

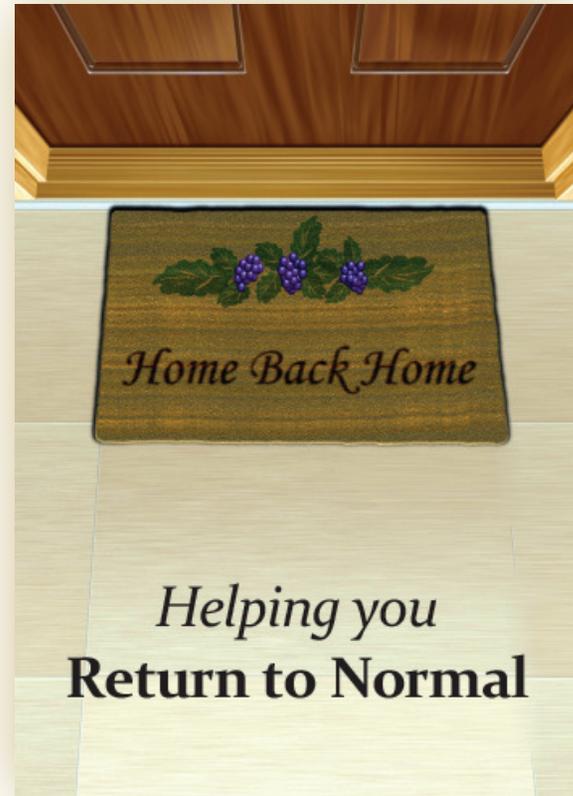
After the Fire



Helping you
Return to Normal

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The First 24 Hours

After the Fire is designed to assist you in coping with a disaster and help you begin the recovery process. The information in this booklet was compiled by the United States Fire Administration (USFA) and Polk County Fire Rescue for you to reference during your time of need.

The hardest part is knowing where to begin and who to contact after you have a fire in your home. The information in this booklet is intended to assist you in rebuilding your life.

Some tasks require immediate action, while others may be prioritized.

Remember...*Recovering from a fire can be a physically and mentally draining process.* Be sure to take time out for yourself if you feel too stressed.

CAUTION

- Do not enter the damaged structure. Fires can rekindle from hidden smoldering debris.
- Usually the fire department will determine that utilities (water, electricity and natural gas) are either safe or should be disconnected before they leave the site. Be sure to ask.
- Look for structural damage caused by the fire. Roofs and floors may be damaged and could collapse.
- Food, beverages and medicine exposed to heat, smoke, soot and water should not be consumed.

Securing Yourself and Your Home

Many times, the responding fire department will contact the American Red Cross to start the assistance process, however, you should also contact your local disaster relief service.

Organizations such as the American Red Cross or the Salvation Army may be available to help with your immediate needs, such as:

- clothing
- eyeglasses
- food
- medicine
- temporary housing
- other essential items

We have provided you with some important telephone numbers. If you have no insurance, your recovery from a fire loss may be based on your own resources and help from some of the community organizations below.

Organization	Telephone
American Red Cross	863-294-5941
Crisis Counseling Centers (nonprofit)	863-519-8011 <i>or</i> 877-822-5205
BoCC Social Services Division	863-534-5387
Lighthouse Ministries	863-687-4076
Salvation Army	863-291-5107
United Way of Central Florida	863-648-1500
OTHER: Church	

If you are insured, give notice of the loss to your insurance company. Ask:

- What do I do about covering doors, windows and other exposed areas?
- How do I go about pumping out water?
- Do you need me to provide an inventory of damaged personal property? How detailed do you want my report?

Leaving Your Home

1. Contact your **local law enforcement** agency to inform them that your home will be unoccupied.
2. In some cases it may be necessary to **board openings** to discourage trespassers.
3. Beginning immediately, **save receipts** for all purchases. These receipts are important in documenting for your insurance company the money you have spent related to your fire loss and also verify losses claimed on your income tax return.
4. When it is safe to do so, try to **locate the following** items:
 - Identification, such as a driver's license or Social Security card
 - Insurance information
 - Medical information
 - Eyeglasses, hearing aids or other medical necessities
 - Valuables, such as credit cards, bank books, cash and jewelry
 - Sentimental, non-replaceable items



Many people and/or companies you hire should be notified of your relocation, including:

- Insurance agent/company
- Mortgage company
- Family and friends
- Employer
- Child's school
- Anyone who regularly services your home, such as:
 - Pest control
 - Lawn care
 - Pool maintenance
- Delivery services
- Law enforcement
- Utility companies
- Post Office



Salvaging Your Belongings

Professional fire and water damage restoration businesses may be the best source of cleaning and restoring your personal belongings. Local companies offering this service can be located in the telephone directory or online.

