

# Middlesex Fire Department

After the Fire



Instruction Booklet

*Because we care*

<http://www.middlesexfire.org>



## After the Fire Cover Letter

Dear Citizen:

The Middlesex Fire Department strives to serve the community of Middlesex by saving lives and property. Firefighters are familiar with the devastation and trauma resulting from fire. Generally, those who experience fire are not. The difficult period directly after a fire is confusing and traumatic.

Recovering from a fire can be a physically and mentally draining process. When fire strikes, lives are suddenly turned upside down. Often, the hardest part is knowing where to begin and who to contact. We recognize this and have created this booklet to assist you through this trying and tragic period.

While firefighters are on the scene they will attempt to assist you and your family as best as they can. After they leave questions may arise. By referring to this booklet, many 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.

A final note – The Middlesex Fire Department is here for you. It is made up of 20 or so active volunteer firefighters and EMS personnel. Our greatest concern and commitment is for the safety and well-being of the citizens of Middlesex.

If we can help you in any other way, please do not hesitate to call the Middlesex Fire Department at (585) 554-3434 or one of the Fire Chief's at the phone numbers below.

Yours truly,

Jason Bassett, Fire Chief  
Home - 585-554-6283  
Cell - 585-746-2338

Thomas Mahaney, First Asst. Chief  
Home - 585-554-6128  
Cell - 585-737-9093

David T. Harrington, Second Asst. Chief  
Cell - 585-615-1987

John Baker, Third Asst. Chief  
Home - 585-554-3592  
Cell - 585-905-9192

# After the Fire General Information

## Telephone Numbers

American Red Cross Yates County Chapter – Penn Yan.....	315-536-6841
Friendship House Food / Clothing Bank - Middlesex.....	585-554-6056
Salvation Army – Canandaigua..	585-394-3531
Yates County Department of Social Services.....	315-536-5183
WIC (assistance for Women-Infants-Children) - Yates County Public Health.....	315-536-5160
Middlesex Code Enforcement Officer.....	585-554-3607 or 585-329-6163
<b>Fire/Police/Medical (Emergency Only).....</b>	<b>9-1-1</b>
Middlesex Fire Department.....	585-554-3434
Middlesex Ambulance.....	585-554-6657
Yates County Sheriff's Department.....	315-536-4438
Yates County Office of Emergency Management.....	315-536-3000
Family Counseling Service of the Fingerlakes.....	1-800-695-0390
FF Thompson Hospital - Canandaigua.....	585-396-6000
Soldier's and Sailors Hospital – Penn Yan.....	315-531-2000
Geneva General Hospital – Geneva.....	315-789-4222
Clifton Springs Hospital – Clifton Springs.....	315-462-9561
Strong Memorial Hospital – Rochester .....	585-275-2100
Rochester General Hospital - Rochester.....	585-922-4000
Internal Revenue Service.....	1-800-829-1040
Social Security Administration.....	1-800-772-1213
Pet Care Boarding & Pet Care.....	(check phone directory under Veterinarians)
Transportation Taxi service.....	(check phone directory under Taxicabs)
Frontier Telephone.....	1-800-921-8104
Time Warner Cable.....	1-800-756-7956
New York State Electric and Gas (NYSEG Office).....	1-800-572-1111
New York State Electric and Gas (NYSEG Electric Emergencies).....	1-800-572-1131
New York State Electric and Gas (NYSEG Gas Emergencies).....	1-800-572-1121

## Records and Documents

Records and documents are very important to your wellbeing and can be damaged or destroyed as a result of a fire. For this reason the Middlesex Fire Department provides the following list of documents that should be located and/or replaced. Locating these documents will speed up the process of recovering from a fire.

Driver's License.....DMV Office – Penn Yan – 315-536-5122  
.....Canandaigua – 585-396-4210  
Birth Certificate.....City, Village or Town Clerk where the marriage license was granted  
.....or NYS Dept of Health  
Checks / Bank Books.....Your bank, as soon as possible  
Insurance Policies.....Your insurance agent  
Military Discharge Papers.....Local Veterans Administration office  
Passports.....Local passport office including all area Post Offices and Yates County Clerk  
Marriage Certificates.....City, Village or Town Clerk where the marriage license was granted  
.....or NYS Dept of Health  
Divorce Decree.....County Court Clerk where decree was issued  
Social Security or Medicare cards.....Social Security Office 1-800-772-1213  
Credit Cards.....The issuing companies, as soon as possible  
Titles to Deeds.....Clerk of city or county in which the property is located  
Stocks and Bonds.....Issuing company or your broker  
Wills.....Your lawyer  
Medical Records / Prescriptions.....Your doctor, as soon as possible  
Warranties.....Issuing company  
Income Tax Records.....The Internal Revenue Service Center where filed, or your accountant  
Auto Registrations and Vehicle Titles.....DMV Office – Penn Yan – 315-536-5122  
.....Canandaigua – 585-396-4210  
Citizenship Papers.....The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service  
Pre-paid Burial Contracts.....Issuing company / association

