

DEBRIS REMOVAL PROGRAM ENROLLMENT/PROCESS

1. What is the Consolidated Debris Removal Program?

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

In **Phase I**, state and federal agencies have organized teams of experts 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, herbicides, pesticides, propane tanks, asbestos siding, and paints. **Phase I** is an automatic enrollment and includes both residential and commercial properties that have been destroyed by the fire.

In **Phase II**, fire-related debris will be removed from your property, if you elect to participate in the program by signing a Right of Entry Form (ROE).

2. What do I need to do?

Phase I (household hazardous waste): You do not need to do anything to have household hazardous waste removed from your property. Operations are automatic and already underway.

Phase II (remaining debris and ash): Contact Kern County Public Health to get a ROE form. You will fill out the form to grant government contractors access to your property to conduct the debris removal. Check <https://kernpublichealth.com/returning-home-after-a-wildfire/> for information.

3. After I turn in an ROE to Kern County Public Health, what happens next?

First, Kern County Public Health will review your ROE and ensure it has been filled out completely and correctly. It will also cross check property records to verify that you are the property owner. Afterwards, the ROE will be transferred to the Debris Manage Team approval, for processing and scheduling.

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

The property will be posted with a white placard indicating that household hazardous waste has been removed. Only household hazardous waste that was accessible and identifiable and poses a threat to public health and the environment is removed from your property. The remaining fire debris and ash may still contain hazardous substances like heavy metals and asbestos fibers. Use caution when coming in contact with fire debris and ash.

5. Is the debris-removal program only for houses that are completely destroyed?

This debris removal program is for severely fire-damaged or destroyed houses and/or structures at least 120 square feet, as identified by CalFire and local agencies. If you are unsure if your structure(s) qualifies for the debris-removal program, submit a ROE form to Kern County Public Health for assessment.

6. What is considered household hazardous waste?

Household hazardous waste is waste from residential and commercial structures that pose a threat to human health, animals, or the environment. Household 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.

7. Are burned electronics and appliances included in the household hazardous waste cleanup?

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

8. 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.

9. When will my debris be cleared?

Crews have already begun removal of hazardous household waste. Removal of fire debris, other than hazardous household waste, should begin soon.

There are a number of factors that determine when your lot will be scheduled for debris removal. Contractors are responsible for planning their work, based on priorities set by Cal OES and partners, with input from Kern County Public Health to maximize efficiency.

10. 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 were 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.

11. After debris clearance and soil testing, what are the next steps?

Once it is verified that contractors have removed all debris and soil testing meets California standards, contractors will return to install erosion control methods. It will then be reported to Kern County Public Health that your lot is clear. Kern County Public Health will then notify you that your property is safe and ready for rebuilding.

12. Once the household hazardous waste is removed by 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 Kern County Public Health and all applicable County Departments before your contractors start any work. You will be required to meet the California standards required by the Phase II cleanup contractors.

13. Will I be notified before crews clean my property?

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

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

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. The ROE has a section to identify items for crews to look for during clean up.

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

Yes; however, 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.

16. How will our rivers, streams and aquifers be protected from contamination?

The crews 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 will also take measures such as wrapping the debris in trucks to minimize particles traveling from the air to the water.

17. 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 and state and federal EPA standards.

18. 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

19. Who will pay for the debris removal?

All initial costs will be paid by state and federal agencies. However, if property owners have homeowners insurance covering debris removal, owners must inform Kern County Public Health by indicating that coverage on their ROE. Homeowners may be required to remit that portion of their insurance proceeds specifically reserved for debris.

20. 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 or federal government, your insurance company may be required to provide payment from your policy designated for debris removal to the government.

21. What portion of my homeowner's policy will Kern County Public Health 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:** If your homeowner's insurance policy contains a separate, debris specific clause, Kern County Public Health 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 Kern County Public Health 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 homeowner's insurance policy does not have a separate, debris-specific clause and instead includes the costs of debris removal in the total coverage, Kern County Public Health will only collect insurance proceeds for debris removal after you have rebuilt your home. Kern County Public Health will only collect any available insurance proceeds, if any, after rebuilding is complete. If there are no remaining funds, the homeowner will not owe Kern County Public Health any additional money for debris removal.

22. If I participate in the Consolidated Debris Removal Program, will Kern County Public Health have the right to take all my insurance proceeds?

No. Kern County Public Health will only seek reimbursement from the insurance carrier as stated above. Kern County Public Health will not attempt to collect any insurance proceeds designated solely for rebuilding except as specified above.

23. Can I use my debris removal insurance policy to remove items that are ineligible for removal under the Consolidated Debris Removal 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.) Kern County Public Health will only collect remaining insurance proceeds, if any, after you have removed ineligible fire related debris. If your homeowner's 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. Kern County Public Health 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.

CONTRACTING

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

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

Grounded in Health

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