



# FIRE PROTECTIONS

## INFORMATION AND ADVICE TO ASSIST IN THE AFTERMATH OF A FIRE

A fire can wreak sudden havoc onto your home and life. It is important to be prepared to deal with the aftermath and take the necessary steps to protect yourself and your family from any additional burden.

### IMMEDIATE PRECAUTIONS

- (1) Do not enter your home until the fire department lets you know that is it safe.
- (2) Do not touch anything in your apartment without clearing it with the fire department. Items may have been contaminated by the fire or smoke.
- (3) Do not try to turn on your utilities without the fire department's approval; you could cause further damage or be injured.
- (4) Contact your landlord, mortgage company, and/or insurance company (renter's or homeowner's insurance) about the fire, if appropriate.
- (5) Contact your local disaster relief service, such as the American Red Cross. This will help you find a place to stay, food, clothing and medicine.

### PROTECTING AND RECOVERING PERSONAL INFORMATION & BENEFITS

- (1) If you lost vital documents or financial instruments (such as, your passport, driver's license, debit/credit cards, checkbooks, health insurance card and Social Security card) in the fire, take the proper steps to replace them as soon as possible.
- (2) If you take any regular medications, contact your doctor and/or pharmacist to inform them that you have been displaced by a fire. Ensure your new address is reflected in any Medicaid documentation.
- (3) If you are receiving ongoing assistance from the government, such as Social Security, notify the relevant government agency with your change of address to ensure you continue to receive timely disbursements. Visit <https://www.ssa.gov/agency/contact/> or call 1-800-772-1213.



(4) Check with the Internal Revenue Service to see if you are eligible for special benefits for people recovering from fire loss. Visit <https://www.irs.gov/help/telephone-assistance> to find the best method of contact.

(5) If you had a copy of your last will and testament in your home, and it has either been destroyed or you can no longer access it, consult with your attorney to determine if he/she has another copy to obtain for your records.

## **INSURANCE**

(1) If you have an insurance policy, contact your insurance company to determine what is covered by your policy. Be sure to inquire as to the best way to guard against additional loss when entering and cleaning/repairing your home. Consider discussing the appropriate approach with your insurance company.

(2) Maintain your receipts for all money you spend as a result of the fire. You may be able to receive reimbursements for these expenses.

(3) Take as many pictures as possible of the damages to your home. Focus on your home, as a whole, as well as individual rooms, pieces of furniture, or other valuables. You can (and should) do this in advance of any disaster; simply take photographs of each room of your home and, especially, any valuable pieces you may own.

(4) Note/list (with detail when possible) any and all belongings that were lost or damaged in the fire.

(5) Obtain a copy of the fire report from your local fire department or the fire marshal. You may need it to make your claim. You can contact D.C.'s Fire and Emergency Medical Service Department by calling (202) 673-3320 or emailing [info.fems@dc.gov](mailto:info.fems@dc.gov).

(6) If you noticed any issues with your building's safety features and especially if you reported them to building management, make a note of that and find any records you may have.

## **LEGAL ACTION**

You may have legal recourse against your landlord, property manager, and/or building owner. Make sure to document any injuries or losses. You can contact Legal Counsel for the Elderly's Hotline at (202) 434-2120 or contact a personal injury lawyer.