



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, fuel containers and ammunition 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 and debris created by wildland fires may be hazardous. Do not let children play in or with things covered by ash. 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 or difficulty breathing in people who already have asthma or other lung diseases

WHAT PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE) SHOULD I USE TO ENTER 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 other lung or heart conditions should reduce their time in these areas and, if tolerable, may benefit from wearing respiratory protection while there.

- Lingering smoke and fire ash at home and in the yard can worsen a person's lung or heart issues. Smoke can irritate the skin, nose, throat, lungs and eyes and can cause coughing and wheezing. These symptoms may be significant depending on the type of soot/ash, amount of exposure, and underlying health conditions. Pay attention to how you feel and take breaks.
- Use N95 or P100 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 and must have a tight seal between the mask and user's face to keep you from breathing in dust and ash. **Note:** These do not come in sizes suitable for children.
- If you cannot locate N95 or P100 masks, a well-fitting dust or surgical mask may provide some protection – please note that masks are not designed to protect you from smoke or ash.

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

- Earplugs or safety earmuffs 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/or 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), internal cleaning and 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 more information on the health effects from wildfire smoke, please visit:

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

If you have any questions, please send an email to AskHHMD@fire.lacounty.gov.