



IMPORTANT WILDFIRE DEBRIS GUIDANCE

Update: Nov. 5, 2020

A wildfire creates an unexpected emergency situation that warrants a rapid response in which normal regulatory requirements may not be prudent or practical. With the resulting large scale loss of structures during wildfire events, The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) has developed guidance to deal with the debris left behind by the total destruction of structures.

CDPHE recognizes that prompt cleanup of building ash and debris will help enable residents to move forward with their lives while minimizing potential public health and environmental issues that may be exacerbated the longer the debris is left in place. In light of this situation, the CDPHE has temporarily waived certain regulatory requirements that would apply under non-emergency conditions.

One of these is the requirement for testing burned buildings for asbestos-containing materials. There has never been a complete ban on the addition of asbestos fibers to building materials so even newly built buildings can have asbestos-containing materials in them. Therefore, ash and debris from burned buildings can contain asbestos fibers as well as numerous other hazardous materials. The following requirements for handling the ash and debris from these burned buildings are those necessary to minimize potential exposure to any of the unknown hazardous materials that could be present. The ash and debris must be wetted, wrapped and disposed of in accordance with the published guidance documents for the specific wildfire in question.

The wildfire guidance does not require testing the building for asbestos-containing materials. The CDPHE does not recommend testing the ash and debris from buildings destroyed by these wildfires as testing can be difficult, expensive and may cause delays in being able to handle the waste. If an owner elects not to utilize the wildfire guidance, a comprehensive inspection for asbestos-containing material must be conducted for each destroyed building. A certified Asbestos Building Inspector must submit a sampling plan for approval by the CDPHE's Indoor Environment Program prior to any sampling. If asbestos is present in any of the samples, the building ash and debris is no longer eligible for the relief provided by the wildfire guidance document but must be abated under the requirements of Colorado Regulation No. 8, Part B, at a much greater expense. CDPHE encourages the use of the wildfire guidance document as a cost effective, expedient and safe means of handling the debris.

In order to facilitate the timely and protective cleanup of building debris from structures completely destroyed by these wildfires, the minimal requirements contained in the specific wildfire guidance documents must be followed. Please contact the Indoor Environment Program at 303-692-3100 or cdphe.asbestos@state.co.us if you wish to discuss any alternative to following these documents or have any additional questions.