After the Fire
Helping you Return to Normal
Message from the Chief

We are truly sorry for your loss. We know a fire will change your life in many ways. Knowing where to begin and who can help you is important. Polk County Fire Rescue hopes you find this information useful in your journey to return to normal.

A house fire can cause serious damage. The building and many of the things in your home may have been badly damaged by flames, heat, smoke and water.

You will find that things the fire did not burn are now ruined by smoke, and soggy with water used to put out the flames. Anything you want to save or reuse needs to be carefully cleaned.

The firefighters may have cut holes in the walls of the building to search for hidden flames. They may have even cut holes in the roof to let out the heat and smoke. Cleanup will take time and patience.

If your home had a home fire sprinkler system, you will find little damage from flames, heat, smoke and water. If you plan to rebuild your home, now is the time to think about installing sprinklers.

Robert Weech
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**Polk County Fire Rescue**

**Helping you Return to Normal**

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**Welcome Home**
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 and Polk County Fire Rescue for you to reference during your time of need.

One of the difficulties in this process is knowing where to begin and who to contact after 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, and if necessary, seek professional counseling.

**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 do not have renters or home owners insurance, your recovery from a fire loss may be based on your own resources and help from some of the community organizations below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Red Cross</td>
<td>(863) 294-5941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisis Response Team</td>
<td>(863) 519-3744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(800) 627-5906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BoCC Health and Human Services Division</td>
<td>(863) 534-5387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighthouse Ministries</td>
<td>(863) 687-4076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation Army</td>
<td>(863) 291-5107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Way of Central Florida</td>
<td>(863) 648-1500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 the money you have spent related to your fire loss for your insurance company, and also verify losses claimed on your income tax return.

4. When it is safe to do so, try to locate the following items:
   - Animal registration papers
   - Birth, death, divorce papers and marriage certificates
   - Citizenship papers
   - Eyeglasses, hearing aids or other medical necessities
   - Identification, such as a driver license or Social Security card
   - Income tax records
   - Insurance information
   - Medical information
   - Military discharge papers
   - Mortgage papers
   - Passports
   - Prepaid burial contract
   - Sentimental, non-replaceable items
   - Stocks and bonds
   - Titles to deeds
   - Valuables, such as credit cards, bank books, cash and jewelry
   - Warranties
   - Wills, trusts
Leaving Your Home

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

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

Hiring a professional fire and water damage restoration business 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 the manufacturer’s instructions.
• Wear rubber gloves when using tri-sodium phosphate to clean clothes. Tri-sodium phosphate can be found at most hardware, home improvement or retail stores.
• 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 tablespoons 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.

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.
Salvaging Your Belongings

Food
Wash food cans and jars in detergent and water. If labels come off, be sure you mark the contents and expiration date 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.
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 tablespoons 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.
Salvaging Your Belongings

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, rinse carefully and thoroughly. Allow stuck photographs to 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, then thaw and wash a few at a time. After washing the photos, dry 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 a 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 in a solution of:
- 1/2 cup household ammonia
- 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
- 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.
Salvaging Your Belongings

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](http://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
# Replacing Documents and Records

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>CONTACT INFO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Animal Registration Papers</strong></td>
<td>SPCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(863) 646-7722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Humane Society</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(863) 324-5227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Animal Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(863) 577-1762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Auto Registration</strong></td>
<td>Dept. of Motor Vehicles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(850) 617-2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tax Collector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(863) 534-4700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bank Records, Checks</strong></td>
<td>Your Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Safety Deposit Box</strong></td>
<td>Florida Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(863) 519-7900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Birth, Death and Marriage Certificates</strong></td>
<td>Bureau of Records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:polkcommunications@flhealth.gov">polkcommunications@flhealth.gov</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(863) 519-7900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Citizenship Papers</strong></td>
<td>U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(800) 375-5283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.uscis.gov">www.uscis.gov</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Credit Cards</strong></td>
<td>Issuing Companies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Divorce Papers</strong></td>
<td>10th Judicial Circuit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Polk County</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Circuit Court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>where decree was issued</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(863) 534-4488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Driver License/ID</strong></td>
<td>Dept. of Motor Vehicles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(850) 617-2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tax Collector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(863) 534-4700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income Tax Records</strong></td>
<td>IRS or Accountant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(863) 904-3399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lakeland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(863) 904-3399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Insurance Policies</strong></td>
<td>Your Agent/Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.irs.gov">www.irs.gov</a></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Replacing Documents and Records

