



## Safety recommendations when re-entering wildfire or flood impacted areas

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### Protective Equipment

Anyone entering an area impacted by fire or floods should follow proper safety precautions. Ensure you have access to these personal protective equipment items:

- hard hat
- goggles or safety glasses
- mask gloves
- boots with steel toes

Masks and gloves are available at the onsite Community Assistance Center.

### First Aid

First aid, even for minor cuts and burns, is extremely important. If someone is injured, contact a physician to determine the necessary type of treatment. Immediately clean all open wounds and cuts with soap and clean water.

### Tetanus

Except for minor scratches, some cuts may need treatment to prevent tetanus. Tetanus is a bacterial infection that can cause serious illness, resulting in muscle stiffness and tightening of the neck and shoulder muscles, commonly known as 'lockjaw.' Around 10 percent of tetanus cases are fatal. In most settings, a disaster does not increase the risk for tetanus. However, the risk of tetanus among disaster survivors and emergency responders can best be minimized by following standard immunization recommendations and providing proper wound care. After receipt of Tdap, a booster shot of tetanus and diphtheria (Td) is recommended for adults **every 10 years**.

If you receive a puncture wound or a wound contaminated with feces, soil, or saliva, a healthcare professional should determine if a tetanus booster is necessary. If you are concerned that you may have been exposed to tetanus, please call your healthcare provider or CCHHS at 928-679-7222 to schedule an appointment.

### Unstable Structures

Never assume that fire or flood damaged structures, walkways, sidewalks, parking lots and roads are stable. Buildings may have structural damage you are unable to see and can be dangerous.

- Do no work around any fire-damaged structure until it is examined and certified safe for work by a registered engineer or architect.
- Assume all stairs, floors and roofs are unsafe until inspected.
- Leave the structure immediately if it shifts or unusual noises signal a possible collapse.

### **Electrical Hazards**

As power returns after an outage, electrical or traumatic injuries could happen as power lines are reenergized and equipment is turned on. Only trained professionals, such as electricians and utility workers, should deal with electrical problems such as downed power lines and restoring electrical power. Others should avoid all potential electrical hazards.

- Never handle a downed power line.
- Assume all power lines are energized and call the power provider to de-energize the line(s).
- Turn off power at the main breaker or fuse of the service panel.
- Do not turn power back on until electrical equipment is inspected and qualified.
- Do not use electrical equipment that has been exposed to heat from fire until checked by an electrician.
- Unless power is off, never enter flooded areas or touch electrical equipment if the ground is wet.

### **Hazardous Materials**

Tanks, drums, pipes, or equipment that may contain hazardous materials such as pesticides or propane may be damaged.

- Do not move displaced containers without first contacting the local fire department or hazardous materials team.
- Wear appropriate protective clothing and respirators if working in potentially contaminated areas to avoid touching or breathing in vapors.
- Frequently and thoroughly wash skin that may have been exposed to pesticides and other hazardous chemicals.

### **Debris**

In the recovery phase of a wildfire or flood event, individuals may be exposed hazards including downed trees, broken glass, exposed electrical wires, contaminated soils, and hot spots. **Use caution when re-entering the area.**

### **Working in Confined Spaces**

Confined areas may have toxic gases, a lack of oxygen, or explosive conditions. These make them potentially deadly areas. Never enter a confined space unless you have been properly trained.

### **Respiratory Hazards**

- Individuals entering areas impacted by fire may be exposed to ash, soot and break-down products from burned material that may irritate airways and otherwise affect breathing.
- Spoiled and wet plants and other organic material can grow a lot of bacteria and mold during

warm weather. Breathing bacteria and organic dust may cause lung disease.

- When exposure to dust cannot be controlled or avoided, use a well-fitted, NIOSH-certified air-purifying respirator (such as an N-95 or more protective respirator) to reduce the effects of dust.

## **Injury**

Take precautions to prevent potential strain and injuries to hands, back, knees and shoulders.

- Avoid back injuries when lifting or moving objects by hand.
- Use teams of two or more to move bulky objects.
- Do not lift material weighing 50 pounds or more (per person).
- Use automated lifting devices for heavier objects.

### **Coconino County Health and Human Services**

2625 N. King Street

Flagstaff, AZ 86004

928-679-7272

[www.coconino.az.gov/hhs](http://www.coconino.az.gov/hhs)

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