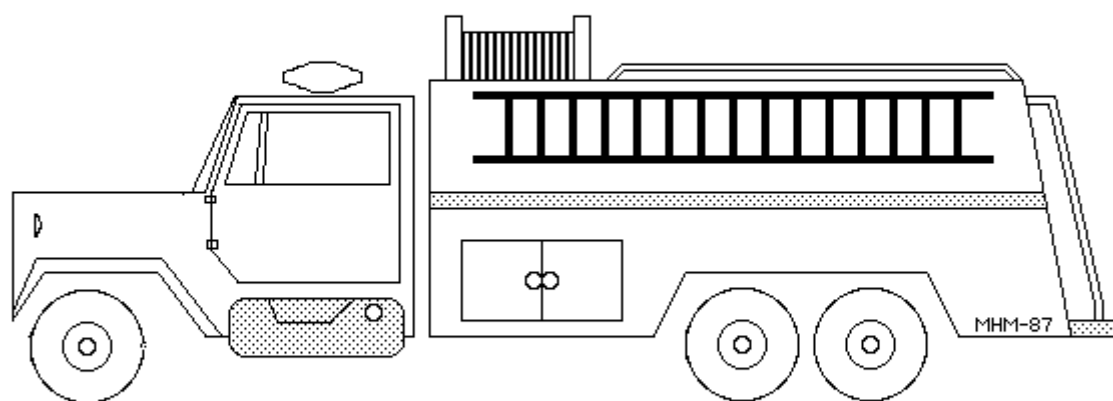


AFTER THE FIRE



A TIME OF DECISION

WEST COUNTY CHIEFS' ASSOCIATION

Dear Citizen,

As firefighters, our primary concern is to protect the lives and property of West County residents; as firefighters we regularly see the devastation a fire can leave behind. The trauma of experiencing a fire, no matter how large or small, can only be surpassed by the confusion of what to do "once the fire is out" and the firefighters have left.

Once the fire is out, the damage becomes another complete task and a statistic for us; however, for you the owner, it is a nightmare filled with uncertainties that must be dealt with immediately.

We at the Fire Departments understand what you are going through and want to assist you in any way we can. We have made available to you this booklet which includes information and suggestions that may help you now and through the coming days. This information has been compiled from various governmental agencies.

If there is anything we can help you with - Please don't hesitate to call us.

Kenneth J. Kovacs, President
West County Chiefs' Association

A.F. Dobler Hose & Ladder Company * Albion Fire Department
Cranesville Volunteer Fire Department * Lake City Fire Company
Platea Volunteer Fire Department * Springfield Volunteer Fire Department

AFTER THE FIRE

Table of Contents:

1. [Cautions](#)
 2. [Securing the site](#)
 3. [Assistance](#)
 4. [If you must leave](#)
 5. [INSURANCE](#)
 6. [MONEY REPLACEMENT](#)
 7. [RECORDS AND DOCUMENTS](#)
 8. [SALVAGE HINTS](#)
 9. [Walls and Ceilings](#)
 10. [Wood Furniture](#)
 11. [Wood and Vinyl Floors](#)
 12. [Carpets and Rugs](#)
 13. [Mattresses](#)
 14. [Locks, Hinges, small appliances](#)
 15. [Cooking Utensils](#)
 16. [Refrigerators and Freezers](#)
 17. [Food](#)
 18. [Clothing](#)
 19. [Leather and Books](#)
 20. [ABOUT OUR OPERATION](#)
 21. [TELEPHONE DIRECTORY](#)
 22. [FIRE DEPARTMENT ADDRESSES AND PHONE NUMBERS](#)
-

AFTER THE FIRE

BE SURE TO NOTIFY YOUR INSURANCE AGENT/COMPANY AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!

