

COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION

AFTER THE FIRE



PUTTING LIVES BACK TOGETHER

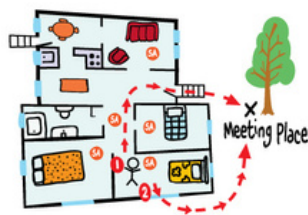
A GUIDE TO HELP YOU THROUGH THE NEXT FEW HOURS
AND DAYS AFTER A FIRE

HARRIS COUNTY ESD NO. 48 FIRE - EMS
COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION, LEADING THE WAY TO A
SAFER FUTURE.

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Plan and Practice Your Home Fire Escape Drill



NOTE: The material in the booklet was sourced from other “After The Fire” resource guides including the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), U.S. Fire Administration, American Red Cross, FEMA, and Lincoln County. Visit our website for local resources or scan the QR code on the next page.

The Fire Is Out - What Now?

A fire at home can lead to significant damage and life changes. Harris County ESD No. 48 emphasizes the importance of knowing how to start recovery and who to contact for help. Fires can damage buildings and belongings through flames, heat, smoke, and water, even if not everything is burned. Cleanup requires time and careful handling of items. Posing safety and health risks even after it's extinguished due to soot and contaminated water. Before cleaning or repairing, consult the fire department, local officials, insurance agents, and restoration specialists for guidance. Follow safety measures for recovery after a fire.

For more information including insurance considerations, protecting your property, making a damage inventory, cleaning fire damage, and frequently asked questions, please visit our website hcesd48.org/communityriskreduction or scan the QR code.



Vital Information

The next steps following a fire regardless of whether you own the property, the first priority after a fire is to safeguard yourself from further losses.

Here are the steps to take after experiencing a fire in your home:

- If you are a homeowner, it is your duty to cover any openings to protect against the elements and unauthorized entry. Your insurance company may assist with this upon your request. Ensure that all external doors and windows are secured or locked. If you don't have insurance there are resources available that will provide this service. Please scan the QR code above to see a list of local resources.
- If you are a tenant, reach out to the landlord. It is their responsibility to prevent additional damage to the property.

Source: U.S. Fire Administration

Within the First 24 Hours:

- Confirm that the structure is secure.
- Ensure that all family members and pets are safe.
- Find temporary accommodation for at least the next 72 hours.

- Create an inventory of any lost or damaged items to report to your insurance company (no matter how minor).
- Take photos of every room, both inside and outside.
- Document any items removed from the house with photos.
- Obtain a copy of the fire report from the Fire Department.
- Use your contact log to notify relevant people and businesses about the fire.

Take a moment to breathe; this is a lot to process, but you will get through it.

Vital Information

Date of fire: _____
Time of fire: _____
Location of fire: _____

Responding fire department:

HARRIS COUNTY ESD NO. 48

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
21201 MORTON RD
KATY, TX 77449



Non-emergency telephone number of responding fire department: **281-599-8888**

Fire incident report number issued by the responding fire department:

Fire Marshal or Fire Investigator Name:

Fire Marshal - Investigator Phone Number:

Documents and Records

You will want to replace many of the following valuable documents and records destroyed or lost in the fire including:

- Driver's License
- Auto Titles & Registration
- Bankbooks (checking, savings, etc.)
- Insurance Policies
- Military Discharge Papers
- Passports
- Birth, Death, and Marriage Certificates
- Divorce Papers
- Social Security or Medicare Cards
- Credit Cards
- School Records
- College Records - Certificates
- Titles & Deeds
- Stocks and Bonds
- Wills
- Medical Records (pets also)
- Medication List (pets also)
- Vaccination Records (pets also)
- Warranties
- Income Tax Records
- Citizenship Papers
- Prepaid Burial Contract
- Animal Registration Papers
- Mortgage Papers
- Business Ownership Records

Source: U.S. Fire Administration

Use caution after a fire; soot and dirty water may pose health risks. Consult your insurance agents and restoration specialists before cleaning or repairing. The Fire Marshal will inform you when it's safe to enter your home. If you can't return, salvage essential items like personal identification, valuables, and necessary medicines with the help of a firefighter or investigator. Contact local disaster relief services like the Red Cross for temporary shelter and assistance with food and other needs.



Affects from the Fire

- Inform local law enforcement when your home will be unoccupied.
- Keep receipts related to fire-related losses for insurance claims and tax purposes.
- Consult with an accountant or the IRS about any special benefits that may apply.
- Share your mobile phone number with contacts and forward your landline to your new address.
- Request the Postal Service to hold your mail.
- Cancel any deliveries and update your employer regarding any flexible work arrangements.



