

Announcement

Ralph Hunter Memorial Award

2024 Recipient

Sean Debley

Program Manager
Ventura County Environmental Health Division
Local Enforcement Agency

The Ralph Hunter Memorial Award is in recognition of an individual who has made a major impact to the solid waste field/Local Enforcement Agency (LEA) program through development of a special or new program, involvement with educational activities, committees and/or workgroups, permitting and/or enforcement, or a special achievement that enhances the protection of public and environmental health principles.

Sean Debley has over 15 years of experience in LEA programs. He began his career with Fresno County's LEA Program as an Inspector before moving to Ventura County and holding positions as Inspector and Supervisor before accepting his current position as Program Manager, where he oversees several environmental health programs. Over the last decade, Sean has been a vital member in disaster debris cleanup resulting from wildfires that have impacted Ventura County. Some of his most notable contributions include:

- Led the Debris Removal Operations Center (DROC) as Incident Commander for the 2024 Mountain Fire, which burned 182 structures. His responsibilities included incident management for debris removal operations, contract procurement, and coordination of local and state resources in the cleanup of affected properties.
- Worked as County Liaison to the DROC for the 2017 Thomas Fire and 2018 Woolsey-Hill Fire, while working closely with the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES), California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA), CalRecycle, and other state and local partners to ensure proper cleanup.
- Served as LEA Southern/Southwestern Regional Roundtable Chair and Enforcement Advisory Council (EAC) Member from 2015-2020.

- Received the 2018 “Golden Shovel” award from emergency management staff at the Thomas/Woolsey Fires DROC.
- Recognized by the Ventura County Board of Supervisors for his leadership and contributions during the Thomas and Woolsey Fires cleanup.
- Provided expertise as a key advisor in disaster debris removal operations to the Ventura County LEA and identified areas for improvement in the Army Corps of Engineers Debris Removal Operation Plans for the 2025 Eaton and Palisades Fires in Los Angeles County.
- Conducted outreach and provided guidance on behalf of the Ventura County Environmental Health Department regarding the county-led Debris Removal Program for homeowners with properties affected by wildfires.
- Presented at the 2018 LEA Technical Training Series during the 2017 Disaster Panel (Fires and LEA Perspective).
- Provided insight into new and proposed legislation impacting LEAs, including California’s 2016 Senate Bill 1383.

Sean has the utmost respect from his colleagues at Ventura County and has demonstrated strong dedication to serving the members of his community. Rob Mullane, Director of Ventura County’s Resource Management Agency stated, “his dedication, empathy, and attention to detail were critical to the success of the debris removal operations and in allowing the affected community to navigate what would otherwise have been a complicated and emotionally challenging ordeal.” Gina Libby, Environmental Health Specialist IV with Ventura County writes that Sean “spent countless hours on the phone or at in-person meetings with homeowners to understand their specific questions and any special requests for property cleanup. Sean shared that one of the best aspects of leading the DROC was his role in helping people in their time of need and traumatic loss.”

Sean is a worthy recipient of the 2024 Ralph Hunter Memorial Award. Please join us in congratulating him on this achievement.