

Caroline County Department of Fire-Rescue & Emergency Management

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After the Fire

This information has been prepared by the Caroline County Department of Fire & Rescue, to assist the citizens of Caroline County who have had a fire. This information is designed to help you, the property owner, overcome the confusion and understand the procedures used by your local Fire Department.

Fire Department Activities

Ventilation

Even a small fire can rapidly fill a house with heat, smoke and toxic gases. These products can endanger trapped occupants, cause damage in areas not effected by the fire and hamper fire fighting operations. Firefighters will frequently remove the heat and smoke by opening or removing windows, using large fans and sometimes removing skylights or cutting holes in roofs. These activities will allow for a prompt control of the fire and minimize damage to your home and possessions.

Locating Hidden Fires

Firefighters will often remove a section of sheetrock on the interior walls to inspect for fire spread inside the walls. If this is not done, a small fire can go undetected and result in a second fire that is more damaging than the initial fire. Unfortunately, in order to properly extinguish a fire, firefighters may cause some damage. Be assured that many precautions are taken to protect your property and limit damage. The Fire Department is always available to answer any questions you may have about your fire.

Salvage

When at all possible, the firefighters will cover or remove your furniture and other valuables to prevent further damage by smoke and/or water.

Before leaving the scene, the Fire Department will protect your home as much as possible, by removing water and debris as well as covering broken windows and ventilation openings with plastic. The Fire Department however, does not insure that the structure is safe for habitation prior to leaving.

Investigation

Every fire in Caroline County is investigated by the Fire Department. When additional expertise is needed, assistance is requested from the Virginia Department of State Police. Any suspicious fires are investigated by the Sheriff's

Office. The primary purpose of an investigation is to determine the cause of the fire and to prevent a similar fire in the future. Your assistance is a very important part of the origin and cause determination. For assistance in obtaining copies of fire reports contact the Department of Fire - Rescue at (804) 633-9831.

Homeowner Activities

Smoke Detector

After a fire, it is very important to assure that your smoke detector is still in good working order. If your unit is not working properly, or if you do not have one, the Fire Department will provide you with one. Ask the fire officer about the smoke detector program.

Local Help and Assistance

The Red Cross can provide emergency shelter, food and clothing. If needed contact:

Rappahannock Area Chapter of the American Red Cross at 1-540-735-0500 or the

Caroline County Communications Center 24-hour non-emergency number (804) 633-4357

At your request the fire officer in charge can call the Red Cross for you before leaving the scene.

Insurance

Your insurance agent should be contacted as soon as possible. The agent can assist with advice about securing your home and beginning the restoration process. The agent can also inform you of the expenses your insurance will and will not cover before you begin any work.

The insurance company will require an itemized list of all contents and personal belongings. You should start this list as soon as possible. Do not throw anything away until you have been advised by your insurance company.

Any losses not covered by insurance could qualify for a tax deduction. Contact the Internal Revenue Service for information.

Cleanup

Whether your property is insured or not, consider engaging the services of a reputable commercial firm that specializes in after-fire cleanup. Do-it-yourself cleaning techniques may increase damage or at best be only partly successful.

Contractor and service firms that specialize in the treatment, repair and restoration of fire, smoke and related damage are likely to be listed in the yellow pages of the telephone book under the heading "Fire and Water Damage

Restoration.” Choose a contractor licensed by the State. These contractors are insured, can provide customer references and have good credit ratings. Select a contractor who gives a complete written description of the work to be done.

Take Measures to Prevent Additional Damages

If your loss is so severe that you must make arrangements to live elsewhere, secure your property before leaving. If doors and windows are intact, properly close and lock them to prevent unauthorized entry into the property. Doors and windows that have been burned should be boarded up.

In cold weather, if heat cannot be restored to the structure immediately, drain all water lines and water heaters. Put antifreeze in all sinks, toilet bowls and the traps. Be sure to let all water out of the toilet tank.

Restoring Utilities

Utilities, whether electric, gas or oil, should only be restored by a qualified person. The electrical inspection is approved by the Building Inspector.

Heating equipment involved in a fire should be inspected and serviced. Contractors are listed in the yellow pages under “Heating Contractors.”

Chimney Fires

If there has been a fire in your chimney, you should not use the fireplace or wood stove until the chimney has been cleaned and inspected by a qualified person. Contractors can be found in the yellow pages under “Chimney Builders and Repairers” and “Chimney Cleaning.”

Damaged Documents and Records

Copies of deeds, marriage and divorce records can be obtained from:

Circuit Court Clerk
P.O. Box 309
Bowling Green, VA 22427
Telephone: (804) 633-5800

Copies of birth and death certificates can be obtained from:

Virginia Department of Health
Bureau of Vital Statistics
Telephone: (804) 786-6228

If your house has substantial damage or has been destroyed by fire, contact the Commissioner of Revenue’s office for possible adjustments to real estate taxes. Their telephone number is (804) 633-9834.

Food

If you are without power, make arrangements to move frozen food as soon as possible. Many freezers will stay cold enough to keep food for 24 hours. Once the food is out, rinse out the freezer and prop the door open with a rolled towel or foam padding block to assure ventilation and prevent mildew and offensive odors. Refrigerators should be emptied, cleaned and propped open as well.

Do not refreeze vegetables that have completely thawed. Refreeze only if ice crystals are still in the vegetables themselves.

The outside of food cans or jars should be washed in detergent and water. If the labels come off, mark them with a grease pencil. Do not use bulged, dented or rusted cans, as they may cause food poisoning.

If there is any question as to whether any foodstuffs are safe to consume, contact:

Virginia Cooperative Extension Office Telephone: (804) 633-6550

Damaged Money

Any damaged currency that is clearly more than one-half of the original note can be exchanged through your local bank.

In cases where less than one-half of the note is identifiable, the currency must be examined before exchange is made. Information is available from the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, telephone (804) 697-8000. Ask for the pamphlet "Preparation and Redemption of Mutilated U.S. Paper Currency" printed by the Department of Treasury, Bureau of Engraving and Printing. It is very important that you do not disturb the fragments or remains any more than is absolutely necessary.

The following County departments can be contacted to provide additional information or assistance:

Department of Fire & Rescue	(804) 633-9831
Building Inspector	(804) 633-4303
Health Department	(804) 633-5465
Social Services	(804) 633-5071
Sheriffs Office	(804) 633-5400

This information is provided in cooperation with the following volunteer fire and rescue organizations that are proud to serve the citizens of our County!

Fire Departments:

Bowling Green Volunteer Fire Department
Ladysmith Volunteer Fire Department

Port Royal Volunteer Fire & Rescue
Sparta Volunteer Fire Department
Frog Level Volunteer Fire Department
Upper Caroline Volunteer Fire & Rescue

Rescue Squads:

Bowling Green Volunteer Rescue Squad
Ladysmith Volunteer Rescue Squad
Frog Level Volunteer Rescue Squad