

Health and Safety Guidelines

Recovering from a disaster is usually a gradual process. Safety is a primary issue immediately following an event. This section offers some general advice on steps to take after disaster strikes in order to begin getting your home, your community, and your life back to normal.

TIPS

For Returning Home

Keep a battery-powered radio with you so you can listen for emergency updates and news reports.

Use a battery-powered flash light to inspect a damaged home. (Note: The flashlight should be turned on outside before entering - the battery may produce a spark that could ignite leaking gas, if present.)

Use a stick to poke through debris.

Use the phone only to report life-threatening emergencies.

Stay off the streets. If you must go out, watch for fallen objects; downed electrical wires; and weakened walls, bridges, roads, and sidewalks.

Before You Enter Your Home

Walk carefully around the outside and check for loose power lines, gas leaks, and structural damage. If you have any doubts about safety, have your residence inspected by a qualified building inspector or structural engineer before entering.

Do not enter your home if you smell gas, floodwaters surround your home, or if your home was damaged by fire and authorities have not declared it safe.

Enter the Home Carefully and Check the Following

Natural gas. If you smell gas or hear a hissing or blowing sound, open a window and leave immediately. Turn off the main gas valve from the outside, if you can. Call the gas company from a neighbor's residence. If you shut off the gas supply at the main valve, you will need a professional to turn it back on. Do not smoke or use oil, gas lanterns, candles, or torches for lighting inside a damaged home until you are sure there is no leaking gas or other flammable materials present.

Sparks, broken or frayed wires. Check the electrical system unless you are wet, standing in water, or unsure of your safety. If possible, turn off the electricity at the main fuse box or circuit breaker. If the situation is unsafe, leave the building and call for help. Do not turn on the lights until you are sure they are safe to use. You may want to have an electrician inspect your wiring.

Roof, foundation, and chimney cracks. If it looks like the building may collapse, leave immediately.



