



NEW MEXICO  
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**NMED Solid Waste Bureau Guidelines for Returning Residents – Little Bear Fire**

When disaster strikes, lives are suddenly turned upside down. Often, the hardest part is just knowing where to begin and who to contact for help. It is natural and normal to feel overwhelmed by all that has happened and the anticipation of what will follow. The key is to remain calm, ask smart questions and use common sense as you begin the recovery process. Before going on the site, be aware of these hazards:

- Electrocutation hazards are always an issue if the electrical service has not been disconnected or a power line is down. Electricity can be conducted through wet walls, flooring and appliances creating an electrocution hazard.
- Because of the presence of plastics and other synthetic materials in a structural fire, there is often hazardous residual particulate matter in the air after a fire, and breathing airborne particulates can be harmful.
- Be aware of buried gas lines on the site, damaged propane tanks, submerged gas control valves, damaged circuit breakers and fuses pose explosion and fire hazards in partially destroyed structures.
- As tempting as it is, do not re-enter your property unless your building has been inspected and you have been advised by a fire fighter, building official or structural stabilization professional that it is okay to enter. “OK TO ENTER” DOES NOT MEAN SAFE TO ENTER.
- Even after a damaged building has been cleared for entry, it is still a very dangerous environment that requires your careful attention and adequate Personal Protection Equipment (“PPE”) and go with someone else in case of fall or injury. NEVER ALLOW CHILDREN IN A BUILDING OR ON THE SITE. The “site” includes the yard where rusty nails, broken glass, and weakened standing trees are present.
- The building may look safe yet be structurally unsound, depending on the damage to floors, roofs and load bearing walls. You can find yourself falling through a floor that appears perfectly sound, but has been destroyed underneath.

If you are facing clean-up of a fire damaged property, be aware of the following environmental concerns relating to managing the clean-up of solid wastes at your property:

- Be aware that many residential structures, especially older homes built before 1988, may contain asbestos sheeting in walls, chimney flues in roofing, ceiling and vinyl floor tiles,

sheet linoleum backing, and boiler insulation. Asbestos is not destroyed in a fire, and it can become airborne when clean-up work or excavation disturbs the materials.

- Burn debris needs to be removed as soon as possible to limit the release of potentially present asbestos fibres. It is very important that damaged debris be carefully removed after pre-wetting to limit the release of the asbestos fibres, and taken to the Otero/Greentree Regional Landfill in trucks with a securely tarped load.
- Appropriate PPE including coveralls, tyvek suits, boots, safety goggles, gloves and the proper masks to prevent inhalation of fibres is necessary. Ordinary paper dust masks and handkerchiefs do not filter out the fine particles from ash, dusts, or any asbestos fibres at the site. Facemasks with a 95 rating (e.g., N95, P95, or R95) can be used to filter out dust and ash; however, facemasks with this rating do not effectively remove asbestos. Facemasks with a 100 rating (e.g., N100, P100, or R100) should be used if there are concerns that asbestos may be present in the burn debris. As noted above, pre-wetting of burn debris is important to limit the release of asbestos fibres into the air.
- Do not spread ash around your property. Wet the ash and include this material in your disposal load.
- Please note that if you wish to hire a hauler to transport waste to the Greentree/Otero Regional Landfill, the hauler must be registered with the NMED Solid Waste Bureau. A list of registered haulers is available at [www.nmenv.state.nm.us/swb/Haulers.htm](http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/swb/Haulers.htm) Look under Commercial and Special Waste Hauler Information under the yellow garbage truck picture.
- Contact the Greentree Solid Waste Authority to discuss disposal options at the NMED-permitted Otero/Greentree Regional Landfill (575-439-4355). This landfill has already been authorized by the New Mexico Environment Department to accept fire debris from property owners impacted by the Little Bear Fire. You may also be authorized by Lincoln County to bury your waste on your property if you meet minimum acreage requirements, set backs from water courses and bodies, wells. You must contact the Greentree Solid Waste Authority for authorization of on-site burial (575-378-4697, Extension 23 or 13).

You may also contact the New Mexico Environment Department, Solid Waste Bureau at (505) 827-0197 for technical assistance or to answer specific questions.