

This guide was pulled together by the 352 DEIA group at JPL. It is intended for those whose homes are still standing, but were in an area that was heavily affected by the fires. We have also added a section at the end for homes in areas that were lightly affected. We are reading guides from around the internet and compiling all information into one place. We are not professional fire experts, but are attempting to consolidate all information we can find into one easy to read document.

The most extensive guide we found on cleaning is here:

https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_marshall-fire-mat-homeowners-guide-risk-reduction-remediation-residential-smoke-damage.pdf

Was your home damaged?

- LA County has maps of home damage assessments:
 - Eaton: <https://recovery.lacounty.gov/eaton-fire/>
 - Palisades: <https://recovery.lacounty.gov/palisades-fire/>
 - Black: no damage, Green: affected (1-9% damaged), Yellow: Minor damage(10-25%),Orange: Major damage (26-50%), Red: Destroyed (>50%)
 - As of 1/14/25, 9am this assessment is ~30% complete
- If your home was lightly affected (soot or ash inside to low levels, etc.), we have added a section at the end of this document to address that case
- You can self assess your level of smoke damage:
 - Wear PPE (goggles, N95 mask or better, gloves, long sleeve shirt, long pants, closed toe shoes).
 - Walk the exterior of your home and look for obvious signs of damage or ash buildup - pay attention to roofs, overhangs, windows, doors, and electrical equipment - photograph the exterior of your home (for insurance)
 - Do not enter the home if there is ANY visible damage to electrical or gas equipment. You may want to turn off your main electrical breaker if there is some risk the inside of the home is damaged.
 - From FEMA: Categories of Smoke, Soot and Ash Conditions and Smoke Remediation Recommendations:

Category	Description of Smoke, Soot and Ash Conditions	Smoke Remediation Recommendation
None	No visible soot or ash on horizontal surfaces, no visible airborne particulate, and no noticeable smoke odor. Wipe test can be used to confirm no soot/ash.	No smoke remediation by homeowner is necessary.
Light	No visible soot or ash on horizontal surfaces and no airborne particulate, but noticeable smoke odor. Wipe test confirms no soot/ash. (No visible soot/ash on exterior siding or windows.)	Homeowner can undertake simple steps to clean the home
Moderate	Presence of light soot and ash on horizontal	Homeowner can undertake

	surfaces, visible airborne particulate, and noticeable smoke odor. Soot Wipe test shows a light amount of soot/ash. (Soot/ash may be visible on exterior siding and/or windows.)	detailed steps to clean the home if simple cleaning steps are unsuccessful.
Heavy	Presence of heavy soot and ash on horizontal surfaces and floors, visible airborne particulate, and noticeable smoke odor. Wipe test shows a heavy amount of soot/ash. (Soot/ash likely visible on exterior siding and/or windows.)	Retain a professional cleaning/restoration service contractor if detailed steps to clean the home are unsuccessful.
Other	Visible fire damage to structural elements or contents.	Do not enter home until cleared by the fire department, then keep professional contractor(s) to address structural fire damage and smoke damage.

How to determine when to return?

- The writers of this document are not public health professionals, and this advice is not official advice. We have done our best to collect information from many resources and consolidate it while keeping accuracy. Safety is not something we can determine for anyone else. **LISTEN TO YOUR BODY AND PRIORITIZE YOUR PERSONAL SAFETY**
- To view the map of the areas that are now lifted, please visit the bit.ly/EatonFireRepopulationZonesMap. To check your address, please use the search tool in the upper right-hand corner.
 - If you are not in the Eaton area, check here: <https://lacounty.gov/emergency/>
- Even after the evacuation order is lifted, you may need to take precaution before going back to your home. There have been some [studies](#) on returning to burned areas, but safety can be relative to each person's situation.
- There are some reports on JPL Slack that the process to safe the area may take 1-3 months.
- Check the air quality in your area using [South Coast AQMD's website](#)
 - Note that there are some reports on Slack that AQI may not include all things that are hazardous from these fires.
- Check if your water is safe to drink at home: <https://pwp.cityofpasadena.net/pasadena-drinking-water-system-impacted-by-eaton-fire/>
- www.sce.com and www.socalgas.com can be used to check if your power and gas are available.
- You can call the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health at the Public Health InfoLine at (833)-540-0473 for help with specific safety questions
- Burned homes go through a 2 step process: 1) removing visible household hazardous waste, which is completed for free by cleanup crews from the DTSC or the EPA. 2)

removing remaining toxic ash and debris, which can be done through a government managed program or through a private contractor that you hire. Homes are not safe after phase 1.