1. Cautions:

- Household wiring which may have been water damaged, should be checked by an electrician before the current is restored.
- Be watchful for any structural damage caused by the fire. The Fire Department will secure property we believe to be a safety hazard.
- Any food or beverages that had contact with smoke, soot, or heat should be discarded. Wash your canned goods and jars in soapy water. If the labels come off - be sure to remark them with a black magic marker only if you know the contents. Don't use canned goods if the cans have bulged, are dented, or show rust. **IF YOU ARE UNSURE . . . THROW IT OUT!**
- Any medications that had contact with smoke, soot, or heat should also be thrown out. If you are uncertain about the re-usability of the medication - **DISCARD IT.** Notify your physician and/or pharmacist for replacement.
- If your power has been turned off-**KEEP DOORS TO REFRIGERATOR AND FREEZER CLOSED!** Refrigerators and freezers left unopened will hold their temperature for a short time. If your food becomes spoiled or thawed - **THROW IT OUT!**
- If you have a safe - **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO OPEN IT!** Wait until the safe has cooled; otherwise, there is a chance the contents will burst into flames when the door is opened.
- The Fire Department will see that the utilities(water, electric, and natural gas) are either safe to use or are disconnected before we leave. The utility companies will not make repairs on the customers side of the meter; therefore, a private contractor will have to be contacted to make these repairs. All repairs of this nature require permits and inspection by proper building departments. The utility companies will not restore your utilities until the repairs are approved by the building department. **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO MAKE THESE REPAIRS YOURSELF!**

2. SECURING THE SITE:

- The Fire Department will remove as much water and debris as possible from the fire building before turning the building 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 even the Fire Department feels the building is unsafe, we will secure the property as best we can.

3. ASSISTANCE:

- Contact your local disaster relief services agency such as the American Red Cross or the Salvation Army if you are in need of temporary housing. They have other services to help fire victims - give them a call to see if they can assist you in any way.
- If you are insured under a package homeowner's or tenant's policy, a section of your coverage may pay for temporary housing.

4. IF YOU MUST LEAVE:

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

- Contact the local police so they can keep an eye on the property during your absence.
- Try to locate the following items to take with you:
 1. All important identification
 2. Vital medicines such as insulin, or heart medication
 3. Eyeglasses, hearing aids, or other personal aids
 4. Valuables such as money, insurance policies, credit cards, jewelry, check book, etc.
- If you feel you will be out of your home for an extended period of time, you may want to notify the following of your relocation:
 1. Post Office to forward mail
 2. Your bank
 3. Utility companies
 4. Social Security Administration
 5. Insurance company
 6. Fire Department - if the fire is under investigation
 7. Newspapers and magazines you may subscribe to

- If there is structural damage to your building, check with the city building department to see if there is a need for a permit before attempting any repairs.

5. INSURANCE:

INSURED

The first thing to do after a fire, is to contact your insurance company or agent as soon as possible. If you are renting the property, you must also contact the owner. Your insurance agent may be able to help you in making immediate repairs or help in securing your home. If you cannot reach your agent and need professional assistance in boarding up your home, a general contractor or a fire damage restoration firm can be very helpful. Check the yellow pages for such assistance.

Remove as many valuables as possible if you must stay elsewhere. Be sure to inventory the property you remove. Also check for important papers which may have been damaged.

UNINSURED

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

Check with the AMERICAN RED CROSS or SALVATION ARMY, local church groups or civic organizations such as ROTARY, EXCHANGE, or LIONS CLUB for assistance.

Some losses due to fire are tax deductible for your federal income tax. Be sure to keep receipts of money spent for repairs or replacing damaged property and in covering your 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 form 1045, APPLICATION FOR TENTATIVE REFUND - check with the I.R.S. first.

PERSONAL INJURY

If as the result of the fire, you, a friend, or a member of your family is injured and the injuries require more than immediate first aid, contact your health insurance agent for further directions.

6. MONEY REPLACEMENT:

PAPER CURRENCY

NOTE - Handle burned money as little as possible. Attempt to encase each bill or portion of bill in plastic wrap for preservation.

If the money you've kept in your home is only half burned or less, you can check with your local commercial bank or take the remainder to the Federal Reserve Bank, or you can mail the remainder of the money (in plastic wrap) via First Class Mail to:

U.S. Treasury Dept.
Main Treasury Bldg.
Room 1123
Washington, D.C. 20220

COINS

Mutilated or melted coins can be taken to the Federal Reserve Bank or mailed via First Class Registered mail to:

United States Mint
5th and Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19015

SAVINGS BONDS

If your U.S. Savings Bond(s) have been mutilated or destroyed, write to:

U.S. Treasury Dept.
Bureau of Loans and Currency
537 W. Clark Street
Chicago, IL 60605
ATTN: Bond Consultant

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

7. RECORDS AND DOCUMENTS:

Documents and records are very important to your well being and can be damaged or destroyed as a result of a fire. For this reason, the Fire Departments provide the following list of records and documents that should be located and / or replaced. Locating these documents will speed up the process of recovering from a fire.

