

Returning Home After a Wildfire

- Do not return home until authorities say it is safe to do so.
- Avoid hot ash, charred trees, smoldering debris, and live embers. The ground may contain heat pockets that can burn you or spark another fire. Use appropriate masks or respirators, and maintain a physical distance of at least six feet while working with someone else to protect yourself from COVID-19. When cleaning up ash, use a respirator to limit your exposure.
- When cleaning, wear protective clothing, including a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, work gloves, appropriate cloth face coverings or masks, and sturdy thick-soled shoes during cleanup efforts.
- Use appropriate masks or respirators.
- When cleaning up ash, use a respirator to limit your exposure and wet debris to minimize breathing dust particles:
 - People with asthma and/or other lung conditions should take precautions in areas with poor air quality, as it can worsen symptoms. Children should not help with cleanup efforts.
 - Pay attention to any health symptoms if you or your children have asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), heart disease, or are pregnant. Get to medical help if you need it.
- Document property damage with photographs. Conduct an inventory, and contact your insurance company for assistance.
- Continue taking steps to protect yourself from COVID-19 and other infectious diseases, such as washing your hands often and cleaning commonly touched surfaces.
- Send text messages or use social media to reach out to family and friends. Phone systems are often busy following a disaster. Make calls only in emergencies.
- Engage virtually with your community through video and phone calls. Know that it's normal to feel anxious or stressed. Take care of your body, and talk to someone if you are feeling upset. Many people may already feel fear and anxiety about the coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19). The threat of a wildfire can add additional stress.

U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Ready.gov. (Revised 2021, July 23). Returning home after a wildfire. In *Wildfires*. Retrieved July 27, 2021, from <https://www.ready.gov>

Disclaimer: This document is intended for general information only. It does not provide the reader with specific direction, advice, or recommendations. You may wish to contact an appropriate professional for questions concerning your particular situation.

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