- Your area may be under a windblown dust and ash advisory. LA county public health website will show these warnings www.publichealth.lacounty.gov

Your First Visit

- Prior to returning, be sure that the fire department has cleared the area and is allowing entry.
- Take photographs of the damage. You may need these to substantiate insurance claims later. Save all receipts for any purchases related to clean up and return.
- Recovering personal property while keeping the ash footprint as is, will not disqualify you from no-cost government debris removal (if needed in your case).
- There may be a posted notice on your door with directions for your protection, which you should follow.

General Safety

- **LISTEN TO YOUR BODY AND PRIORITIZE YOUR PERSONAL SAFETY**
- From a hazardous material clean up specialist: The air smelling fine inside or outside the house is absolutely no indication of safety. The air quality app on your phone is no indication of safety. ASSUME THE AIR IS NOT SAFE RIGHT NOW. Wear N95 or KN95 masks (or better) inside and out. Assume that there is ash in your house even if it didn't burn, even if you can't see it.
- Avoid direct contact with ash, which may contain toxic substances. If you have respiratory conditions, limit your exposure to ash and smoke, and use an N95 mask if necessary.
- Toxins in debris of burned homes include: arsenic, lead, mercury, asbestos, and other hazards like household chemicals.
- What to wear for clean up: Mask (N95, P100, or better that is properly fitted), gloves, long sleeved shirts and pants to avoid skin contact, goggles or safety glasses if moving debris
- Follow all safety protocols coming out of your city
- Assume all power lines are live until your power utility can confirm otherwise.
- If power is out, use a flashlight. Do not use any open flame, including candles, to inspect for damage or serve as alternate lighting.
- Normal household items, such as cleaning products, can cause toxic fumes and other hazards if they mix.
- Spilled chemicals that don't pose a health risk must still be carefully cleaned up. Wear rubber gloves and discard spilled chemicals and rags used for cleaning according to the advice of local authorities.
- Check for smoke and embers throughout the home, including the attic.

- Beware of animals, such as rodents, snakes, spiders and insects, that may have entered your home. As you inspect your home, tap loudly and often on the floor with a stick to give notice that you are there.
- Damaged objects, such as furniture or stairs, may be unstable. Be very cautious when moving near them. Avoid holding, pushing or leaning against damaged building parts.
- Is your ceiling sagging? That means it got wet – which makes it heavy and dangerous. It will have to be replaced, so you can try to knock it down. Be careful: wear eye protection and a hard hat, use a long stick, and stand well away from the damaged area. Poke holes in the ceiling starting from the outside of the bulge to let any water drain out slowly. Striking the center of the damaged area may cause the whole ceiling to collapse.
- Is the floor sagging? It could collapse under your weight, so don't walk there! Small sections that are sagging can be bridged by thick plywood panels or thick, strong boards that extend at least 8–12 inches on each side of the sagging area.
- Do not use a leaf blower for clean up, as it kicks ash up into the air.
- Mist ash lightly with water and then gently sweep indoor and outdoor surfaces, then follow with wet mopping. Avoid getting ash in the air. Do not use a leaf blower or shop vacuum. A HEPA filter vacuum can be used.
- Ash may be thrown away in the regular trash by placing it in a plastic trash bag first (from la county public health)
- Be aware of any areas that are confined or poorly ventilated where carbon monoxide may have built up.
- Certain groups may be at higher risk from wildfire smoke and debris:
[https://www.cdc.gov/wildfires/risk-factors/ Children](https://www.cdc.gov/wildfires/risk-factors/Children)
- and people with [asthma](#), [COPD](#), [heart disease](#), [diabetes](#), chronic kidney disease or those who are [pregnant](#) need to be especially careful about breathing wildfire smoke.
- Children should not do any clean up work.
- If you use a generator to power anything, do not use the generator inside your home. Generators should be at least 20 feet away from your home to prevent toxic carbon monoxide gas
- Avoid ash from wooden decks, fences, and retaining walls pressure treated with chromated copper arsenate (CCA) as it may contain lethal amounts of arsenic.
- Avoid stirring or sifting through ash and avoid actions that kick ash particles into air, as much as you can

