



GRIZZLY FLATS COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT

DEBRIS REMOVAL

Recovery after a major wildfire is a long-term process. Some of the early activities involve repairing areas damaged by fire destruction, and addressing safety hazards such as fire-weakened trees, burning stump holes, damaged utilities, and hazmat concerns.

FACT SHEET



WHY IS FIRE-CREATED DEBRIS HAZARDOUS?

After a fire, debris and ash from residential and commercial structures contain many hazardous materials, created through the burning of synthetic and toxic materials. Household products such as gasoline, cleaning products, pesticides, freon, lead, asbestos, and other chemicals may have been stored in homes, garages, or sheds that burned in the fire. These materials can be present in the ash and soil following a fire. Exposures can occur by sifting through ash and debris, causing ash to become airborne and inhaled or ingested. The improper handling and disposal of hazardous material may impact you, the environment, and public health.



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DEBRIS REMOVAL (CONTINUED)

WILDFIRE CLEANUP PROCESS

Wildfire cleanup includes both debris and hazardous tree removal. The following summarizes both processes:

▶ DEBRIS REMOVAL PROCESS

When it comes to the removal of fire-related debris, the first step is to conduct background soil sampling to identify and remove any asbestos-containing materials. This includes measuring and recording foundation, structure, debris, utility infrastructure, and property-specific hazards. When debris needs to be removed after a wildfire, it is transported safely out of the affected area by trucks. After which, all burnt debris, ash, and any contaminated soil are properly disposed of at a licensed facility.

▶ HAZARDOUS TREE REMOVAL PROCESS

A certified tree surgeon first assesses the fire-damaged trees and likeliness to fall on public right of way. Fire-damaged trees that are in danger of falling on the public right of way or public facilities (e.g., on a public road) will be cut down by a licensed timber operation. The cut trees are then hauled away from the property or processed using woodchippers. There are also hazardous trees located in other areas, some of which are within striking distance of water facilities, which have made it unsafe for workers to perform repairs or maintenance.

HAZARD MITIGATION EFFORTS TAKE TIME

Debris removal following any natural disaster, such as a devastating wildfire, is an extensive process. Fire-damaged trees are one of the main reasons the debris removal period can be extended even further. Anytime there are burned trees on federally owned land, there are additional restrictions placed on the removal process. Because those trees are considered natural resources, they cannot be removed in the same way as damaged trees in other fire-stricken locations. Multiple agencies must be involved in the debris removal from federal lands, including the U.S. Forest Service.

Additionally, due to the increase in wildfires in California over the past few years, companies that are responsible for removing debris have limited availability to take on additional projects. Because there are multiple wildfire sites that need to be serviced, there is also limited availability of the equipment that is required for removing some of the debris, including the woodchippers that are needed to handle large trees.

We appreciate your patience and understanding during this time, as we work diligently to coordinate the removal of hazardous debris resulting from the Caldor Fire.

