

Information Sheet

for

Residents Affected by the 2013 Elmore County Wildfires & Recovery

Elmore County Commissioners
Elmore County Assessor
Elmore County Extension Office
Elmore County Land Use and Building Department
Elmore County Sheriff
Central District Health Department
Department of Environmental Quality
Idaho Department of Agriculture
Idaho Department of Fish and Game
Idaho Department of Water Resources
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Simco Road Regional Landfill
Soil and Water Conservation District
The Mountain Home Highway District
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

As you begin the rebuilding process, we ask you to consider the following environmental and public health issues that sometimes are overlooked and can cause future problems. Identifying these issues while in the clean-up phase is often the most cost-effective method of handling post-fire tasks. Within each section of this information sheet, you will find a description of the issues, ideas to resolve the issues, and contact information to assist you if you need additional information.

Air Quality

If you are working at your property, water mist will reduce your exposure to small particulate matter and help anchor existing dust. Please consider (at least initially) using a 1/2 face respirator or a NIOSH certified N95 or P100 Particulate Mask that has two straps that go around your head. Your local hardware store should have these types of masks available for purchase at minimal cost. Without a mask, fine particles of ash and other fire debris can reach the lower part of the lungs and may cause long-term respiratory issues.

The fire aftermath may contribute to poor air quality in the area, especially during high winds. We suggest you keep windows closed and operate filtered air conditioning units with the fresh air intake closed (if you have an AC unit). High efficiency air conditioner filters will capture the most particles. Be sure to clean or replace the filter often. In addition to AC filters, room sized HEPA filtering units can clean indoor air. These are usually purchased at your local hardware store.

Please do not burn any waste materials on your property. This will cause unnecessary smoke and, depending upon what is burned, might leave hazardous substances in the soils.

Building Permits

The Elmore County Land Use and Building Department (Department) would like to be made aware of demolition progress. Please note that Elmore County will be waiving fees for demolition permits on damaged or burned buildings.

Building permits will be required for any new construction. Building permit information can be found on the following webpage www.elmorecounty.org under the building and zoning tab or by phone at (208) 587-2142 ext. 502. The Department will also be available for site visits and consultation during rebuilding process.

Property Assessments

Please contact the Elmore County Assessor at 587-2142 ext. 507 if you have concerns about your property's value and assessment.

Disposal of Solid Waste and Hazardous Materials & Debris

Please refrain from burying or burning any debris on your property. Hazardous material left on-site after a fire can present conditions harmful to you, nearby families/residents, and wildlife and can affect the water quality of local streams. Proper cleanup of these items can greatly reduce the impact on public health and the environment.

There are several classes of wastes to consider: solid waste; recyclables; household hazardous wastes and debris; household special wastes; and, business or commercial hazardous waste and debris.

Solid Waste/Recyclables

Much of the waste left in the fire's aftermath is solid waste. Elmore County has placed roll-off dumpsters in the Fall Creek area. These dumpsters are provided for people affected by the fire to use for disposal of non-hazardous solid waste and metals recycling. Recyclable metals can be segregated from solid waste to reduce the volume of disposed materials and save cost. Separate disposal bins for metal waste will be placed in the Falls Creek area soon. Many types of solid wastes can be handled safely by the Simco Road Regional Landfill (<http://www.idahowaste.com>).

Disposal of domestic livestock that perished in the fire is handled through rendering plants licensed through the Idaho Department of Agriculture. The Department's list of licensed rendering plants is located at:

<http://www.agri.state.id.us/Categories/Animals/deadAnimals/deadrendering.php>.

If you need additional information, please contact the Idaho Department of Agriculture at 332-8540.

Wildlife that perished in the fire is best left in the wild unless it is causing a nuisance; however, you can move perished wildlife that is causing a nuisance. If you need more information, please call the Idaho Department of Fish and Game's Southwest Regional Office at 465-8465.

Household Hazardous Waste and Debris

Another category of wastes are household hazardous waste (HHW) and debris. Much of the HHW likely was consumed in the fire. However, HHW not consumed in the fire, including partially filled containers, can include:

Paint & solvents

Gasoline

Used oil

Pesticides/herbicides

Batteries

Tires

Other chemicals

If you are unsure if waste is an environmental or health issue, and if it is safe to do so, please place red tape around the waste and sign the area where the waste is located to warn others of the potential danger. This would include storage sheds where chemicals were stored prior to the fire. Contact DEQ at 373-0550.

Elmore County is planning a Household Hazardous Waste event to collect your HHW. This event will be coordinated with the county extension office. More details will be provided by the county once the event is scheduled. Please contact Dave Humphreys from the County Extension Office at 587-2133 should you need more information about the event.

In the meantime, if you encounter leaking containers, call the Fire Department/haz mat team (911) for assistance.

Household Special Wastes

Red fire retardant is not hazardous and can be safely washed off.

Ammunition, blasting caps, and other explosives exposed to fire can be very volatile. If you are unsure of the safety of any of these, please call the Elmore County Sheriff's office (911) to arrange for proper disposal.

