

ORDINANCE NO. 4638

**AN URGENCY ORDINANCE OF THE COUNTY OF VENTURA
ESTABLISHING LOCAL STANDARDS AND PROCEDURES FOR
CLEANUP OF DEBRIS GENERATED BY THE MOUNTAIN FIRE**

The Board of Supervisors of the County of Ventura ordains as follows:

Section 1. This ordinance shall be known as the Mountain Wildfire Debris Removal Urgency Ordinance.

Section 2. Emergency Findings. This urgency ordinance is adopted pursuant to California Government Code sections 25123(d) and 25131 and shall take effect immediately upon its approval by at least a four-fifths vote of the Board of Supervisors. The Board of Supervisors finds that this ordinance is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health and safety, based upon the following facts:

1. A large number of residential structures were burned in the Mountain Fire that started on November 6, 2024.
2. The potential for widespread toxic exposures and threats to public health and the environment exists in the aftermath of a major wildfire disaster. Debris and ash from residential and commercial structure fires can contain hazardous substances and the detrimental health effects of hazardous substances releases after a wildfire are well-documented.
3. The combustion of building materials such as siding, roofing tiles, and insulation can result in dangerous ash that contains asbestos, heavy metals, and other hazardous waste. Household hazardous waste such as paint, gasoline, cleaning products, pesticides, compressed gas cylinders, and chemicals may have been stored in homes, garages, or sheds that may have also burned in the fire, also producing hazardous waste.
4. Exposure to hazardous substances may lead to acute and chronic detrimental health effects and may potentially cause long-term detrimental public health and environmental impacts. Uncontrolled hazardous waste and debris pose significant threats to public health through inhalation of dust particles and contamination of drinking water supplies. Improper handling can expose workers to toxic materials, and improper transport and disposal of fire debris can spread hazardous substances throughout the community.
5. Standards and removal procedures are needed immediately to protect the environment and public health, and to facilitate coordinated and effective mitigation

of the risks to the environment and public health from the health hazards generated in the Mountain fire.

6. On November 7, 2024, pursuant to California Health and Safety Code sections 101040 and 101080, the County Health Officer issued a Declaration of a Local Emergency and Order Prohibiting the Endangerment of the Community through the Unsafe Removal, Transport, and Disposal of Fire Debris (the “Declaration”).
7. The Declaration prohibits removal of fire debris from residential properties without first obtaining a hazardous materials inspection from the California Department of Toxic Substances Control, or the County of Ventura Certified Unified Program Agency. Pending the enactment of additional requirements to address the Mountain fire cleanup, the Declaration requires authorization from the County of Ventura Environmental Health Division before removing fire debris and providing debris bins to property owners for the purposes of the removal of fire debris.
8. It is essential that this ordinance become immediately effective to mitigate the harm that could be caused to the public health and safety and to the environment from improper disturbance, removal and/or disposal of debris containing hazardous materials, and to facilitate the orderly response to the Mountain fire.

Section 3. Removal of Fire Debris from Private Property.

1. Definitions. For purposes of this ordinance:

- (a) “Board” shall mean the Board of Supervisors of the County of Ventura.
- (b) “Director” shall mean the Director of the County of Ventura Environmental Health Division or his or her designee.
- (c) “Consolidated Debris Removal Program” shall mean the fire damage debris clearance program operated by the County of Ventura or the California Office of Emergency Services for the Mountain Fire in conjunction with other state and federal agencies.
- (d) “Local Fire Debris Removal Program” or “Local Program” shall mean the requirements for inspections and cleanup established by the County of Ventura for structures within the unincorporated area of Ventura County damaged or destroyed by the Mountain Fire.
- (e) “Fire debris” shall mean any and all ash or debris resulting from the damage to or destruction of structures in the Mountain Fire.

- (f) "Removal," "remove" and "removed," when used in the context of fire debris, shall mean and include all cleanup of fire debris, including removal, transport and disposal of fire debris, but it shall not include the removal of personal property from residential sites unless such removal of personal property involves cleanup and the removal of ash from the property.

2. Term of this Ordinance.

This ordinance shall take effect immediately upon adoption and shall remain in effect until the cleanup of fire debris has been completed on all properties in the unincorporated areas damaged by the Mountain Fire.

3. Prohibition on Removal of Fire Debris from Private Property.

No fire debris may be removed from private property unless and until a hazardous materials inspection of the property has been conducted either by the California Department of Toxic Substance Control, the County of Ventura Certified Unified Program Agency or by an entity approved through the Local Fire Debris Removal Program. No fire debris may be removed from private property except through the Consolidated Debris Removal Program or the Local Fire Debris Removal Program.

4. Removal of Fire Debris through the Local Fire Debris Removal Program.

- (a) The Director shall administer the Local Program in the unincorporated areas of Ventura County under the supervision of the County Executive Officer. The Director shall utilize the state and federal standards and cleanup goals of the Consolidated Debris Removal Program as the standards for the Local Program. Under the supervision of the County Executive Officer, the Director may administratively update these standards as necessary to address ongoing changes to efficiently remove hazardous fire debris from the community.

- (b) The Local Program shall require an application that identifies the appropriate licensed contractors that will perform the work and the submission of plans that demonstrate that the standards established in the Local Program will be met. Work shall not begin until the Director approves the application.

- (c) Upon completion of the work described in the approved plans, the property owner shall submit a Property Cleanup Completion Certification to the Director.

- (d) Notwithstanding any contrary provision in the Ventura County Building Code, a County of Ventura demolition permit may be required for ash debris removal work for which the Director has issued an approval allowing such work to proceed.

