



# Los Angeles County Public Works

900 South Fremont Avenue, Alhambra, CA 91803-1331  
Telephone: 626-979-5370 • Website: [lacounty.gov/recovery](https://lacounty.gov/recovery)

## BOBCAT FIRE AND LAKE FIRE - CONSOLIDATED DEBRIS REMOVAL PROGRAM

### General Information and Frequently Asked Questions (**Updated Regularly**)

Ash and debris that remain from a structure that was destroyed in the Bobcat or the Lake Fire may contain hazardous waste and materials that can threaten public health or the environment. Therefore, the Los Angeles County Public Health Officer declared a Local Health Emergency on November 5, 2020, which **prohibits the removal of fire debris** until an inspection of the debris is conducted by either state, federal, or local hazardous materials agencies.

Los Angeles County (County) requested State and federal assistance to expedite recovery activities and ensure the safe removal of hazardous waste and fire debris from structures and properties damaged by the wildfires. There are two phases in the Consolidated Debris Removal Program:

#### **Phase I – Hazardous Material Inspection and Removal**

The Los Angeles County Fire Department alongside teams from the California Department of Toxic Substance Control (DTSC) will begin assessing and removing household hazardous waste from properties burned by the Bobcat Fire and Lake Fire. Property owners cannot opt out of these household hazardous waste assessment and removal activities that are conducted at no cost to the property owner.

Additional information can be found on the LA County Recovery website: [lacounty.gov/recovery](https://lacounty.gov/recovery).

#### **Phase II – Fire Debris Removal Operations**

Upon completion of Phase I, there are two options for fire debris removal from your property:

#### **Option 1: Residents who **opt-in** and qualify for the Government-Sponsored Fire Debris Clearance Program (Recommended)**

The California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES), in coordination with Los Angeles County Public Works, will provide Bobcat Fire and Lake Fire debris removal at no direct cost to property owners.

- To participate in the program (opt-in) property owners must submit a completed Right-of-Entry (ROE) Permit for Fire Debris and Hazard Tree Removal by **February 15, 2021**. The form provides consent for debris removal teams to access the property and remove fire debris and hazard trees.



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- The ROE form is available at [lacounty.gov/recovery](http://lacounty.gov/recovery) or by request through email [bobcatfire@pw.lacounty.gov](mailto:bobcatfire@pw.lacounty.gov) or [lakefire@pw.lacounty.gov](mailto:lakefire@pw.lacounty.gov) or by calling **(626) 979-5370**.
- Property owners are encouraged to contact their homeowner's insurance companies, as insurance debris removal proceeds will be dedicated to the County to off-set debris removal costs. Property owners who do not have insurance but meet the eligibility guidelines are eligible for the program.
- Property owners interested in opting-in are advised *not* to begin clearing debris as this may affect eligibility to participate in the program.

### Option 2: Residents who **opt-out** or do not qualify for the Government-Sponsored Fire Debris Clearance Program

**Property owners are strongly encouraged to participate in the Government-Sponsored Fire Debris Clearance program as it will be a safer, streamlined process with no fee administered.** However, property owners who are ineligible for the Government-Sponsored Program or elect **not** to participate must submit a "Los Angeles County Local Fire Debris Removal Program Application" (available at [lacounty.gov/recovery](http://lacounty.gov/recovery) or by request through email [bobcatfire@pw.lacounty.gov](mailto:bobcatfire@pw.lacounty.gov) or [lakefire@pw.lacounty.gov](mailto:lakefire@pw.lacounty.gov)) and Work Plan to the County for approval before **February 28, 2021**.

An approved Work Plan and applicable permits (such as a demolition permit) are required prior to commencing debris removal. The work must be done to standards of all applicable ordinances and other regulations so that community and environmental health and safety risks are adequately addressed. Documentation on adequate cleanup and proper disposal will be required. The work must be completed pursuant to the standards set forth by the County by **April 30, 2021**.

Property owners participating in Option 2 may remove debris after the approval of a Los Angeles County Local Debris Removal Program Application and Work Plan. Debris from the property may then be removed in one of the following ways:

- Hire a contractor for clearance and hauling. Residents are advised to select a contractor based on their individual needs. For general information regarding contractors, visit the Department of Consumer Affairs Contractors State License Board webpage at: [cslb.ca.gov/Media\\_Room/Disaster\\_Help\\_Center/](http://cslb.ca.gov/Media_Room/Disaster_Help_Center/)
- Clear and haul fire debris directly to a permitted landfill or other permitted solid waste facility.
- Clear fire debris and utilize roll-off bins or dumpsters by authorized waste haulers to remove debris for disposal.



