

# POST-DISASTER RECOVERY PROCESS

Recovery and reconstruction after a disaster hits can feel overwhelming. This guide is intended to assist you through the process of rebuilding.

## STEP ONE | INITIAL ACTIONS:

UP TO ONE MONTH

- If the property sustains fire damage or hazardous materials are released, the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department will investigate. If the property damage is caused by natural disasters or structural impacts, the Fairfax County Land Development Services (LDS) inspectors will investigate. Once the investigation is complete, the structure will be released by investigators to the occupant/owner of the property.
- If the building is unsafe to occupy, the Fairfax County Fire Official or Fairfax County Building Official will post the property to indicate the level of access permitted and to prevent unauthorized persons from entering the structure. The occupant of the property or the contractor may enter the property to begin restoration efforts. A request may be made to the fire official or building official to remove the “no trespassing” post once the property is ready for restoration.
- If the utilities have been shut off, the owner or contractor will need to contact the individual utility companies to restore service. Utilities may include gas, electricity, water and propane.
- If there are structural damages that are a danger to the public, the structure must be remediated as soon as possible as recommended by a third party structural engineer.

## STEP TWO | PROPERTY ASSESSMENT:

TWO TO THREE WEEKS

- The property owner should contact the insurance company immediately to report the fire and for details on claims processing and other insurance-related requirements.
- A Fire Incident Report may be required by the insurance company. This can be requested from the County Fire Marshal.
- If the property is served by a private well or septic system, the Fairfax County Health Department should be contacted for an evaluation.



A Fairfax County, Va., publication | October 2020

To request this information in an alternate format,  
call 703-324-1780, TTY 711.



## **STEP THREE | PROJECT SCOPE DETERMINATION:** TWO DAYS OR MORE

- Request a Damage Assessment Report from LDS to identify the scope of damage and identify the work needed to rebuild. Some reconstruction will require permits and/or building plans. The LDS Permits Applications Center can help you identify which permits will be required to rebuild.
- Even if you plan to rebuild the same structure that was damaged or destroyed, permits may be required. Submit any necessary plans and permit applications to LDS. You may need to hire a Virginia licensed registered design professional such as an engineer or architect.

## **STEP FOUR | PERMITS AND CONSTRUCTION:** UP TO A YEAR OR MORE DEPENDING ON COMPLEXITY OF THE PROJECT

- Obtain permits and proceed with construction. A licensed contractor may be required.
- Obtain final inspections and an occupancy permit before returning to the building. Depending on the project, inspections may be required from multiple agencies including LDS, Fire Marshal's Office and Health Department.
- If the business is a food establishment, the Health Department will need to conduct an inspection prior to reopening.

The timeline to rebuild depends on a variety of factors including the amount of damage and complexity of the rebuild. When obtaining permits from LDS, property owners should provide a reasonable timeframe for the restoration to be completed. Should the property remain in a state of disrepair with no effort made to restore it, the Department of Code Compliance may receive complaints related to property maintenance or nuisance, which could result in a Notice of Violation.

## **QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE**

### **Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department**

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fire-ems/>  
703-246-4800, TTY 711

### **Fire Incident Report**

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fire-ems/record-requests-vfoia>

### **Fairfax County Land Development Services**

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/landdevelopment/>  
703-324-1780, TTY 711

### **Permit Application Center Information**

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/plan2build/development-process-overview/4-review-process-and-permitting>  
703-222-0801, TTY 711.

### **Requirements for Signed and Sealed Drawings**

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/landdevelopment/signed-and-sealed-drawings>

### **Fairfax County Department of Code Compliance**

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/code/>  
703-324-1300, TTY 711

### **Fairfax County Health Department**

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/health/environment>  
703-246-2411, TTY 711

### **Fairfax County Office of Emergency Management**

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/emergencymanagement/cemg>  
571-350-1000, TTY 711