



Los Angeles County Fire Department

Precautions when entering areas burned by Wildfire

Your home may be impacted by smoke, soot, ash, chemicals, water, and structural damage. Before entering any area heavily damaged or destroyed by a wildfire, be sure that the local fire department has cleared the area and advised you it is safe to do so. Once you are able to enter a burned out area, please take appropriate precautions and be aware of hazards to your health and safety. Your building and safety agency may post a notice on your damaged structure with directives for your protection.

WHAT HAZARDS SHOULD I WATCH FOR?

- Damaged or fallen power lines
- Ash, soot, and contaminated debris
- Unstable structures
- Sharp objects such as nails, metal, concrete, or wood debris
- Slip, trip, and fall hazards from unstable structures, open pits, or wet and slippery surfaces
- Household hazardous materials such as kitchen and bathroom cleaning products, paint, batteries, pesticides, herbicides, and fuel containers which have been partially damaged or destroyed
- Confined or poorly ventilated areas where carbon monoxide may be present from the operation of pumps, generators, or pressure washers
- Propane cylinders for heating or from BBQ appliances

FIRE ASH

The ash deposited by wildland fires may be hazardous. Avoid washing ash into storm drains. Ash and contaminated debris from residential structures should be contained and disposed of at a municipal solid waste landfill under the direction of the local (solid waste) enforcement agency ([DPH Solid Waste Program](#)). Fire ash may be:

- Irritating to the skin, especially to those with sensitive skin;
- Irritating to the nose and throat and may cause coughing; or
- A trigger for an asthmatic attack in people who already have asthma

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE) TO WEAR WHEN ENTERING BURNED OUT AREAS

PPE helps to reduce exposure to hazards. Use PPE when entering your property and select PPE based upon the situation.

RESPIRATORY PROTECTION

- People with asthma or respiratory conditions should reduce their exposure in these areas, and wear respiratory protection.
- Lingering smoke and fire ash can worsen a person's respiratory issues. Smoke can irritate the skin, nose, throat, lungs, and eyes; causing coughing and wheezing. These symptoms may be significant depending on the type of soot/ash, amount of exposure, and underlying respiratory conditions.
- Use N95 rated masks to help filter out and reduce exposure to fine dust particles such as ash, soot, and other nuisance-type particles. The mask must cover both the nose and mouth to keep you from breathing in dust and ash.
- If you cannot locate N95 masks, a well-fitting dust or surgical mask may provide some protection.

PROTECTIVE CLOTHING, GLOVES, AND BOOTS

- At a minimum, wear long sleeve shirts, long pants, or coveralls, garden or leather gloves and boots or shoes with thick soles to prevent punctures from sharp objects.

EYE, FACE, AND HEAD PROTECTION

- Wear safety glasses or goggles.
- Protective helmets or hard hats are recommended for areas where there is a risk of overhead hazards.

HEARING PROTECTION

- Ear plugs or safety ear muffs should be used when operating heavy machinery or power tools.

UTILITY PRECAUTIONS

- Your utility service providers may have turned off your supply of natural gas, electricity, and drinking water as result of this fire. Do not turn utilities back on without consulting with your local utility provider.
- Water system components should be checked for damage. Use a qualified and reputable company for any repairs. Prior to using your water system for consumption (drinking, cooking or bathing), flush the system to remove all stagnant water from the water lines. Run all cold and hot water taps for at least five minutes before you use them, even if the water is not hot.
- Assume all power lines are live until cleared by your power utility. Stay away from damaged or fallen power lines and power poles.

For additional information on the health effects from wildfire smoke, please visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/features/wildfires/>