Outside

- Start by checking damage on the outside of your home before you enter. Look for loose power lines, broken or damaged gas lines, foundation cracks, missing support beams, or other damage. If there are signs of damage, contact a building inspector or contractor to check the structure before you enter.
- Stay out of any building that has water around it.
- Keep away from loose or dangling power lines. Report them immediately to the power company.

- Check the trees around your home for signs of instability before conducting any clean up on your own or professionally since they can fall on you or workers. If any trees look unstable or have branches that look unstable call a professional tree removal company.

Locks and Doors

- If a door is jammed, don't force it open. It may be supporting part of the structure. Enter a different way.
- Locks may be damaged. They will need to be removed and wiped with oil or oil should be worked in through the keyhole. Use machine oil. Hinges will need to be cleaned and oiled.

Utilities

- Do not attempt to restore power, gas, or water until a professional has inspected the systems. Report any visible damage or strong odors like gas to utility providers immediately.
- **Look for damaged utilities:**
 - Smell and listen for gas leaks. If you detect a gas smell or hear a hissing noise, leave the property immediately and move away from it. Call the fire department once you are safe and report the leak.
 - If you see sparks, broken or frayed wires, or if you smell hot insulation, turn off the electricity at the main fuse box or circuit breaker.
 - If there is a pool of water on the floor between you and the fuse box or circuit breaker panel, use a dry wooden stick to try to reach to turn off the main fuse or breaker, but do not step or stand in water to do that. If you cannot reach the fuse box or breaker panel, call a qualified electrician for assistance.
 - Inspect the panel box for any breakers that may have tripped. A tripped breaker may indicate damaged wiring inside your home. Do not turn them on. Call an electrician.
 - If you suspect sewage lines are damaged, avoid using sinks, showers or toilets and call a plumber.
 - If water pipes are damaged, turn off the water at the main valve. Call a plumber for assistance.
- Use a flashlight to inspect fuses. Replace broken fuses with exactly the same amperage rating and never use an object such as a coin or strip of metal to bypass the protection that fuses provide.
- If you have a heating oil tank system, turn off all valves and contact a professional specializing in maintenance of such equipment before using it again,.
- If you have a propane tank system, turn off all valves and contact a propane supplier to check the system out before you use it again.
- If you have a home phone line: Check each telephone to see if it is still on the hook. Hang up any phones that aren't. Wait a few minutes, and then pick up one phone to listen for a dial tone to know whether you have working telephone service. If you don't

have a dial tone, try unplugging all the phones. Plug in one at a time and listen for dial tone. This will help you determine if the phone itself is broken or the service is completely out. If it is, contact the telephone company to report the problem and request repair.

- Do not use any electrical equipment that has been exposed to extreme heat from fire.
- Treat all power lines as energized unless proven otherwise.

Whole Home

- If the weather is dry, open windows and doors to ventilate and dry your home.
- Make temporary repairs such as covering holes, bracing walls, and removing debris

Appliances and Food

- Disconnect and check all appliances for water damage before using them.
- Throw away food, beverages and medicine exposed to heat, smoke or soot. Food that was in the freezer can be used if it still has ice crystals on it. If not, discard it. Items that were stored in sealed glass or metal cans or jars should be safe for use. Clean before opening.
- When you leave the area after your first visit, remove ash covered clothing to prevent spreading the ash, and blot using a cloth on areas of exposed skin and hair to remove contaminants. Wash out your eyes and mouth as soon as you can if they were exposed and contact your local poison control center or the American Association of Poison Control Centers at 1-800-222-1222. Seek medical care immediately if the exposure is severe or you experience symptoms.

