the labels come off, mark the contents of the container with a grease pencil. If the cans are dented, rusted or bulging, throw them out.

Clothing-Smoke odor and soot can sometimes be washed from clothing. The following formula often works for clothing that can be bleached:

4-6 tablespoons of Tri-Sodium Phosphate

1 cup Lysol or any household bleach

1 gallon of warm water

Mix well, add clothes, and rinse with clear water and dry well

Be aware that Tri-Sodium Phosphate is a caustic substance used as a cleaning agent. It should be used with care and stored out of reach of children and pets. Wear rubber gloves and eye protection when using it. Read the label carefully.

To remove mildew, wash the fresh stain with soap and warm water. Then rinse and dry the clothing in the sun. If the stain remains try using lemon juice and salt, or a diluted solution of household bleach and water.

Cooking Utensils-Pots, pans, flatware, etc. can be washed with warm soapy water, rinsed and then polished with a fine-powdered cleaner. Copper and brass can be polished with a special polish, salt sprinkled on a piece lemon, or salt sprinkled on a cloth saturated with vinegar.

Electrical Appliances-Electrical appliances that have been exposed to heat, steam, or water should not be used until a service representative has inspected them. If the electricity, gas, or water has been shut off, you must contact the utility companies to find out the steps necessary to restore these services. Often a licensed electrician or plumber must inspect and make any necessary repairs to your home before the services will be restored.

Freezers and Refrigerators-To remove odors from your refrigerator or freezer, wash the inside with a solution of baking soda and water or use 1 cup vinegar or household ammonia to 1 gallon of water. Baking soda in an open container can also be placed inside to help absorb the odor.

Caution: When cleaning or discarding a refrigerator or freezer be sure that the doors are removed or secured to prevent a child from becoming trapped inside.

Frozen Foods-If your freezer is not operational leave the door closed until you can find another freezer for your food. Your freezer usually has enough insulation to keep foods frozen for at least 24 hours. If the frozen foods still have ice crystals on them they are generally safe to save. If there are no ice crystals on the food then throw them out. When it comes to salvaging foods always remember "When in doubt, throw it out".

Furniture-Smoke and soot can sometimes be removed from furniture. Try mixing together the following:

4 to 6 tablespoons Tri-Sodium Phosphate

1 cup Lysol or household bleach

1 gallon warm water

Be aware that Tri-Sodium Phosphate is a caustic substance used as a cleaning agent. It should be used with care and stored out of reach of children and pets. Wear rubber gloves and eye protection when using it. Read the label carefully.

Wipe the furniture with the solution, rinse with clear war water, and dry thoroughly. Do not dry furniture in the sun.

Wood Furniture-Do not dry in the sun, the wood may warp. Clean off wood with a commercial cleaning polish, wipe with a soft cloth and buff. Remove drawers and let them dry thoroughly to prevent sticking. Wet wood must be dried thoroughly. If mold, film, or white spots form on the wood contact the manufacturer, the store where it was purchased, or a wood restoration professional for further instructions.

Leather-Wipe leather goods with a damp cloth, then a dry cloth. Stuff purses and shoes with dry newspaper to help them retain their original shape. Leave suitcases and briefcases open until dry. Leather goods should be dried away from heat and sun. When leather goods are dry, clean with saddle soap. Suede can cleaned with a suede brush. Rinse leather and suede jackets in cold water and dry away from heat and sun.

Locks and Hinges-Locks and hinges should be disassembled, wiped with a clean cloth and oiled. If locks and hinges cannot be disassembled spray oil into the keyhole, bolt opening or hinge pin and operate the lock or hinge several times to distribute the oil.

Mattresses and Pillows-Salvaging an innerspring mattress is very difficult to do at home, contact the mattress manufacturer for advice on whether it is worth it or not. If you must use the mattress temporarily, dry it in the sun. Pillows are also very difficult to salvage due to the feathers and foam retaining the odors. Contact your dry cleaner for advice.

