



Asbestos

CalWood/Left Hand Canyon Wildfires, October 2020

The ash deposited by a wildfire burning grass/trees is relatively nontoxic and similar to ash that might be found in your fireplace. However, any ash and debris from burned structures may contain more toxic substances due to the many synthetic and other materials that may be present in buildings. For example, car batteries or mercury light bulbs, lead-based paint, plastic items and other potentially toxic materials may have been present in the buildings prior to the fire. People should take precautions when entering buildings that are partially damaged by the fire or when handling any materials from buildings completely destroyed by the fire. They should wear protective clothing and equipment to avoid skin contact with debris and inhalation of ash.

One particular concern in handling debris from structures damaged or destroyed by wildfires is the possible exposure to asbestos fibers. Asbestos is a known carcinogen and exposure to asbestos fibers can cause or contribute to the development of various diseases including asbestosis, mesothelioma and lung cancer. Asbestos fibers have been commonly used in a variety of building materials including wall and ceiling textures, drywall, insulation, sheet vinyl flooring and floor tiles. Asbestos-containing materials that are in good condition should not pose a hazard. However, materials that are damaged or disturbed can release asbestos fibers creating a potential exposure risk for building occupants and neighbors. To address this, Colorado law has detailed requirements related to the proper identification, handling and disposal of asbestos-containing materials.

For structures that are damaged or destroyed by wildfires, following all of these requirements may not be possible or feasible. In recognition of this, the following modified procedures for dealing with buildings damaged or destroyed by this wildfire must be followed:

- I. **Addressing asbestos in buildings completely destroyed by the fire where only ash and debris remain, or where sampling building materials for the presence of asbestos cannot be done safely¹:**

Safe Handling of Ash and Debris

The ash/debris should be handled in a manner that will minimize potential exposure to asbestos fibers and other hazardous materials in the debris.

- Ash/debris must be wetted to minimize dust; packaged inside a container (such as an end-dump roll-off or truck) lined with double 6-mil plastic sheeting with the sheeting completely closed over the material and sealed once the container is loaded.
- Soil under/surrounding the building should be scraped to ensure that all ash and building debris has been removed from the site.
- Contractors should consult with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) at (303) 844-4500 (Englewood) or 303-844-5285 (Denver) to determine training and personal protective equipment that will be required for those handling this material.

Proper Disposal of Ash and Debris

Ash and debris must be disposed of at an approved landfill. The following landfills can accept ash and debris from buildings destroyed or damaged by this fire that cannot be safely characterized for the presence of asbestos.

¹ Building owners should work with appropriate local officials overseeing the fire response to determine whether a partially damaged structure can be safely inspected.

Tower Landfill, Inc.
8480 Tower Road
Commerce City
Amy Hobbs: 720-490-0230

Denver Arapaho Disposal Site
3500 S. Gun Club Road
Aurora
Gary Baldwin: 720-977-2104

Buffalo Ridge Landfill
11655 WCR 59
Keenesburg
Gary Baldwin: 720-977-2104

Foothills Landfill
8900 Hwy 93, Golden
Steve Derus, 720-590-4046

Front Range Landfill
1830 Weld CR 5, Erie
303-673-9431

No other landfills are currently approved to accept ash and debris from buildings completely destroyed by this fire. In order to get approval to accept these materials, landfills must request and receive permission from the Hazardous Materials and Waste Management Division (HMWMD) which will include agreement to implement certain best management practices designed to protect landfill workers and nearby public from potential asbestos hazards.

- Please contact the landfill before loads are taken there to confirm waste acceptance, to alert them that the material is coming and to initiate a waste profile. The landfill should be informed that the material has come from the fire area and may contain suspect asbestos-containing materials or other hazardous materials.
- Recycling of metal and concrete foundations is permissible under the following circumstances: Metal debris must be washed clean of ash/debris prior to recycling. If you wish to recycle a concrete foundation, the concrete must be inspected by a Colorado certified asbestos building inspector to determine that it is free of asbestos-containing materials prior to recycling.

Notification and Permitting Requirements

State demolition permitting requirements are waived. However, the building owner or contractor must submit written notification to the CDPHE Indoor Environment Program. This notification should be done using the Disposal Notification Form, CalWood/Left Hand Canyon Wildfires, October 2020.

II. Addressing asbestos in buildings only partially damaged by the fire and where sampling building materials for the presence of asbestos can be done safely:

Remaining building materials must be inspected by a Colorado certified asbestos building inspector prior to renovation/demolition or debris handling activities impacting the building materials. If asbestos-containing material is present in amounts greater than the trigger levels, they must be removed in accordance with Colorado Regulation No. 8, Part B - Asbestos. Known friable asbestos-containing materials must be disposed of at a landfill that can accept friable asbestos waste.

III. If there is known asbestos-containing material above regulatory trigger levels in a building, the owner must follow the requirements of Colorado Regulation No. 8, Part B.

For buildings that had been previously inspected and found to contain asbestos-containing materials or were previously known to contain asbestos in amounts greater than the state trigger levels, asbestos abatement permits and demolition permits are required. Known friable asbestos-containing materials must be disposed of at a landfill that can accept friable asbestos waste.

Asbestos Consulting Firms (asbestos inspectors):

<https://environmentalrecords.colorado.gov/HPRMWebDrawer/RecordView/1140204>

Asbestos Abatement Contractors:

<https://environmentalrecords.colorado.gov/HPRMWebDrawer/RecordView/1248240>

For additional asbestos information, please contact the CDPHE Indoor Environment Program at: 303-692-3100 or cdphe.asbestos@state.co.us