### Disclaimer

This publication was prepared by the Middlesex Fire Department as an aid to fire victims. There are no warranties made in connection with this publication, and the Middlesex Hose Company, the Middlesex Fire District nor the Town of Middlesex shall not be held responsible for any damages (consequential, special or otherwise) arising from its use.

Revision - 06/2010

## Housing Assistance

After a fire we will offer to contact a local emergency disaster relief service such as the American Red Cross if you are in need of temporary housing. They will respond to the scene of the incident and speak with you. They have other services to help fire victims as well. You may also contact them yourself, see the Telephone Numbers section for a number to call.

If you are insured under a package homeowner's or renter's policy, a section of your coverage may pay for temporary housing.

### **If you must leave...**

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

- Contact the Yates County Sheriff's Office (315) 536-4438 so they can keep an eye on the property during your absence.
- Try to locate the following items to take with you:
  - All important identification, records and documents.
  - Vital medications such as insulin or heart medications (if these have been damaged by fire, call your doctor or pharmacy and get replacements.)
  - Eyeglasses, hearing aids or other personal aids.
  - Valuables such as money, insurance policies, credit cards, jewelry, checkbook, ect.

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

- Post Office to forward your mail to a new address
- Your Bank(s)
- Utility Companies
  - Electric
  - Phone
  - Gas / Propane
  - Cable
  - Internet Service Provider
- Social Security Administration
- Insurance Company
- Fire Department (if the fire is under investigation)
- Newspapers and Magazines you may subscribe to

If there is structural damage to your house or building, check with the Town Code Enforcement Officer to see if there is a need for a permit before attempting repairs.

## Securing the Site

The Fire Department will remove as much water and debris as possible from the fire building before turning the building back 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 the Fire Department or Code Enforcement Officer feels the building is unsafe, we will secure the property the best we can.

### Cautions

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

The Fire Department will see that the utilities (water, electric or natural gas) are either safe to use or are disconnected before we leave. The utility companies will not make repairs on the customer's side of the meter; therefore, a private contractor will have to be contacted to make repairs. All repairs of this nature require permits and inspection by the code enforcement officer. The utility companies will not restore your utilities until the repairs are approved by the code enforcement officer. **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO RECONNECT UTILITIES YOURSELF!**

Be watchful for any structural damage caused by the fire. The Fire Department will secure property we believe to be a safety hazard.

If you have a safe and it is hot, **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO OPEN IT!** Wait until the safe has cooled; Hot gases could burst into flames when the door is opened and the contents of the safe are exposed to oxygen.

## Insurance

### IF YOU ARE INSURED:

The first thing to do after the fire is to contact your insurance company or agent as soon as possible. If you are renting or leasing the property, you must also contact the owner. Your insurance adjuster may be able to assist you in making immediate repairs or help in securing your home. If you are unable to contact your agent and need professional assistance in boarding up your home, you may contact a general contractor or a fire damage restoration firm. (Refer to your phone directory, under Contractors-General or Fire & Water Damage Restoration.)

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

### IF YOU ARE NOT INSURED:

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

The American Red Cross, Salvation Army, local church groups or civic organizations such as Rotary may be able to provide assistance.

You may be eligible for casualty loss; Some losses due to fire are tax deductible for your federal income tax. Be sure to keep all receipts for money spent on repairs or replacing damaged property and in covering your living expenses.

Check Publication 574, Tax Information on Disasters, Casualty Losses and Thefts, available from your local Internal Revenue Service Office.

## **Vehicle Fires**

### **IF INSURED:**

Contact your insurance agent who can explain coverage and will assist you with your claim. If your vehicle is damaged in a structure fire, contact both your home and vehicle insurance agents.

### **IF UNINSURED:**

If the vehicle is repairable, a list of repair facilities can be obtained in the yellow pages of your phone directory, under Automotive Repairing and Service. If towing is required, the police department can assist you in securing a towing company. If vehicle is a total loss (beyond repair), it may have some value to a salvage yard. A list of vehicle salvage companies can be obtained in the yellow pages of your phone directory, under Automotive Parts & Supplies, used and rebuilt.

