

# Brooklyn

AFTER THE FIRE



INSTRUCTION BOOKLET

Because we care

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# After the Fire

## Letter from the Chief

Dear Citizen,

The Brooklyn Fire Department strives to serve the community, its citizens, and its businesses, by saving lives and property. Firefighters are familiar with the devastation and emotional trauma resulting from fire. We recognize that generally, those who experience a fire are not. The difficult period directly after a fire is confusing and traumatic. We recognize this and have created a booklet to assist you through this trying and tragic period.

While firefighters are on scene they will attempt to assist you and your family as best as they can. After they leave questions may arise. Our hope is that, by referring to this booklet, a number of your concerns may be addressed. A list of important resources and telephone numbers are also included to speed your recovery from this unexpected event and loss.

If we can help you in any other way, please do not hesitate to call the Brooklyn Fire Department at (216) 749-1212.

Sincerely,

*Joseph F. Zemek*  
*Fire Chief*  
*City of Brooklyn*

# After the Fire

## General Information

### Telephone Numbers

American Red Cross	(216) 431-3010
Animal control	(216) 741-1213
Auto Registration and Licenses	(216) 459-9332 or (614) 752-7500
Building Inspections and Permits	(216) 635-4202 or (216) 635-4203
Chamber of Commerce	(216) 288-5484
<b>Community Churches</b>	
• Brooklyn Reformed Church	(216) 749-2024 or (216) 749-4548
• Brooklyn United Church of Christ (Brooklyn Trinity)	(216) 661-0227
• Cleveland Baptist Church	(216) 671-2822
• Church On The Summit	(216) 741-5683
• Dr. Martin Luther King Church	(216) 749-5585
• Harmony Baptist Church	(216) 351-3740
• Saint Elias Church	(216) 661-0404
• Saint Thomas Moore Church	(216) 749-0414
• The Lutheran Church of The Good Sheppard	(216) 661-9898
City Hall	(216) 351-2133
City Services (Waste / refuse collection)	(216) 635-4233
City Service Director	(216) 635-4219
Columbia Gas Co.	(800) 344-4077
Cuyahoga County Health Department	(216) 201-2000
Division of Water – City of Cleveland	(216) 664-2444
Dominion East Ohio Gas Co.	(216) 361-2345
Driver’s Licenses (Department of Public Safety)	(614) 752-7500
Fire Chief’s Office	(216) 635-4226
Fire Department (Administration / non-emergency)	(216) 749-1212
Fire Department Emergency (Fire and EMS)	911
Internal Revenue Service	(216) 522-4048

Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District	(216) 881-6600
Police Administration	(216) 749-1234
Police Emergency	911
Sanitation – Waste Management	(216) 635-4233
Social Security Office	(800) 772-1213
Veterans Administration	(800) 827-1000
Welfare Office	(216) 651-5005

### **Records and Documents**

Records and documents are very important to your wellbeing and can be damaged or destroyed as a result of a fire and / or catastrophic event. For this reason, the Brooklyn Fire Department provides the following list of records and documents, (to guide and remind you), that should be located and or might need to be replaced. Locating these documents will speed up the process of your recovery from this devastating event.

- Driver’s License – Contact the Driver’s License Bureau
- Checks – Contact your bank
- Insurance policies – Contact your insurance company / agent
- Military Discharge papers – Contact the Veterans’ administration
- Passports – Contact US Post Office
- Marriage License – Contact County Courthouse where marriage took place
- Birth Certificates – Contact City Hall where birth occurred
- Divorce Decree - Contact County Courthouse where divorce took place
- Social Security Card(s) – Contact Social Security Office
- Credit Cards – Contact issuing company
- Titles or Deeds – Contact County Courthouse where property is located
- Stocks – Contact issuing company or your Broker
- Will(s) – Contact your lawyer
- Medical Records / Prescriptions – Contact your physician or pharmacy
- Warranties – Contact the issuing company
- Income tax records – Contact the Internal Revenue service
- Auto Registration / Title – Contact the auto registration bureau
- Aging and adult services – Contact the Red Cross
- Welfare Office and Food Stamps – Contact the Welfare Office

**\*Note: It is wise to store all important documents and records in an approved container that is specifically designed for that purpose**

## **Important Names / Telephone Numbers**

Insurance Company \_\_\_\_\_

Insurance Adjuster \_\_\_\_\_

Contractor \_\_\_\_\_

Plumber \_\_\_\_\_

Bank(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Doctor(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Dentist \_\_\_\_\_

Pharmacy \_\_\_\_\_

School(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Veterinarian \_\_\_\_\_

## **Housing Assistance**

Contact the Red Cross, Disaster relief Services if you are in need of temporary housing. They will also be able to assist you (or direct you to the proper agency) with other services and / or needs.