Saving Clothes

Smoke odor and soot can sometimes be washed from clothing. Before you begin:

- Test a small area of the garment before using any treatment and follow manufacturer's instructions.
- Wear rubber gloves when using Tri-Sodium Phosphate to clean clothes. Tri-Sodium Phosphate can be found at most hardware stores.

Remember:

Do not throw away any damaged goods until after an inventory is made. All damaged items are taken into consideration in developing your insurance claim.

If you are considering contracting for inventory or repair services, discuss your plans with your insurance provider first.

- Keep all chemicals out of reach of children and pets.
- Read product labels before beginning.

The following formula may work for clothing that can be bleached:

- 4 to 6 Tbsp. Tri-Sodium Phosphate
- 1 cup household cleaner or chlorine bleach
- 1 gallon warm water

Mix well, add clothes, then rinse with clear water. Dry thoroughly.

An effective way to remove mildew from clothing is to wash the area with soap and warm water, rinse, then dry in the sun. If the mildew remains, use lemon juice and salt or a diluted solution of household chlorine bleach.



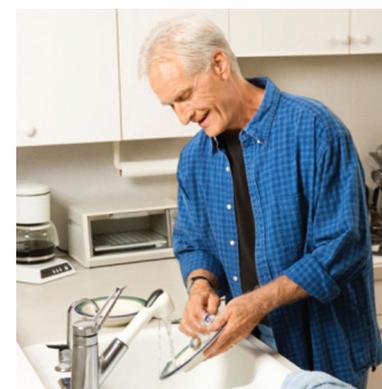
Food

Wash food cans and jars in detergent and water. If labels come off, be sure you mark the contents on the can or jar with a grease pencil. Because of the possibility of contamination do not use canned goods when the cans have bulged or rusted. Do not refreeze frozen food that has thawed.

To remove odor from your refrigerator or freezer, wash the inside with a solution of baking soda and water, or use a solution of one cup of vinegar or household ammonia for each gallon of water. Baking soda in an open container, or a piece of charcoal left in the refrigerator, can also absorb odor.

Cooking Utensils

Your pots, pans, flatware, etc. should be washed in soap and water, rinsed and then polished with a fine-powdered cleaner, such as those used for sinks or tubs. You can polish copper and brass with a special polish, salt sprinkled on a piece of lemon or salt sprinkled on a cloth saturated with vinegar.



Electrical Appliances

Don't use appliances that have been exposed to water or steam until you have a service representative check them. Steam can remove the lubricant from some moving parts. If the fire department turned off your gas or power during the fire, call the electric or gas company to restore these services. **Do not try to do this yourself!** Often a licensed plumber or electrician must make repairs before service can be restored.



Replacing Documents & Records

Begin to fill in the blanks with contact phone numbers. A few local numbers have already been included for you:

Item	Who to Contact	Contact Information
Animal Registration Papers	Humane Society, Veterinarian or Animal Control	
Auto Registration	Dept. of Motor Vehicles or Tax Collector	DMV Customer Service 1-850-617-2000 Tax Collector 863-534-4700
Bank Records, Checks	Your bank, as soon as possible	
Birth, Death and Marriage Certificates	Bureau of Records in appropriate state	Florida 1-850-245-6700 Email archives@dos.state.fl.us
Citizenship papers	U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Services	1-800-375-5283 www.uscis.gov
Credit Cards	Issuing companies, as soon as possible	
Divorce papers	Circuit Court where decree was issued	Polk County 863-534-4488
Driver's License/ID Card	Dept. of Motor Vehicles Tax Collector	DMV Customer Service 1-850-617-2000 Tax Collector 863-534-4700
Income Tax Records	IRS Center or your accountant	IRS in Lakeland 863-904-3399 www.irs.gov
Insurance Policies	Your insurance agent	
Medical Records	Your doctor	
Military Discharge Papers	Dept. of Veterans Affairs	1-800-827-1000 www.va.gov
Mortgage papers	Your lending institution	
Passports	Passport Services	1-877-487-2778
Prepaid Burial Contract		
Social Security or Medicare Cards	Social Security Office	Lakeland 863-683-0611 Winter Haven 863-293-2782
Stocks and Bonds	Issuing Company or your broker	
Titles to Deeds	Property Appraiser's Office	Polk County 863-534-4777
Warranties	Issuing Company	
Wills and/or Trusts	Your Attorney	
OTHER:		

