



Mountain Fire Debris Removal

The ash and debris that remain from a structure destroyed by wildfire contain hazardous waste and materials that can threaten public health. Therefore, the Ventura County Public Health Officer declared a Local Health Emergency on November 8, 2024, which prohibits the removal of fire debris until an inspection of the debris is conducted by either state, federal, or local hazardous materials agencies.

The Public Health Emergency Declaration also prohibited the delivery of debris bins in the affected areas without the approval from the Ventura County Environmental Health Division (Division). The Division will release debris bins to properties that do not have any destroyed or damaged structures and meet the [exemption requirements](#). This includes removal of smoke-damaged personal items and removal of vegetative landscape debris from the fire. In addition, burn debris from fences and structures less than 120 square feet in size (e.g., gazebos, sheds, and decks) can be cleared from the property if the structures contained no stored paint, pesticides, herbicides, propane, or other hazardous substances, and if the best management practices listed in the document are followed. This exemption does not apply to debris containing asbestos.

Hazardous Waste and Structure Fire Debris Clean-up

To expedite recovery activities and ensure the safe removal of hazardous waste and fire debris, the County is coordinating with State agencies and vetted contractors to remove hazardous waste and fire debris from structures and properties damaged by the wildfire.

There are two phases to this Fire Debris Removal Program:

- Phase 1: Household hazardous waste (HHW) removal
- Phase 2: Debris and ash removal.

Phase 1: Household Hazardous Waste Removal

During Phase 1, teams from federal or state environmental response agencies will inspect your property and remove any HHW that pose a threat to human health and the environment such as batteries, identifiable asbestos, pesticides, cleaning products and paints. There is no cost to the property owner for this work and you do not need to file a request to participate. Once your property is cleared, a clearance notice will be posted on the property. The Phase 1 clearance does not include removal of fire debris and ash, which may contain hazardous substances like heavy metals and asbestos fibers. The remaining ash and debris will be removed during Phase 2.



Phase 2: Debris Removal and Property Clean-up

Two options are available to property owners who had structures destroyed by the fire:

- Option 1: Government-Funded Fire Debris Removal (Government Program)
- Option 2: Private Fire Debris Removal Program (Private Program)

Option 1: Government Program

During Phase 2, County or State teams will remove the remaining debris (including building foundations) from properties with destroyed structures. You will need to provide Right-of-Entry (ROE) application and insurance information before the work can be done. This work will include removal of all structure debris, foundations, trees that present a safety hazard to work crews, and some soil to ensure the site is clean and safe for rebuilding. All the work is undertaken by County or State contractors and there is no cost to the property owner. However, any insurance proceeds for debris removal shall be dedicated to off-set costs.

Option 2: Private Program

Property owners who do not qualify for, or who chose not to participate in the Government Program, must hire a private contractor to remove fire debris and clean up their properties. A Private Fire Debris Removal application and workplan must be approved by the County of Ventura prior to the commencement of work. Private debris removal is done at the homeowner's expense and must follow the same cleanup standards used by Government Program. Work must be performed by qualified personnel.

Resources:

More information and application packets for the State and Local programs will be posted on www.VenturaCountyRecovers.org when available.

Contact Us:

Environmental Health Division – Mountain Fire Message Center: 805-654-2432