Medicines-Medicines and medical equipment exposed to heat, smoke, steam, or water damage should be replaced immediately. Contact your pharmacist, doctor's office and or your medical insurance company for replacements.

Photographs-If photographs are not burned they can usually be saved. Never try to peel apart photographs that have stuck together. Photographs are developed in water solutions. Soak the photographs in clear, clean water and then rinse them carefully and thoroughly. Let stuck photographs separate on their own. Dry the photographs image side up on a smooth hard surface such as a countertop or glass table top. If the photographs stay damp for too long then mold will form. Make sure you dry them away from the sun in an area with good ventilation.

Throw rugs and carpets-Throw rugs and carpets must be allowed to dry thoroughly. Throw rugs can be cleaned by beating, sweeping, and vacuuming, and then shampooing. To dry lay them flat and circulate warm, dry air. A fan may help with this process. For information on cleaning and preserving carpets contact your carpet dealer, installer, or a professional carpet cleaning professional.

Walls and Ceilings-Walls and ceilings made of drywall that have been exposed to heat, steam or water damage must be replaced. Drywall will not retain it's resistance to fire, mold, or mildew after a fire. Contact a licensed professional about replacing the drywall.

REPLACING DOCUMENTS AND RECORDS

Obtaining replacements and copies of important documents, cards and papers is a time consuming process. Call the agency or company responsible for the item that you need in advance and get specific procedural instructions on their requirements.

Missing or Damaged Item	Agency to Contact
Driver's licenses	Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles at 1-850-617-2000 or http://www.hsmv.state.fl.us
Vehicle registrations, and vehicle titles	Miami Dade County Tax Collector at 305-375-5678 or http://www.miamidade.gov/taxcollector
Checks, bank books, and banking records	Your bank or credit union
Insurance policies	Your insurance agent
Military records and discharge papers	http://www.usa.gov and click on the "Replace Vital Records" link
Passports	1-877-487-2778 or http://www.usa.gov and click on the "Replace Vital Records" link
Citizenship papers	Citizen and Immigration Services at 1-800-375-5283 or http://www.usa.gov and click on the "Replace Vital Records" link
Birth, Death, Marriage and Divorce Certificates	If the event occurred in the state of Florida contact the Department of Health at 1-904-359-6900 or http://www.doh.state.fl.us and click on the "Floridians and Visitors" link. If the event did not occur in Florida contact the state that the individual was born, died, or married in.
Divorce papers	The circuit court where the divorce decree was issued.
Social Security or Medicare cards	Social Security Office at 1-800-772-1213 or http://www.usa.gov and click on the "Replace Vital Records" link
Credit cards	The credit card company
Stocks and bonds	The issuing company or your stock broker
Copies of wills	The attorney that prepared them
Medical records and prescriptions	Your doctor's office
Warranties	The issuing company
Income Tax records	Internal Revenue Service at 1-800-829-1040 or http://www.usa.gov and click on the "Replace Vital Records" link or your accountant.
Prepaid burial contracts	The issuing company
Lost animals, vaccination records, and animal medications	Miami-Dade Animal Services at 305-884-1101 or http://www.miamidade.gov/animals or your veterinarian

REPLACING DAMAGED MONEY

Any badly soiled, defaced, dirty, limp, torn, disintegrated, or worn out U.S. currency note that is clearly more than one-half of the original size does not require special examination. These currency notes should be brought to your bank and exchanged. Your bank should then process them via the Federal Reserve Bank.

If less than one-half of the U.S. currency note is identifiable and the method of mutilation and supporting evidence demonstrates to the Treasury Department that the missing portions have been totally destroyed then the currency may be replaced by the Treasury Department.

Do not disturb fragments any more than is absolutely necessary. If the damaged currency is brittle or falling apart, pack it in plastic and cotton without disturbing the fragments, and place in a secure container. If the damaged currency was damaged inside of a purse, box, or other container, leave the currency in the container to protect the fragments from further damage. The entire container should be sent. If the currency was flat when damaged leave it that way, do not attempt to roll or fold it. If the currency was rolled or folded leave it that way, do not attempt to straighten it out.

