
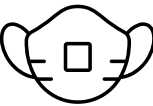



Protecting Public Health During Fire Residual Clean-up



Take Precautions. Be Safe. Protect Your Health.

Fire residual is comprised of tiny particles (ash, soot and dust) that can be deposited on indoor and outdoor surfaces and can be inhaled if the ash becomes airborne. Because the substances in the fire residual vary, it is best to be cautious. It may contain traces of hazardous substances such as heavy metals, asbestos, arsenic or lead that can be harmful to health. For these reasons, it is advisable to be cautious and avoid direct exposure to fire residual.

- **Do not allow children to play in or with items covered by fire residual.** Wash and clean affected children's toys before using. Children should not be in the vicinity while cleanup is in progress.
- **Use "wet" methods when cleaning**, such as a damp cloth or wet mop.
 - o When hosing off or wetting down fire residual, use as little water as possible. 
- **Only use HEPA-filter vacuum cleaners**, if vacuuming is necessary. Do not sweep with a broom or use leaf blowers.
 - o Shop vacuums and other common vacuum cleaners do not filter out small particles but instead can put particles back into the air where they can be inhaled.
- **Avoid direct skin contact** with fire residual by wearing gloves, long-sleeved shirt and pants during clean up. If it gets on your skin, wash with warm water and soap as soon as possible.
- **Use a disposable N-95 mask** to avoid breathing in small particles that may be disturbed during cleaning. 
 - o Although smaller sized masks may appear to fit a child's face, none of the manufacturers recommend their use in children. Children should not be in the vicinity while cleanup is in progress.
- **Wear safety goggles** (not safety glasses) if clean-up may cause ash in the air and if using chemical cleaning solutions to prevent splashing into the eyes.
- **Wash any home-grown fruits or vegetables from trees or gardens before eating.** If fire residual is encountered, wash hands well before eating. 
- Fire residual and cleanup supplies may be **thrown away in the regular trash** by placing it in a plastic trash bag first (to prevent any particles from becoming airborne and blowing away as the trash is emptied).

People with asthma or other lung diseases, heart disease, pregnant women, and the elderly should exercise special caution because they may be more susceptible to health effects from fire residual. Contact your primary healthcare provider if you think you are experiencing symptoms related to exposure to fire residual.

For more information, contact the Monterey County Environmental Health Bureau at (831) 755-4505.