- (e) The City of Camarillo (“City”) shall administer its own alternative fire debris removal program within its jurisdictional boundaries. Pursuant to the Declaration, the Director shall be notified of applications to the City’s program, and compliance with the City’s program is sufficient for compliance with the Declaration with respect to properties within the City’s jurisdictional boundaries.

5. Hold on Building Permits.

- (a) No County of Ventura building permit to repair or reconstruct a fire damaged structure or private infrastructure damaged or destroyed by the Mountain fire shall be issued until fire debris cleanup is completed on the affected property in accordance with this ordinance and a Property Cleanup Completion Certification required by the Local Program, or equivalent certification issued through the Consolidated Debris Removal Program, is approved and submitted to the County of Ventura Building Official.

6. Deadlines and Enforcement.

- (a) Owners of properties on which there is fire debris that have not been enrolled in the Consolidated Debris Removal Program must submit a Local Fire Debris Removal application to the County no later than January 13, 2025. Any property on which there is fire debris that is not enrolled in the Consolidated Debris Removal Program and has not submitted an application for the Local Program by that date is hereby declared a public nuisance and health hazard.
- (b) Cleanup of properties enrolled in the Local Program must be completed no later than March 15, 2025. Any property enrolled in the Local Program that has not been cleaned up in accordance with the Local Program after that deadline is hereby declared a public nuisance and health hazard.
- (c) The Director may change the deadlines set in subsections 6(a) and (b), above, in exigent circumstances or as necessary and appropriate to facilitate the cleanup, avoid undue hardship and protect public health and safety.
- (d) The Board’s intent is to facilitate orderly remediation of a large-scale disaster. Nothing in these deadlines shall limit the authority of the County of Ventura or any County of Ventura official to abate hazards more quickly where required by exigent circumstances. Nothing in this ordinance shall limit the authority of the County of Ventura or any County of Ventura official to take any enforcement action or pursue any available remedies, including, without limitation, requiring preventive measures as defined in Health and Safety Code section 101040.

(e) Enforcement and Abatement

- (1) Authority to Abate. The Director is authorized to enter property and abate any public nuisance under this ordinance.
- (2) Summary Abatement Authorized. If a nuisance under this ordinance constitutes an immediate and serious threat of harm to public health or safety, the Director may enter the property and summarily abate the nuisance without compliance with the procedures prescribed elsewhere in this ordinance, except that the Director shall give the owner of the subject property such notice and opportunity to be heard as are feasible and appropriate under the circumstances. Immediately following summary abatement, the Director shall notify the owner of the subject property of the abatement.
- (3) Non-Summary Abatement Procedures.
 - (i) Pre-Abatement Notice. Prior to commencing a non-summary nuisance abatement, the Director shall issue an Abatement Notice (“Notice”) giving reasonable notice of the proposed abatement. The Notice shall be given by mailing a copy to the property owner(s) as listed on the last equalized tax roll. A summary of the Notice shall be posted in a conspicuous location on the property to be abated at least 10 days prior to the summary abatement action.
 - (ii) Appeal and Waiver. The property owner(s) or any person or entity having a legal interest in the property may submit a written appeal of the Notice to the Director no later than 10 days from the date of mailing of the Notice. The written appeal shall state the basis for the appeal. The Director shall review the appeal and shall issue a written decision no later than 10 days after receipt. The Director’s decision shall uphold, rescind or modify the Notice. Failure to appeal within the time prescribed shall constitute a waiver of the right to contest the abatement.
 - (iii) Post Abatement Notice. After the abatement is completed, the Director shall serve the property owner(s) with a post-abatement notice that sets forth: (a) the actions taken by the Director; (b) the reasons for the actions; (c) a report of the costs of abatement with a demand that the costs of abatement be paid within 60 days; and (d) that a lien against the property will be recorded for failure to pay within the prescribed time frame in (c).
- (4) Judicial Enforcement Action. County Counsel is authorized to initiate suits to abate public nuisances as defined in this ordinance without further Board approval.

(5) Remedies not exclusive. The remedies identified in this ordinance are in addition to and do not supersede or limit any and all other remedies, civil or criminal, available at law or in equity.

Section 4. Adoption of this ordinance is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to California Public Resources Code section 21080(b)(3) regarding projects to maintain, repair, restore, or replace property or facilities damaged or destroyed as a result of a declared disaster and section 21080(b)(4) regarding actions to mitigate or prevent an emergency, and CEQA Guidelines section 15269(a) regarding maintaining, repairing, restoring, demolishing, or replacing property or facilities damaged or destroyed as a result of a disaster in a disaster stricken area in which a state of emergency has been proclaimed by the Governor pursuant to the California Emergency Services Act, commencing with section 8550 of the California Government Code.

Section 5. If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, or phrase of this ordinance is for any reason held to be unconstitutional or invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, such decision shall not affect the validity of the remaining portion of this ordinance. The Board of Supervisors hereby declares that it would have passed this ordinance and every section, subsection, sentence, clause or phrase thereof irrespective of the fact that any one or more sections, subsections, sentences, clauses or phrases be declared unconstitutional or invalid.

Section 6. This ordinance shall be and the same is hereby declared to be in full force and effect immediately upon its passage by a four-fifths or greater vote. The complete text of this ordinance shall be published once before the expiration of 15 days after said passage, with the names of the Supervisors voting for or against the same, in a newspaper of general circulation published in the County of Ventura, State of California.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 22nd day of November, 2024, by the following vote:

AYES: Supervisors La Vere, Gorell, Parvin, Lopez, Long

NOES: Supervisors none

ABSENT: Supervisors none

Kelly Long
Chair, Board of Supervisors
County of Ventura

ATTEST:
DR. SEVET JOHNSON
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors
County of Ventura, State of California

By: Lon Key
Deputy Clerk of the Board