For more information contact the Mutilated Currency Division at their toll free number 1-866-575-2361 or <http://www.usa.gov> and click on the "Replace Vital Records" link.

For information on replacing mutilated coins go to <http://www.usa.gov> and click on the "Replace Vital Records" link.

If your U.S. Savings Bonds have been mutilated or destroyed go to <http://www.usa.gov> and click on the "Replace Vital Records" link. Have the following information ready: the name(s) on the bonds, approximate date or time period when purchased, denominations, and approximate number of each.

OBTAINING COPIES OF REPORTS

Fire and medical reports generally take 3 to 5 business days to process. You must have identification with you in order to obtain a copy of a report. Please call in advance to find out if the report has been processed. For more information on acceptable forms of identification, applicable fees and hours of operation contact:

Miami Beach Fire Department
Rescue Division
1680 Meridian Avenue, 2nd floor
305-673-7130

If a Fire Investigator was called in investigate the fire, you may obtain a copy of the Fire Investigation report. Fire Investigation reports are not released until the fire investigation is closed. You must have identification with you in order to obtain a copy of a report. Please call in advance to find out if the fire investigation has been closed. For more information on acceptable forms of identification, applicable fees and hours of operation contact:

Miami Beach Fire Department
Fire Prevention Division
1680 Meridian Avenue, 2nd floor
305-673-7123

Police investigation reports are not released until the investigation is closed. You must have identification with you in order to obtain a copy of a report. Please call in advance to find out if the investigation has been closed. For more information on acceptable forms of identification, applicable fees and hours of operation contact:

Miami Beach Police Department
Records Division
1100 Washington Avenue 1st floor
305-673-7990

Police crime scene photos are not released until the investigation is closed. You must have identification with you in order to obtain copies of the photos. Please call in advance to find out if the investigation has been closed. For more information on acceptable forms of identification, applicable fees and hours of operation contact:

Miami Beach Police Department
Crime Scene Unit
1100 Washington Avenue 1st floor
305-673-7982

PHONE NUMBERS AND WEBSITES

Agency	Contact Information
American Red Cross	(305) 644-1200 or (800) 733-2767 or http://www.redcross.org
Salvation Army	http://www.salvationarmyusa.org
Miami Beach Fire Department non-emergency	(305) 673-7120
Miami Beach Police Department non-emergency	(305) 673-7900
Miami Beach Building Department	(305) 673-7610
Miami Beach City Hall	(305) 673-7000 or http://www.miamibeachfl.gov
Miami Beach Water & Sewer Department	(305) 673-7625
Florida Power And Light	Residential (305) 442-8770 or http://www.fpl.com Business (305) 442-0388 or http://www.fpl.com
TECO Peoples Gas	(305) 940-0139 or 1-877-832-6747 or http://www.peoplesgas.com
Social Security Office	(800) 772-1213 or http://www.usa.gov and click on the “Replace Vital Records” link
Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles	(850) 617-2000 or http://www.hsmv.state.fl.us
Miami Dade County Tax Collector	(305) 375-5678 or http://www.miamidade.gov/taxcollector
Veterans Administration	http://www.usa.gov and click on the “Replace Vital Records” link
Passports	(877) 487-2778 or http://www.usa.gov and click on the “Replace Vital Records” link
Citizen and Immigration Services	(800) 375-5283 or http://www.usa.gov and click on the “Replace Vital Records” link
Florida Department of Health	(904) 359-6900 or http://www.doh.state.fl.us
Internal Revenue Service	(800) 829-1040 or http://www.usa.gov and click on the “Replace Vital Records” link
Miami-Dade Animal Services	(305) 884-1101 or http://www.miamidade.gov/animals
Miami Beach Firefighters Local 1510	(305) 637-5050 http://www.miamibeachfirefighters.com