Salvaging Your Belongings

Floors, Furniture and Walls

To remove soot and smoke from walls, furniture and floors use a mild soap or detergent or mix together the following solution:

- 4 to 6 Tbsp. Tri-Sodium Phosphate
- 1 cup household cleaner or chlorine bleach
- 1 gallon of warm water

Wear rubber gloves when cleaning with this solution. Be sure to rinse your walls and furniture with clear warm water and dry thoroughly after washing them with this solution.

NOTE: *It is always a good idea to properly ventilate areas where you are cleaning with harsh chemicals.*

Wash a small area at a time working from the floor up. Then rinse the walls with water immediately. Ceilings should be washed last.

Do not repaint until walls and ceilings are dry.

Wallpaper can also be repaired. Contact your wallpaper dealer or installer for information regarding wallpaper cleaners.



Locks and Hinges

Locks, especially iron locks, should be taken apart and wiped with oil. If locks cannot be removed, squirt machine oil through a bolt opening or keyhole, and work the knob to distribute the oil. Hinges should also be thoroughly cleaned and oiled.



Photographs

Preserving damaged photographs is very important to victims of fires. If photographs are not burned they can usually be saved. Never try to peel apart photographs that have stuck together. Photographs were originally developed in water solutions and then washed.

Soak the photos in clear, clean water and rinse carefully and thoroughly and let stuck photographs separate on their own. If they stay damp they can be damaged by mold. If you have quantities of wet photos, wrap them in plastic wrap, freeze them, then thaw them and wash them a few at a time. After washing the photos, dry them image side up on a smooth hard surface like a glass table or kitchen counter.

Rugs and Carpet

Allow rugs and carpet to dry thoroughly. Throw rugs can be cleaned by beating, sweeping, shampooing or vacuuming. Rugs should be dried as quickly as possible. Lay them flat where they can circulate with warm, dry air. A fan directed toward the rugs will speed drying. Even though the surface may seem dry, remaining moisture can quickly cause the rug to rot. For information on cleaning and preserving carpets, call your carpet dealer, installer or a qualified cleaning professional.



Salvaging Your Belongings

Wood Furniture

Do not dry your furniture in the sun. The wood could warp and twist out of shape. Wipe off mud and dirt. Remove drawers. Let them dry thoroughly so they will not stick when you replace them.

Scrub wood furniture or fixtures with a stiff brush and cleaning solution. Wet wood can decay and mold, so dry thoroughly. **NOTE: Open doors and windows for good ventilation.** If necessary for air flow, turn on your furnace or air conditioner if they are in working order.

If mold forms, wipe the wood with a cloth soaked a solution of **1/2 cup household ammonia and 1/2 cup water**. Then dry the surface and polish with wax or rub the surface with a cloth soaked in a solution of **1/2**



cup turpentine and 1/2 cup linseed oil. *Be careful. Turpentine is combustible and gloves should be worn when working with chemicals.*

You can also rub the wood surface with a fine grade steel wool pad dipped in liquid polishing wax, then clean the area with a soft cloth and buff.

Money Replacement

Handle damaged **bills** as little as possible. Attempt to encase each bill or portion of a bill in plastic wrap for preservation. If money is less than half burned, you can take the remainder to your regional Federal Reserve Bank for replacement. Contact your bank to learn the nearest location. Or you can mail the burned or torn money by registered mail with return receipt requested to:

Department of the Treasury
Bureau of Engraving and Printing
Office of Currency Standards
P.O. Box 37048
Washington, DC 20013

Mutilated or melted coins can be taken to your regional Federal Reserve Bank or mailed by registered mail with return receipt requested to:

Superintendent
U.S. Mint
P.O. Box 400
Philadelphia, PA 19105

If **U.S. Savings Bonds** have been destroyed or mutilated, you must obtain Department of Treasury Form PDF 1048 (I) **from your bank** or www.ustreas.gov and mail to:

Department of the Treasury
Bureau of Public Debt
Savings Bonds Operations
P.O. Box 1328
Parkersburg, WV 26106-1328

Back to Normal

Restoring Power, Water, Gas and Phone

Your property must be inspected by the proper company representative and given approval before utilities can be turned back on. After the inspection, a Polk County building official will either approve or deny whether or not the property is in livable condition. Once approval is made, contact your local utility providers to reconnect service.