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**Applications may be submitted in person, e-mail, mail, or fax. Below are more details:**

Method for Submittal	Details
Document Drop off Please call ahead: (661) 524-2390	Building and Safety – Antelope Valley Office, 335 A East Avenue K-6 Lancaster, CA 93535. Office Hours: Monday through Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
E-mail	<a href="mailto:bobcatfire@pw.lacounty.gov">bobcatfire@pw.lacounty.gov</a> or <a href="mailto:lakefire@pw.lacounty.gov">lakefire@pw.lacounty.gov</a> *Please limit file size to 150 megabytes (MB) and contact our hotline at (626) 979-5370 if you do not receive confirmation within 2 business days.
Mail	Los Angeles County Public Works Environmental Programs Division Bobcat Fire and Lake Fire Debris Removal Team P.O. Box 1460 Alhambra, CA 91802-1460
Fax	(626) 458-3569

**For questions, contact the Debris Removal Hotline at (626) 979-5370.  
For additional fire-related resources, visit [lacounty.gov/recovery](http://lacounty.gov/recovery).**



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### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### 1. What is the Consolidated Debris Removal Program?

The Consolidated Debris Removal Program consist of 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 State Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) to inspect impacted properties and remove any household hazardous waste that may pose a threat to human health, animals, and the environment such as batteries, herbicide, pesticide, propane tanks, asbestos siding, and paints. Phase I is automatic and includes both residential and commercial properties that have been destroyed by the fires.

In **Phase II**, CalOES, FEMA, and local officials will coordinate with the State's Debris Task Force and its Debris Management Teams (DMT) to conduct fire-related debris removal from your property if you have elected to participate in the Government-Sponsored Fire Debris Clearance Program (Government-Sponsored Program) by signing a Right-of-Entry (ROE) Permit for Debris and Hazardous Tree Removal.

#### 2. What do I need to do?

**Phase I (Hazardous Material Inspection and Removal):** You do not need to do anything to have household hazardous waste removed from your property. Operations are automatic and will be underway.

**Phase II (Fire Debris Removal Operations):** Contact Los Angeles County Public Works at (626) 979-5370 to get a Right-of-Entry (ROE) form or download the form at [lacounty.gov/recovery](http://lacounty.gov/recovery). You will fill out the form to grant government contractors access to your property to conduct the debris removal.

#### 3. How will I know if Phase I has been completed on my property?

The LA County Fire Department or DTSC will mark the property indicating that household hazardous waste has been removed.



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#### **4. After I turn in an ROE to the County, what happens next?**

First, the County will review your ROE and ensure it has been filled out correctly. Property records will be used to verify property ownership. Afterwards, the ROE will be transferred to the DMT for processing and scheduling.

#### **5. Is the Government Sponsored Fire Debris and Hazard Tree Removal Program only for houses that are completely destroyed?**

This debris removal program is for fire-damaged or destroyed houses and hazard trees, as directed by Los Angeles County. If you are unsure if your property qualifies for the debris-removal program, submit a Right-of-Entry form to [bobcatfire@dpw.lacounty.gov](mailto:bobcatfire@dpw.lacounty.gov) or [lakefire@dpw.lacounty.gov](mailto:lakefire@dpw.lacounty.gov) respectively. For more information visit [lacounty.gov/recovery](https://lacounty.gov/recovery).

#### **6. What is a hazard tree? Will the Government Sponsored Program remove my trees?**

A hazard tree is any tree in immediate danger of falling onto a road or adjacent parcel. Hazard trees must be removed to eliminate the immediate threat to the public at large. The DMT will remove trees that are a threat to the safety of the debris removal crews working on the property and trees that are dead or likely to die within five years as a result of the fire, as determined by a certified arborist, that present a threat to public health and safety on the public Right of Way (ROW), i.e. roadways, and/or public infrastructure, fire hydrants, water meters, etc.

#### **7. I don't have any burned structures on my property, but I have burned trees, am I eligible for the Government Sponsored Fire Debris and Hazard Tree Removal Program?**

Yes. Whether or not you have a burned structure, if you believe you have trees on your property that are dead or likely to die within five years as a result of the fire, you should submit a Right of Entry Form. The State will use a certified arborist to determine whether the trees on your property present a threat to the public Right of Way (ROW), i.e. roadways, and/or public infrastructure, fire hydrants, water meters, etc.