### **ALTERNATE TRANSPORTATION:**

If you need transportation, please refer to the Reference Directory section of this pamphlet for possible options.

### **FIRE DEPARTMENT PROCEDURES:**

Occasionally, firefighters will have to force entry into the vehicle to check for fire extension and extinguish the fire. To ensure that the fire is completely extinguished, it may be necessary for our firefighters to do one or more of the following: 1. Cut and/or disconnect battery cables to prevent electrical shorting of wires where insulation of wiring has been damaged. 2. Complete removal of padding from seats, especially where cotton padding is used. 3. Forced entry into the passenger compartment, engine compartment, and trunk of vehicle to extinguish, check for fire spread, and gain access to battery cables.

## General Information

### **IF YOU NEED EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE:**

If you need emergency assistance for food, clothing or lodging, contact the local American Red Cross or Salvation Army offices.

### **PETS:**

Smoke can damage the lungs of a dog or cat in minutes and sparks can cause painful burns that may stay hidden under your pet's fur. As soon as possible, take your pet to a veterinarian.

### **COUNSELING AND SUPPORT:**

After the fire, you may experience anxious feelings, depression, difficulty concentrating, sadness, anger, fatigue, irrational (unfounded) fears and nightmares. These are common - and normal - responses to a traumatic event. If you or your family members need support, call the American Red Cross, or check the yellow pages in your phone directory under Counselors. Some employers and/or health insurance carriers provide coverage for counseling services.

### **WHAT ABOUT CASH OR NEGOTIABLES?**

If burned, handle with extreme care and as little as possible. Attempt to encase each crisp sheet in a plastic wrap in order to salvage as much as possible. Take everything to your local bank for advice regarding replacement.

### **WHAT ABOUT ODORS?**

Sometimes there is a residual smoke odor from a small fire that is annoying and lingering. Short of a good cleaning of everything in the house, you can place saucers of household vanilla, vinegar, or activated charcoal about your home to help absorb these odors. Remember that the smoke odor is also inside the heating and cooling ductwork and you get a fresh blast every time your air system is turned on. If insured, consult your insurance company for assistance. If the odor does not go away in about a week, you may, and probably should, call a janitorial supply or cleaning service specializing in restoration of fire damaged property (refer to your yellow pages, under Fire & Water Damage Restoration). They have the equipment to scrub out the ductwork and deodorize everything in the house.

### **GENERAL CLEANING / SALVAGE TIPS**

If insured, contact your insurance company. Professional fire and water damage restoration businesses may be the best source of cleaning and restoring your personal belongings. Companies offering this service can be located in the phone directory.

If you are going to do the work yourself, here are some tips you might want to consider:



1. Vacuum all surfaces.
2. Change and clean air conditioner/heater filters.
3. Seal off the room in which you are working with plastic wrap to keep soot from moving from one location to another. Try to keep windows closed.

### **SPECIFIC CLEANING / SALVAGE TIPS:**

First a word of caution before you begin: test garments before using any treatment, and follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully. Several of the cleaning mixtures described in this section contain the substance Tri-Sodium Phosphate. This substance can be purchased under the generic name TSP in paint and hardware stores. Tri-Sodium Phosphate is a caustic substance used commonly as a cleaning agent.

It should be used with care and stored out of reach of children and pets. Wear rubber gloves when using if you have sensitive skin. Read the instructions for complete details. Also, do NOT use gasoline for cleaning and do NOT mix ammonia with bleach.

- **Clothing:** Smoke odor and soot can sometimes be washed from clothing. The following formula may work for clothing that can be bleached: \* 4 to 6 tbsp. Tri-Sodium Phosphate \* 1 cup household cleaner or chlorine bleach \* 1 gallon warm water \* Mix well, add clothes, rinse with clear water. Dry thoroughly. An effective way to remove mildew from clothing is to wash the fresh stain with soap and warm water, rinse, and then dry in the sun. If the stain has not disappeared, use lemon juice and salt, or a diluted solution of household chlorine bleach. Should you have any questions about the cleaning or preparation of clothing, it is wise to contact a cleaning service. Take wool, silk, or rayon garments to the dry cleaners as soon as possible.
- **Cooking Utensils:** Your pots, pans, flatware, etc. should be washed with soapy water, rinsed and then polished with a fine-powdered cleaner. You can polish copper and brass with special polish, salt sprinkled on a piece of lemon, or salt sprinkled on a cloth saturated in vinegar.
- **Electrical Appliances:** Do not operate wet appliances that have been exposed to water or steam until you have had a service technician check them. This is especially true of electrical appliances. In addition, steam can remove the lubricant from some moving parts. If the Fire Department turned off your gas or power during the fire, call the electric or gas company (see Reference Directory at the bottom) to restore these services - do not try to do it yourself.
- **Food and Other Perishables:** Any food, beverages and/or medicines exposed to heat or smoke should not be consumed. If food was in tightly closed or sealed containers, or in airtight refrigerators or freezers, they may be salvageable. It is cheaper to replace the material than to jeopardize your health by taking a chance. If in doubt, throw it out! To remove odor 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 to one gallon of water.