Long Term Clean up process

Key Contacts:

- Building & Grading/Drainage: Local LA County Public Works Building and Safety offices can be found at [LA County Public Works Building and Safety office](#)
- Septic Systems: Los Angeles County Environmental Health (626) 430-5380
- Fire Prevention: Los Angeles County Fire Headquarters (323) 890-4132. Local district office numbers may be found at <https://fire.lacounty.gov>
- Geology & Soils: Los Angeles County Public Works Geotechnical & Materials Engineering (626) 458-4925.
- Planning and Zoning: Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning: (213) 974-6411. Local office numbers may be found at: planning.lacounty.gov
- Fire Debris Removal: (888) CLEANLA / (888) 253-2652

- To check your jurisdiction for planning departments:
<https://planning.lacounty.gov/disaster-recovery/>
- You can download the CalRecycle guide to wildfire debris removal (16 pages) here:
<https://www2.calrecycle.ca.gov/Docs/Web/127224>
 - A summary of the most pertinent information for those whose home is still standing is included throughout this document.
- You may want to set up air filters once most of the ash that could be disturbed is cleaned. Here is a guide to build a filter if you do not own one:
<https://corsirosenthalfoundation.org/resources/how-to-build-a-corsi-rosenthal-box-usa/>
- The Los Angeles County Fire Department is coordinating fire debris assessment and household hazardous waste removal activities to provide the necessary clearances for the safe removal of demolition/fire debris. This is done at no cost and inspectors will go property to property. The Los Angeles County Fire Department must inspect the property before any work is to begin. This process is time-intensive. We understand that residents want to return home as soon as possible and are doing all we can to expedite the process without undermining your safety.
- Residents should not attempt to remove hazardous fire debris themselves. Post-fire house debris is hazardous because it can contain toxic materials like asbestos, lead, mercury, chemicals from household products, and other heavy metals which are released into the ash and debris when structures burn. These materials pose a risk to health if inhaled or handled improperly.
- Planning is underway for Debris Removal Activities in coordination with the County Office of Emergency Management and our State and Federal Partners. Residents should check recovery.lacounty.gov frequently for updates on the debris removal program.
- The state's Consolidated Debris Removal Program, Cal OES and the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (Cal Recycle) will also work with participating counties to have state-approved crews help to clear wildfire debris consisting of contaminated soil, metal, ash, concrete, and hazardous trees.
- You may want to assess and remove damaged trees in your area to prevent further danger. CalRecycle can help you with this if your tree is eligible: Trees are eligible for removal if they:
 - Are at least 6 inches in diameter when measured from chest high
 - Are on a property that has submitted a Right-of-Entry form
 - Could fall on public property
 - Have had a certified arborist determine the tree is dead — or damaged and likely to die in the next five years — and in danger of falling on the public.
- You can install dehumidifiers to control moisture in the air if water was used to fight fire in and around your home.

Specific Cleaning Advice from LA County Public Health:

- Advice from a hazardous material cleaning expert: First, hard surfaces can be cleaned. Porous items maybe not. Anything that has density -- think mattresses, pillows, upholstered furniture, etc. -- no. I put it to him, what would you do? Without hesitation he

said he would get rid of those things immediately. He doesn't say this lightly. These toxins will be buried in that soft material forever. And the only place they go is into your body. Clothing, light drapes, things that are porous but not dense, can be cleaned. A good round or two in the laundry should be sufficient but there are many cleaners who do bulk laundry and are experienced in smoke restoration. But if your clothing or anything else continues to smell after cleaning, get rid of it.

