

Fire-Damaged Heritage Stone: First Steps Checklist

First days after a fire on listed or heritage masonry — for loss adjusters, fire restoration firms, church insurers, architects and conservators

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Two different problems share the word “soot”: acute fire/smoke residues, and long-term atmospheric black crusts. This sheet is for the first days after a building fire on listed or heritage stone. Align first response with Icon Guidance Note No.3 (soot/smoke after fire). Do not treat heat-altered stone colour as dirt. Cleaning methods — including laser — need trials and, where required, listed building consent.

DO — FIRST DAYS

- Scene release first: no cleaning and no removal of debris or damaged material until the fire and rescue service (and police, if involved) have released the scene and the insurer or loss adjuster has inspected or agreed in writing that work may start. Before then, only authorised emergency make-safe.
- Make people safe; wait for structural / fabric sign-off before access for cleaning.
- Record before touching — photographs, designation status, known roof metals (e.g. lead).
- Dry HEPA vacuum first when surfaces are dry (Icon). Nozzle clear of the surface; avoid brushes that smear soot into pores.
- Triage porous and heavily sooted faces; avoid compressing soot by handling or wrapping.
- Commission lead / asbestos / contamination surveys where fire debris or historic fabric warrants it.
- COSHH and PPE for soot and combustion residues; contain cross-contamination.
- Protect openings from weather; plan for salts from firefighting water as a separate issue.
- Bring in a qualified conservator before further cleaning beyond dry vacuuming (Icon).
- Assume listed building consent may be required before any cleaning method that alters appearance or fabric — ask the conservation officer.
- If laser (or any other clean) is later proposed: trial panels to BS EN 16782 / BS 8221-1 practice; keep a cleaning test report.

SOURCES (LIGHT)

- Icon Guidance Note No.3 — soot/smoke after fire (2022).
- BS EN 16782:2016 — laser cleaning of porous cultural heritage materials (tests + report).
- BS 8221-1:2012 — cleaning and surface repair of buildings.
- Historic England — cleaning guidance incl. graffiti note (laser described); LBC as required.

DON'T

- Don't wet-clean, scrub, or pressure-wash soot into pores as a first response.
- Don't treat heat-reddened sandstone or calcined limestone as removable soiling.
- Don't start laser, abrasive, chemical or steam cleaning without trials and the consents that job needs.
- Don't copy a method from a forum post or a different job without your own trials.
- Don't skip lead / asbestos checks on unknown fire debris and historic roofs.
- Don't use ozone chambers or high-temperature “thermal deodorisation” on heritage objects (Icon).
- Don't claim structural competence from a cleaning brief.

HOLD BEFORE ANY CLEAN

Scene released (FRS / police) · insurer or loss adjuster agreed in writing · structural sign-off · contamination survey as needed · dry HEPA done · conservator engaged · LBC / church faculty path checked · trial panel plan written (method, parameters, acceptance) · Site File blanks ready.



Scan for this checklist

Scan for the online page:
naturalstonecraft.co.uk/printables/fire-damage

Editable site templates (trial panel report, colour and photo log, stop-work sheet, method statement, Site File fire module) are available separately — enquire@naturalstonecraft.co.uk

Laser may suit dark carbon films on sound light stone after trials — it is not the default first step after fire. Large interiors often use dry vacuum plus peelable systems; carving may justify laser later. Heat change and salts need separate decisions.