



# DEALING WITH WILDFIRE DAMAGE

Your guide for a fast recovery.

HELPING YOU  
RESTORE, REBUILD, & RISE



# ARE YOU WILDFIRE READY?

With an unprecedented increase in North American wildfires and fire intensity in recent years, damage prevention and safety should be a top priority for business owners in wildfire-prone regions. Your ability to move quickly after a wildfire can have a potentially large impact on recovery time and overall costs—and that level of prep starts before the flames even begin.

You will need evacuation plans to keep you and others safe, a clear chain of decision makers to coordinate response and recovery, an understanding of key insurance considerations, and an established emergency restoration partner to help you rise from the worst.

In this guide, we'll help you understand what to expect from some of the issues you may have to deal with before and after a wildfire, including:

- ✓ **Examples of damage that can happen**
- ✓ **An overview of what to expect after a wildfire**
- ✓ **Safety procedures that will help you prepare your property**

Now is the time to prepare and ensure the quickest and most efficient recovery in case a wildfire impacts your property.

**DISCLAIMER:** *This brief guide is intended to raise awareness about wildfire preparedness and is not a comprehensive recovery plan. Every property and wildfire is different. Consult your FIRST ONSITE team to develop a customized plan tailored for your unique needs.*

# WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER A WILDFIRE

Once the flames are out and the fire is contained, the hard work of recovery begins. Depending on the type of building and business, considerations may vary. However, based on our decades of wildfire recovery experience, we've established a list of the top initial steps many of our clients' face. To give you an idea of what to expect, here are some of the common tactics FIRST ONSITE provides when responding to a wildfire disaster:

## SAFETY ASSESSMENT

Safety is our top priority, always—and following a wildfire, it's non-negotiable. We assess structural conditions and focus on shoring and stabilizing buildings, as well as considering asbestos and contamination risks. Our teams are well-versed in safety needs and regulations for specific industries of all kinds, including handling hazardous materials.

Depending on the extent of the damage, several parties may be involved at this stage, including fire departments, municipalities, engineers, environmental agencies, and insurance and subrogation adjusters. We can help you communicate and coordinate with the various parties to ensure your recovery process moves forward efficiently.

## SECURING THE PROPERTY

Wildfires attract a lot of attention. It's common for curious onlookers to show up following a fire, as well as employees, residents, and tenants who want to recover personal items as soon as possible. Unfortunately, looters often see fire-damaged property as an opportunity. All of this adds up to too many people seeking entry to your property—and that means you've got to secure it.

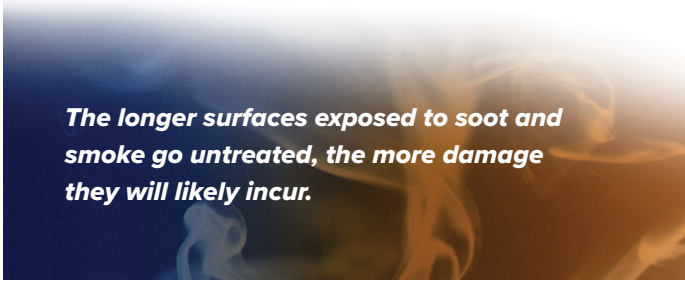
We can help quickly secure your site, whether that means bringing in security guards, boarding up parts of the building, or even setting up fencing.

## PREVENTING SECONDARY DAMAGE

In addition to contacting your broker or agent as soon as possible after a loss, insurance policyholders are also expected to mitigate further damages following a fire. As your restoration partner, we can help you determine what needs to be addressed and protected, and make sure the work is completed in a timely manner.

## GET SMART ABOUT SOOT & SMOKE

It's not just flames you've got to worry about. Soot and smoke can be a major contributor to costly damage during a wildfire. Soot is made of flakes of matter that did not burn completely, while smoke is a combination of solid and liquid particulates and gases, with a composition that varies based on fuel and surrounding conditions.



*The longer surfaces exposed to soot and smoke go untreated, the more damage they will likely incur.*



## DAMAGE ASSESSMENT

Once officials deem an area safe to enter, experts will need to assess possible damage to building features, such as plumbing, electrical, and HVAC systems. Time is often of the essence in saving property such as fixtures, furniture, equipment, and documents that have been exposed to smoke, water, or other contaminants, so it's essential that you act quickly to understand the damage and recovery options.

Much of the assessment process involves considering damage levels to different items and determining whether cleaning/restoring makes more sense than replacement. Cleaning is often the fastest and most economical recovery option. We can work with your insurance company to figure out what makes the most sense for your items and property.

