

In the aftermath of wildfire disasters, local governments work alongside state and federal partners to determine the best path forward for communities to rebuild.

Soon after a wildfire is extinguished, the Department of Toxic Substances Control – or another designated agency – visits each residential property to remove household hazardous waste such as car batteries, chemicals, and propane tanks.

In most cases, CalRecycle is then called on to oversee the safe removal of ash, metal, and concrete that were once family homes.

Staffed by both private and public sector scientists and engineers, the program ensures debris is removed and managed in a way that protects workers, the environment, and the community.

Under the consolidated debris removal program, state-managed contractors inspect participating properties to make sure there are no hazards for the debris removal crews -- including free standing chimneys or asbestos. Crews also verify the right equipment can efficiently be mobilized to the property. The site assessment also includes checking for evidence of endangered species, historical artifacts, or stream beds that could be disturbed.

Once debris removal crews arrive at a property, they work swiftly to clear concrete, metals, ash and other debris, taking care to keep dust and ash from becoming airborne or washing into groundwater, both onsite and while trucked to end use facilities.

Once principal debris removal is completed, critical steps must take place before the property can be returned to the homeowner for rebuilding. These steps include: Testing the soil for any remaining contamination, putting erosion control measures in place, and removing any fire damaged trees that are a danger to the public.

The final step is to - inspect the property to ensure that -contractors have completed all work that will allow wildfire survivors to safely rebuild their homes.