

**DECLARATION OF A LOCAL HEALTH EMERGENCY CONCERNING
UNHEALTHFUL AIR QUALITY AND AN ORDER PROHIBITING THE
ENDANGERMENT OF THE COMMUNITY THROUGH THE UNSAFE
REMOVAL, TRANSPORT, AND DISPOSAL OF FIRE DEBRIS**

WHEREAS, California Health and Safety Code section 101040 authorizes the local health officer to take any preventative measure that may be necessary to protect and preserve public health from any public hazard during an emergency;

WHEREAS, section 101080 of the California Health and Safety Code authorizes the local health officer to declare a local health emergency in the jurisdiction or areas thereof affected by release or escape of hazardous waste which is an imminent threat to the public health or imminent and proximate threat of the introduction of any contagious, infectious, or communicable disease, chemical agent, noncommunicable biologic agent, toxin, or radioactive agent;

WHEREAS, the Director of the Ventura County Environmental Health Division is a duly authorized deputy local health officer with respect to hazardous waste and materials matters;

WHEREAS, the potential for widespread toxic exposures and threats to public health and the environment exists in the aftermath of a major wildfire disaster, and debris and ash from residential structure fires contain hazardous substances that can result in adverse health impacts to the public;

WHEREAS, the combustion of building materials such as siding, roofing tiles, and insulation result in dangerous ash that may contain asbestos, heavy metals, and other hazardous substances, and household hazardous substances such as paint, gasoline, cleaning products, pesticides, compressed gas cylinders, and chemicals may have been stored in homes, garages, or sheds that may have burned or released in the fire, also producing hazardous substances;

WHEREAS, exposure to hazardous substances may lead to acute and chronic health effects and may cause long-term public health and environmental impacts; uncontrolled hazardous substances and debris pose significant threats to public health through inhalation of dust particles and contamination of drinking water supplies; and improper handling can expose workers to toxic materials, and improper transport and disposal of fire debris can spread hazardous substances throughout the community;

WHEREAS, the combustion of building materials and vegetation may result in transient unhealthful air quality in areas of Ventura County;

WHEREAS, exposure to unhealthful air quality may lead to acute and chronic health effects and may cause long term public health impacts and residents should minimize their exposure this unhealthful air quality;

WHEREAS, the Health Officer of Ventura County finds that the wildfire (known as the Mountain Fire) that started in Ventura County on November 6, 2024, has created an imminent threat to public health in Ventura County in the form of unhealthful air quality and contaminated debris from household hazardous waste and materials and structural debris resulting from the destruction of residential and or commercial structures;

WHEREAS, areas that have been closed to reentry by residents and the public for safety reasons will be opened in the near future;

WHEREAS, this hazardous waste debris poses a substantial present or potential hazard to human health and the environment unless its removal and disposal is performed in a manner that will protect the public health and safety;

WHEREAS, the California Office of Emergency Services may establish a voluntary Fire Debris Removal Program to ensure the safe removal, transport, and disposal of hazardous fire debris;

WHEREAS, property owners that do not participate in the Fire Debris Removal Program must conduct their private debris removal, transport, and disposal in a manner that does not endanger the community and that complies with all legal requirements;

WHEREAS, on November 7, 2024, the Governor of the State of California proclaimed a State of Emergency existed in Ventura County; and

WHEREAS, on November 6, 2024, The Ventura County Sheriff proclaimed a Local Emergency existed in Ventura County;

NOW, THEREFORE, A LOCAL HEALTH EMERGENCY IS HEREBY DECLARED in Ventura County in those areas of the county affected by the Mountain Fire.

FURTHER, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED THAT:

1. No removal of fire debris from the Mountain Fire in Ventura County shall occur from properties without a hazardous materials inspection conducted either by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, California Department of Toxic Substances Control, or the County of Ventura Unified Program Agency. The term "removal of fire debris" as used in this order includes all cleanup of fire debris, but it does not include the removal of personal property from residential sites.

2. Pending the enactment of additional requirements to address the Mountain Fire disaster clean up, no debris bins shall be provided to property owners for the purposes of the removal of fire debris without the authorization of the Ventura County Environmental Health Division.

3. Pending the enactment of additional requirements to address the Mountain Fire

disaster clean up, property owners that choose not to participate in the State Fire Debris Removal Program if one is established in Ventura County, must register with and obtain the permission of the Ventura County Environmental Health Division before beginning the removal of fire debris and conduct their private debris removal, transport, and disposal in a manner that does not endanger the community.

4. This order applies in the incorporated and unincorporated areas of Ventura County impacted by the Mountain Fire within Ventura County.

Dated:

11/7/2024

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Uldine Castel", written over a horizontal line.

Uldine Castel, M.D.
Interim Ventura County Health Officer

Dated:

11/7/2024

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "C.R. Genkel", written over a horizontal line.

Charles R. Genkel
Director, Environmental Health Division County of
Ventura