Check with your insurance agent, your coverage may pay for temporary housing.

### **IF YOU MUST LEAVE**

This may be your decision or that of the Fire Department or building inspector if the building is unsafe. If you must leave:

- Contact the Police Department 216-749-1234 so that they can keep an eye on the property during your absence.
- Try to locate the following items to take with you:
  - All important identification
  - Vital medications such as insulin or heart medications
  - Eyeglasses, hearing aids, or other personal aids

- Valuables, such as money, insurance policies, credit cards, jewelry, checkbook, etc.

If you feel that you will be out of your home / building for an extended period of time, you may want to notify the following of your relocation:

- Post office to forward your mail to the new address
- Your bank(s)
- Utility companies
- Social Security administration
- Insurance company
- Fire Department (if the fire is under investigation)
- Newspapers and / or magazine that you may subscribe to

If there is structural damage to your building, check with the City Building Commissioner (216-635-4202) to see if there is a need for a permit before attempting repairs and / or remodeling.

## **INSURANCE**

### **INSURED**

Contact your insurance agent as soon as possible after a fire. If you are renting property, you must contact the property owner as well. Your insurance agent may be able to help you in making immediate repairs, or help in securing your home / building. If you cannot reach your agent and you need professional assistance in boarding up your home, a general contractor, or fire damage restoration firm can help (the Fire Department can, upon your request, offer some of these firms' contact information).

Remove as many of your valuables as possible if you must stay elsewhere. Be sure to inventory the property that you remove. Also, check for important documents that may have been damaged.

## **UNINSURED**

If your property is not insured, or if your insurance will not cover all of your losses, contact your family lawyer. You may have to depend on your own resources and the help from other agencies to recover your losses.

The American Red Cross, Salvation Army, local church groups, or civic organization, (such as the Rotary or Christian Action), may be able to provide assistance.

Some losses, due to fire, are tax deductible for your federal income tax. Be sure to keep receipts for all monies spent on repairs, restorations, remodeling, replacing damaged property, and covering living expenses. These receipts will be helpful in calculating the loss for your yearly tax return.

Check with your local Internal Revenue Service office for *PUBLICATION 547, TAX INFORMATION ON DISASTERS, CASUALTY LOSSES AND THEFTS*. A quick refund is possible if you file a *Form 1045, APPLICATION FOR TENTATIVE REFUND*. Check with the IRS first.

## **MONEY REPLACEMENT**

### **PAPER CURRENCY**

NOTE: Handle burned money as little as possible, attempt to encase each bill, or portion of the bill, in plastic wrap for preservation.

If the money that you have kept in your home is only half burned, or less, you can check with any local commercial bank or take the remainder to the Federal Reserve Bank. You can also mail the remainder of the money, in plastic wrap, via first class mail to:

United States Treasury Department  
Main Treasury Building, Room 1123  
Washington D.C. 20220

## **COINS**

Mutilated or melted coins, can be taken to the Federal Reserve Bank, or mailed via first class to:

United States Mint  
5<sup>th</sup> and Arch Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19015

## **SAVINGS BONDS**

If your United States Savings Bond(s) have been mutilated or destroyed, write to:

United States Treasury Department  
Bureau of Loans and Currency  
537 West Clark Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60605  
Attention: Bond Consultant

Be sure to include the name(s) and address on the bonds, their approximate date or time period when they were purchased, their denomination(s), and the approximate number of each.

## **SECURING THE SITE**

The Fire Department will remove as much water and debris as possible from the fire building before turning the structure over to the owner. It is the responsibility of the owner to see that the property is secure after the Fire Department leaves the scene. In the event that the Fire Department feels that the structure is unsafe, we will secure the property as best as we can.

## **CAUTIONS**

Household wiring, which may have been water damaged, should be checked by a licensed electrician before the current is turned back on.