If you have children in school, make sure to notify their schools about any potential effects on their attendance.

Source: FEMA After The Fire

Coping with the Aftermath

You have experienced the impact of a fire, and it's natural to feel upset, overwhelmed, or even numb. These emotions can arise immediately after the incident or may emerge days, weeks, or even months later. Take a deep breath! Your feelings are completely normal. It's common to encounter some of the following emotions:

- Vivid memories of the event
- Frequent crying
- Headaches
- Trouble sleeping
- Low energy
- Difficulty concentrating
- Guilt
- Anger
- Confusion
- A sense of helplessness
- Decreased appetite
- Irritability
- Withdrawal from everyday activities
- Anxiety

Source: American Red Cross

Like other life stresses, many individuals manage to cope effectively. Consider the aftermath as a strain; just as we recognize the need to care for our bodies after an injury, we should also allow ourselves the time to heal emotionally and to take it easy for a while.

Coping with the Aftermath

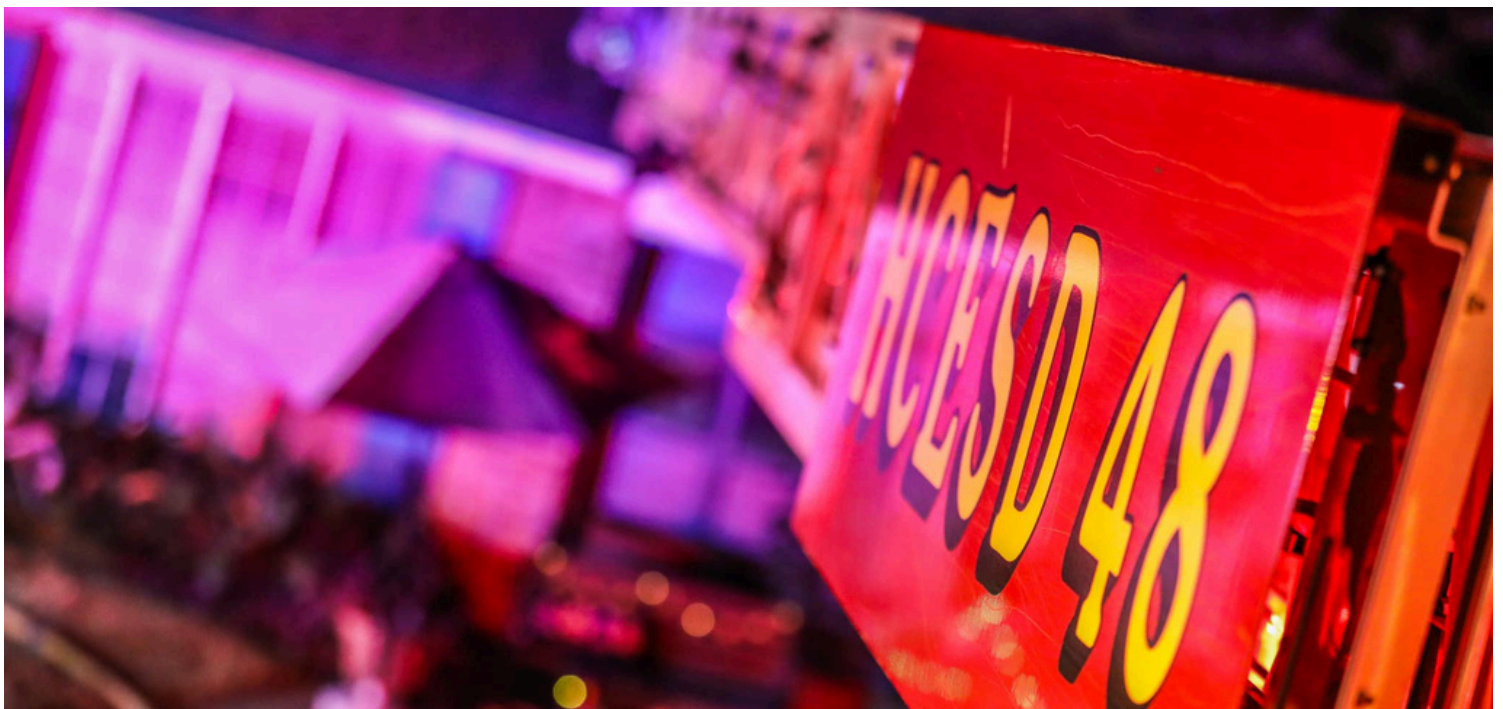
Disasters can take a toll on us psychologically, yet it is often challenging to recognize this impact, particularly if your home has suffered damage or if you have experienced the injury or loss of a loved one. It's important to acknowledge these feelings and practice self-compassion.

