

Ash and Debris Cleanup Guidance

As a result of the recent fires in the San Diego Region many rental communities are experiencing significant ash fallout as well as debris and other related issues. County public health officials are recommending residents and businesses avoid using cleanup methods that may create additional health risks by stirring up ash (the use of leaf blowers should be minimized). It is important to understand that each building (materials and environment) must be evaluated individually to determine the appropriate measures to be taken. There is no one solution that can be applied to every situation.

Although health protection should always remain the first concern during cleanup, it's also important to try and minimize the amount of runoff containing ash and debris that enters the storm water conveyance system (e.g., streets, gutters, culverts, and ditches).

The County of San Diego, Department of Public Works and Regional Water Quality Control Board have websites that can provide you with additional information.

<http://www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dpw/watersheds/stormwater.html>

<http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/rwqcb9/>

It should be noted that these guidelines apply only during the current emergency situation; additional requirements regarding discharges to the storm water conveyance system apply under normal conditions. During the fires, many areas of the County are also under restricted water usage; some clean-up efforts may need to be delayed until these restrictions are removed.

Outdoor Clean-up

1. Try to wait until ash has stopped falling before cleaning up. This will limit the number of cleanup efforts needed, which can help reduce the amount of wash water entering storm water conveyance systems and receiving waters.
2. As a first step for cleaning, try to determine if ash and debris can be contained and cleaned up without washing the material into the storm water conveyance system. Wet clean up methods to consider include:
 - a. Wash ash and debris into landscaped areas wherever possible;
 - b. Use a damp mop to clean up ash and debris from small areas, such as patios;
 - c. Dampen accumulated ash and debris and scrape it up or vacuum it up using an adequate filtering vacuum;
 - d. If washing roof areas, redirect downspouts to landscaped areas.
3. If the above methods cannot be used, and washing of ash and debris to the storm water conveyance system is necessary, use as little water as possible and try to filter the wash water before it enters the storm water conveyance system. Place gravel bags, filter fabric, fiber rolls, etc., in front of storm drains to capture ash and debris. Scoop up captured ash and debris and dispose of appropriately.

Interior Clean-up

Minimize stirring up settled dust when cleaning interior areas by using wet methods or adequate filtering vacuums. Typical household vacuums may pickup and disturb settled dust.

1. For carpets, use of a high efficiency, HEPA-type vacuum is recommended.
2. Use a damp cloth to pick-up dust and trap it on the cloth for small horizontal surfaces. Clean the cloth in water as needed; dispose of it to the trash when it becomes too dirty for continued use. Dispose of dirty water into the landscaping or sewer system (toilet or sink drain).
3. For non-porous surfaces like tile or vinyl floors, use a damp mop to trap the dust. Clean the mop as needed in water, and dispose of dirty water into the sewer system.

For additional information regarding requirements for water quality protection during both emergency and non-emergency conditions, contact the Regional Stormwater Hotline at 1-888-846-0800.