The Fire Department will make sure that the utilities (water, electric, and/or natural gas) are either safe to use, or are disconnected before we leave the scene. The utility companies will not make repairs on the customer's side of the meters; therefore, a private licensed contractor

will have to be contacted, by the building's owner (home owner) to make repairs. All repairs of this nature require permits and inspections by proper building department personnel. The utility companies *will not* restore your utilities until the repairs are made and approved by the building department. **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO RECONNECT UTILITIES YOURSELF!**

Be watchful for any structural damage that may have been caused by the fire. The Fire Department will secure all properties that we feel are a safety hazard.

Any food and/or beverages that were in contact with smoke, soot, or heat should be discarded. Wash all canned goods and jars in soapy water. If the labels come off, remark the contents with a permanent marker. Do not use any canned goods that are bulging, dented, or rusty. **YOU ARE UNSURE, DISCARD IT!**

Any medications that had contact with smoke, soot, or heat should also be thrown out. If you are uncertain about the reusability of the medication, contact the prescribing physician or pharmacist for replacement, and discard it.

If your power has been turned off KEEP DOORS TO YOUR REFRIGERATOR AND FREEZER CLOSED! Refrigerators and freezers left closed will hold their temperatures for a short time. If the food becomes spoiled or thawed, THROW IT OUT! (for more information on saving foods, see salvage hints).

If you have a safe, **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO OPEN IT!** Hot gases could burst into flames when the door is opened, wait until the outside of the safe has cooled.

### **SALVAGE HINTS**

The following salvage information was furnished by the Fire Center of The University of Minnesota as reprinted by the Federal emergency Management Agency, U.S. Fire Administration.

These hints are meant as an economical way to clean up, or salvage items, after a small fire. Be sure to contact your insurance company to see exactly what they will cover. Also, consider taking pictures of the damage.

## **CAUTION**

Several cleaning solutions contain the substance known as *Tri-Sodium Phosphate*. *Tri-Sodium Phosphate* is a caustic substance commonly used as a cleaning agent. Any of these products containing *Tri-Sodium Phosphate* should be used with care and extreme caution, and kept out of the reach of children and pets. Wear rubber gloves when using these products. Read the label and instructions on the container before using. *Tri-Sodium Phosphate*, (also known as TSP), can be purchased in your local hardware, paint, or local home improvement store.

- Vacuum all surfaces
- Change and clean all furnace and air conditioner filters
- Seal off the room that you are working in, with plastic to keep soot from moving from one location to another. Try to keep the windows closed.

## **WALLS AND CEILINGS**

To remove soot and smoke damage from painted walls, mix together four (4) to six (6) tablespoons of *Tri-Sodium Phosphate* in one (1) gallon of water.

Wash a small area at a time, working from the floor up. Do ceilings last. Rinse thoroughly with clean water. **DO NOT REPAINT UNTIL THE SURFACE(S) IS COMPLETELY DRY!** It is advisable that you use a smoke sealer (available where paint is sold) before painting.

Wallpapered walls usually cannot be restored. Check with a local wallpaper dealer.

## **CARPETS AND RUGS**

Carpets and rugs should be allowed to dry thoroughly. Throw rugs can be cleaned by beating, sweeping, vacuuming, and shampooing. Rugs should be dried as quickly as possible. Lay them flat and expose them to a circulation of warm, dry air. A fan turned on the rugs will speed the drying process. Make sure that the rugs are thoroughly dry. Even though the surface may seem dry, moisture remaining at the base of the fiber can quickly rot the rug. For more information on cleaning and preserving carpets, call a local carpet dealer.

## **MATTRESSES**

Reconditioning an innerspring mattress at home is impossible to do. However, your mattress might be able to be renovated by a company that builds or repairs them.

If you must use your mattress temporarily, put it out in the sun to dry, and then cover it with plastic sheeting. It is impossible to remove the odor of smoke out of pillows. The foam and feathers hold the odor in.