#### **8. 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 includes chemicals that are ignitable, toxic, corrosive, or reactive. Examples include pool chemicals, car batteries, antifreeze, used oil filters, solvents, fertilizers, pesticides, propane tanks, disinfectants, aerosols, paint, bleach, and ammunition.

#### **9. Are burned electronics and appliances (white goods) included in the household hazardous waste cleanup during Phase I?**



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No, Teams handling hazardous waste will not remove appliances or electronic wastes, such as TV and computer monitors, computers processing units, or cell phones. These materials will be removed during Phase II through the Government-Sponsored Program or the Los Angeles County Local Fire Debris Removal Program. For more information visit [lacounty.gov/recovery](https://lacounty.gov/recovery).

### **10. 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. This is an emergency protective measure. 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 the landfill.

Removal of hazardous waste from the fire debris prevents these environmental contaminants from polluting the environment and protects the workers and the public from exposure during debris removal efforts.

Removal crews are specifically certified to handle household hazardous waste.

### **11. When will my debris be cleared?**

Crews have already begun removal of hazardous household waste (Phase I). Removal of fire debris and hazardous trees, is scheduled to begin in January of 2021.

There are a number of factors that determine when everyone's lot will be scheduled for debris removal. To maximize efficiency, contractors schedule their work based on priorities set by CalOES and partners with input from County.

### **12. What is soil testing? Why is this being performed, and how? Who tests the soil?**

Crews scrape 3 – 6" of soil from the ash footprint and samples are sent to a state-approved lab for analysis. The results are compared against background samples taken from areas in the vicinity that are not directly impacted by fire to ensure that all contaminated ash was removed. If necessary, more soil is removed and the site is retested until it comes back clear of contaminants. All soil testing results are returned to the DMT for final review and validation.

### **13. After debris clearance and soil testing, what are the next steps?**

Once the DMT have ensured that contractors have removed all debris and soil testing meets California state standards, contractors will return to install erosion control methods. The DMT will then report to the County that your lot is clear. The County will then notify you that your property is safe and ready for rebuilding.

**14. Once the household hazardous waste is removed by the Fire Department and DTSC during Phase I, can property owners hire their own contractors to remove the remaining debris (Phase II)?**

Yes. If you decide to remove fire-related debris from your property on your own, you must apply to the Los Angeles County Local Fire Debris Removal Program and obtain all the necessary permits and environmental clearances from the County before your contractors start any work.

**15. Will I be notified before crews clean my property?**

Yes. If you opted-in to the Government-Sponsored Program for Phase II, the operational crews will attempt to contact you 24-48 hours prior to accessing your property. You are expected to ensure crews are able to access your property by unlocking gates and/or providing access codes.

### **Health and Safety**

**16. 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 more information visit:

- [cdph.ca.gov/Programs/OPA/Pages/NR18-056.aspx](https://cdph.ca.gov/Programs/OPA/Pages/NR18-056.aspx)
- [publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/docs/respiratory-protection-508-new.pdf](https://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/docs/respiratory-protection-508-new.pdf)

**17. Can residents be present during the cleanup of their personal property if participating in the Government-Sponsored Program (Phase II)?**

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. Property owners must also follow the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Guidelines for COVID-19.

**18. How are the DMT protecting our rivers, streams and aquifers from contamination?**

The DMT will use erosion controls on the site as well as use silt collection devices around storm drains to minimize impacts to rivers, streams and the aquifers. They are also taking





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measures such as wrapping the debris in trucks to minimize particles traveling from the air to the water.

### **19. Who ensures compliance with worker safety regulations?**

The State's Debris Task Force's safety professionals and contractor safety staff ensure work is complying with all OSHA, Cal/OSHA, CDC, and state and federal EPA standards.

### **20. What safety and environmental regulations are contractors required to comply with?**

Contractors are required to comply with all local, state and federal laws and regulations regarding safety and the environment. Whenever there is a conflict between codes or regulations, the most stringent regulation is applied.

### **Payment and Insurance**

### **21. Who will pay for the debris removal when Opting-in to the Government Sponsored Program?**

All upfront costs will be paid by state and federal agencies. However, if property owners have homeowners, secondary, or automobile insurance covering debris removal, owners must inform the County by indicating that coverage on their ROE. Homeowners may be required to remit that portion of their insurance proceeds specifically reserved for debris. Please see Attachment A "November 2018 Wildfires Consolidated Debris Removal Program Insurance Fact Sheet" for more details.