Baking soda in an open container or a piece of charcoal can also be placed in the refrigerator or freezer to absorb odor.

- **Medicines:** Prescription drugs can change strength by exposure to heat. Please check with your doctor first before taking these medicines.
- **Rugs and Carpets:** 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 a 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 cause the rug to rot. For more information on cleaning and preserving carpets, call your carpet dealer or installer or a qualified carpet cleaning professional.

- **Leather and Books:** Wipe leather goods with a damp cloth, then a dry cloth. Stuff purses and shoes with newspaper to retain shape. Leave suitcases open. Leather goods should be dried away from heat and sun. When leather goods are dry, clean with saddle soap. Rinse leather and suede jackets in cold water and dry away from heat and sun. Wet books can be taken care of as soon as possible. The best method to save wet books is to freeze them in a vacuum freezer. This special freezer will remove the moisture without damaging the pages. If there is a delay in locating such a freezer, then place them in a normal freezer until a vacuum freezer can be located. A local librarian can also be a good resource.
- **Locks and Hinges:** Locks (especially iron locks) should be taken apart, wiped with oil. 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 thoroughly cleaned and oiled.
- **Walls, Floors and Furniture:** To remove soot and smoke from walls, furniture and floors, use a mild soap or detergent, or mix together the following solution:
  - 4 to 6 tbsp. Tri-Sodium Phosphate
  - 1 cup household cleaner or chlorine bleach
  - 1 gallon warm water.

Wear rubber gloves and goggles while working with this solution.

Be sure to rinse your walls and furniture with clear, warm water and dry thoroughly after washing them with this solution. Wash a small area at one time, working from the floor up. Then rinse the wall with clear water immediately. Ceilings should be washed last. Do not repaint until walls and ceilings are completely dry. Your wallpaper can also be repaired. Use a commercial paste to re-paste a loose edge or section. Contact your wallpaper dealer or installer for information on wallpaper cleaners. Washable wallpaper can be cleansed like any ordinary wall, but care must be taken not to soak the paper. Work from bottom to top to prevent streaking.

- **Wood Furniture:** Do not dry your furniture in the sun. The wood will warp and twist out of shape. \* Clear off mud and dirt. \* Remove drawers. Let them dry thoroughly so there will be no sticking when you replace them. \* Scrub wood furniture or fixtures with a stiff brush and a cleaning solution. \* Wet wood can decay and mold, so dry thoroughly. Open doors and windows for good ventilation. Turn on your furnace or air conditioner, if necessary. \* If mold forms, wipe the wood with a cloth soaked in a mixture of borax dissolved in hot water. \* To remove white spots or film, rub the wood surface with a cloth soaked in a solution of 1/2 cup household ammonia and 1/2 cup water. Then wipe the surface dry and polish with wax or rub the surface with a cloth soaked in a solution of 1/2 cup turpentine and 1/2 cup linseed oil. Be careful - turpentine is combustible. \* A very inexpensive product, oil soap, (readily available in hardware and grocery stores) is a most efficient product to use on wood, including kitchen cabinets. \* You can also rub the wood surface with a fine grade steel wool pad dripped in liquid polishing wax, clean the area with a soft cloth and then buff.
- **Mattresses:** Reconditioning an inner-spring mattress at home is very difficult, if not impossible. Your mattress can probably be renovated by a company that builds or repairs mattresses. If you must use your mattress temporarily, put it out into the sun to dry - then cover it with plastic sheeting. It is almost impossible to get smoke odor out of pillows, whether they are made of feathers or foam.

### Common Questions

#### Q. 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) slows the damaging outward movement, helps remove blinding smoke that obscures the actual fire, and enables firefighters to fight the fire more efficiently. The result of this action is less damage to the structure in the long run.

#### Q. Why are holes cut in walls?

This is done so that the Fire Department is absolutely sure that the fire is completely out, and that there is no fire inside the walls or other hidden places.

#### Q. Where can I get a copy of the fire report?

You can obtain a copy of your fire report at the Middlesex Fire Department, call the fire chief and request a copy.