

Frequently Asked Questions About Phase 2 Debris Removal by the US Army Corps of Engineers

Right of Entry form is required if you want the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to do work free of charge. Those opting out should also submit the form to avoid delaying work in their communities.

What is the role of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Army Corps of Engineers) in debris cleanup?

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is executing Phase 2 of the federally funded debris cleanup effort on behalf of FEMA. Their responsibility is to remove fire-related debris from private properties, including hazardous trees, ash and structural remains. On a property-by-property basis, this work will follow the EPA's initial hazardous materials removal in Phase 1. However, the Army Corps of Engineers will not wait until all of the EPA work is done throughout the burn areas before stepping in to begin their Phase 2 work. Phase 1 and Phase 2 work will happen at the same time across both the Palisades Fire and Eaton Fire areas.

What is Phase 2 of the cleanup?

Phase 2 involves removing visible fire debris, such as chimneys, hazardous trees, ash and, if specified on the right-of-entry (ROE) form by the owner, foundations. See the [Army Corps of Engineers website](#) for additional information on the debris-removal process and associated FAQs.

When does Phase 2 begin?

The Army Corps of Engineers will begin debris removal as the EPA completes its work in individual neighborhoods and a large number of residents complete right-of-entry (ROE) forms to opt in to have the Army Corps of Engineers clear their properties of debris.

Within the communities affected by fire, both phases of work will be going on concurrently. Working in two phases has proven to expedite the work of clearing property of debris in the wake of multiple fire disasters. The two agencies are not waiting for one phase to be completely finished across the region before the second phase begins.

On each individual property, the sequence goes in this order: EPA needs to first clear hazardous material in Phase 1 to expedite the larger debris removal work of the Army Corps of Engineers in Phase 2. The Army Corps of Engineers will follow behind EPA and clear Phase 2 debris as well as household hazardous material not removed by the EPA.

What does the Army Corps of Engineers remove?

The Army Corps of Engineers crews are responsible for removing:

- Chimneys

- Hazardous trees (dead or at risk of dying within five years)
- Fire ash and debris
- Foundations (if specified in the ROE)
- Up to 6 inches of soil in the ash footprint (if necessary and safe to do so)
- Household hazardous materials not removed in Phase 1 by the EPA

What will the Army Corps of Engineers not remove?

Slope stabilizing structural walls and other foundational elements will not be removed if their removal could destabilize the property or neighboring areas.

How is the removal process conducted?

Verified ROEs are grouped together and assigned to debris removal crews. Factors like property size, access, and the complexity of handling specific debris on site will determine how long each cleanup takes. See the [Army Corps of Engineers website](#) for more information on the debris-removal process and associated FAQs.

How long does the cleanup take?

The Army Corps of Engineers is aiming for debris to be safely removed in two-to-three days PER PROPERTY. This timeline can change depending on the size of the lot or parcel, the amount of debris, inclement weather, and other factors, so it may take longer to remove debris. Other factors include the size of the lot, the amount of hardscape, the degree of damage, the condition of the foundation and whether you want to remove or try to maintain the foundation. None of those specifics will be available to the Army Corps of Engineers until they get on site. It will not be possible to estimate how long it will take to clean up your property until the contractor assesses the site. And for the same reasons, we cannot accurately predict at this time how long the overall cleanup effort will take.

What do I have to do to get this work underway?

Sign a right-of-entry (ROE) form giving the Army Corps of Engineers access to your property. The form can be found at recovery.lacounty.gov/debris-removal.

What is the deadline to file a right-of-entry (ROE) form?

The deadline to opt into the government sponsored debris removal program is March 31, 2025. You should fill out the form as soon as possible, unless you are opting out of free debris removal by Army Corps of Engineers. Debris removal by the Army Corps of Engineers cannot proceed until you submit your form. **Failing to submit the ROE form by March 31, 2025 is considered opting out.**

If I fill out the ROE form first, will my home be cleaned first?

No, the debris removal process is not a first-come, first-served process. But getting your forms in early -- and encouraging your neighbors to do so as well -- will speed the work in your neighborhood.

My home is still standing, do I need to fill out the ROE form?

If you have a destroyed structure on your property, please fill out and submit the form.

What happens if I opt in?

If you opt in, the debris removal will be performed for you by the Army Corps of Engineers, with no out-of-pocket cost. Your insurance payment for debris removal will be assigned to

the government to help pay for the work; even if the insurance payment does not fully cover the work, the work will be performed at no charge to you. **You do not need insurance to participate in the program.**

What if I want to handle debris removal myself through a private contractor? What happens if I opt out?

If you opt out of the program, you must receive approval from the County and a permit from the applicable local city authority to proceed with debris removal. Then you will be responsible for hiring the appropriately licensed and certified contractors. You will be responsible for all costs of debris removal and asbestos abatement.

What steps are required and what qualifications does a contractor need in order to handle the debris removal if I opt out?

If you opt out of the program, once the EPA has completed its Phase 1 work, you will be responsible for hiring the appropriately licensed and certified contractors to remove the debris. This will include retaining a Certified Asbestos Consultant (CAC) to conduct a survey to identify asbestos in debris. If the CAC finds asbestos, you will need to hire an abatement contractor; and the CAC and abatement contractor will work together to submit an asbestos cleanup plan to South Coast AQMD for review and approval. More information on this process can be found [here](#).