<u>Item:</u>	<u>Who to Contact:</u>
Auto Registration / Title	Any auto club, notary public, district magistrate, or Dept. of Motor Vehicles.
Bank Book / Check Book	Your Bank
Insurance Policies	Your Insurance Agent
Military Discharge Papers	Veterans Outreach & Assistance: 453-5719 or 1-800-352-0915
Passports	452 - 3333 Ext. 229
Birth Certificates & Death Certificates	Bureau of Vital Statistics: 871 - 4261
Marriage license	452 - 3333 Ext. 264
Divorce Papers	452 - 3333 Ext. 218
Social Security Card	452 - 2231
Credit Cards	Issuing Company
Property Titles / Deeds	County Records Dept. 452 - 3333 Ext. 246
Stocks	Issuing Company or Broker
Wills	Your Lawyer
Prescriptions	Your Physician or Pharmacist
Warranties	Issuing Company
Income Tax Records	1 - 800 - 424 - 1040
Citizenship Papers	1 - 412 -644 - 3356
Welfare Papers / Foodstamps / Access Card	Public Assistance Office 871 - 4441
Aging and Adult Services	459 - 4581

NOTE - It is wise to store all important documents and records in an approved container that is specifically designed for such purposes.

8. 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 and the 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 of the cleaning mixtures contain the substance Tri-Sodium Phosphate. Tri-Sodium Phosphate is a caustic substance used commonly as a cleaning agent. It should be used with care and stored out of the reach of children and pets. It is recommended that you wear rubber gloves when using. Read instructions before you start. (Tri-Sodium Phosphate can be purchased at hardware or paint stores).

- Vacuum all surfaces
- Change and clean air conditioner filters
- Seal off the room in which you are working with plastic to keep soot from moving from one room to another. Also try to keep windows closed.

9. WALLS AND CEILINGS:

To remove soot and smoke from painted wall, mix 4 - 6 tablespoons of tri-sodium phosphate and one gallon of water.

Wash a small area at a time - working from the floor up. Do ceilings last. Rinse thoroughly. **DO NOT REPAINT UNTIL COMPLETELY DRY!** It is advisable that you use a smoke sealer (available at your local paint store) before painting.

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

10. WOOD FURNITURE:

Do not use chemicals on furniture. A very inexpensive product called **FLAX SOAP** (available in hardware and paint stores) is an 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 cloth soaked in 1/2 cup of water and 1/2 cup vinegar solution. Then wipe dry and polish with wax.
- You can also rub the wood surface with 4/0 steel wool in liquid polishing wax, wipe with soft cloth and then buff.
-
- NOTE - Wet wood can decay and mold, so dry well. DO NOT DRY IN DIRECT SUNLIGHT as the wood may warp and twist out of shape.

11. WOOD AND VINYL FLOORS:

Use Flax soap on wood and vinyl floors. It will take 4 to 5 applications. Then strip and re wax. When water gets underneath linoleum, it can cause odors and warp the floor. If this has happened - remove your linoleum. Call your linoleum dealer for suggestions on how to loosen the adhesive without damaging the floor covering. Be sure to let the floor dry thoroughly before replacing it.

12. CARPETS AND RUGS:

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

13. MATTRESSES:

Reconditioning an innerspring mattress at home is nearly impossible. Your mattress can probably 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, 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.

14. LOCKS, HINGES, TYPEWRITERS, SEWING MACHINES, AND OTHER SMALL APPLIANCES:

Steam from a fire removes lubrication from these items. They should be taken apart, and oiled. It is suggested that these items be taken to a repair shop. 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 cleaned and oiled.

15. 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.

16. REFRIGERATORS AND FREEZERS:

To remove odors from your refrigerator or freezer, wash the inside with a solution of baking soda and water or a cup of vinegar or ammonia to 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 water.

CAUTION!

When cleaning or discarding any refrigerator or freezer be sure the doors are removed or secured against closing on a young child!

17. FOOD:

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

- Keep the freezer closed. Your freezer has enough insulation to keep food frozen for at least one day, perhaps more.
- Move your food to a neighbors freezer or a commercial freezer firm. Wrap the frozen food in newspapers or blankets, or use insulated boxes.