### **22. If I have homeowners insurance, can I participate in the Government-Sponsored 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 designated for debris removal to the government. Please see Attachment A "November 2018 Wildfires Consolidated Debris Removal Program Insurance Fact Sheet" for more details. For more information regarding insurance claims, coverage, or understanding your policy, please visit the California Department of Insurance website at <http://www.insurance.ca.gov/01-consumers/140-catastrophes/WildfireResources.cfm> or call the Insurance Consumer Hotline at 1-(800) 927-4357.

### **23. What portion of my homeowners 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 homeowners insurance policy:





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- **Specified Amount:** If your homeowners insurance policy contains a separate, debris-specific clause, the County will only collect the specified amount designated in the debris removal clause. These clauses are 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). You will not owe the County any additional money, even if the actual costs to remove the debris exceeded the amount designated in your insurance policy for debris removal.
- **No Specified Amount:** If your homeowners insurance policy does not have a separate, debris-specific clause and instead includes the costs of debris removal in the total coverage, the County will only collect insurance proceeds for debris removal after you have rebuilt your home. The County will only collect any available insurance proceeds, if any, after the rebuild. If there are no remaining funds, the homeowner will not owe the County any additional money for debris removal.

Please see Attachment A “November 2018 Wildfires Consolidated Debris Removal Program Insurance Fact Sheet” for examples.

### **24. If I participate in the Government-Sponsored Program, will the County have the right to take all of my insurance proceeds?**

No. The County will only seek reimbursement from the insurance carrier as stated above. The County will not attempt to collect any insurance proceeds designated for rebuilding.

### **25. Can I use my debris removal insurance policy to remove items that are ineligible for removal under the Government-Sponsored Program?**

Yes. If you have a specified amount for debris removal in your insurance policy, you may use your insurance proceeds 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 remaining insurance proceeds, if any, after you have removed ineligible fire-related debris.

If your homeowners insurance policy does not have a separate, debris-specific clause and instead includes the costs of debris removal in the total coverage, 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 remaining insurance proceeds, if any, after you have removed ineligible fire related debris.

In either scenario, the property owner will be required to substantiate all expenditures. For more information regarding insurance claims, coverage, or understanding your policy, please visit the California Department of Insurance website at <http://www.insurance.ca.gov/01-consumers/140-catastrophes/WildfireResources.cfm> or call the Insurance Consumer Hotline at 1-(800) 927-4357.



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Property owners are advised *not* to begin clearing remaining ineligible debris until Phase II has been completed on their property as this may affect eligibility to participate in the program.

### **Contracting**

#### **26. Will the State's Debris Task Force use local contractors in this effort?**

The State's Debris Task Force will choose a prime contractor who will hire subcontractors. The State's Debris Task Force will make every effort to encourage the prime contractor to use local subcontractors.

If you have any questions regarding the Consolidated Debris Removal Program, send them to [debrisquestions@caloes.ca.gov](mailto:debrisquestions@caloes.ca.gov) or visit the State's website at [wildfirerecovery.caloes.ca.gov](http://wildfirerecovery.caloes.ca.gov).

### **Foundations**

#### **27. How does the state determine removal of foundations?**

In general, the structural integrity of concrete and masonry (CMU) can adversely be affected in fire situations, especially when the structure is completely consumed by the fire. The properties of the material may be irreversibly altered deeming it unsatisfactory for reuse in supporting a rebuilt structure. Please see Attachment B "Debris Operational Guidance: Damaged Concrete at Wildland Urban Interface Fires" for more information. For property owners participating in the Government-Sponsored Program your foundation may be removed as determined by the State.

### **Swimming Pools**

#### **28. Will my pool be drained as part of the Government-Sponsored Program?**

Pool water pumping is not eligible under the Government-Sponsored Program. However, on a case by case basis, if there is substantial structural debris, the pool water may be pumped. Contractor will place metal fencing completely around the pool where feasible and notify the homeowner.

#### **29. How do I maintain my pool impacted by smoke and ash contamination, or fire damage?**

Please see Attachment C for the Los Angeles County Public Health's guidelines for Swimming Pools Impacted by Fire, Smoke, and Ash. For more information, please contact the Environmental Health, Recreational Waters Program at (626) 430-5360 or [rhealth@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:rhealth@ph.lacounty.gov).

