Health and Safety Precautions for Re-entry

YOU ARE ENTERING A HAZARDOUS AREA
ENTER AT YOUR OWN RISK

In the burn area, you will encounter dangerous conditions and will be exposed to toxic materials that may include but are not limited to:

- Embers /hot ash
- Hazardous materials, including: ash, asbestos, heavy metals, oils, fire retardants, pesticides and other hazardous materials
- Puncture hazards, including: broken pipes, exposed nails, broken glass, damaged structural elements
- Potential explosive hazards including: propane tanks, ammunition, and solvents
- Slippery surfaces
- Toxic airborne particles
- Uneven ground
- Unstable structures

Wear protective gear and minimize time of exposure
HEALTH AND SAFETY PRECAUTIONS FOR RE-ENTRY AND DEBRIS REMOVAL AFTER FIRE

If you visit your property to collect belongings and mementos, please familiarize yourself with the information in this packet. It contains important details about the hazards of entering a fire-impacted area.

DEBRIS AND HAZARDOUS WASTE

- Fire damage can create significant health and safety hazards that may be present at individual properties.

  It is recommended that structure ash is not disturbed due to potential exposure to toxic materials. If you choose to visit your property, please consider the following:
  - Wear sturdy shoes (steel toes and shanks are recommended) and clothing
  - Hazardous chemicals and conditions may be present
  - Inspect propane tanks for visible damage before turning on
  - Cover all clothing when in proximity to ash. Wear gloves, long-sleeved shirts, and long pants to avoid skin contact, whenever possible. Goggles should be worn. Contact with wet ash may cause chemical burns or irritation on skin. Change your shoes and clothing prior to leaving the decontamination site, to avoid tracking ash into your car, home, etc.
  - Anything in contact with ash should be cleaned and sanitized. Sorting through/cleaning fire debris is not recommended.
  - Be aware of slip, trip, fall, puncture and overhead hazards.
  - Do not use leaf blowers or do any activities that will put ash into the air.
  - Wear a close fitting respirator mask that is rated N-95 or P-100 to block particles from ash or smoke from being inhaled. N-95 respirators are well-fitted when they do not come into contact with facial hair; strap tension is adequate, not overly tightened; and masks fit across the nose bridge. A tight seal would not be possible for most children, even with a small adult-size model. People with heart or lung disease should consult their physician before using a respirator.
  - The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) is the only agency that certifies respirators to determine that they adequately protect people. Look for NIOSH approval on the package or label.

DO NOT REMOVE ASH AND DEBRIS

The county is working with various state and federal partners to establish a process for the assessment and removal of household hazardous waste and asbestos, as well as structural ash and debris from the fire. This process will announced to the public upon its completion.

FOOD SAFETY

The affected fire areas have not had power since the fire started. Food is considered unsafe after a power loss of four or more hours. If you have food remaining at your home or property, all food should be discarded.

- Never taste food to determine safety. You can’t rely on appearance or odor to determine food safety.
- If your refrigerator has been non-operational for an extended period of time, the food inside has gone bad.
- Once your refrigerator has been emptied, clean the inside with soap and water, rinse with clean water, then sanitize with water and bleach (1 Tablespoon of bleach per gallon of water).
• For more information regarding food safety during a power outage, refer to “Food Safety During Power Outages” at the following website: https://tinyurl.com/yxnfzxzn

WATER SAFETY
If you are served by a public water system, contact your water service provider for information regarding water safety. If your home or business lost water pressure at any point, water available from your tap should be considered unsafe.
• Commercially bottled water should be used for consumption purposes until your water provider confirms a safe and potable water supply.
• Once your water supply is confirmed to be safe and potable, all water lines serving your home or business should be thoroughly flushed.
• If you are served by a private well, refer to “Well Disinfection & Sampling Information” at the following website: https://tinyurl.com/y4escz8k
• If your well has been damaged, it may have been exposed to potential contamination and can contaminate surrounding groundwater if not repaired properly. Fire can damage the well casing, electrical conduits and piping. DO NOT use the water for consumption which includes drinking, cooking, dishwashing, oral hygiene, hand washing, bathing and pets.
• The well must be repaired by a qualified professional, properly disinfected as per Butte County Environmental Health’s requirements and then tested to determine the water is safe for consumption.
• Qualified professionals include licensed well drillers, pump contractors and/or certified distribution operators. Water sampling may be conducted by the Butte County Public Health laboratory or by a local state certified laboratory (FGL and Basic Laboratory in Chico, CA).

SEPTIC SYSTEMS
• Fire could have damaged your septic system. The damage would have most likely occurred to the piping between the house and the septic tank, or from the septic tank to the leach field. Damage sometimes occurs from heavy equipment such as backhoes and bulldozers used to fight the fire or to clean up debris. The repairs to the system must be completed by qualified professionals as per Environmental Health Division requirements.

ELECTRICAL HAZARDS
• Please treat any and all down power lines or wires as energized and live with the potential to cause serious injury, up to and including death.
Building Inspectors continue to inspect structures that are in evacuation zones. Upon returning to your property you may see one of three different types of placards posted by the Butte County Building Department – a Green Placard, a Yellow Placard or a Red Placard. Be sure to read all notes on the placard. Do not remove, alter or cover placards until Authorized by the Butte County Building Division. *(Butte County Ordinance #4026 Section 6 section 26-3)*

**Green:** The Green Placard means the structure is “Safe for Occupancy.” Your structure is safe to occupy as long as it has water, electrical and gas service (if gas appliances). Structures may be damaged, yet the safety of the structure was not significantly changed by the disaster.

**Yellow:** The Yellow Placard means the structure has been damaged and occupancy is restricted as noted on the placard as long as you have water, electricity and gas (if gas appliances). Repairs require permits from the County.

**Red:** The Red Placard means “No Entry.” Structures are damaged and pose an imminent threat to life or safety under expected loads or other unsafe conditions. Do not enter these structures.

Please Note: Although a structure may be placarded “Inspected” or “Restricted Use”, specific areas in and around the building could be further identified as unsafe.

If you believe your home or business has been damage and has no placard posted, please contact the Building Division at 530.552.3700 or dsbuilding@buttecounty.net.
REACH OUT

Stress, anxiety, and other depression-like symptoms are common reactions after a disaster.

Butte County has now experienced repeated exposure to traumatic events.

Wildfires, especially, can lead to strong feelings of distress for those impacted, including firefighters and other emergency responders.

Know that you're not alone.

The Disaster Distress Helpline
Call 1.800.985.5990 or
Text TalkWithUs to 66746

Butte County Behavioral Health
Crisis Line
530.891.2810 or 800.334.6622

North Valley Talk Line
Peer Support Line
855.582.5554