You may experience various reactions. If you identify with any of the following, we suggest the following steps:

- Be patient and gentle with yourself in the coming weeks. Healing from the physical and psychological aftermath of an event like a house fire takes time. Make an effort to carve out moments for relaxation and engage in activities that bring you joy.
- Open up and share. Talk about your experiences and emotions with someone you trust, whether it's family, friends, coworkers, ministers, or counselors. This sharing can be a crucial element of your recovery journey.

Source: LincolnCounty.gov

Parents should be particularly attentive to their children during this period. It's common for parents to overlook their child's emotional needs once they feel relieved that their family is safe. However, they might be surprised by how long their child's fears persist. Parents may even find themselves feeling frustrated if their child's behavior disrupts the family's daily routine.



Coping with the Aftermath



Children require time to heal from trauma, with behavioral changes potentially lasting months to two years but usually diminishing over time. Most don't develop serious psychological issues unless faced with extreme circumstances. Children may express anxiety by reverting to younger behaviors like bed-wetting or clinging to parents, often fearing another disaster. To help them cope, parents should demonstrate safety measures, conduct hazard hunts, test smoke alarms together, practice fire drills, and provide comfort and reassurance.

To help your child cope with challenges:

- Re-establish routines with meal times and family activities.
- Acknowledge and support your child's fears.
- Inform your child's school and teacher about the situation for potential support.
- For assistance, contact HCESD48 Peer Support at 346-604-0402 or 281-906-6796.
- Refer to "Helping Children Cope with Disaster" from FEMA and the American Red Cross, available locally or at www.fema.gov/pdf/library/children.pdf.

Source: American Red Cross

Speaking with the Media

The media aims to report stories that the public finds significant, often focusing on disasters, crimes, and fires, especially involving fatalities. Journalists seek to include perspectives from victims or their families to humanize tragedies and help the public understand crises. Media coverage can also educate on preventing future incidents. Victims have the right to privacy and can choose not to give interviews, stating, "I don't want to say anything now." It's important to remember that the media may not prioritize your best interests.

If approached for an interview by the media, you have rights to:

- Share your story personally.
- Decline to comment.
- Have a representative speak for you.
- Set interview time and location.
- Bring someone with you.
- Provide a written statement instead of an interview.
- Consent to or refuse photography.
- Request non-use of offensive images.
- Exclude children from interviews.
- Refuse to answer certain questions.
- Demand corrections for inaccuracies in reports.
- File complaints against unethical reporters.



Feedback

Source: LincolnCounty.gov

We hope this information helps you through the process of rebuilding and on your way to getting back to normal. If you have a questions, comments, or concerns, please email us at communityteam@hcesd48.org or call 281-599-8888 Ext. 135

After you are settled back in your house, we offer a FREE Home Safety Survey. A 30-point check list to ensure you and your family are safe.

We also offer Safe Sitter for new teen babysitters, CPR classes, car seat installs and inspections, fire extinguisher trainings, FREE C.E.R.T. classes, and more.

QUICK CHECKLIST

THE FOLLOWING CHECKLIST SERVES AS A QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE FOR YOU TO FOLLOW AFTER A FIRE STRIKES

- If you are insured, contact your insurance company for detailed instructions on protecting the property, conducting an inventory and contacting fire restoration companies. If you are not insured, try contacting private organizations for aid and assistance.
- Contact your local disaster relief service, such as The American Red Cross, if you need temporary housing, food and medicines. If you are insured, your insurance company might provide these services.
- Be watchful of any structural damage caused by the fire. Do not enter the home unless instructed by the fire investigator.
- Center Point will disconnect the electric and/or gas meters before the fire department leaves the site. DO NOT attempt to reconnect utilities yourself. Be sure to have the utilities inspected by a licenses contractor before calling Center Point to return services.
- Conduct an inventory of damaged property and items. Do not throw away any damaged goods until after an inventory is made.
- Try to locate valuable documents and records.
- If you leave your home, contact you neighborhood contracted patrol (Harris/Fort Bend County Sheriff or Harris/Fort Bend Constables Office) to let them know the site will be unoccupied.
- Begin saving receipts for any money you spend related to fire loss. The receipts may be needed later by the insurance company and for verifying losses claimed on income tax.
- Notify your mortgage company of the fire.
- Check with an accountant or the Internal Revenue Service about special benefits for people recovering from fire loss.



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