



## Public Information

County of Ventura · Resource Management Agency · Environmental Health Division

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# THOMAS FIRE DEBRIS REMOVAL FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## What is the Ventura County Consolidated Fire Debris Removal Program?

The Ventura County Consolidated Fire Debris Removal Program (Program) has two phases: removal of household hazardous waste and removal of other fire-related debris.

**In Phase I**, county, state and federal agencies have organized teams of experts from the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) to inspect your property and remove any household hazardous waste that may pose a threat to human health, animals, and the environment such as batteries, oil, propane tanks, visible bulk asbestos, and paints.

**In Phase II**, Cal OES and local officials are coordinating with California's Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) to execute contracts and conduct fire-related debris removal from your property.

## What do I need to do?

**Phase I:** Household hazardous waste: Operations are already underway.

**Phase II:** Debris and ash removal: Contact Ventura County Environmental Health (County) to get a Right-of-Entry (ROE) which grants government contractors access to your property. Check the Ventura County Recovers website for information on how to obtain the form at: <http://venturacountyrecovers.org>

## What is a Right to Entry (ROE) form?

A Right to Entry (ROE) form gives government contractors permission to access your property and begin debris cleanup. These forms are coordinated between CalRecycle and the County.

## **If I missed the ROE deadline may I still submit one?**

ROEs submitted after the deadline must be reviewed on a case by case basis by the County. Provided a late ROE is submitted for a property in an area not already cleared by CalRecycle, then the late ROE may be approved and the property placed in the debris removal program. The longer the property owner waits to submit the ROE form the less likely they are to be included in the program.

## **My house was destroyed in the fire. Can I go back onto my property to see if I can find any valuables or mementos?**

Safe sifting through your property will NOT jeopardize your claims for disaster assistance. Property owners who desire to search debris for possible salvageable items should do so with caution and with proper protective gear: eye protection, masks, gloves, long-sleeved shirts, and long pants. Residents should minimize contact with fire debris, which may contain materials that can be hazardous to your health. For information visit:

<https://calepa.ca.gov/disaster/fire/>

<https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/wildfires/index.html>

<https://calepa.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/34/2016/10/Disaster-Documents-FireAsh.pdf>

## **When will the debris removal begin in Ventura County?**

Crews have already begun removal of hazardous household waste. Removal of fire debris, other than hazardous household waste, is scheduled to begin by January 15, 2018 for some properties and will continue throughout the winter.

## **Who will pay for the debris removal?**

The costs will be paid by the local and state agencies. Property owners that have insurance that specifically covers debris removal, owners must inform local officials, and they may be required to remit that portion of the insurance proceeds that are specifically reserved for debris removal.

## **What is considered household hazardous waste:**

Household hazardous waste is waste from houses that poses a threat to public health, animals, or the environment. Hazardous waste included chemicals that are ignitable, toxic, corrosive and reactive. Examples include pool chemicals, car batteries, antifreeze, used oil filters, solvents, fertilizers, pesticides, propane tanks, disinfectants, aerosols, paint, bleach, and ammunition.

**Are burned electronics and appliances (white goods) included in the household hazardous waste cleanup?**

Teams handling hazardous waste will not remove appliances or electronic waste, such as TV and computer monitors, computer processing units or cell phones. These materials will be removed as part of the overall debris removal process.

**How will I know if household hazardous waste has been removed from my property?**

Debris removal teams will mark the property indicating that household hazardous waste has been removed.

**Once the household hazardous waste is removed by the DTSC, can property owners hire their own contractors to remove the remaining debris?**

Yes. If you decide to remove fire-related debris from your property, you must obtain all the necessary permits and environmental clearances from your local government.

**Why not just have the contractors remove household hazardous waste as part of the general clean up?**

Household hazardous waste must be removed without delay to protect public health and safety. Additionally, hazardous waste could have significant long-term environmental impacts and should not be combined with the waste from the general clean-up that is going to landfills. Removal of hazardous waste from the fire debris prevents these environmental contaminants from polluting the environment, and protects workers and the public from exposure during debris removal efforts. The crews that conduct removal are specifically certified to handle household hazardous waste.

**Can residents be present during the cleanup of their personal property?**

The safety of the general public and workers is a priority during debris operations. To prevent safety hazards, the public is encouraged to stay away from areas where debris removal operations are underway. Exclusion zones will be established surrounding the current work area to ensure safety of the public.

**Is the debris removal process only for houses that are completely destroyed?**

This debris removal program is for destroyed houses, as directed by local government. If you are unsure if your house qualifies for the debris removal program, submit a Right-of-Entry form to the Ventura County Environmental Health Division for assessment.

