



**THIS COMMUNITY RE-ENTRY BOOKLET WAS PUBLISHED
BY THE MUNICIPALITY OF FORT SMITH PROTECTIVE SERVICES**

HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDE

Protect yourself and your family

Experiencing an evacuation can be stressful and overwhelming. If you need to talk, call the Mental Health Help Line at 1-800-661-0844 or 811.

Indigenous Health services are also available toll-free by calling 1-855-242-3310 or by online chat at hopeforwellness.ca.

1. Re-enter Your Home Safely:

Places affected by the wildfire will likely smell very smoky for an extended period. Lingering smoke and fire ash at your home and yard can temporarily worsen personal respiratory issues. If you or any of your family members have breathing difficulties or asthma, take all appropriate precautions to protect yourself. Call Health Link at 811 for health advice or consult the health centre or pharmacist for any medications or extra precautions you may need at this time.

2. Air Quality:

Get the air moving inside your house by using a fan and open your windows. Only do this if there's no smoke in the area.

- If possible, have your ducts and air conditioning system cleaned by a professional.
- HEPA furnace filters may help take away the "smoky smell" from your home. Consider replacing your filter.
- Humidifiers can help settle any floating ash within your home.

3. Use Water Safely:

If your home is connected to the municipal potable water system, it is recommended that you run all taps in your water system for at least 5 minutes to get the stagnant water out from the water lines.

If your home is connected to a water tank, do a physical inspection of your tank and test your water before you begin using it. Harmful germs (bacteria), chemicals, or physical debris can get into your water if the tank is damaged. First repair the damage and clean and disinfect your water tank. Water test kits are available at Home Depot or order online. Information on how to clean and disinfect your tank can be found at:

<https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Alberta/Pages/How-to-clean-and-disinfect-a-cistern.aspx>

4. Foods and Medications:

- Discard any spoiled foods, condiments, and sauces, even if the refrigerator maintained 4°C at all times.
- Discard any medications that require refrigeration.
- Ensure you have enough medication to last two weeks before returning. The local pharmacy and health center will be busy.

5. Cleaning Your Refrigerator and Freezer:

1. Spoiled food may have affected your refrigerator or freezer. Clean, sanitize, and deodorize your refrigerator and freezer once you have discarded the spoiled food. To do this:
Remember that appearance and odor are not good indicators of food safety. Be safe. When in doubt, throw it out.
2. First unplug the refrigerator and freezer.
3. Rinse or blow out the coils and compressors on the refrigerator and freezer.
4. To clean the inside, use soap and water and then rinse with clean water.
5. Sanitize the inside with a bleach/water mixture made by mixing 1 teaspoon of ordinary household bleach for every 4 cups of water.
6. Leave the doors of the refrigerator and freezer open to help them dry out.
7. Once the appliance is dry, reconnect the power.
8. Wait until the inside temperature of your refrigerator has reached 4°C/ freezer temperature is at -18°C before restocking it with food.

6. Restore Your Home - How to Clean

There may be smoke odor, ash, and soot in your home after the fire. Some or all items listed below may need to be done. It will depend on how close to fire activity your home or cabin was.

Exterior Surfaces

- Use a hose, sprayer, or pressure washer on the outside of your home, driveway, walkway, vehicle, patio, deck, and outdoor furniture. Rinse off the air intake vents and air conditioner carefully.

Interior Surfaces

- Wash all surfaces and items inside your home with a mild detergent or appropriate cleaning solution and rinse thoroughly. Clean any place where there's ash, dust, or the smell of fire.
- Wet wiping or mopping is safer and better than dry or dust mopping. Change the water if it gets dirty.
- Only vacuum with a unit that has a HEPA filter that can catch ash particles.

Fabric, Carpets and Clothing

- Steam clean carpets, drapes, curtains, and furniture. Change the water often.
- Wash or dry clean all affected clothing and household linens. You may have to run many rinse cycles to get out all the ash, soot, and smoke.

7. Repair Water Damage:

If your home was damaged by any water while you were gone, such as firefighting activities, or a leaking water pipe, you will need to get rid of all excess water to prevent potential mold growth.

More information is available here: <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Alberta/AlbertaDocuments/mould-remediation-private-homes.pdf>

Links to more information:

- Smoke Forecasts: <http://firesmoke.ca/forecasts/current/>
- Air Quality Health Advisories: https://weather.gc.ca/airquality/pages/provincial_summary/nt_e.html