If your property is uninhabitable, you must consider a temporary housing solution, such as a rental home or month-by-month apartment rental.

POWER	Contact Information
Bartow Electric	1-863-534-0100
Lakeland Electric	1-863-834-6300
Peace River Electric Cooperative	1-800-282-3824
Progress Energy	1-800-700-8744
TECO	1-813-223-0800
Withlacoochee Electric Cooperative	1-863-687-4396
GAS	
Central Florida Gas	1-800-554-6427
Amerigas	1-863-439-1597
UTILITIES	
Polk County Utilities	1-863-298-4100
CODE ENFORCEMENT	
Polk County Building and Codes	1-863-6080

Polk County Fire Rescue

Polk County Fire Rescue began in the late 1950s. Prior to its inception, many fire calls in the unincorporated areas of the county were not being responded to by any fire department. Homes and other property burned to the ground as volunteer fire departments struggled to operate and raise funds.

Through the efforts of the Board of County Commissioners and a committee from the Polk County Mutual Aid Fire Association, a Fire Ordinance was developed for the unincorporated areas of the county to ensure structure fire calls were responded to. The ordinance would provide for a fire fee being assessed. These funds would provide operating monies for existing volunteer fire departments. It would also help create new departments to provide fire protection in areas that at that time were not protected by a fire department.

The ordinance also provided for the county to enter into contracts with municipalities. These Outside Protection Agreements (OPAs) contracted with cities and towns to cover areas of Polk County immediately adjacent to their municipal boundaries, thereby reducing response time and ensuring that all structure fires in unincorporated areas would be responded to in a timely manner.

Today, Polk County Fire Rescue maintains 32 fire and 13 ambulance stations, has more than 600 fulltime employees and 100 volunteers, with 20 Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT). In 2011, Fire Rescue responded to more than 83,000 incidents in a seven-minute average response time.



Honoring our Fallen Heros

Benjamin Matthew Lang was born on Oct. 2, 1981. A quiet child, full of wonder, he was destined for greatness. A celebrated athlete, he graduated from Lake Wales High School in 2000.

One of the best stories about Ben was told by his fellow firefighters. During Hurricane Charley, weather conditions had become too severe for emergency vehicles to be on the roads. Firefighters were at the station watching the storm through the open bay doors. A dove trying to ride out the storm in a nearby tree fell to the ground unable to fly to safety. While the crew formulated a plan of action, Ben appeared dressed in his yellow rain gear. He went out in the storm to rescue the little bird. Successful on the second attempt, he brought the bird into the bay and placed it on a towel in a dry corner. When the storm subsided, the little dove flew away.

On Aug. 23, 2004, Ben was working when the call came for medical response to a seizure victim. When the fire engine arrived on the scene, paramedics asked if one of the firefighters would ride in the ambulance to help stabilize the patient en route to the hospital. Ben boarded the back of the ambulance as he had done so many times before. On the way to the hospital, rainy weather conditions led to a crash, and unfortunately, Ben lost his life.

Ben's chosen path in life was to give of himself. He chose, like so many other men and women, to lay his life on the line, no fear and no questions asked, to help others.

This booklet is dedicated to the men and women of the fire service who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

For your Records

The Polk County Fire Rescue Commanding Officer will help you fill in the following blanks. Use this information to retrieve documents you may need to provide to your insurance company.

Incident Number

Incident Date/Time

Responding Agency

Polk County Fire Rescue (PCFR)

Responding PCFR Station

Commanding Officer (CO)

CO Contact Information

TO REQUEST A FIRE REPORT:

PCFR Fire Administration Office

863-519-7350

PO Box 1458, Bartow, FL 33831

This booklet was provided to you through the Polk County Board of County Commissioners and Polk County Fire Rescue.

www.polk-county.net

