

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Air Quality Watch Continues for Santa Barbara Residents Cautioned about Post-Fire Cleanup

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. — The Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District and the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department today reissued the Air Quality Watch for Southern Santa Barbara County. Air quality has improved overall, and residents are now cautioned to be careful when cleaning up ash deposited during the Jesusita Fire. If you sense high levels of particles in the air where you are, be cautious and use common sense to protect your family's health. Everyone, especially people with heart or lung disease (including asthma), older adults, and children, should limit time spent outdoors, and avoid activities that stir particles into the air. If you have symptoms of lung or heart disease that may be related to exposure to particles, including repeated coughing, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, wheezing, chest tightness or pain, palpitations, nausea or unusual fatigue or lightheadedness, contact your health care provider. In some cases, if properly used, masks can reduce your exposure, however, their use can provide a false sense of security, and masks can be ineffective depending on the type and fit of the mask. The decision to use a mask should be made in consultation with your health care provider.

Ash Cleanup

Residents are advised to be cautious when cleaning up ash to avoid stirring up particles and especially to avoid using leaf blowers (and to ask landscaping services to avoid use of leaf blowers). Anyone with heart or lung problems should not do post-fire cleanup. **Possibly the best way to clean up ash is to use a high-quality shop/industrial vacuum outfitted with a high-efficiency particulate filter and a disposable collection filter bag.** Ash can be bagged and put into trash cans, so it will not be stirred up again into the air. Special attachments can be used to clean ash from gutters, so that it will not blow back over outdoor spaces. Attachments and disposable bags are available from most hardware stores. In addition, **gentle** sweeping of indoor and outdoor hard surfaces followed by wet mopping may be effective. A damp cloth or wet mop may be all that is needed on lightly dusted areas. When cleaning up it may be useful to spray areas lightly with water; however, it is best to divert the water to lawn or garden areas so that ash-filled water does not flow into streets, runoff systems and the creeks. Do not allow children to play in ash-filled areas, avoid skin contact with ash, wash pets, remove ash from outside toys and play equipment, and take cars to the car wash.

Asbestos from burned material

When houses burn, asbestos fibers from building materials may become airborne, creating a potentially hazardous situation. Houses built or re-built more than 20 years ago have a higher likelihood of containing asbestos fibers. Cleanup and demolition activities can make conditions worse if not done properly. Handling materials that contain asbestos can be hazardous to your health. Additional asbestos-related tips are available at www.sbcapcd.org/asbestos-fire.htm.

For more information see www.OurAir.org, and for recorded advisory updates, call 805-961-8802. An Air Quality Watch is issued when there is potential for poor air quality in some areas of the county.

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