

# STATE OF COLORADO

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Dedicated to protecting and improving the health and environment of the people of Colorado

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Colorado Department  
of Public Health  
and Environment

## Wildfire Recovery Guidance for Cleanup of Damaged or Destroyed Buildings

### Debris and Ash – Handling and Disposal

The ash deposited by forest fires is relatively nontoxic and similar to ash that might be found in your fireplace. However, any ash may contain unknown substances, including chemicals. In particular, ash and debris from burned structures may contain more toxic substances than forest fire ash, because of the many synthetic and other materials present in homes and buildings. For example, car batteries or mercury light bulbs may have been present in the buildings. In addition, older buildings have a greater potential to contain asbestos and lead.

People should take care when handling any materials from buildings that either are partially damaged by the fire (i.e., salvageable building materials remaining) or completely destroyed by the fire (i.e., only ash and debris remain). They should wear protective clothing and equipment to avoid skin contact and inhalation of ash and other disturbed material.

All debris and ash should be handled in a manner that will minimize potential exposure to any unknown hazardous materials that could potentially be present in the debris. Soil under the area where the ash/debris was deposited should be scraped to ensure all ash and building debris has been removed from the site.

- Materials must be thoroughly wetted to minimize dust, and then packaged inside a 6-mil plastic sheeting liner and placed in an end-dump roll-off with the top of the roll-off sealed with the plastic sheeting to secure the contents during transport once the roll-off is loaded.
- The department is providing a [list of landfills](#) that will accept debris and ash from burned structures affected by these wildfires. Roll-offs can be taken to any one of the landfills on the list. Please call the landfill contact before transporting loads to alert the landfill that the material is coming and confirm it will accept the waste.
- If you wish to bring debris and ash from structures burned during these wildfires to a different landfill, please contact that landfill to ensure they can accept the material.

The landfill should be informed the debris and ash has come from a structure burned in a wildfire area. Contractors should consult with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration at 303-844-5285 (Denver area office) or 303-843-4500 (Englewood area office) to determine required training and personal protective equipment that will be required for those handling this material.

A state-issued demolition permit is not required to remove the ash and debris from buildings that have been partially or completely destroyed. However, the ash and debris must be thoroughly wetted prior to handling to minimize dust.

**Asbestos**

If asbestos-containing material is known to be present in ash or debris in amounts greater than the trigger levels, they must be removed in accordance with Colorado Regulation No. 8, Part B. Trigger levels for single family residential dwellings are 50 linear feet on pipes, 32 square feet on other surfaces or the volume equivalent of a 55-gallon drum. If this is not known, the material may be handled and disposed of using the procedures outlined above.

Metal debris must be washed clean of ash/debris prior to recycling. Concrete debris (foundations) must be disposed of at an approved landfill. If you wish to recycle this material, it must be inspected by a certified asbestos building inspector and found to be free of asbestos-containing materials prior to recycling.

Lists of and contact information for landfills that will accept ash and debris from the various wildfires can be found on the [Air Pollution Control Division's website](#).

If you need additional information, please contact Charles Johnson at the department's Solid Waste Unit at 303-692-3348 or [Charles.Johnson@state.co.us](mailto:Charles.Johnson@state.co.us), or the Asbestos Unit at 303-692-3100 or <http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/ap/asbestos/index.html>.