- Advice from a hazardous material cleaning expert: don't even think about going back there to live until there has been a full professional cleaning with people who specialize in this. It is well-known across the country that landlords will almost always say they can do the cleaning themselves. They cannot. This has to be a certified company with experience in this. Also a good company knows how to navigate the insurance maze and help you get this done.
- To remove soot and smoke from walls, furniture and floors, use a mild soap or detergent or mix 4 to 6 tbsp. of tri-sodium phosphate with 1 cup household cleaner or chlorine bleach to every gallon of warm water. Wear rubber gloves. Be sure to rinse surfaces with clear warm water and dry thoroughly. Use straight parallel strokes that overlap a little.
- Wash walls one small area at a time, starting from the floor up to prevent streaking. Immediately, rinse with clear water. Wash ceilings last. - Note that some guides state to start at the ceiling first and work down the wall to the floors. Others say to start at the bottom of walls and move upward to prevent streaking.
- To reduce the chances of mold and mildew growth, wipe down all surfaces that were wet with a solution of 1 cup of liquid household bleach to a gallon of water. 1 st Perform a test on a small area with the bleach solution to make sure there will be no discoloration; to perform test, wipe with solution and let dry for 24 hours.
- Do not repaint walls and ceilings until both are completely dry.
- Washable wallpaper can be cleaned like painted walls, but do not wet through the paper. Use a commercial paste to re-paste any loose edges or sections.
- Wipe all metallic finishes with cooking oil to prevent rust and staining.
- To remove heat discoloration on stainless steel, dip a soft cloth in vinegar and scrub the surface of the stainless steel. Scrub the surface until there are no more streaks to be seen.
- Clean plastic or surfaces such as PVC windows and white painted surfaces using a mild detergent to remove possible acidic soot which may activate with moisture in the air and cause permanent staining.
- Pots, pans, flatware, etc., should be washed with soapy water, rinsed, and then polished.
- Stuff purses and shoes with newspapers to keep the shape. Leave suitcases open.
- Products containing fragrances should not be used to clean, as they mask odors.
- Where surface staining cannot be removed, consider the use of specialized paint (with anti-bleed characteristics) to eliminate the stain. Typically, these paints are lacquers or oil based.
- For Damage Due to High-Oxygen Fires: Use dry chemical sponges that are meant to remove initial deposits and use a mild detergent.

- For Damage Due to Kitchen Fires: Thorough cleaning is required, as residue may not be readily visible. Remember that usually kitchen cabinets and drawer contents will need to be removed to allow access to hidden areas.
- Cleaning of Heavy Residue: This may require assistance from professionals and mechanical cleaning. Cleaning methods include the following:
 - Low-pressure sandblasting
 - Sodium bicarbonate blasting
 - Dry ice blasting
 - Power washing with steam
 - Chemical application and agitation
- Cleaning Techniques for Specific Materials
 - Curtains and Upholstery: Soot is oil and should be removed as much as possible with a powerful vacuum. On sooty fabrics, do not use an upright vacuum or any machine or attachment with brushes or beater bars, as it will force soot into your other possessions and make them much more difficult to clean. Hold the vacuum nozzle slightly above the surface and let the vacuum do the work in lifting soot from the surface. Immediately after cleaning cover possessions with clean sheets to prevent re-soiling during your other clean-up efforts. Do not machine wash drapes or other materials that require dry cleaning.
 - Carpet: Use a rotary scrubber or an extraction machine from a rental outlet or supermarket or hire a professional carpet cleaner.
 - Clothes and Bedding: Smoke odors can remain in fabrics for a very long time until all the unburned chemicals have been removed. Many of them are invisible to the eye. Soak overnight with detergent and wash normally. For items that can be bleached, add laundry bleach as normal during the wash cycle.
 - Hard Materials – Porous (painted surfaces, wallboard, plaster, wallpaper, exposed wood): If soot is present on porous surfaces, we recommend the use of a dry chemical sponge to remove as much soot as possible. This step can prevent soot from being transferred deep into the surface where it may show as a permanent stain.
 - Hard Materials – Less Porous (tile, countertops, sealed wood, glass, metal, appliances, and vinyl wallpaper): Use a sponge, towel, or mop with household cleaning detergent.
- If you have fruit trees or gardens, you might consider a soil test prior to consuming anything grown in your land. More details can be found here: <https://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu/pdf/8424.pdf> This is specific to lead, but may be helpful
- To remove the smoke smell once everything is clean of ash and soot, you can use a thermal deodorization process or ozone treatment. Thermal deodorization uses high temperatures, which may not be useful in all cases.
- Make sure your ducts are cleaned in your heating or HVAC system. Wait to turn on these systems until after they are cleaned and cleaning is complete in your home.
- Clean inside all closets, cabinets, drawers. Clean the light fixtures, fans, inside light switch plates, door frames, window tracks, and behind radiators or heating vents.