If your food has thawed, observe the following procedures:

- Fruits can be refrozen if they still taste and smell good. Otherwise, if the fruits are not spoiled, they can be eaten at once.
- Vegetables should not be refrozen if they have thawed completely. Refreeze them only if they have ice crystals in the vegetables. If your vegetables have thawed and cannot be used soon, throw them out! Don't wait for a bad odor.
- Meats may be refrozen (if ice crystals remain) but cook very thoroughly before tasting. If odor is poor or if you question these foods, throw out, as bacteria multiply rapidly.

18. CLOTHING:

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

Add 4-6 teaspoons trisodium phosphate and 1 cup Lysol (or any household cleaning bleach) to 1 gallon of warm water. Mix 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 in the sun. If the stain isn't gone, use lemon juice and salt, or a diluted solution of chlorine bleach.

TEST COLORED GARMENTS BEFORE USING ANY TREATMENT!

Take wool, silk, or rayon garments to the dry cleaners as soon as possible.

19. 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 shape. Leave your suitcases open. Leather goods should be dried away from heat and sun. When 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 and sun.

Books can be dried by placing them on end with pages separated. Then they should be piled and pressed to prevent the pages from crinkling. Alternating drying and pressing will help prevent mildew from forming, until the books are thoroughly dry. If your books are very damp, sprinkle cornstarch or talc between the pages, leave for several hours, then brush off. A fan turned on the books will help them dry.

20. ABOUT OUR OPERATIONS:

Here are a few common questions people have about our operations.

1. WHY ARE WINDOWS BROKEN OR HOLES CUT IN THE ROOF?

As a fire burns, it moves upward then outward. Breaking the windows and / or cutting holes in the roof (called ventilation) stops that damaging outward movement and enables the firefighters to fight the fire more efficiently, resulting in less damage to the structure in the long run.

2. WHY DO WE CUT HOLES IN WALLS?

We have to be absolutely sure that the fire is completely out, and that there is no fire inside the walls or other hidden places. We will do the least amount of damage necessary to insure everything is safe.

3. IS IT POSSIBLE TO OBTAIN A COPY OF THE FIRE REPORT?

Yes. A fire report is a public document and is available at your local fire department listed on the last page.

If you have any questions or comments about any part of our operations, call your local fire department.

21. TELEPHONE DIRECTORY:

Agency:	Telephone Number
American Red Cross (Albion)	756-4344
American Red Cross (Girard, Lake City, Platea, Springfield)	774-5691
Building Permits - Albion	756-3660
Building Permits - Cranesville	756-4477
Building Permits - Conneaut Township	756-4301
Building Permits - Elk Creek Township	756-3268
Building Permits - Girard Borough	774-9683
Building Permits - Girard Township	774-4738
Building Permits - Lake City Borough	774-2116
Building Permits - Springfield Township	922-3274
Internal Revenue Service	1-800-424-1040
Salvation Army	456-4237
Telephone Utility - Alltel (Albion, Cranesville, Springfield)	1-412-327-6111
Telephone Utility - GTE (Girard, Lake City, Platea)	453-7751
National Fuel Gas	871-8400
Penelec	864-4011
Girard Borough Electric	774-9683
Cable TV - TCI of NW PA (Girard & Lake City)	899-0625
Cable TV - Albion Borough	756-4915
Water Dept - Albion Borough	756-3019
Water Dept - Cranesville Borough	756-4477
Water Dept - Girard Borough	774-9683
Water Dept - Lake City Borough	774-2116

22. Fire Department Names and Addresses:

A.F. DOBLER HOSE & LADDER COMPANY

12 Mechanic St.
Girard, Pa 16417
Station phone: 774-8218

ALBION FIRE DEPARTMENT

19 Franklin St.
Albion, Pa 16401
Station phone: 756-4210

CRANESVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

North Meadville St.
Cranesville, Pa 16410
Station phone: 756-3441

LAKE CITY FIRE COMPANY

2232 Rice Ave.
Lake City, Pa 16423
Station phone: 774-4402

PLATEA VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

Maple Ave
Platea, PA 16417
Station phone: 774-8473

SPRINGFIELD VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

11959 Main St.
East Springfield, Pa 16411
Station phone: 922-3595

Presented as a Public Service by

THE ALBION NEWS

in Cooperation with

The West County Chiefs' Association

This document originally prepared by Tina M. Littell & Micheal H. McCabe, December 1986-January 1987. Adapted to HTML by Micheal McCabe in June 1994. Last revised January 2000.