## THE SALVAGE PROCESS AT A GLANCE

Every organization has its own unique considerations when it comes to salvaging fixtures, furniture, goods, and materials. General, salvage steps include:

- ✓ SAFETY AND DAMAGE ASSESSMENTS
- ✓ CONTAINMENT
- ✓ PRESERVATION
- ✓ DECONTAMINATION
- ✓ RESTORATION AND REPAIR
- ✓ RE-COMMISSIONING



## RESTORATION & PREVENTION

When it comes to cleaning up and preventing further damage to relatively “unburned” areas, we rely on a host of resources. One of the most significant challenges following a fire is often mitigating water damage from sprinklers and fire hoses. In addition to removing water, professional dehumidification and mold remediation support may be needed to restore humidity levels and prevent mold from taking hold and spreading.



**Standard clean-up toolkits typically include some combination of the following resources:**

**CLEANING AGENTS:** General purpose and heavy-duty detergents, glass cleaner, wood polish, metal cleaners and polish, acid cleaners, wood restoring creams and gels.

**FURNISHING AND STRUCTURE CLEANING SOLUTIONS:** Carpet and upholstery cleaners, floor cleaners, stone, tile, and grout cleaning chemicals, dry cleaning solvents, pressure cleaning chemicals, specialized ceiling and surface cleaners, sandblasting equipment and sealants to reduce odors.

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## DOCUMENT RECOVERY 101

When it comes to recovering damaged documents, books, and other paper contents, every second counts. This is a unique challenge, and the faster you can begin the recovery process, the more successful it will be, as disintegration begins swiftly. We can help you deal with charred edges and other damages, in addition to providing critical security needed for any confidential documents.

## PROCESS SNAPSHOT:

Wet and/or damaged documents are boxed and loaded onto freezer trucks for transport

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Initial freezing slows down disintegration until damage can be completely halted with our freeze-drying process

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Many freeze-drying chambers can take 14 - 28 days, but our newer technology works in as few as 5 - 7

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Cobalt 60 gamma sterilization can be used to sterilize documents exposed to pathogens



## COORDINATING WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Beyond notifying your insurance broker and filing a claim, your employees, customers, residents, tenants, and any other impacted parties will want to know what's happening in the building and how bad the damage is. We can help you provide the information you need to address peoples' top questions and concerns.

In addition, we help coordinate reentry and/or retrieval of important and valuable items, such as medication, phones, computing devices, as well as important documents, files, and personal items. In some cases, safety means we must turn people away. However, if damage is limited, we can help you coordinate safe retrieval of these important items—which can include hygienist testing to ensure safety.

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While these are some of the most common steps we tackle post-wildfire, our capabilities don't end with this list. From assessing structural concerns and extracting water, to removing soot, odors, and chemicals, to restoration and structural repairs, FIRST ONSITE is here to help with every aspect of the recovery process from start to finish.

Our unmatched speed, resources, and scalability, plus our experienced team of smoke and fire damage professionals, will get you back to life and business—quickly, safely, and cost-effectively. With cutting-edge technology and a proven history, we're proud to be the only partner you'll ever need for complete recovery from smoke and wildfire damage.

## FULL SERVICES INCLUDE:

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- ✓ RESTORING INDOOR AIR QUALITY

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  - ✓ FIRE, SMOKE & SOOT DAMAGE

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  - ✓ WATER DAMAGE

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  - ✓ DRYING & DEHUMIDIFICATION

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  - ✓ TEMPORARY STRUCTURAL REPAIRS

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  - ✓ STRUCTURAL CLEANING & DECONTAMINATION

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  - ✓ DOCUMENT & CONTENTS RESTORATION

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  - ✓ TEMPORARY POWER & HVAC

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  - ✓ GENERAL CONTRACTING & RECONSTRUCTION

# HOW TO PREPARE BEFORE THE FIRE

With the threat of wildfires so great, and the resulting damage so significant, businesses need to take every step possible to protect their facilities. Proper fire safety planning and prevention strategies can make a big difference. We recommend considering the following tactics to limit damage and ensure the most efficient recovery:

- 1 CREATE A 30-FOOT DEFENSIBLE SPACE AROUND YOUR BUILDING:**  
Wildfires need fuel to burn and spread. Clear away any combustible materials, such as propane tanks, branches, leaves, or brush from the area surrounding your facilities.
- 2 INSTALL A FIRE SUPPRESSION SYSTEM:**  
Insurance experts recognize suppression systems such as interior sprinklers as one of the strongest strategies for fighting the spread of fires within your buildings. The National Fire Protection Association says properly installed and maintained sprinkler systems are 95% effective at dousing flames before they destroy a building.
- 3 DESIGNATE A SAFETY OFFICER:**  
Designate an employee as your organization's fire prevention officer. This person should be responsible for creating escape routes and offsite meeting places for employees, as well as keeping all company safety plans and equipment updated.
- 4 CHECK STAIRWELLS:**  
Many businesses are stretched for adequate space, but you should avoid the temptation to store materials in your stairwells. Boxes or other materials stored in stairwells can quickly become both a fire and safety hazard.
- 5 MAKE YOUR ROOF FIRE-RESISTANT AND CLEAR GUTTER DEBRIS:**  
Roofs constructed from non-flammable materials, such as asphalt, metal, slate, or tile, offer the best possible protection against fire. IF replacing a wooden roof is not immediately possible, you can treat it with fire retardant. Debris can easily ignite from sparks or embers, so keep your gutters clean. Screening them with metal mesh to reduce the amount of debris that can accumulate.