- Avoid washing ash into storm drains and use as little water as possible outside to clean to avoid runoff.
- Dispose of all cleaning materials properly in sealed bags.
- Check crawl spaces, eaves, and attic for ash infiltration.

Insurance specific to this case

- Contact your insurance agent. Do not discard damaged goods until an inventory has been taken. Save receipts for money spent relating to fire loss. Your insurance agent may provide immediate help with living expenses until you are able to return home and may offer assistance for repairs.

Lightly Affected Homes

- This portion of the guide applies to homes that may have ash or soot inside, but no fire damage. Please still see the general safety tips above, as many of them still apply to this case.
- For light smoke, soot and ash damage (i.e., where there is only an odor of smoke, but no visible presence of soot or ash), the homeowner can undertake the following four basic restoration steps: Aerate/Ventilate, Filter, Absorb, and Clean.
 - Aerate/Ventilate. Open all windows and doors to air out the interior of the home. Note: This first step should be avoided if heavy smoke and particulates remain in the air outside.
 - Filter. Install a new air filter in your air handling unit with a Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV) rating of MERV 11 or higher to help filter smoke particles and operate the unit using constant fan mode.
 - Absorb. Place activated charcoal bags or containers throughout the home to absorb smoke odors. These bags/containers can be found at most home improvement stores or available online. Avoid the use of odor masking products or perfume-based odor counteractants. These products are not effective at eliminating smoke odors and may result in new odors that are difficult to identify.
 - Clean. If the odor is particularly strong in one or more rooms of the home, consider cleaning all absorbent materials in that room(s), such as linens and other fabrics.
- For moderate smoke, soot and ash damage, where there is a light level of soot on horizontal surfaces and visible airborne particulates, in addition to a noticeable smoke odor, the homeowner can undertake the following six detailed restoration steps: Protect yourself, stop the spread, initial cleaning, detailed cleaning, discard unsalvageable items, and clean HVAC systems.
 - Protect Yourself. ▪ Wear PPE, including safety goggles and an N95 or P100 respirator, to protect your eyes and lungs from irritation by smoke and ash. Additionally, dress in long-sleeved shirts, long pants, close toe shoes and socks to minimize skin contact. ▪ Use extreme caution when cleaning electrical devices

and appliances. Make sure to turn off power to these items prior to cleaning, and do not over-wet the devices. Shut down all electronics (televisions, computers, printers, etc.), then HEPA vacuum rather than wet clean surfaces; follow manufacturer's recommended methods and products. ▪ Contact your doctor or medical provider about cleaning and use of affected medications and medical equipment. You may need to contact your medical equipment provider for additional assistance.

- Stop the Spread. ▪ Keep in mind that if soot and/or ash is visible on hard flooring surfaces, then it is present on carpeted surfaces. Therefore, avoid walking through the home excessively, prior to cleaning, as this will only spread and further embed the soot into the flooring surfaces. Homeowner's Guide to Risk Reduction and Remediation of Residential Smoke Damage 8 ▪ Do not turn on the air handler for your HVAC system until the bulk of the soot/ash has been removed. Operating the air handler prior to removing the bulk of the soot/ash throughout the home will only result in spreading the particulate and re-contaminating surfaces that have already been cleaned.
- Initial Cleaning. ▪ Start by removing any visible soot/ash or debris from exterior siding and windows. Use a pressure nozzle attached to a garden hose to wash off light soot or ash off exterior siding; consider using a pressure washer to remove any stubborn soot or debris. Clean exterior windows with a gentle mixture of dish soap and water applied with a microfiber towel and be sure to carefully separate clean towels from dirty ones already used. ▪ Move to the interior and start by cleaning all hard floor surfaces using a damp cloth or cleaning pad sweeper. Note that several passes may be needed to remove all the soot from hard floors. ▪ Next, clean all carpets using a high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filtered vacuum. As with hard floor surfaces, several passes may be needed to remove all soot from carpets. ▪ Use a clothes washer to clean all bedding, towels, and clothes that have visible soot on the surfaces. ▪ Clean all soft goods such as couches, mattresses, pillows, pet beds, and plush toys with a HEPA filtered vacuum. Note that several passes may be needed to remove all soot from various soft surfaces.
- Detailed Cleaning. ▪ First, damp wipe ceilings and walls using water and a mild detergent or all-purpose cleaner. Start by cleaning high surfaces then work your way downward. Use caution when working on ladders. Prior to cleaning, test clean a hidden area of a ceiling or wall to ensure that the surface will not be damaged by the water and/or cleaner. Note it may be necessary to clean the surfaces multiple times. ▪ Next, damp wipe hard contents and furniture using water and a mild detergent or all-purpose cleaner. As with ceilings and walls, test clean a hidden area before proceeding to make sure that the surface will not be damaged by the water and/or cleaner. Also note that it may be necessary to clean the items multiple times. ▪ All dishes, utensils, glasses, which have visible soot can be cleaned in the dishwasher or hand washed using dish soap and warm water. Additionally, you may have to clean items in cabinets, depending on the extent and severity of the soot deposition. ▪ Use caution when damp cleaning

