



## Did the power, gas and water get turned off? How can I have these reconnected?

The Fire Officer in charge may have needed to disconnect power, water and gas for safety reasons during the fire.

If you are insured, your insurance company can arrange for these services to be reconnected. If you are not, you will need to organise it yourself by phoning each supplier and tradesperson.

The suppliers of your power, water and gas will need to send qualified tradespeople to inspect and repair any damage to your services, and arrange for them to be reconnected.

## Why is the media here?

The media often reports on fires in their news bulletins. If a reporter approaches you for an interview, you can decide if you want to speak to them or not. If you agree to be interviewed, you can discuss with them beforehand the kind of questions they will ask so you know what to expect. You can also ask a Fire Officer to help you or act as a facilitator.

If you feel uncomfortable about any part of the interview, let the reporter know you do not want to continue. If the cause of the fire has not yet been found and is still under investigation, it is best not to discuss anything with the media.

## I need to talk to someone, who can I turn to?

A house fire is a traumatic experience that may cause you mental and emotional pain, this is completely normal, but you need to think about how you and the rest of your family will cope. It is important that you ask for help and talk to someone about what you are going through such as family, friends or a counsellor.

The DFES Chaplain can offer support to you and your family. The Fire Officer in charge may call the Chaplain to your house to provide you with immediate emotional support and help you make a plan for the future. There are a number of organisations that have round the clock help lines you can call.

## 24 hour support numbers:

**Crisis Care** (08) 9223 1111

**The Samaritans** (08) 9381 5555

**Lifeline** 13 11 14

Your Fire Officer in charge is \_\_\_\_\_

They are from \_\_\_\_\_ Fire Station

on \_\_\_\_\_ shift

Their phone number is \_\_\_\_\_

Your Fire Officer in charge will help you by ticking the boxes that you have talked about that you now need to follow up:

If you are insured:

- Contact your insurance company

Your insurance company will look after:

- emergency accommodation
- emergency food and clothing
- contacting a company to clean up the damage
- getting water, gas and electricity checked and reconnected

Your insurance company will provide advice on:

- who to contact to secure your home
- when the insurance assessor will come to your home
- when you can contact tradespeople to fix your home

If you are not insured or your policy does not cover, contact:

- emergency agencies for accommodation, food and clothing
- a company to secure your house
- counselling and support agencies (including DFES Chaplain)
- a company to clean up the damage
- an electrician to repair damage and reconnect electricity
- a plumber to repair damage and reconnect water and gas
- a company to fix your home.

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# PICKING UP THE PIECES...

## WHAT YOU CAN DO AFTER A FIRE AT YOUR HOME



### Disclaimer

The information contained in this guide is provided by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) voluntarily as a public service. This guide has been prepared in good faith and is derived from sources believed to be reliable and accurate at the time of publication. Nevertheless, the reliability and accuracy of the information cannot be guaranteed and DFES expressly disclaims liability for any act or omission done or not done in reliance on the information and for any consequences, whether direct or indirect, arising from such act or omission. This brochure is intended to be a guide only and readers should obtain their own independent advice and make their own necessary inquiries.



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If a fire has damaged or destroyed your home you may feel shocked and confused. It can also be difficult to accept what has happened. This is normal and these feelings will generally fade with time. Meanwhile, there are a number of things you can do to help you get back on your feet.

This brochure will help you know your options, how you can get replacement clothing and work out where you will go if you cannot stay at home. The Fire Officer in charge at the scene can also help you.

### **I don't have anywhere to stay tonight. What will happen to my family and me?**

If your home is insured, call your insurance company as you may be covered for emergency accommodation through your policy.

There are usually after hours phone numbers available. If you are not insured, it may be possible to stay with family or friends.

Other options are to contact the Department of Housing, which can help you find crisis accommodation and assist with longer term housing, or the Department for Child Protection and Family Supports' Crisis Care.

**Department of Housing, Homeless Advisory Service:**  
**free call 1800 065 892**

(between 8am and 5pm Monday to Friday)

**Department for Child Protection and Family Supports,**  
**Crisis Care:**

**(08) 9223 1111 or free call 1800 199 008** (day or night)

### **How does my insurance company become involved?**

If you are the owner of the property you need to notify your insurance company as soon as possible. They will send a representative to estimate the cost of damage and determine a settlement figure.

If you are a tenant and have contents insurance, in addition to telling your landlord or agent about the fire, you should also contact your insurance company.

### **What if I am not insured?**

You will need to organise repairs to your house but remember to rely on family and friends to help you.

### **What about my house, will it be secure overnight?**

If you are the owner of the property you are responsible for organising security of your house while you are waiting for the insurance assessment. Your insurance company will provide you with advice and if a representative is in attendance, they can organise a contractor to make your home secure. If you have any queries, talk to your local police.

If there are areas that may be damaged more by being left out in the open, the State Emergency Service (SES) can fix tarpaulins and tie down loose items. Ask the Fire Officer in charge or Police Officer to organise this, or call the SES on 132 500.



### **Everything has been lost in the fire. How will I feed and clothe my family?**

If you are insured, check with your insurance company as they may be able to help with food and clothing through your policy.

If you are not insured or your insurance does not cover you for this, the Department for Child Protection and Family Support can help with food, clothing, emergency accommodation and other essential needs.

**Department for Child Protection and Family Support:**

**(08) 9222 2555, freecall 1800 622 258**

(between 8am and 5pm Monday to Friday)

**Crisis Care:**

**(08) 9223 1111 or free call 1800 199 008**

(day or night)

### **Can I remove personal items?**

If parts of your house have not been destroyed and the Fire Officer in charge or Fire Investigation Officer tells you it is safe to enter, you may want to get the following items:

- Identification
- Credit cards
- Cheque books
- Legal documents
- Insurance information
- Medications
- Eye glasses
- Hearing or personal aids
- Jewellery, photo albums, DVD's
- Other valuables.

**However, it is best to check with your insurance company before removing any items.**

### **The fire has made a mess of my house. When can I clean it up?**

Firefighters generally use water under pressure to put out a fire.

They make every effort to limit the damage and protect household goods and furniture so you can get back into your home quickly.

If the fire has impacted the inside of your house, some cleaning will probably be required. Check with the Fire Officer in charge, Fire Investigation Officer or Police Officer as to when the clean-up process can start. If there is an investigation or evaluation occurring there may be some areas you cannot clean to begin with. You should also check with your insurance company to see if your policy allows for commercial cleaners.

### **What is the Fire Investigation Officer's role?**

When the Fire Officer in charge of an incident cannot find out what started the fire they may call in the Fire Investigation Officer.

If someone has been seriously injured or died in the fire the police will also attend.

It is the responsibility of the Fire Investigation Officer or Police Officer to make sure your house is secure while the investigation is occurring. They will put barrier tape around your home, so people do not enter as it may be not be safe and could compromise the investigation.

If you need to go into your home in this situation a Police Officer or the Fire Investigation Officer may go with you. Once the investigation is finished they will give control of your house back to you. In many circumstances it may not be possible for you to access the home whilst the investigation is occurring.

### **What is the role of the Police Arson Squad?**

The Police Arson Squad will attend if requested by the Fire Investigation Officer. They regularly work in conjunction with the fire services and will go to a fire if the cause is considered to be suspicious or deliberate; cannot be determined; or if someone has died.