



A Tradition of Stewardship  
A Commitment to Service

Planning, Building & Environmental Services

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## **CAUTIONS ABOUT RETURNING TO A SURVIVING HOME**

Below are some basic guidelines for returning to your home after the fire. This is not an all-inclusive list, just some thoughts to get one headed the right direction. Be careful, use common sense and think about what you are going to do before you act or take a step. Keep yourself and your family safe.

**First visit:** It is going to be extremely emotional when you first see your home again. Do not let the elation of the home still standing overcome caution. One needs to still be careful entering a surviving home.

**Protective gear:** A good dust mask is mandatory along with gloves and boots for damaged areas. Breathing in ash is very bad for one's health, so please wear a properly rated dust mask though they may be uncomfortable.

**Plan of attack:** Once you are able to clearly focus, carefully enter the structure. Watch for any signs of damage due to the fire. Walk through the entire house, looking for signs of heat damage. Likely heat damage locations may include the inside and outside along the edges of windows, doors and any openings.

**Photos:** Take photos to document the damage and the general condition of the house both inside and out. If you decide not to stay, inventory everything you leave behind.

**Damaged structures:** Please refer to document for 'destroyed home' for cautions and suggestions for entering a damaged structure.

**Professional help:** The cleanup task should be left for professionals once you have collected what mementos you are able to find. It takes specialized equipment and knowledge to safely and effectively clean up after a catastrophe. Smoke damage can be difficult to address and remove.

**Be Safe:** Above all else be safe! Don't be thinking "it is only once, it won't happen to me, I can do this though it is risky". Things can be replaced, you can't. No prized possession is worth risking injury. You survived the fire, don't be hurt by its aftermath.