## **WOOD FURNITURE**

Do not use chemicals on furniture. A very inexpensive product called *FLAX SOAP* (available in hardware and paint stores) is a most efficient product to use on wood, (including kitchen cabinets). If you do not have *FLAX SOAP*:

- Wipe off with *Borax*, dissolved in hot water, to remove mildew.
- To remove white spots or film, rub the surface with a clean cloth soaked in a solution of 50% water and 50% vinegar. Then wipe dry with a clean dry cloth and polish with furniture wax.
- You can also rub the wood surface with steel wool in liquid polishing wax, wipe with a clean dry soft cloth, and then buff.

NOTE: wet wood can decay and mold, so dry well, **BUT DO NOT DRY IN DIRECT SUNLIGHT**, as the wood will warp and twist out of shape.

## **WOOD AND VINYL FLOORS**

Use *FLAX SOAP* on wood and vinyl floors. It will take 4 to 5 applications. Then strip and rewax. When water gets underneath linoleum, it will cause odors and warp the floor. If this has happened remove the linoleum and thoroughly dry the plywood sub flooring (usually made of plywood). Call your linoleum dealer for suggestions on how to loosen the adhesive without damaging the floor covering and sub flooring. Be sure to let the sub flooring dry thoroughly before replacing the linoleum.

## **LOCKS, HINGES, AND SMALL APPLIANCES**

Steam from a fire will remove lubrication from these items. They should be taken apart and lubricated. It is suggested that these items be taken to a repair shop. If locks cannot be removed, squirt machine oil through the bolt opening or keyhole and work the knob to distribute the oil. Hinges should also be removed, thoroughly cleaned, and oiled.

## **COOKING UTENSILS**

Your pots, pans, flatware, etc., should be washed with a fine-powdered cleanser. You can polish copper and brass with special polish, or salt sprinkled on a cloth saturated in vinegar.

## **REFRIGERATORS AND FREEZERS**

To remove odors from your refrigerator or freezer, wash the inside with a solution of baking soda and water, or use one cup of vinegar, or household ammonia mixed with one gallon of water. Some baking soda in an open container, or a piece of charcoal, can be placed in the refrigerator, or freezer, to absorb odors.

**Caution:** When cleaning or discarding any refrigerator or freezer, be sure to either remove the doors, or secure them against closing on a young child.

## **FOOD**

If your freezer has stopped running you can still salvage the frozen food:

- Keep the freezer closed. Your freezer has enough insulation to keep foods frozen for at least one day.
- You may also remove your food to a neighbor's house, or a commercial freezer company. If moving the foods, wrap it in newspaper and blankets, or use insulated containers (boxes).

If your foods have thawed, observe the following procedures:

- Fruits can be refrozen if they still taste and smell good. They can also be eaten if they are not spoiled.
- Vegetables should not be refrozen if they have thawed completely. Refreeze only if there are ice crystals on them. If vegetables have thawed and cannot be used soon, throw them away.
- Meats may be refrozen (if ice crystals remain). Cook thoroughly before eating the meats. If any odor is present throw the meat away, bacteria forms rapidly.

### **CLOTHING**

Smoke and soot can sometimes be removed from clothing. The following formula will often work for clothing that can be bleached:

4-6 teaspoons of *Tri-Sodium phosphate*

1 cup Lysol or any household chlorine bleach

1 gallon of water

Mix all ingredients well – add clothes, rinse with clean water, and dry well

To remove mildew, wash the fresh stain with soap and water. Then rinse and dry the article(s) in the sun. If the stain is not gone, use lemon juice and salt, or a diluted solution of household chlorine bleach. Test the colored garments before using any treatments! Take wool, silk, and / or Rayon garments to the dry cleaners as soon as possible.

### **LEATHER AND BOOKS**

Wipe your leather goods with a damp cloth, then with a dry cloth. Stuff your purses and shoes with newspapers to retain their shapes. Leave your suitcases open. All leather goods should be dried away from heat and the sun. When your leather goods are dry, clean with *saddle soap*. You can use steel wool or a suede brush on suede. Rinse leather and suede jackets in cold water and dry away from heat or the sun.

## **HOW TO USE 9-1-1**

1. 9-1-1 can be dialed from any telephone in the County area.
2. When calling; state the nature of the emergency, the address of the emergency.
3. Give the number of the phone that you are calling from
4. Give your name.
5. REMAIN CALM and answer all questions that the 9-1-1 operator (dispatcher) is asking you. The dispatcher wants to help you and dispatch the proper resources; he/she may not be able to help you, if you are too excited.
6. Speak clearly; do not shout in to the phone.
7. Do not hang up until the 9-1-1 dispatcher has done so.