# Attachment A

STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Ricardo Lara, *Insurance Commissioner*

## DEPARTMENT OF INSURANCE

CONSUMER SERVICES & MARKET CONDUCT BRANCH

300 SOUTH SPRING STREET-SOUTH TOWER

LOS ANGELES, CA 90013

(213) 346-6800

(213) 897-6041 (FAX)

[www.insurance.ca.gov](http://www.insurance.ca.gov)



### November 2018 Wildfires Consolidated Debris Removal Program Insurance Fact Sheet (01/11/2019)

As a result of the recent wildfires, local, state, and federal agencies have initiated a consolidated debris removal program. This action was taken due to the health and safety concerns associated with hazardous substances, ash, and other materials. Homeowners are being asked to sign a Right of Entry form in order to participate in this program. If the homeowner agrees to participate in the program and signs the Right of Entry Form the consolidated debris removal program is being done free of charge, whether the property owner is insured or not insured. If the property is insured, there will be no reduction in the homeowners' coverages available for the rebuilding process.

As noted in the Right of Entry Form, if the homeowner has insurance in effect at the time of the wildfire that provides specified coverage for debris removal (i.e. a certain dollar amount or percentage), the homeowner authorizes that these specified debris removal benefits be paid directly to County up to the specified amount of coverage, after which the homeowner will not be liable for any further costs to County. In the event that coverage for debris removal are not provided on the basis of a specified amount but are included within another coverage category, payment to County shall be limited to the unused benefit amount (if any) in that coverage category after the residence is rebuilt, after which Owner shall not be liable for further costs to County. The benefits of this program would apply even if the homeowner decides not to rebuild in the same location but purchases a replacement home in another location.

Homeowners' (HO) insurance policies cover costs for debris removal in a few different ways. You should consult your specific insurance policy to determine how debris removal benefits are paid. The most common type of HO policy will have (up to) three separate major coverages applicable to debris removal:

**Coverage A (Primary Structure):** Cost to rebuilt or replace the primary structure.

**Coverage B (Other Structures):** Cost to rebuilt or replace other structures including detached garages, sheds, etc.

**Coverage C (Contents or Personal Property):** Cost to replace personal property.

In addition to debris removal benefits that can be paid from the above coverages, many HO policies provide a specified additional benefit for debris removal. The most common HO policy will add additional debris removal coverage of 5% of the policy limits for Coverage A, if Coverage A limits are exhausted (used up) for the actual rebuild costs. Some policies also have additional coverage of 5% of the policy limits for Coverage B and for Coverage C.

Under these types of policies, FEMA, state and local governments (in order to avoid a duplication of benefits) would only require the County to collect up to the additional specified coverage amounts for debris removal (i.e. 5% of Coverage A, plus 5% of Coverage B, plus 5% of Coverage C). This would leave the primary coverage limits intact for the rebuild.

## Attachment A

### Example 1: Typical HO Policy with Specified Additional Debris Removal Benefits:

Coverage	Coverage Limits	Specified Additional Debris Removal Coverage
Coverage A: Primary Structure	\$200,000	(5% Cov A): \$10,000
Coverage B: Other Structures	\$20,000	(5% Cov B): \$1,000
Coverage C: Contents	\$100,000	(5% Cov C): \$5,000
Total Direct Coverage Available for Debris Removal (Amount to be paid to County)	NA	\$16,000
Sample Debris Removal Cost*		\$75,000
Deficiency (Homeowner not liable for this deficiency only if they go through the Consolidated Debris Removal Program)**		\$59,000

\* The Average Cost for Debris Removal from the Valley and Butte Fires was about \$115,000 per property, so \$75,000 is a very conservative cost, even if the work is done by a private debris removal company (assuming they have all the permits, licenses, plans, equipment, and environmental clearances). Also, an insurer would not be expected to pay an unreasonable amount for debris removal costs.

\*\* If the insured does NOT go through the consolidated debris removal program, the \$59,000 deficiency would erode the insured's primary coverage limits, leaving less money to rebuild. Typically, the insurer would deduct the \$59,000 from Coverage A (Primary Structure), leaving the insured (in this example) with only \$141,000 to rebuild the Primary Structure.