framed and unframed photos and wood furniture as they can easily be damaged by water and cleaning products. ▪ Most un-opened boxed and canned pantry items can be wiped clean.

- Discard Unsalvageable Items. ▪ Food items left open or in partially opened containers such as cereal boxes should be discarded. Photo document all discarded items. Homeowner's Guide to Risk Reduction and Remediation of Residential Smoke Damage 9 ▪ Consider replacement of baby items, especially pacifiers and baby bottles, as well as medical devices such as oxygen and continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) masks and tubing instead of cleaning. 6. Clean HVAC System. ▪ Wipe all HVAC register covers. Be sure to tape a lightweight fabric, such as cheesecloth, over the register prior to starting the air handler. ▪ Once most of the soot has been removed in the previous steps, install a new air filter in your air handler with a Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV) rating of MERV 11 or higher to help filter smoke particles, and operate the unit on constant fan mode. ▪ It is recommended to have all ducts and the furnace professionally cleaned.
- Paraphrased advice from reddit r/pasadena:
 - Wipe the ash on windowsills, floors, and surrounding furniture with wet towels before swiffering the floors until the pads stay white.
 - Beat and Vacuum rugs outside (ideally with HEPA filter vacuum to avoid creating airborne soot particles, or wear an N95 mask or respirator)
 - Wash all bedding, curtains, other washable soft items
 - Wipe all surfaces in the house with a little all purpose cleaner and paper towels
 - Use a charcoal air scrubber or other air filter to help with the smell.
 - Use soot sponges (should be able to get some from a Home Depot, amazon, etc) to wipe the walls. (Don't wet them)
 - You may still want to get some level of professional testing done for exposure, especially if you have children or fall into any vulnerable groups for exposure to smoke or ash
 - When possible, open your windows to air out your home
- More advice can be found in the above Specific Cleaning Advice Section

Renters Specific

- [Pasadena Tenants union has a tenants-specific guide](#)
 - If your unit was not completely destroyed, do NOT let the landlord kick you out

Bibliography

- Red Cross guide to returning to a home after a fire:
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- NBC article on returning post fire:
<https://www.nbclosangeles.com/news/local/returning-home-heres-what-the-la-county-sheriff-wants-you-to-know/3602186/>
- LA County Recovers guide to returning after a fire:
<https://recovery.lacounty.gov/returning-after-fire-faq/>
- How to build a Corsi-Rosenthal Box:
<https://corsirosenthalfoundation.org/resources/how-to-build-a-corsi-rosenthal-box-usa/>
- Pasadena Check if your water is safe to drink:
<https://pwp.cityofpasadena.net/pasadena-drinking-water-system-impacted-by-eaton-fire/>
- Physical Health Symptoms and Perceptions of Air Quality among Residents of Smoke-Damaged Homes from a Wildland Urban Interface Fire
<https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acsestair.4c00258>
- <https://calrecycle.ca.gov/disaster/wildfires/>
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