## **FIRE PREVENTION TIPS**

1. Install and maintain smoke detectors. They are best installed on the ceilings to adjacent sleeping areas.
2. Avoid overloading electrical outlets. This condition can cause fires due to excessive amounts (3 or more) of appliances in the same outlet.
3. Have an escape plan for every person in the house, practice it! Have two (2) ways out (either through a door or window).
4. Have a meeting place to go to once everyone is outside. For the children's sake call it "home base" or "safe zone" because they respond to this as well as identify with the concept. This should be a place away from the home, preferably; a mailbox, neighbors porch, etc.
5. If a fire occurs **GET OUT!** Call the Fire Department. Fires grow quickly! A small fire can, in less than seconds, become a raging, choking inferno. Leave fighting the fire to the professionals. The sooner the Fire Department is notified, the sooner they will be able to get on scene and begin extinguishment. This will have an impact on preventing damage loss.
6. Post your address and telephone numbers by the telephone for baby sitters, guests, and even yourself to use in case of an emergency. 9-1-1 is uncomplicated; however, you may even forget your own name and address under extreme stress.
7. If a pan fire occurs, put a lid or cover on it. Tip the lid so it shields your arm from the flames as you place it. Turn off the heat source. NEVER throw water or any towel on a pan fire. Call the Fire Department!

## **HOW YOU CAN HELP IF THE EMERGENCY PERSONNEL ARE AT YOUR HOME**

1. If it is a fire stay away from the house or apartment.
2. Tell arriving firefighters if there are any other persons in the structure.
3. If an animal is still in the structure, let the arriving firefighters know. Avoid using the animal's name, or a term used for the animal. This leads to confusion, resulting in a firefighter searching for what he / she thinks is a human.
4. Remain as calm as possible. Stay with friends or other family members, please DO NOT leave the location unless instructed to do so.
5. If you accompany an ambulance to a hospital via your personal vehicle, obey ALL traffic laws.
6. If you are instructed to not enter the structure after a fire, DO NOT enter.

## **ABOUT OUR OPERATION**

Here are a few common questions people have asked us.

### **WHY ARE WINDOWS BROKEN AND / OR HOLES CUT IN THE ROOF?**

As fire burns, the heat, flames and toxic smoke move upward then outward. The superheated smoke can ignite rapidly when a door is opened. This can cause an entire structure to become involved in fire. Cutting of holes, and/or breaking windows ventilates (releases those superheated gases and smoke. This prevents flashover and/or a backdraft situation and enables firefighters to enter the structure safely and find the seat of the fire quicker.

### **WHY ARE HOLES CUT IN WALLS?**

We have to be absolutely sure that the fire is completely out and that no fire has extended into walls, or other hidden spaces. We will do the least amount of damage necessary to ensure that everything is safe.

### **WHY DOES A FIRE ENGINE RESPOND TO MEDICAL EMERGENCIES WHEN THERE IS NO FIRE?**

If the Paramedic rescue squad (ambulance) is out on another call (or if the need for extra manpower exists) the engine will respond, so that the patient can receive the needed care as soon as possible.

### **IS IT POSSIBLE TO OBTAIN A COPY OF THE FIRE REPORT?**

Yes. A fire report is a public document. You can request a copy by calling the Brooklyn Fire Department (216-749-1212) and talking to an officer or the Chief. You can pick up the requested copy at the Fire Station (located at 8400 Memphis Road) during normal business hours, Monday through Friday (excluding holidays) between the hours of 8 am until 4 pm.

**A final note:** The Brooklyn Fire Department is here for you. It is made up of State Certified Firefighters who also do dual roles as Certified Emergency Medical Technicians, and Paramedics. Our ambulances are staffed with Firefighter/Paramedics and are fully equipped to handle any medical or injury request.

We are here to serve. Our greatest concern and commitment is for the safety and well-being of the citizens who work, travel and live in Brooklyn.

If you have any questions or comments about the operations of the Brooklyn Fire Department, call us.

**DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**TIME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**INCIDENT NUMBER:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS OF THE FIRE:** \_\_\_\_\_

For additional information please call the Fire Department Administration at  
(216) 635-4226