

Reduce Exposure to Ash When Returning Home After a Wildfire



Protect your family from wildfire impacts, even if your home was not burned or damaged by a wildfire. Ash and debris from burnt structures can be blown into homes. Ash contains toxic metals and chemicals that can harm your health. It can irritate your skin, eyes, nose, and throat, make it hard to breathe, and trigger asthma attacks in people who have asthma.

Follow these tips to protect yourself and your household:

Keep Ash Away

- Keep children away from ash and clean toys before they play with them.
- Wash fruits and vegetables from your garden thoroughly before eating them.
- Remove shoes before entering your home or use “sticky mats”, available at hardware stores, in entryways and doors to remove dust and ash from your shoes.
- Keep pets away from ash and shampoo them if they get ash on them.

Keep Your Indoor Environment Clean

- Frequently clean indoor surfaces with a damp cloth, HEPA-filter vacuum cleaner and wet mop. Do not sweep with a broom.

Note: Only use HEPA-filter vacuum cleaners. 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.

Keep Safe When Working Outside

- Do not use leaf blowers or do any activities that will put ash into the air.
- Wear gloves, long sleeved shirts, long pants, and shoes to avoid skin contact with ash and other debris. Wear eye protection and head covering when in contact with ash.
- Wash off ash that gets on your skin as soon as you can.
- Double bag debris and ash in plastic bags or other containers. Seal all bags or containers to prevent ash from being spread by wind or rain. Check with your County for disposal instructions.
- Wear a close-fitting respirator that is rated [N95](#) or P100 to protect yourself from inhaling ash and smoke. Adults should choose a respirator approved by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health ([NIOSH](#)).

