



County of Santa Clara
Department of Environmental Health – Debris Removal
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REQUIREMENTS FOR CONDITIONAL EXEMPTION FROM COUNTY OF SANTA CLARA PRIVATE CONTRACTOR DEBRIS REMOVAL PROGRAM

ELIGIBILITY

Property owners may apply for a conditional exemption from the County's Private Contractor Debris Removal Program if the debris on a parcel is limited to fences, non-structural wood material, and non-residential structures less than 120 square feet that did not contain hazardous substances such as paint, fuels, oils, pesticides, herbicides, propane, or asbestos. Additional exemptions may be granted on a case by case basis for non-residential structures greater than 120 square feet that did not contain any hazardous materials and pose a minimal risk to human health and the environment.

A verification inspection by the County Department of Environmental Health (DEH) may be required to confirm site conditions after receipt of the application and prior to DEH's approval of an exemption. No work plan is required if an exemption is issued. Property owners will not be reimbursed with public funds for any portion of remediation or debris removal work conducted pursuant to an approved exemption.

PROCESSING AND DISPOSAL OF WOOD WASTE

There are numerous wood products that may be left after a fire that may need to be disposed of or processed onsite. For organic wood products (trees, brush, etc.), chipping and grinding may be a viable option provided that the following best management practices are followed:

- Wood chips, waste wood, or bark mulch may last several seasons, depending on the material and its depth. Occasionally, these materials are combined with soil in an erosion control mix. Spread the material to a depth of 2-6 inches, primarily on slopes less than 4:1 (25%).
- Wood chips, waste wood, or bark mulch are not allowed in streams or locations where they may be subject to erosion.
- Fencing, particle board, and preserved lumber are not appropriate to chip and grind onsite.
- Precautions must be taken against spontaneous combustion, and storage and/or piling of mulch should be avoided where possible.

GRADING AND EROSION CONTROL REQUIREMENTS

Once grading has been completed, best management practices shall be implemented to establish erosion control at the disturbed site.

- Follow best management erosion and sediment control practices to prevent ash, soil, and other pollutants from washing into the street, drainage courses and culverts, or onto neighboring properties. Stormwater best management practices may be found [here](#). Stockpiled materials that are not immediately loaded for transport shall be handled and stored onsite in a manner as to avoid offsite migration. Stockpiles may be stored for up to 180 days. This may include wetting and covering the waste until it is loaded and transported. Locate stockpiles away from drainage courses, drain inlets, or concentrated flows of stormwater.
- Stockpiled material may not be stored or placed in a public roadway

- During the rainy season, cover non-active soil stockpiles and contain them within temporary perimeter sediment barriers, such as berms, dikes, silt fences, or sandbag barriers. A soil stabilization measure may be used in lieu of cover.
- Implement appropriate control measures during debris removal and provide final site stabilization after debris removal is completed.

DEBRIS REMOVAL REQUIREMENTS FOR SOLID WASTE FACILITIES

Burn waste/ash at a minimum shall be disposed of at a Class III disposal facility with a liner approved by the Regional Water Control Board to accept the waste, and any characterization requirements of the disposal site must be met before transporting. An approved hauler appropriately licensed for the material transported will need to perform the work, and the material must be wetted and “burrito wrapped” (CalRecycle protocol) and tarped for transport and ultimate disposal. Contractors/haulers failing to adhere to this standard may have their material rejected at the disposal facility and/or a fine imposed. Your approved exemption form must be kept onsite and carried with you or your licensed hauler during debris transport. Your approved exemption will serve as verification to the landfill that this material is coming from an approved site. **Asbestos transport and disposal are not authorized by this exemption.**

DUST CONTROL GUIDELINES

- Property owners or their contractors should look to provide water or an approved dust palliative, or both, to prevent dust nuisance at each site. Dust resulting from performance of the work should be controlled at all times.
- Each area of ash and debris to be removed must be pre-watered 48 to 72 hours in advance of the removal. Hoses with a fine spray nozzle are recommended. The water must be applied in a manner that does not generate runoff. Engineering controls for stormwater discharges must be in place prior to dust control operations.
- All loads shall be covered with a tarp; this includes metal debris. Ash and debris loads shall be fully encapsulated with a tarp (“burrito wrap” method). Concrete loads are exempt from a tarp provided the loads are wetted prior to leaving. If concrete loads generate dust, then the loads must be wetted and covered.
- All waste material that is not unloaded at the end of each workday should be consolidated, sufficiently wetted, and/or covered to prevent the offsite migration of contaminants.
- All visibly dry, disturbed soil surface areas of operation should be watered to minimize dust emissions during performance of work.
- Speeds must be reduced when driving on unpaved roadways.
- Procedures must be implemented to prevent or minimize dirt, soil, or ash contaminating roadways, neighboring parcels, or creating an airborne health hazard. The use of blower devices, dry rotary brushes, or brooms for removal of carryout and track out on public roads is strictly prohibited.

VEHICLE AND ROAD SAFETY

If removal activities on your property will create a roadway blockage or hinder traffic patterns, property owners or their contractors are responsible for obtaining any required local permits and shall post warning signs, as required by local ordinances. As there may be many contractors actively working on remediation efforts in the burn area, it is in the property owner's best interest to identify removal and remediation efforts in adjacent areas that could impact the ability to locate, park, or transport equipment and materials.

WELLS AND SEPTIC GUIDELINES

- Identify wells, water tanks, and leach fields on the property and take steps to protect them during debris removal. Any immediate hazard involving septic tanks or septic systems shall be mitigated prior to debris removal.
- Contact Santa Clara County Department of Environmental Health at (408) 918-3400 for water well and/or septic system repair questions and permitting needs.

SOIL TESTING AND SCREENING CRITERIA GUIDELINES

Soil testing and screening criteria are not required under this exemption; however, property owners must meet any waste characterization requirements of recipient disposal sites prior to transporting waste.

HAZARD TREES

Property owners must arrange for the removal of Hazard Trees from their private property. A Hazard Tree is defined as a tree that is so damaged by the SCU Lightning Complex Fires that its structural integrity is compromised and it: (1) poses an immediate threat of falling onto work crews or obstructing access to the debris clearance site, or (2) presents a threat of public health or safety due to risk of falling onto a public right of way or public infrastructure.

CONTRACTORS

All contractors must review and comply with State and County Health Officer Orders and directives governing construction work during the COVID-19 pandemic, including the County Health Officer's [Mandatory Directive for Construction Projects](#) and the State's [COVID-19 Industry Guidance: Construction](#). They must also submit a Social Distancing Protocol to the County Public Health Department at www.COVID19prepared.org prior to performing work in the County.