



# County of Yolo

## DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

### Environmental Health Division

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## Guidelines for Clearing Fire Debris

### General Safety

The Yolo County Environmental Health Division (YCEH) warns property owners who wish to conduct ash and debris cleanup themselves that significant health hazards may be present when handling ash, debris, and household hazardous waste. Experience from similar fires in California has shown that asbestos, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), heavy metal residues, and other hazardous substances may be present in burn ash and debris.

Be aware of heat stress when wearing personal protective equipment.

Ash should be wetted (not soaked) to prevent airborne emissions during handling operations. Do not create ash runoff.

Keep children, pets and livestock out of areas with ash and debris.

Avoid direct contact with ash at all times. If you get ash on your skin, eyes, or in your mouth, wash it off with water as soon as you can. Ash may contain traces of hazardous chemicals such as metals like lead, cadmium, nickel and arsenic; asbestos from older homes or other buildings; perfluorochemicals (from degradation of non-stick cookware, for example); flame retardants; and caustic materials. For these reasons, it is advisable to be cautious and avoid exposure to the ash. People with asthma or other lung diseases, pregnant women, and the elderly should exercise special caution because they may be more susceptible to health effects from the ash.

Although not recommended by YCEH due to potentially significant health hazards, property owners may conduct their own cleanup of fire debris. If property owners proceed with their own cleanup, they are strongly recommended to make use of the following personal protective equipment:

- Respiratory protection (NIOSH-approved, N-95, if asbestos suspected, use "HEPA" or N100, can be purchased from most hardware stores)
- Gloves such as nitrile gloves worn under work gloves, or equivalent chemical resistant gloves
- Disposable coveralls such as "Tyvek" or other equivalent disposable coveralls (should be disposed of prior to entry into vehicles or homes). If not available, wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants to avoid skin contact. Contact with wet ash may cause chemical burns or irritation on skin.
- Footwear such as steel-toed boots (if possible, wear booties that can be discarded, or wash boots at end of day)
- Hardhat & goggles or protective glasses

### **Household Hazardous Waste**

Fire debris may contain various hazardous materials which pose a greater threat to human health and the environment when disposed improperly. Because of this, these items should be segregated and disposed separately at an appropriate disposal facility:

- Compressed gas cylinders, propane, LPG, oxygen, welding gases
- Gasoline cans (and other fuel containers)
- Bulk chemicals & chemical containers
- Lead acid batteries
- Transformers
- Paints and thinners
- Asbestos siding, insulation, tiles
- Lead-based paint and/or treated wood debris
- Bulk pesticides
- Bulk fertilizers
- Ammunitions
- Laboratory equipment
- Electrical Transformers
- Air conditioners
- CRTS from TVs and computer monitors
- Large metal appliances, lawn mowers, tractors, chainsaws, ATVs, etc.

Yolo County Central Landfill (YCCL) has a program established to handle HHW. Please call (530) 666-8856 for more information.

### **General Fire Debris**

Once HHW has been segregated from other fire debris, the remaining fire debris may be managed as solid waste to be disposed of at YCCL. Please call YCCL at (530) 666-8729 for more information and acceptance of general fire debris waste.

Recycle metals and concrete if possible.