

# Debris Removal

Cleaning up after a fire is traumatic. As you go through this process, it's important to protect yourself and the environment as you begin the first steps to recovery.

## Should I try to clean up my property myself?

Jackson County and the Cities of Phoenix and Talent are currently recommending that you do not attempt to clean up your property yourself.

### Reasons for this recommendation are as follows:

- There may be hazards such as asbestos fibers, toxic chemicals, hazardous trees and structural hazards on your property.
- Complying with state and federal hazardous waste laws is complex and requires special licenses and certifications.
- Many home owner insurance policies may not cover the full cost of the cleanup.
- Plans are currently being developed by the state to clean properties on a comprehensive and systematic basis. This will take some time, but there are large benefits to individual property owners.
- A single coordinated approach will avoid blight and help maintain property values. It ensures your cleanup will be in compliance with Federal and State regulations.



We are expecting the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, using US EPA strike teams, to arrive on scene in mid October to begin household hazardous waste cleanup. This is the first step in this cleanup process.

## Fire debris can include hazards such as:

- Tiny particles of dust, dirt, and soot that can easily become airborne and inhaled
- Toxic amounts of heavy metals including arsenic, cadmium, copper, lead, and mercury
- Asbestos
- Material such as propane tanks, air conditioners, batteries, cleaning products, pesticides, and herbicides that are hazardous or require special handling and disposal



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**If you choose to remove debris yourself, please do the following:**

## **Protect yourself.**

Make sure it is safe to start work. Get clearance from the appropriate authorities supervising the fire clean-up. Follow your jurisdiction's procedures. Identify and mitigate hazards such as damaged trees and unstable structures. Wear a N95 mask, gloves, safety glasses, & sturdy shoes.

## **When possible...**

Any clean up of the impacted properties should be conducted by professionals who have the appropriate expertise for these activities.

## **Don't wash it down the drain.**

Never wash waste or debris into storm drains. Using a broom or a low pressure hose you may push **very small** amounts of ash onto soil or landscaped areas.

## **Know what you have, segregate materials, dispose of properly.**

Debris removal requires approval from the Cities of Talent and Phoenix. Contact your city for info. Different types of materials are disposed of differently. Contact your Disposal Company so you know how to dispose of ash, metal, and hazardous materials, including vehicles, appliances, medical waste, and contaminated soil.

## **Use caution around debris.**

- Be aware of electrical hazards.
- Wear sturdy footwear, eye goggles, a properly fitted N95 or KN95 respirator, and heavy-duty work gloves.
- Cloth face coverings, paper masks, or bandannas are not effective at filtering out fine airborne ash, dust, or asbestos fibers.
- Don't use a leaf blower.
- Children should not be involved in cleanup activities.

## **Important information:**

- If you see a spill or hazardous material, call the DEQ 1-888-997-7888 or report online at: [oregon.gov/deq/Get-Involved/Pages/File-Pollution-Complaint.aspx](https://oregon.gov/deq/Get-Involved/Pages/File-Pollution-Complaint.aspx)
- If there is a spill that poses a threat to public health and safety, call 911.
- How to safely manage ash and debris from burned buildings: [ordeq.org/afterthefire](https://ordeq.org/afterthefire)
- Advice for returning to a home that survived a wildfire: [ordeq.org/returninghome](https://ordeq.org/returninghome)
- City of Talent: (541) 535-1566
- City of Phoenix: [joe.slaughter@phoenixoregon.gov](mailto:joe.slaughter@phoenixoregon.gov)
- Rogue Valley Sewer Services: (541) 664-6300
- Recology: (541) 482-1471
- Rogue Disposal: (541) 779-4161
- DEQ, Medford Office: (541) 776-6010
- FEMA: 1-800-621-3362