

HOW TO CLEAN SMOKE DAMAGE ON YOUR WALLS

There is nothing worse than a house fire. Not only are your house and belongings damaged but also there is often a risk to you and your family. Even after the fire has been dealt with, there is the aftermath of the fire to deal with. Common problems include smoke, soot and cleaning up the water and the chemicals that were used by firefighters. The damage to your house shows on your burnt and blackened walls and ceiling.

SOOT AND CHARRING

However, the worst possible effect of soot is its tendency to cause cancer and cause serious defects in the birth of a newborn. Soot produces polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons in its gaseous state. These hydrocarbons are responsible for gene mutation for particular groups of genes, and they can cause birth defects in the child and also increase the chances of getting cancer.

Soot is the residue left by burnt things after a fire. It contains a lot of carbon-based impurities and is mainly caused when the material doesn't burn completely. The texture of soot is oil based because there are plastic things in every home and burning them leads to oily molecules getting released in the air.

Soot can wreak havoc when it enters a person's respiratory system and thus, it is a serious health hazard. When soot particles enter the alveoli, they get released into the blood stream and through that, the impurities reach various parts of the body. If the impurities get accumulated, the person's health could suffer.

You will need the following items:

- TSP or Trisodium Phosphate cleaner (1 tbsp.)
- Rubber gloves for cleaning
- A Large sponge or the sponge used while washing your car. A lot of cleaning needs to be done, and the sponge should be large enough to soak up a lot of water in one go
- 2 large buckets
- Warm water
- Goggles and a mask to protect eyes and face
- Rags to clean

CLEANING PROCESS

Use your vacuum cleaner to clean soot over the surface of things. After you put on your heavy-duty gloves, use the sponge and soak it into the TSP solution. The TSP solution contains a gallon of water and a tablespoonful of TSP. Work section-by-section, focusing on one segment and wall at a time.

First, wipe the surface of the wall or ceiling with the sponge and use hard and firm strokes. After that, dip the rags in clean warm water and rinse the ceiling and walls. Do the same with the other segments until everything has been cleaned properly.

The frequency of the above step may be more than one. It depends on the condition of the house after the fire and how much charring and soot buildup has occurred. You must be careful not to over-wash your ceilings and walls because seepage of water might occur into the drywall or baseboard.

Don't saturate your walls with TSP and warm water.

Never start your cleaning process before you are properly attired. Your heavy-duty gloves, safety goggles and mask should be worn over your face and should cover as much as they can. Carefully cover your nose and make sure the safety glasses have no place for dust or soot to get into your eyes.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KILL THE ODOR

A simple deodorant or room freshener doesn't have a smell strong enough to counteract the bad odor from smoke. To deal with smoke, something stronger has to be used to disable odor causing smoke molecules in the air.

Below are some items that can help you kill the odor from smoke damage:

After your house gets cleaned, you need to make decisions and come up with a budget about what to replace and what to repair.

White Vinegar – White vinegar has a strong smell and can be used to wipe all affected surfaces. Furniture, walls, floors, and ceilings can all do with a quick cleaning by a rag dipped in white vinegar.

Baking Soda – It absorbs odors naturally and can be left in a bowl in every room. Also, you can sprinkle some over the pieces of furniture and other surfaces to counteract the odor.

Odor Reducing Products – An odor-reducing products like incense, Febreze or oil diffusers can be used along with the other steps to reduce the odor.

Activated Charcoal – This is another natural odor absorber that can be left around the room in powdered form to deal with smoke odor.

Ozone Generators – These are used to deal with the bad odor caused by smoke but are pretty expensive.

Odor Reducing Fogs – Many professional companies deal with smoke odor using special fogs that kill the smell completely.

BUBBLING AND BLISTERING

Bubbling and blistering of the paint on your walls and ceiling may occur from excessive heat. A bubble or blister cannot be "undone," but can be repaired.

What You Will Need:

- Putty knife
- Spackle
- Fine sandpaper
- Primer
- Paint matched to the color of your wall/ceiling

The Repairing Process:

- Gently scrape away the top of the bubble or blister with the putty knife.
- Sand the bubble or blister until it is flat.
- Spackle the area to cover any indents or imperfections.
- When the spackle is completely dry, sand the spackled area until it is smooth and flush with the wall/ceiling.
- Prime and paint the area. If the paint doesn't match, be prepared to re-paint the entire wall/room/ceiling.

SMOKE ODOR

Aside from unsightly charring and soot build-up, smoke can leave an unpleasant odor that seems to cling to the walls. Smoke odors can be quite stubborn. Depending upon how strong the smoke odors are, one or more of these methods may prove helpful. Keep in mind, though, that if the smoke odor has permeated into your carpets, draperies, furnishings, etc., there is little that can be done to eliminate the smoke odor unless these items are removed or replaced.

Vinegar: White vinegar cuts through odors naturally. Try wiping down furniture, washable walls, floors, etc.

with white vinegar. Also, try placing several bowls of vinegar around the room with the smoke damage, leaving them there for several days. If you can't stand the smell of vinegar either, try mixing a bit of lavender oil into the bowls to help cut the odor of the vinegar.

Baking Soda: Baking soda is another natural odor-absorber. Try sprinkling liberal amounts of baking soda over furniture, floors, etc. Leave a few bowls of baking soda around the room for several days to help absorb the odors.

Febreze: Febreze, a popular odor-reducing product sold in many stores, uses a chemical compound called cyclodextrin, a sugar-like substance that absorbs odors. Spraying the area down with Febreze may help to reduce the smoke odor.

Activated Charcoal: This product, often used as a detoxifying agent, is also a natural odor absorbent. Placing bowls of activated charcoal (powdered form) around your room may help to absorb the smoke odors.

Fresh Air: In the warmer weather, leave your windows and doors open as much as possible. Fresh air will eventually dissipate the smell of smoke.

Ozone Generators: There are products on the market known as Ozone Generators which may help in reducing or even eliminating smoke odor from your house. Remember, though, that these expensive products, while effective in reducing the odor, will not eliminate it completely if the odor has permeated the carpets, draperies, furnishings, etc.

ADDITIONAL TIPS AND ADVICE

Trisodium Phosphate does work very well for cleaning smoke damage, but it is such a harsh chemical that it may not be available in all areas. Check with your local home improvement store (such as Lowe's or Home Depot) for possible alternate cleaning solutions.

Many people hesitate to call in a smoke damage specialist because the process can be costly, sometimes dangerous and environmentally unfriendly (i.e. the use of ozone neutralizers). However, there are companies available which employ environmentally friendly smoke removal procedures.

If you have severe smoke damage in your home, it may be best to contact a smoke damage professional.

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