

**Monterey County Health Department
Environmental Health Bureau**

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**Wildfire Fire Recovery and Rebuilding
Frequently Asked Questions**

Phase I Frequently Asked Questions

WHAT IS PHASE I?

Phase I is the first phase of the Government Sponsored Consolidated Debris Removal Program. In Phase I, organized teams of experts from U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) to inspect property and remove any hazardous waste that may pose a threat to human health, animals, and the environment such as batteries, herbicide, pesticide, propane tanks, asbestos siding, and paints, and e-waste. Property owners will be able to follow the clean-up process for all affected parcels on an online interactive map and properties will also be placarded to identify when Phase I is completed.

*This interactive map will be coming soon and will be accessible through Monterey County Wildfire Recovery Webpage.

HOW DO I SIGN UP TO BE INCLUDED IN THE PHASE I REMOVAL PROGRAM?

Registration is not required. All residents whose homes were destroyed from the fires are automatically enrolled into the Phase I removal program.

CAN I BE ON SITE DURING THE PHASE I CLEANUP PROCESS?

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.

WILL EPA REMOVE ANYTHING OTHER THAN HHW?

No. EPA will only remove hazardous waste. If firearms or suspected remains are found, EPA will immediately stop work and contact the County Sheriff. No other items will be removed. The EPA will not assess the permit status or other code related issues of any site or remaining structures on a property as part of this work. If you have questions about the status of your property or Phase 1 in general contact the EPA at (415)-793-8794.

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.

WHERE WILL PHASE I START?

The starting location or locations will be dependent on how the United States Environmental Protection Agency, US EPA, initiate proceedings. As this service is free of charge and comes at no cost to the affected homeowner, EPA may take priority based on environmental risks, including but not limited to ash/debris run off into neighboring creeks and nearby watersheds.

IS IT REQUIRED TO BE ENROLLED IN THE PHASE I REMOVAL PROGRAM?

Homeowners may choose to opt out of the free Government Sponsored Debris Removal Program and hire a private contractor for this work. Those wishing to do so, must make that decision by 5:00 p.m. Friday, September 25th. Before opting out, property owners should fully inform themselves of all aspects of debris removal including:

- Insurance coverage
- Availability of specialized contractors
- Ash sampling
- Work plan requirements
- Cost of removal or storage
- Disposal of hazardous waste as Monterey County landfills do not accept this type of waste and it is illegal to dump waste outside of an appropriate disposal site.

Those choosing to opt-out of the government sponsored debris removal program will have to sign a comprehensive acknowledgment, waiver and release that they assume full responsibility for debris removal and all associated costs, which may be substantial and disposal impractical for individual property owners due to the limited number of approved disposal sites. Additionally, choosing to opt out of Phase 1 automatically disqualifies property owners from Phase 2 Debris Removal and Property Clean-Up. Those considering opting out should contact Monterey County's Resource Management Agency about what is required for removal and how this may impact the rebuilding process. To opt out, property owners must notify RMA of their choice, and be prepared to sign a comprehensive acknowledgment, release and waiver. Please send an email with your request to escobar@co.monterey.ca.us or call (831) 784-5689.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I START OR COMPLETE THE WORK MYSELF?

Property owners that begin cleanup outside of the Government Sponsored Consolidated Debris Removal Program and without the approval from the Monterey County Environmental Health Bureau may potentially disqualify themselves from the state/federal sponsored cleanup/funding as well as prevent themselves from obtaining required permits for rebuilding. In addition, there are criminal penalties associated with unauthorized disposal and dumping of hazardous materials.

If unapproved cleanup work has already started on your property please stop immediately and contact Randy McMurray at 831-796-1269 or Maria Ferdin at 831-755-8915, from the Monterey County Environmental Health Bureau.