Your contractors will need to be approved by the County and your city, and you will be responsible for all costs of debris removal. The work must be completed in compliance with all local rules and regulations related to debris removal. Private contractors must also adhere to the same haul routes and safety standards being used by the Army Corps of Engineers to minimize neighborhood disruption. Please check in regularly for additional information and updates on specific regulations at recovery.lacounty.gov or call the LA County Public Works Fire Debris Hotline at 844-347-3332.

If I opt in, can I opt back out even after I submitted my ROE form?

Yes, if you submit the ROE form and then decide to opt out, you can do so. However, it may cause delays.

If I opt out, can I opt in again?

Once your opt out application is approved, your permit issued, and any work is begun on your property, you cannot opt back in. You will bear the full cost of debris removal and disposal.

If I do not fill out the ROE form and opt out of Phase 2, will I be deprioritized for Phase 1?

No.

What if I don't have insurance?

If you don't have insurance, you can opt in to the Army Corps of Engineers debris removal program (Phase 2) at no cost to you. If you opt out, you will be responsible for the cost of clearing the debris from your property. Debris removal by the Army Corps of Engineers has no cost to you regardless of your insurance coverage or whether you have any insurance at all. If you do have insurance that

covers this work, the government will ask your insurance company, not you, for reimbursement of costs up to the limits of that specific coverage.

How will you decide which properties are cleared first?

Properties cannot begin Phase 2 until they have received a Phase 1 clearance from the USEPA. As ROEs are collected and ownership is verified, the Army Corps of Engineers will batch properties together for clearing with the objective of moving as quickly as possible and addressing health and safety issues as a top priority.

Do I have to wait until all of the hazardous debris is cleared everywhere in LA County for Phase 2 to start?

No, Phase 1 and Phase 2 will run concurrently. Once each cluster of properties is cleared under Phase 1, the Army Corps of Engineers can begin Phase 2 cleanup on properties where ROEs have been submitted, and ownership has been verified.

What happens if I own a condo? Does the entire building need to agree and file?

Generally, yes, but the recommendation is that each owner of a destroyed unit submit a ROE form as well as the HOA.

What about trailer parks? As the owner of an individual trailer on leased land, do I need to file the ROE or does the park owner need to file?

If the land under the trailer(s) is owned by an individual or entity beside the trailer owner, then the landowner must request removal.

How does the Army Corps of Engineers ensure safety during debris removal?

The Army Corps of Engineers follows strict protocols for:

- Identifying hazardous trees and structures
- Using appropriate equipment and trained personnel
- Complying with environmental safety standards to prevent harm to workers, residents, and neighboring properties

The Army Corps of Engineers follows strict procedures to ensure public safety during private property debris removal. When removing fire ash and debris, the material is placed in the bed of a dump truck inside a heavy-duty plastic liner. This liner is tightly wrapped around the ash, and a tarp is then lowered over the truck to ensure the ash remains contained during transit. You will hear the Army Corps of Engineers teams call this process "burrito wrapping" because of the way the plastic is folded over itself to contain the debris.

The Army Corps of Engineers also utilizes the "wet method" for debris removal, which involves applying water and mist to keep ash on the ground and prevent it from becoming airborne. This approach helps mitigate risks to the community, particularly for standing homes that have been reoccupied.

What happens with hazardous trees?

Hazardous trees are assessed by arborists and removed if they are dead or expected to die within five years. This is done to ensure safety and prevent future risks.

Will the Army Corps of Engineers remove damaged hardscape, including swimming pools, driveways, chimneys, and foundations?

You will need to indicate on the ROE whether you want your foundation removed. The Army Corps of Engineers will also remove chimneys. In-ground pools and driveways will not be removed.

Will they demo my house?

If the home is substantially damaged by the fire and requires demolition, FEMA will make the determination on eligibility. If the home is found to be eligible, the Army Corps of Engineers will demo and remove the fire debris.

How will I know when Army Corps of Engineers will clean my property?

The Army Corps of Engineers will contact you a few days before your property is scheduled for cleanup. The day before work begins, the Army Corps of Engineers will reach out again to see if you are interested in observing the process from a safe distance.

I heard that the Army Corps of Engineers will take some of my insurance money to pay for cleanup. What does that mean? What if I don't have insurance?

If you have insurance that covers debris removal, your insurance company will assign the proceeds of **that specific coverage** to the Army Corps of Engineers to reimburse costs up to the limits of that specific coverage. There is no direct cost to you. If you do not have insurance, nothing is required beyond submitting your ROE. If you contract to do this work yourself, your insurance company will handle your costs as a direct claim to be paid to you.

If my property was not destroyed, am I eligible for soil removal and other Phase 2 cleanup?

Phase 2 cleanup is offered to eligible properties, as determined by FEMA. If a residence is standing and habitable, it likely will not be eligible. A destroyed structure of at least 120 square feet must be on the parcel in order to qualify for free debris removal by the Army Corps of Engineers. If you are unsure if you are eligible and wish to opt in to Phase 2, you are encouraged to complete the Right of Entry (ROE) form.