**Example 2: Less Common Type of HO Policy:** Another type of HO policy has less coverage than the above scenario and does not provide for an additional specified debris removal coverage. In this case, as noted above, attempting to collect debris removal costs would erode most of the Coverage A, B and C limits leaving very little for the property owner to rebuild (i.e. underinsured). However, under these policies, FEMA, state, and local governments will only seek to collect from these types of policies if (after the property owner rebuilds or replaces the home) there is coverage left over in any of the Coverages A, B, or C (that have debris removal benefits). For example using the same coverage limits as above:

Coverage	Coverage Limits	Coverage Used by Insured to Rebuild	Amount Available for Consolidated Debris Removal
Coverage A: Primary Structure	\$200,000	\$200,000	\$0,000
Coverage B: Other Structures	\$20,000	\$18,000	\$2,000
Coverage C: Contents	\$100,000	\$ 93,000	\$7,000
Total Coverage Available for Debris Removal (Amount paid to County)	NA	NA	\$9,000
Sample Cost on Invoice			\$75,000
Deficiency (Homeowner not liable for this deficiency only if they go through the Consolidated Debris Removal Program)**			\$66,000

\*\* If the insured does NOT go through the consolidated debris removal program, the \$66,000 deficiency would erode the insured's primary coverage limits, leaving less money to rebuild. Some insurers would first deduct the full \$75,000 from Coverage A (Primary Structure), leaving the insured with only \$125,000 to rebuild the Primary Structure.

There are other types of residential property insurance policies that differ in how they cover debris removal costs. Homeowners should review their insurance policy to determine how debris removal costs are handled. But, regardless of what type of policy the homeowners has, if the homeowner agrees to participate in the program and signs the Right of Entry Form the consolidated debris removal program is being done **free of charge** to the homeowner. If a homeowner has questions on the consolidated debris removal program and the Right of Entry form, please contact your county administrative offices. If a homeowner has questions on any insurance-related issues, they may visit one of our insurance experts at the Local Assistance Center (while they are operational) in their county or contact the California Department of Insurance by calling our toll-free Hotline at (800) 927-4357 or visit us online at [www.insurance.ca.gov](http://www.insurance.ca.gov)

## **Attachment B**

### **DEBRIS OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE: DAMAGED CONCRETE AT WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE FIRES Version 4.0, August 20, 2018 By Todd Thalhamer, P.E., CA State Matter Expert in Structural Debris**

#### **Background**

The purpose of this debris removal guidance is to assist field operational decisions under a CalRecycle structural debris removal program in removing impacted concrete. Working around concrete structures in areas impacted by ash and debris requires significant careful and deliberate effort with equipment and hand labor to remove contaminants or the contractor risks leaving contaminants behind. There is an additional risk that hard scape and other aspects of the site could be damaged by the removal efforts. Generally, all materials, including concrete in areas directly impacted by the fire and subsequent ash and debris, shall be removed.

As with all construction work, a number of field decisions must be made by qualified individuals to complete debris removal. This guidance is designed to operate in accordance with the Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS) by using the Incident Command System (ICS) for field response. All field personnel will use this Damaged Concrete Guidance to ensure consistent safe practices are followed. Common issues are addressed below; if questions arise about a concrete structure/wall/pad in the field, please refer to the next level of command for further guidance. Field training is always available to assist in decision making. CalRecycle utilizes the following concrete operating procedures relative to situations encountered during debris removal from residences following catastrophic wild fires.

#### **Discussion**

The average house fire burns at a temperature of about 1,100 degrees Fahrenheit (°F) but can reach in upwards of 1,300°F depending on certain conditions such as wind and building construction. The longer concrete is exposed to heat, such as that generated by a large-scale wildland, urban interface fire where little to no structural firefighting suppression occurs, the more damage the concrete sustains.

Basic behavior of concrete at high temperatures is well established in textbooks and discussed in the literature. Important factors in assessing the damage to concrete are the rate of heating and the duration of exposure to high temperatures. At slightly above 212°F, free water in concrete begins to evaporate rapidly. When concrete reaches about 350°F, a significant amount of chemically bound water is released. When concrete temperatures reach above 750°F, the residual compressive strength typically drops by 50 to 60% and the concrete is considered fully damaged.

While some professionals use color changes and hammer tests to assess residential, heat-damaged concrete and others use mechanical compression and shear testing, California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) considers all

## Attachment B

structural foundations to be destroyed by the heat from an unsuppressed structure fire. These slabs and foundations are no longer structurally sound and now considered debris. Additionally, with the known amounts of carcinogens, heavy metals and asbestos, structural slabs will need to be removed to assess the former building sites for residual ash contamination. Should the owner wish to keep a structural foundation, the owner should not enter this public program and instead, contract with a private contractor to remove debris in accordance with local government requirements. The owner should be advised that barrier layers under the slab and anchor bolts are also destroyed by the heat.

