

WILDFIRE DEBRIS

Post-Fire Household Debris Removal Processes

Household Debris Removal

Insurance

Beginning the debris removal process may seem daunting. However, when it comes to insurance, your cleanup should be covered under your property insurance policy. You should contact your insurance company immediately before starting any cleanup to find out if they have any requirements for reimbursement, such as photos of the damage and receipts for temporary housing. As with all claims, it is vital to maintain records and receipts of any activity on your property.

In the case of a presidential disaster declaration, cleanup will most likely be led by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) at no cost to the homeowner.

Homeowners are encouraged to default to EPA recommendations and processes. If a declaration is not made, [local Clean Air Agencies](#) and the Washington State Department of Ecology will assist with cleanup.



Documentation

Many landfills mandate specific documentation for waste disposal to ensure proper handling and regulatory compliance. This may include lab results to identify hazardous materials in your debris. Without the required documentation, disposal may be denied.

Quick Tips

- ▶ Check with local officials before placing debris for collection to determine where and when pickups will be conducted.
- ▶ **Be wary of scams.**
- ▶ Seek information about locally led debris cleanup efforts.
- ▶ Sort debris into three categories: metals, naturals, and ash & trash.

Check out: [Debris Removal and Cleanup Safety Checklist](#)

Resources

- [Hazardous waste disposal sites and services by county](#) (WA Department of Ecology)
- [Safe Cleanup of Wildfire Ash](#) (New Mexico Department of Health)
- [EPA debris cleanup guidelines](#) (Environmental Protection Agency)
- [EPA Disaster Debris Recovery Tool](#) (Environmental Protection Agency)
- [Disposing of hazardous household waste](#) (WA Department of Ecology)

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Quick Guide to the Debris Removal Process

Step 1

Contact your insurance provider. Then, contact your county or city code enforcement agency to determine their cleanup requirements for new construction permits.

Step 2

Determine if the ash and debris contain asbestos. It is strongly recommended you hire a licensed abatement contractor to perform any abatement activities.

Step 3

Sort through debris types and separate into metals, naturals, and ash & trash.

Step 4

Determine if you can bury anything on site. Typically, brick, rock, and concrete can be buried if you have space.

Step 5

Contact your local waste disposal site to learn what requirements they have for waste acceptance.

Step 6

Coordinate debris pick-up or locate a location to dispose of any debris that cannot be buried.



Photo: Bill Bradley

Asbestos

Contrary to common belief, asbestos is still found in many modern day materials. When asbestos is suspected to be present, the site needs to be tested. Asbestos testing should be covered by your insurance policy. In some situations, local municipalities will actually require testing after a disaster.

Read more: [Asbestos and Natural Disaster Guide](#)

Asbestos Resources:

- [Common Asbestos Containing Products](#)
- For guidance on asbestos testing and cleanup, [contact your local Clean Air Agency](#).
- [List of CDC approved respirators for handling asbestos](#).
- [Spokane Clean Air Agency](#) provides advice on hiring asbestos service providers and has a comprehensive list of providers in Washington.