



# RETURNING HOME AFTER A WILDFIRE

Once a wildfire has burned through an area, many dangers may remain. Follow these precautions when returning home.

## Indoor



Check grounds for hot spots, smoldering stumps, and vegetation.



Check the roof and exterior areas for sparks or embers.



Check the attic and throughout your house for any hidden burning sparks or embers.



Turn off all appliances and make sure the meter is not damaged before turning on the main circuit breaker.



Check the well or pump-house to ensure it is in working order.

## Outdoor



Check Trees & Poles with deep charring - those should be considered hazardous.



Check for smoldering holes in the ground - they can be full of hot coals.



Check for hot ambers and wood piles, debris piles and lawns.



Check for white ash- that is evidence of hot material.



Check for weakened trees and brush- they may lose limbs or fall.

## Removing smoke odor

The odor is caused by tiny microscopic particles that cling to walls, furniture, floors, clothing, and other items inside your home. Follow these steps to remove odor.

- Pressure wash, scrub or disinfect all exterior surfaces including walls, walks, drives, decks, window and deck screens, etc.
- Wash and disinfect all interior walls, hard surfaces, cabinets, closets and drawers with mild soap or other appropriate cleaning solutions or products, and rinse thoroughly.
- Wash, dust, and clean all household items, including knick-knacks.
- Clean and deodorize all carpets, window coverings, upholstered furniture and mattresses with steam or other appropriate equipment.
- Wash clothing and household textiles by adding a cup of vinegar to the cycle, along with the usual detergent. Wash several times until the odor is removed.
- Have heating, ventilating and air-conditioning units and all ductwork professionally cleaned to remove soot, ash and smoke residue.
- Change filters right away and at least once a month for the first year.
- If weather permits, open your windows. Keep closet doors, and cabinets open to air out.

To help absorb the odors, use:



**BAKING SODA**  
or  
**ACTIVATED CHARCOAL**

Leave a few bowls around the house for several days.

Resources: Post-wildfire recovery, Cal fire ([readyforwildfire.org](http://readyforwildfire.org))  
Removing smoke odor following a fire, Oklahoma State University ([okstate.edu](http://okstate.edu))