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.

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

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