

## Case Study

### Fire and smoke damage cleaning



**Before**



**After**

**Client** Housing authority

**Sector** Social housing

**Location** East Midlands

#### Background

Our client is one of the largest social housing providers in the East Midlands. The local authority requires specialist support to provide smoke and fire damage cleaning following fires across its housing stock. The housing authority can rely on SafeGroup to deliver that service.

#### The Challenge

The housing authority takes significant precautions to guard against serious fires in its properties, including the fitting of smoke alarms. However, fires still occur. Most begin accidentally, though arson is also a risk. Most fires begin in homes. However, fire damage can be caused to fencing, garages or other communal facilities.

When a fire happens, the housing authority wants a quick response to clean up the damage and mess created to bring the property back into use as quickly and minimise the inconvenience and disruption to the property tenant and neighbours.



**Top:** Soot reveals the outlines of items left in a drawer in a child's upstairs bedroom

**Bottom:** Smoke from the kitchen fire coated every room in the house.

#### Key challenges associated with this process include:

- Property fires generate toxic waste and residue through the burning of substances such as plastic, paint and potentially harmful chemicals stored in the home. This includes smoke and ash particles that fill all spaces in the homes.
- Fire, heat and smoke damage may be hidden from view, in voids or layers of building substrates.
- Fire and smoke damage is often combined with water damage caused by the fire service dealing with the fire.
- Lingering odours caused by deeply-engrained soot and smoke are a significant issue and must be dealt with alongside clearing damaged materials and cleaning surfaces.
- All work must be carried out sympathetically when close to other homes. The fire may have caused serious injury or worse to the people living in the property.
- In some cases, the damaged property is a flat with tenants above, below and across the hall. This requires fire clean-up work to be done respectfully, with least noise and inconvenience to tenants.
- Fire and smoke damage clean-up is often an urgent task, with a deadline to meet to allow further work to be done to bring the property back into use.

## The Solution

The housing authority has commissioned SafeGroup to carry out fire and smoke damage clean-ups across its housing stock. This includes smoke and fire cleaning in detached houses, terraces properties and flats.

Over one three month period, SafeGroup's emergency fire clean-up teams responded to fire and smoke damage clean-up requests in nine properties.

### Key advantages SafeGroup provides included:

- A self-delivered service.
- Technicians trained by the British Damage Management Association.
- Personnel with many years of experience in fire cleaning and fire waste removal.
- A guaranteed fast response – including on-site attendance within four hours for urgent assistance.
- Use of the best technologies and approved procedures for cleaning fire and smoke damaged properties safely and thoroughly.
- A compliant service, with risk assessments and method statements for each project and standards monitored by our internal compliance team.
- Transparent reporting, through a digital project management system, with images taken throughout the clean-up process to demonstrate progress with each task.

## Outcomes

- SafeGroup personnel have achieved the high standards expected of them in every fire clean-up carried out for the housing authority.
- All deadlines for clean-up completion and fire waste removal have been met.
- Properties have been left clean and odour-free, ready to be repaired and redecorated.
- All work has been carried out safely, in accordance with the RAMS.



Picture:  
Fogging underway to deodorise the house.

## Fire cleaning

Professional cleaning chemicals are used to remove soot and smoke from every square inch of surface in a property. This is where experience tells, because SafeGroup teams know how smoke can contaminate even hidden areas in a home where a conventional cleaner would not look. SafeGroup technicians are also qualified to work at height, using pressure washing to remove soot from external walls.

## Air scrubbers and fogging

Our teams also use professional air scrubbers to continually remove soot particles from the air during the fire clean-up process. This is vital to eliminate odours and ensure all potentially toxic particles are removed. Where necessary, we also carry out fogging of rooms with a deodorising chemical to eliminate smells permanently.

## Fire waste removal

SafeGroup works closely with the housing authority's building surveyors and maintenance teams to identify work to carry out. In some cases, this may involve stripping out of materials, such as skirting boards, cupboards and plasterwork, that are too badly damaged to be saved. As a registered waste carrier and a hazardous waste specialist, SafeGroup is ideally placed to carry out this task.

## Chloride testing

SafeGroup also offers chloride swab testing before and after fire and smoke damage cleaning is carried out. This identifies the areas in a property affected by potentially hazardous fire residues and shows they have been decontaminated by the cleaning process.

## SafeGroup comment

“ The transformation we can achieve can be immense and it's great to see the difference we make. We want clients to be very happy with our work and it's good to know that the people moving into places we've cleaned will get no sense of the havoc a fire may have caused. ”

Tom Craig | SafeGroup Senior Cleaning Technician



SafeGroup

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