



## **Boulder County Board of Health Public Health Advisory Regarding Structural Fire Debris**

### **I. Findings**

1. Beginning on December 30, 2021, grass wildfires and straight-line winds of epic proportions resulted in severe damage or total loss of at least 1,000 residential homes and commercial buildings in Boulder County, including in the City of Louisville and Town of Superior (the “Marshall Fire”).
2. The Marshall Fire involved hundreds of structure fires within a dense, and densely populated, area.
3. Structure fires generate debris that can include particulates, exposed asbestos, lead-containing building materials (such as glass and lead paint), and chemical residues. Soot and ash from structure fires may also be toxic or contain carcinogens, and can cause negative health effects if inhaled, ingested, or exposed directly to skin.
4. An enormous amount of structure fire debris located within a heavily populated area poses an imminent threat to public health due to increased likelihood of human exposure to toxic soot and ash over time until debris removal.
5. Sorting, sifting through, and removing structure fire debris without sufficient training and equipment also poses serious health risks as such activities increase human exposure to toxins and carcinogens contained in soot and ash.
6. Impacted buildings may also contain food that must be discarded to protect the public’s health. The safety of food exposed to fire can be compromised by heat, toxic smoke fumes, firefighting chemicals, and loss of refrigeration. Spoiled perishables in impacted buildings can cause foodborne illness, mold, and resulting toxins that can become airborne. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) both recommend that all food exposed to fire be thrown out to avoid toxic exposure and illness. See [USDA Fires and Food Safety](#); [CDPHE Disaster Recovery Guide](#).
7. On January 2, 2022, Boulder County Public Health Executive Director Camille Rodriguez issued a declaration identifying debris caused by the Marshall Fire (the “Debris”) as an immediate threat to the public health and recommending that efforts to remove the Debris be made as soon as possible.
8. On January 5, 2022, Boulder County issued, upon Boulder County Public Health’s recommendation, a press release strongly discouraging residents from disturbing fire ash and debris in the Marshall Fire area.

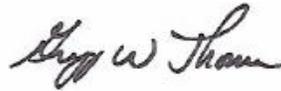


## **II. Public Health Advisory**

The Boulder County Board of Health hereby advises local governments, property owners, and other responsible persons and entities to take all steps necessary to remove Debris caused by the Marshall Fire as soon as possible in order to protect the public health. While time is of the essence in removing the Debris, individuals should not remove debris without taking the necessary precautions and procuring necessary services and equipment.

Individuals should be extremely careful and work with professionals with specialized training and experience to safely remove the Debris. Given the negative health impacts of exposure to structure fire debris, the Board of Health urges all persons and entities to follow debris removal safety guidance issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), CDPHE, and Boulder County Office of Emergency Management (OEM) when engaging in such activities and all persons and entities should follow all federal and state laws and regulations concerning debris removal.

**ISSUED this \_\_\_\_10<sup>th</sup> \_\_ day of January 2022.**



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Gregg Thomas, President  
Boulder County Board of Health