Asbestos can be found in homes, cabins, and other structures constructed prior to 1980. Asbestos can be in insulation, tile, mastics, and roofing and roofing compounds. After a fire, asbestos fibers can remain in the debris. More importantly, working with asbestos containing debris requires some safety precautions such as wearing a protective mask and spraying the material with water as it is excavated and handled to reduce the possibility of dust generation and airborne asbestos fibers. Residential asbestos debris can be disposed of in the Simco Road Landfill. Contact EPA at 378-5746.

Refrigerators and other Freon-containing devices can be disposed of as solid waste once all of the Freon is removed from the device. Certified refrigeration removal businesses are listed in the phone book.

Business or Commercial Hazardous Waste/Special Wastes

Businesses and commercial operations with hazardous waste or other special wastes are requested to call DEQ at 373-0550 and speak with DEQ staff about proper waste identification and waste disposal.

Drinking Water

After a fire, your drinking water system may need to be assessed for damage. Residents should check the integrity of the system as well as consider disinfecting the system.

The Central District Health Department can assist private well owners in testing drinking water in fire-affected areas for E. coli or Total Coliform bacteria FREE OF CHARGE. Please contact the Central District Health Department Elmore County office at 587-4407.

Mark the location of any private wells and mark at least a 50-foot buffer area. Ensure the well and piping is protected from vehicles driving over them.

Fuel, Oil, and Propane Storage Tanks

We recommend that you have any fuel tanks inspected. Any type of underground tank could have been damaged during the fire or firefighting efforts. If you would like to remove the tanks, please call DEQ at 373-0550. UST service providers are listed on DEQ's web page at: <http://www.deq.idaho.gov/media/777876-ust-provider-directory.pdf>.

Mark the location of underground tanks for rebuilding purposes. Ensure vehicles do not drive over underground tanks.

Septic Tanks

Mark the location of your septic tank and leach field for rebuilding purposes. Ensure vehicles do not drive over the tank or leach field as the tank and leach field can be damaged or destroyed. Contact the Central District Health Department at 587-4407 should you need help with septic system information.

Soil Erosion and Potential Soil Contamination Issues

Please be very conscious of the erosion potential that may occur during the next several rainstorms. Uncontrolled runoff may dramatically affect downstream neighbors, roadways, storm drains, creeks, etc.

Check to be sure culverts are clean and free of debris so that drainages are not impeded. The Mountain Home Highway District can help you with information and assistance to assess erosion issues related to road access and culverts. Please contact the District at 587-3211.

Should you need assistance with re-vegetation and/or methods to prevent erosion on your property, consult the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) or the Soil and Water Conservation District in Mountain Home. "Wildfire Recovery Tips for Idaho," published by NRCS, includes a wealth of information about preventing soil erosion. You can reach NRCS or the SWCD at 587-3303. Their offices are located at 795 S. Haskett St, Mountain Home, ID.

If you have questions about possible soil contamination, call DEQ at 373-0550.

The National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) storm water program requires those engaged in clearing, grading, and excavating activities that disturb one (1) acre or more, including smaller sites in a larger common plan of development or sale, to obtain coverage under the Construction Stormwater General Permit (CGP) for potential stormwater discharges. There are exceptions from this requirement when dealing with an emergency but when you are rebuilding, you will want to be sure you follow these requirements. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is the NPDES permitting authority in Idaho. For more information, see EPA's webpage for Construction Storm water: <http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater/cgp.cfm> . For more information, contact EPA via email at mccauley.margaret@epa.gov or by phone at (206) 553-1772.

Flooding

Flooding is the most common and costly natural hazard to occur in our nation. While some floods develop over time, flash floods – particularly common after wildfires – can occur within minutes after the onset of a rainstorm. Large-scale wildfires dramatically alter the terrain and ground conditions. Normally, vegetation absorbs rainfall, reducing runoff. However, wildfires leave the ground charred, barren, and unable to absorb water, creating conditions that promote flash flooding and mudflow. Flood risk remains significantly higher until vegetation is restored. This may take years for a landscape to recover.

Flooding after fire is often more severe since debris and ash left from the fire can form mudflows. As precipitation moves across charred ground, it can also pick up soil and sediment to be carried downstream. This increases flood damage risk and may cause significant damage.

Typically, there is a 30 day wait period on new flood insurance policies. If flood damage occurs resulting from a flood on federal land that is exacerbated by post wildfire conditions, the 30 day waiting period may be waived pending inspection by authorized personnel. This 30 day waiver may only be applied to policies that are made within 60 days of the wildfire containment date.

- Visit www.floodsmart.gov for more information about flooding and obtaining an insurance policy for your property.
- www.idwr.idaho.gov/WaterManagement/FloodPlainMgmt is a great site to gather local flood information and outreach material.

For more re information, please contact Idaho Department of Water Resources Western Regional Office at (208) 334-2190.

Disclaimer

The information contained in this document is meant to provide guidance and help to those people affected by the 2013 wildfires in Elmore County. This document is not meant to be an all-inclusive guide to fire recovery...rather a quick reference to the proper agency contacts and resources for the most pressing issues related to the protection of public health and the environment. If you have suggestions to improve this document, please contact the Commissioners or the appropriate agency.