### Overall Guidance

#### 1. General Discussion

- a. All concrete or asphalt within the structural ash footprint will be removed. A distance of five feet from structural ash is used as a guideline. All concrete left in place will be made safe by cutting rebar flush or fencing retaining walls and/or pools. Generally speaking, if confirmation samples will be collected, then the concrete shall be removed. While cutting or breaking concrete, the contractor shall wear personal protective equipment (PPE), including eye and respiratory protection.

#### 2. Structural Slabs and Foundations

- a. Required removal: Includes homes, cabins, mobile home slabs, barns, sheds, garages, other living structures and any concrete pad that was designed to hold a structural load. If the slab or pad was used to store vehicles or other commercial materials such as tires, building products, roofing tiles, etc., the impacted slab must be removed.
- b. Exception: Well slabs or pads. To protect the well casing and the integrity of the well, remove only ash and debris by hand and leave concrete pad around the well casing. Protect well with temporary construction fencing. Use PPE.
- c. Exception: Former slabs or pads that only held firewood or other inert material will be left in place. These slabs may be from a previous structure that was removed and/or not damaged by a fire.

#### 3. Driveways

- a. Undamaged driveways shall be preserved to the extent practicable. The goal is to provide a stabilized construction entrance for reconstruction.
- b. If the driveway is damaged or contaminated (e.g. burned vehicles) by debris removal equipment or haul trucks to the extent that the driveway is unsafe, the driveway will be removed to the extent necessary. Remove the driveway to the nearest concrete joint or five feet if asphalt outside the contamination or damage. All driveway cuts will be made using a concrete saw. Use PPE.

#### 4. Chimneys

- a. Required removal: See asbestos survey requirements.
- b. Exception: Patio fireplaces will not be removed unless deemed unsafe due to fire related damage.



## Attachment B

### 5. *Patio or other backyard features (such as waterfalls, sports courts, etc.)*

- a. Leave in place unless feature poses a physical hazard from fire related damage or impacted by ash and debris.

### 6. *Pools*

- a. Leave in place. Pools will not be removed or drained. Contractor will place metal fencing completely around the pool where feasible and notify the homeowner.
- b. Exception: Above grounds may be removed if the property owner wants the above ground removed. Pool water may be use as dust control if feasible.

### 7. *Walkways and private sidewalks*

- a. Leave in place.
- b. Exception: Unless necessary to remove for equipment access, covered in ash and debris, or damaged by equipment so that it is unsafe to walk on.

### 8. *Retaining Walls Less Than Four Feet*

- a. Leave in place unless covered in ash and debris or remove if the property owner wants the wall removed.
- b. Exception: If handwork cannot successfully remove the ash, remove wall and cut slope back to 2:1.

### 9. *Structural Retaining Walls Greater Than Four Feet*

- a. Leave in place. If connected to slab, make a cut with a concrete saw approximately 24 inches away from the wall. Notify owner that retaining wall is being left in place for erosion control and that the incident management team (IMT) has *not* evaluated the wall for structural integrity. Inform the local government the wall shall be evaluated by a licensed civil or structural engineer before reusing.
- b. Exception: If wall is unsafe and may collapse, remove wall and cut slope back to 2:1.

### 10. *Basements and Wine Caverns*

- a. Required to be removed. Once basements and caverns are removed, the Contractor will cut the slopes back to 2:1 and fence with temporary construction fencing.

### 11. *Footings*

- a. Required to be removed. Footings under the foundation will be removed.
- b. Exception: If footings are horizontal piers or other structural support below the slab, the concrete and/or steel will be cut/broken at the interface and rendered safe from tripping hazards.

### 12. *Piers, Pilings, or Horizontal Structural Piers Under the Slab*

- a. Leave in place. Remove slab to grade minus 3/10 and cut rebar and other metal supports to the base of the concrete/steel piers/pilings.