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**KEEP EMBERS OUT:**

Any opening can allow sparks and embers to enter your building. Precautions include screening vents with wire mesh, protecting eaves with soffits and fascia made from fire-resistant materials, and repairing any loose shingles.

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**REMOVE CLOSE-BY CONIFEROUS TREES:**

Coniferous trees bearing cones and needles are extremely flammable, whereas leafy deciduous trees are naturally fire-resistant. Any coniferous tree within 30 feet of your property can be a serious fire hazard. Beyond 30 feet, space out coniferous trees by at least 10 feet to reduce spread.

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**WORK WITH NEARBY BUSINESSES:**

If a nearby business property ignites, your property may be next. It is important to make fire preparation a community effort, especially if your property is in a densely populated area. Reach out to local businesses to see if they have a fire prevention plan in place so you can work together to reduce your collective risk.

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**STAY AWARE OF CHANGES TO LOCAL FIRE CODE:**

Experts regularly update best practices to help protect buildings in wildfire zones, and municipalities will quickly update codes and recommendations to reflect that research. Watch your building code changes to identify additional steps you can take. Consider taking steps to meet updated code requirements even if you are grandfathered under a more relaxed code.

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**ENSURE YOU HAVE ADEQUATE INSURANCE COVERAGE:**

Check your insurance policy to ensure your business is sufficiently insured, and that your policy is up to date.

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## CREATING A DISASTER RECOVERY PLAN

Having a disaster recovery plan in place before an emergency strikes is key to a quick, efficient recovery. This plan should outline critical features and considerations in your building, detailing fire protection and mitigation systems, as well as key utility access points and electrical panel locations. Ideally, your disaster recovery plan should include the following details:

- ✓ **Contact information for all key parties**, including insurance brokers, security contacts, and emergency restoration providers
- ✓ **Building entrances and exits**
- ✓ **Parking details**
- ✓ **Amenities summary**, including details such as ENERGY STAR rating, any recently remodeled zones, and other details emergency restoration providers may need)
- ✓ **HVAC details**
- ✓ **Electrical details**
- ✓ **Elevator and stairwell information**, including the number and specs of elevators, as well as number, location, and type of stairwells
- ✓ **Asbestos overview**, including any available information about materials in the building that may contain asbestos

In addition to these precautions, take the time to create a disaster recovery plan. Having a contingency plan in place means you can:

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**ENSURE YOUR TEAM IS READY TO RESPOND QUICKLY AND SAFELY**

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**PREVENT FURTHER DAMAGE TO PROPERTY**

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**REDUCE FINANCIAL LOSS AND LIMIT BUSINESS INTERRUPTION**

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**PREVENT LOSS OF LIFE**

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**PROTECT YOUR ASSETS, PEOPLE, AND PROPERTY**

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For more wildfire damage prevention tips and fire safety advice, reach out to your FIRST ONSITE project manager. We are happy to work with you to ensure you are as prepared as possible to weather a wildfire, no matter what.



# 4 ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER



## HOW WOULD YOUR PROPERTY BE IMPACTED OVER THE LONG AND SHORT-TERM FOLLOWING A WILDFIRE?

Creating a risk assessment and business impact analysis for wildfires and other potential disasters is key to understanding the danger and planning accordingly.



## DO YOU HAVE A DISASTER RECOVERY PLAN FOR WILDFIRES AND OTHER EMERGENCIES?

An action plan is critical to knowing what to do in a disaster situation, and can make a huge difference in damage, recovery times, and costs. Know who to call will save valuable time in an emergency.



## DO YOU HAVE THE CORRECT INSURANCE COVERAGE?

Once you have a clear understanding of your risks, it's important to check your insurance policy to make sure there are no gaps.



## DO YOU HAVE A CRISIS MANAGEMENT TEAM IN PLACE?

Recovering from a wildfire is complex. Having a team ready to handle key tasks such as life safety, securing the property, and communicating with different stakeholders can help speed recovery and ease confusion after a fire.





**BEFORE AND AFTER  
THE WILDFIRE,  
WE'RE HERE  
TO HELP**

FIRST ONSITE provides leading restoration and reconstruction services across North America. Our comprehensive coverage and 24/7, 365 emergency response means we're ready to power you through any challenge—whenever, wherever, no matter what. When disaster strikes, we're first to respond with everything it takes to help you **Restore, Rebuild, and Rise.**

**24/7 RAPID EMERGENCY RESPONSE  
COMPREHENSIVE PRE-PLANNING FOR FASTEST RECOVERY  
UNMATCHED SERVICE AND RESOURCES  
POWERED BY PEOPLE COMMITTED TO DOING THE RIGHT THING**

**ONE CALL IS ALL IT TAKES: 800.622.6433  
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