



# Alberta wildfires – Tips and advice for tenants and landlords

## Rental agreements for units damaged by fire

If a tenant cannot return to the unit because it is destroyed or damaged beyond repair, or damaged to such an extent a reasonable tenant would not be willing to remain in the rental property, it may not be possible to continue living in the unit. The landlord and tenant should communicate their assessment and expectations to each other.

Both should be prepared to provide proof of the condition of the unit to support their position. If they cannot agree, they may need to bring the dispute to the Alberta Court of Justice or the Residential Tenancy Dispute Resolution Service (RTDRS).

## Cleaning and repairs after a fire

The landlord is responsible for ensuring the unit is in a habitable condition. In most cases, the landlord, or the landlord's insurance company will pay for repairs to the unit. There is no set period for a landlord to repair a rental unit, unless an Environmental Health Officer has inspected the property and issued an order to the landlord. However, landlords should attempt to repair the unit within a reasonable timeframe. If tenants believe it is taking too long to repair the unit, they can contact Alberta Health Services. They can also make an application to the Alberta Court of Justice or the RTDRS to terminate the rental agreement or obtain a rent reduction.

## Damages to tenant belongings

Tenants are usually responsible for their belongings. If a tenant has tenant's insurance, they should read their policy closely to see what kind of damage is covered and call their insurer with any questions.

## Paying for alternate accommodations

Tenants are responsible for the cost of alternate accommodations unless otherwise stated in the rental agreement. If the tenant has occupant insurance, they should contact their insurance provider to inquire about coverage.

## Changing of locks during evacuation

The landlord might have changed the locks to protect the property and was not able to contact the tenant at the time. The landlord must give the tenant the new key or they can be charged under the *Residential Tenancies Act*.

## Security deposits

The landlord cannot use the security deposit to pay for repairs due to fire damage. Security deposits are to cover items within the tenant's responsibility, such as cleaning costs, unpaid rent, or fixing damage beyond normal wear and tear.

## Tenant belongings left behind in rental unit

If a tenant leaves goods behind valued at \$2,000 or more, they must be placed in storage for at least 30 days, unless it would be unsafe or unsanitary to store the items.

A landlord is required to keep a written record of the storage, disposition, and sale of the goods for a period of three years after the goods are returned to the tenant, sold, or disposed of. For goods valued at more than \$2,000, landlords should refer to the *Residential Tenancies Act*, and the Residential Tenancies Ministerial Regulation for more information.

If the goods are valued at less than \$2,000, landlords can dispose of them as they see fit; however, in the case of a disaster where tenants had to leave on short notice, landlords may wish to show consideration about disposing items that may have personal value (such as photo albums).

## Additional Resources:

### Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction

Consumer Contact Centre  
Toll-free within Alberta: 1-877-427-4088  
[cs@gov.ab.ca](mailto:cs@gov.ab.ca)  
Or call the Alberta Connects line at 310-4455

### Residential Tenancy Dispute Resolution Service

<https://www.alberta.ca/residential-tenancy-dispute-resolution-service.aspx>  
780-644-3000 (in Edmonton)  
310-0000, then 780-644-3000 (toll-free)  
Or call the Alberta Connects line at 310-4455

### Alberta Health Services – Health Link

Phone: 811

## For more information:

Call Alberta Connects at 310-4455