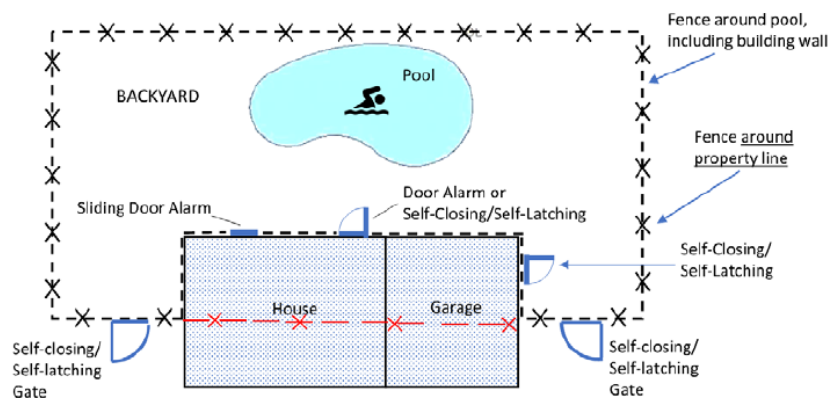
# Swimming Pools After a Fire

**Take Precautions. Be Safe. Protect Your Health.**

## Swimming Pool Fencing

When a fire damages or destroys homes and properties, it may also damage or destroy pool/spa enclosures. Swimming pools and spas without a proper enclosure can be a major hazard. To prevent drowning, injuries, or other risks, swimming pools and spas must be enclosed with a protective fence with the following specifications:

- The enclosure shall be at least 60 inches in height above grade.
- Construction material can be chain link, solid wood, wrought iron, etc.
- Gaps shall not exceed 4 inches to prevent access by small children.
- Gates and entrances shall be self-closing and self-latching.
- See Building Code Manual for other construction requirements: <https://bit.ly/2QUdkii>



For further assistance, please contact the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works – Building and Safety Division, Calabasas District Office, at (818) 880-4150.

## Mosquito Breeding

An unkept pool or spa results in stagnant water which is a breeding ground for mosquitoes to lay eggs that can produce thousands of mosquitoes in just a few weeks. Mosquitoes can spread serious diseases, such as West Nile Virus and Zika Virus.

It is important to keep mosquito breeding conditions from occurring to prevent the spread of disease. As a reminder, under the California Health and Safety Codes, homeowners are responsible for preventing and eliminating any mosquito breeding on their property.

## Attachment C



**It is not necessary to empty the pool.** Instead, use the following preventive measures to control mosquito breeding in vacant swimming pools or spas:

1. **Mosquito dunks**—A mosquito dunk is donut shaped solid item put in the swimming pool water to kill mosquito larvae and can be purchased at any hardware or garden shop.
2. **Mosquito fish**—Mosquito fish are about the size of minnows and eat mosquito larvae. If mosquito fish are used, chemicals (such as chlorine) cannot be in or added to the water.

For mosquito fish, treatment and further assistance, please contact the Los Angeles County West Vector and Vector-Borne Disease Control District at (310) 915-7370.

### Rebuilding Swimming Pools and Spas

The fire may have impacted the structural components of a swimming pool or spa, including the shell, deck, equipment, and enclosure. Please follow the instructions below when repairing or rebuilding your pool following a wildfire.

#### 1. Residential Swimming Pools and Spas

All private swimming pools and spas are permitted by local building and safety departments. Please contact your local building and safety office for information and instructions regarding repairs to the pool structure and/or equipment. Any repairs to the pool structure and equipment requires submittal of construction plans for review and approval. Plan submittal guidelines can be found at: <https://www.dpw.lacounty.gov/rebuild>. Please note that the State debris removal program does not include removal of materials from pool repairs. Demolition of pools will require permits and disposal of pool demolition material is the responsibility of the owner. If you need any further assistance, please contact the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works Building and Safety Division, Calabasas District Office, at (818) 880-4150.

#### 2. Public Swimming Pools and Spas

All public swimming pools and spas, such as those located at hotels/motels, apartment buildings, condominiums, schools, health clubs, city parks, mobile home parks, resorts, organizations, water theme parks, and medical facilities are permitted by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. Any repairs to the pool structure and equipment requires submittal of construction plans for review and approval. Plan submittal guidelines can be found at:

<http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/eh/AreasofInterest/recreationalwater.htm>



**Note:** If your pool needs to be drained due to damage or to make repairs, contact your local Storm Water program for guidance. In general, pool water must be dechlorinated before being discharged. To find your program, visit:

[http://dpw.lacounty.gov/PRG/StormWater/Page\\_03\\_cf1.cfm](http://dpw.lacounty.gov/PRG/StormWater/Page_03_cf1.cfm)

For more information, please contact the Environmental Health, Recreational Waters Program, at 626-430-5360 or [rhealth@ph.lacounty.gov](mailto:rhealth@ph.lacounty.gov).