

Key Rebuilding Steps

The key rebuilding steps that the county and owners will need to undertake, generally in this order, include:

1. *Damage Assessment: Structures, Infrastructure, Services*

Preliminary assessments have been completed by CalFire and information is available on the website at:

<https://www.santacruzcounty.us/FireRecovery/DamageAssessmentMap.aspx>

Additional assessments or corrections may be required. A process for submitting corrections is being established.

2. *Insurance and FEMA Claims*

Property owners may apply for financial assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Please review the [FEMA Claims Information Sheet](#) on additional information regarding filing a FEMA claim. There are deadlines involved so it is best to file as soon as possible.

3. *Calamity Application to County Assessor's Office*

Through this process Assessor's Office staff will initiate re-assessment of your property, which enables them to share property record information with you. Please go to the Assessor's Office website at: <https://www.santacruzcounty.us/asr> for the application and more information.

4. *Records Room Inquiry and Research: Planning Dept, Construction Plans, etc.*

Obtain Building Permit records, including archived project plans, by emailing the Records Room staff at: recordsroominquiries@santacruzcounty.us with the following in the email title "Fire Records Request" to allow for expedited processing. These records are required for staff to determine next steps in the permitting process. . County staff understand that records may be spotty or incomplete in this situation and will work with affected property owners to overcome that issue.

5. *Method for Debris and Hazardous Waste Removal (EPA, State, Private)*

Properties with destroyed structure(s) from a wildfire are being offered a clean-up and debris removal service conducted by specialized work crews which are contracted and managed by County and Federal waste specialists. This program is being paid for with public funds. If property owners have a specified amount for debris removal in their insurance policy, they will need to provide the specified amount to the County. However, a property owner may participate in the program even if the property is not insured. Property owners must sign up for the debris removal program by completing a **Right-of-Entry Form** which allows access to their property to complete the removal work.

Debris removal will occur in two phases:

Phase I: The property will be evaluated for the presence of household hazardous waste and the materials will be removed. Household hazardous wastes include batteries, propane tanks, paints, cleaners, pesticides, and other things that can be caustic, ignite, explode, or cause immediate and significant health hazards. Phase I will be conducted by a local, state, or federal hazardous waste oversight Agency. Property owners should not attempt to remove or evaluate household hazardous waste. Contact with these materials can be toxic, result in long term health effects and/ or cancer.

Phase II: General debris, ash and soil must be cleaned up, and the property must receive an Environmental Health Clearance before reconstruction can occur. You must have an approved plan before you can proceed with your own fire debris removal.

6. *Implement and Obtain Environmental Clearance for Debris/HazMat Removal*

An evaluation of the property and environmental clearance from the Santa Cruz County Environmental Health Division must occur before debris removal can occur and the property can be reoccupied.

Based on cautions received from colleagues in other jurisdictions, it is very important to guard against excess excavation during the debris removal phase of recovery. Related soil disturbance can create issues for foundation design, require remediation such as fill and compaction prior to construction, and/or require deepened foundations, all of which add time and money to the project. The County Environmental Health Division, working with State and other agencies, has issued guidance and will oversee public and private debris removal efforts:

<http://scceh.com/Home/CZULightningComplexFire.aspx>

7. *Implement Site Stabilization Measures such as Erosion Control, as needed*

It is strongly recommended that property owners pursue site stabilization activities as soon as possible, to compact loose soils as may be needed, improve drainage, and install erosion control. "How To" resources are available on the county website, as well as in the community and through the Resource Conservation District.

8. *Evaluate Potable Water and Current Septic System.*

Many of the reconstruction sites are served by small private systems and single wells; some by water district. It is expected that any plastic pipes have been melted and must be replaced; water tanks may also have been affected. County Environmental Health may need to become involved to authorize restoration of water wells and infrastructure.

If satisfactory, an Environmental Health approval will be given. Or submit plans and septic permit application for upgrade if needed. Information is available at the website here: <http://scceh.com/Home/CZULightningComplexFire/SepticWells.aspx>

9. *Technical Report(s) (e.g., soils/geotechnical) and Proposed Project Plans*

In general, any required soils/geotechnical report (discussed below) cannot be completed prior to debris/material removal from the site due to the hazards posed by debris and the need to document post-debris-removal site conditions. However, staff will schedule pre-application intake meetings with applicants to confirm requirements for the permit package while debris removal is underway.

10. IF Needed: Submit Reports and Plans for Discretionary Zoning and/or Environmental Resource Review/Permit (potentially can submit concurrently with building permit)

10. Submit Report(s) and Building Permit Plans to Building Division - E-Plan (electronic)
Applications for building permits that do not require further geologic study will be accepted once plans are complete and any required soils/geotechnical report is completed and stamped by the project professional, and all of the building permit application components are packaged and ready for submittal. Septic clearance from County Environmental Health (by staff and/or consultants) will also be required. Submittal to the County Building Division occurs electronically through the E-plan system. There are professionals and private companies who can assist with plans and plan submittal; technical assistance for E-Plan submittals is on the county website and will also be provided by county/consultant staff.

12. Obtain Contractor / Project Construction Resources

13. Pull Building Permit and Commence Construction; Obtain Inspections; Final Project
Building permits will not be processed and issued until the site is confirmed to be supplied with power, water, and sanitary/septic; cleared of debris/hazards; and ready for construction.