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>CONTACT</th>
<th>INFO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medical Records</td>
<td>Your Doctor</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Military Papers</td>
<td>Dept. of Veterans Affairs</td>
<td>(800) 827-1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.va.gov">www.va.gov</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortgage Papers</td>
<td>Your lending institution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passports</td>
<td>Passport Services</td>
<td>(877) 487-2778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepaid Burial Contract</td>
<td>Lakeland</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(863) 683-0611</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Winter Haven</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Security or</td>
<td>Social Security Office</td>
<td>(863) 293-2782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicare Cards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stocks and Bonds</td>
<td>Issuing Company</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>or Broker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Titles to Deeds</td>
<td>Property Appraiser’s Office</td>
<td>(863) 534-4777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warranties</td>
<td>Issuing Company</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wills, Trusts</td>
<td>Your Attorney</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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</table>
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 county or municipal 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.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Power</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bartow Electric</td>
<td>(863) 534-0100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakeland Electric</td>
<td>(863) 834-6300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace River Electric Cooperative</td>
<td>(800) 282-3824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progress Energy</td>
<td>(800) 700-8744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TECO</td>
<td>(813) 223-0800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withlacoochee River Electric Cooperative</td>
<td>(863) 687-4396</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gas</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Florida Gas</td>
<td>(863) 293-2125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ameri Gas</td>
<td>(863) 665-6016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(800) 263-7442</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Utilities</th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polk County Utilities</td>
<td>(863) 298-4100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code Enforcement</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polk County Building and Codes</td>
<td>(863) 534-6054</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Board of County Commissioners Switchboard</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BoCC</td>
<td>(863) 534-6000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(800) 780-5346</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Impact on Children and Families

A catastrophe such as a hurricane, tornado, fire, flood, or violent acts is frightening to children and adults alike. Talking about the event with children can decrease their fear. It is important to explain the event in words the child can understand, and in a way that will not overwhelm them.

Several factors affect a child’s response to a disaster. The way children see and understand their parents’ responses are very important. Children are aware of their parents’ worries most of the time, but they can be very sensitive during a crisis. Parents should talk about their worries to their children, and talk about their abilities to cope with the disaster. Pretending there is no danger will not end a child’s concerns.
Impact on Children and Families

A child’s reaction also depends on how much destruction and/or death he or she witnesses during and after the disaster. If a friend or family member has been killed or seriously injured, or if the child’s school or home has been severely damaged, there is a greater chance that the child will experience difficulties.

A child’s age also affects how they will respond to the disaster. For example, a 6-year-old may show their worries by refusing to attend school, whereas teens may minimize their concerns, but argue more with parents and show a decline in school performance.

Following a disaster, people may develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which is a set of symptoms that can result from experiencing, witnessing, or participating in an overwhelmingly traumatic event. Children with this disorder have repeated episodes in which they re-experience the traumatic event.

Children often relive the trauma through repetitive play. In young children, upsetting dreams of the traumatic event may change into nightmares of monsters, of rescuing others, or of threats to self or others. PTSD rarely appears during the trauma itself. Though the effects can happen soon after the event, the disorder often surfaces several months or even years later.
Impact on Children and Families

After a disaster, parents should be alert to these changes in a child’s behavior

• Refusal to return to school and clinging behavior, including shadowing the mother or father around the house

• Continuing fears about the event, such as fears about being permanently separated from parents

• Sleep disturbances such as nightmares, screaming during sleep and bed-wetting, persisting more than several days after the event

• Loss of concentration and irritability

• Jumpiness or being startled easily

• Behavior problems, for example, misbehaving in school or at home in ways that are not usual for the child

• Physical complaints such as stomachaches, headaches, dizziness for which a physical cause cannot be found

• Withdrawal from family and friends, sadness, listlessness, decreased activity, and preoccupation with the events of the disaster

Professional advice or treatment for children affected by a disaster, especially those who have witnessed destruction, injury or death, can help prevent or minimize PTSD. Parents who are concerned about their children can ask their pediatrician or family doctor to refer them to a child and adolescent psychiatrist for an evaluation.
About 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 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 Polk to ensure structure fire calls were responded to for residents. The ordinance would provide for the assessment of a fire fee.
Polk County Fire Rescue provides advanced life support transport to all residents and visitors of the county. It also provides fire suppression, rescue services and fire prevention services to all of unincorporated Polk and the municipalities of Eagle Lake, Polk City, Mulberry, Lake Hamilton and Hillcrest Heights. Polk County Fire Rescue has nearly 600 full-time employees, and in 2016 responded to about 90,000 calls for service. The county is quite large, with about 2,000 square miles of land.

Fire operations also has oversight of the division’s uniformed EMTs, paramedics and firefighters. Polk County Fire Rescue operates about 50 fire and rescue stations that are equipped to handle a wide range of scenarios.
Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why did firefighters break windows and cut holes in the roof?