**If I have homeowner's insurance, can I still participate in the debris removal program?**

Yes. However, to avoid a duplication of benefits provided by the state, your insurance company may be required to provide payment from your policy that is designated for debris removal.

**What portion of my homeowner's policy will the county collect for debris removal?**

It depends on the policy that you have. There are generally two types of debris removal coverages in a homeowner's insurance policy:

**Specified Amount:** One type of debris removal insurance coverage contains a separate, specific debris clause, typically capped at a percentage of the coverage amounts listed in the policy (for example, 5 percent of the value of a primary structure, other structure, and personal property.) If you have this type of policy, the county will only collect the specified amount designated in the debris removal clause, not to exceed the actual cost of debris removal. You will not owe the county any additional money, even if the actual costs to remove the debris exceed the amount designated in your insurance policy for debris removal.

**No Specified Amount:** Another type of debris removal insurance policy does not have a specified amount but includes the costs of debris removal in the total proceeds provided for the primary structure, other structure, or personal property. If you have this type of policy, the county will only attempt to collect insurance proceeds for debris removal after you have rebuilt your home. The county will only collect any money that remains in your insurance policy, if any, after the rebuild. The homeowner will not owe the county any additional money for debris removal.

**If I participate in the Consolidated Debris Removal Program, will the county have the right to take all of my insurance proceeds?**

No. There have been many rumors that if a homeowner participates in the Consolidated Debris Removal Program, the county will take all of the homeowner's insurance proceeds or the insurance proceed designated to rebuild their home. **This is simply not true.** The county will only seek reimbursement from the insurance carrier as stated above.

**If I opt into the Consolidated Debris Removal Program, and I have insurance but I decide not to rebuild, will I have to pay for the costs of the debris removal?**

Generally, no. If the insurance proceeds you received did not include specified amount for debris removal you will not be responsible for any costs associated with the debris removal. For more information, contact the Department of Insurance.

**Can I use my debris removal insurance policy to remove items that are ineligible for removal under the Consolidated Debris Removal program?**

If you have a specified amount for debris removal in your insurance policy (for example, 5 percent of the value of a primary structure, other structure, and personal property), you may use your insurance proceeds first to remove fire related debris that is ineligible for removal under the program (e.g., swimming pools, patios, trees, etc...). The county will only collect any money that remains in your insurance policy, if any, after you have removed ineligible fire related debris.

If you have a policy that includes the costs of debris removal in the total proceeds provided for the primary structure, other structure, or personal property, you may use these proceeds to pay for the removal of fire related debris that is ineligible for removal under the program. The county will only collect any money that remains in your insurance policy, if any, after the rebuild and removal of ineligible fire debris. The homeowner will not owe the county any additional money for debris removal. The property owner will be required to substantiate all expenditures.

**After my property is rebuilt or repaired following the damage, will my property taxes be increased over what they were before?**

No. Property owners will retain their previous factored base year value if the restructure is rebuilt in a like or similar manner, regardless of the actual cost of construction. However, any new square footage or extras, such as additional baths, will be added to the base year value at its full market value. For more information go to: <https://www.boe.ca.gov/proptaxes/faqs/disaster.htm#8>

**The ROE includes an indemnification and hold harmless provision. What does this mean?**

State and federal laws require that you agree not to sue the county, state, or federal government for harm resulting from the debris removal.

**Can I be sued by the state or federal contractor that is cleaning my property?**

No. All contractors will be licensed and insured, and their insurance will cover any injuries or damage to equipment that occurs during the debris removal process.

**Will CalRecycle use local contractors in this effort?**

Yes. CalRecycle will hire prime contractors who will use local contractors.

**Will CalRecycle use California State prevailing wage?**

The CalRecycle contractor is required to pay California State prevailing wage.

## **How will the CalRecycle contractor monitor air quality during Phase II debris removal operations?**

The contractor's Debris Removal Operations Plan includes a Community Air Monitoring (CAM) Program. Three air sampling stations and one weather station will be established, one upwind of the work site, one downwind, and one at the nearest sensitive receptor, such as an inhabited residence, school, nursing home, etc.

Each CAM station will consist of a real-time data-logging monitor to measure particulate concentrations, high-volume and low-volume asbestos and heavy metals. A number of response actions might be taken if certain levels are reached, including implementation of additional ash suppressions measures. These measures could include:

- Increasing pre-wetting time
- Adding additional water to dusty operations in the form of a mist
- Limiting drop heights when loading trucks
- Lowering speed of removal equipment
- Applying foam or wetting agents