A: As a fire burns, it moves up, down, across, and grows very fast. Breaking windows and cutting holes in the roof is called ventilation. This slows the fire’s growth. It helps get rid of dark smoke that makes it hard for firefighters to see. It helps them fight the fire more quickly. In the end, ventilation can help save lives and property.

Q: Why do firefighters cut holes in walls?

A: Firefighters may cut holes in the walls to make sure that the fire is completely out and not hidden in the walls.

Q: How can I get a copy of the fire report?

A: Call Polk County Fire Rescue Administration at (863) 519-7350 or toll free (800) 780-5346.
Office of Professional Standards

Do you have kind words, a complaint or concern that you would like to share about Polk County Fire Rescue? The Office of Professional Standards within Fire Rescue is the place where residents can provide an assessment of the agency’s overall performance. The office investigates all complaints of performance, and misconduct about the agency or its personnel, as well as commendations to recognize exceptional public service.

Fire Rescue serves Polk’s residents and visitors with courage, integrity and pride. This division is committed to ensuring that its members meet the highest standards of professional conduct. As with any organization of this size, it is prudent that members take measures to ensure the mission of the department meets the requirements and fundamental expectations of the public we serve.

Reach out to the Office of Professional Standards by sending an email to ProfessionalStandards@polk-county.net or calling (863) 534-6550.
Case Information

Bureau of Fire and Arson Investigations

Case number:

Contact number:

Investigator:

Law Enforcement

Case number:

Contact number:

Officer:

Miscellaneous

Property
Insurance company:

Phone number:

Policy number:

Vehicle
Insurance company:

Phone number:

Policy number:

Other:
Final Checklist

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

☐ Contact your local disaster relief service, such as the American Red Cross. They will help you find a place to stay and find food, clothing and medicine.

☐ If you have insurance, contact your insurance company. Ask what you should do to keep your home safe until it is repaired. Ask who you should talk to about cleaning up your home. If you are not insured, try contacting community groups for aid and assistance.

☐ Check with the fire department to make sure your home is safe to enter. Be very careful when you go inside. Floors and walls may not be as safe as they look.

☐ The fire department will tell you if your utilities (water, electricity and gas) are safe to use. If not, firefighters will have your utilities shut off before they leave. Do not try to turn them back on by yourself. This could be dangerous.

☐ Contact your landlord or mortgage company about the fire.

☐ Try to find valuable documents and records.

☐ If you leave your home, call the local police department to let the police know that the site will be vacant.

☐ Begin saving receipts for any money that you spend related to fire loss for the insurance company, and to prove any losses claimed on your income tax.

☐ Check with an accountant or the IRS about special benefits for people recovering from fire loss.
Smoke Alarms Message

When you rebuild your home, be sure to install smoke alarms. Smoke alarms are a key part of a home fire escape plan. When there is a fire, smoke spreads fast. Working smoke alarms give you early warning so you can get outside quickly.

- A closed door may slow the spread of smoke, heat and fire. Install smoke alarms in every sleeping room and outside each separate sleeping area. Install alarms on every level of the home. Install alarms in the basement. Smoke alarms should be interconnected. When one sounds, they all sound.

- Large homes may need extra smoke alarms.

- Test all smoke alarms at least once a month. Press the test button to be sure the alarm is working.

- There are two kinds of alarms. Ionization smoke alarms are quicker to warn about flaming fires. Photoelectric alarms are quicker to warn about smoldering fires. It is best to use both types of alarms in the home.

- A smoke alarm should be on the ceiling or high on a wall. Keep smoke alarms away from the kitchen to reduce false alarms. They should be at least 10 feet (3 meters) from the stove.

- People who are hard-of-hearing or deaf can use special alarms. These alarms have strobe lights and bed shakers.

- Replace the batteries when you change your clocks for Daylight Saving Time.

- Replace all smoke alarms when they are 10 years old.

Contact the Polk County Fire Rescue Public Education Unit at (863) 519-FIRE (3473) if you would like more tips.
The Media
Local media will often show up on fire scenes or other disaster scenes. They will ask to speak to you or other witnesses. It is important to know that no one is required to speak to the media unless they wish to. If you do not wish to speak to the media, the Public Information Officer or Fire Officer in command of the scene can be notified of your wishes and will ensure that you are not harrased.
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.

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<th>Incident Number</th>
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<th>Responding Agency</th>
<th>Polk County Fire Rescue</th>
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<th>Responding PCFR Station</th>
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<th>Commanding Officer (CO)</th>
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<th>CO Contact Information</th>
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To request a fire report: (863) 519-7350
PCFR administration office PO Box 1458, Bartow, FL 33861