



# COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

701 OCEAN STREET, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060-4073

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CARLOS J. PALACIOS, COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

## PRESS RELEASE

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### REPOPULATION OF FIRE-IMPACTED AREAS

With the commencement of repopulation of fire-impacted areas of the North Coast, Bonny Doon and San Lorenzo Valley, the Santa Cruz County Emergency Operations Center announces measures to protect residents and their properties.

Damaged properties can be hazardous and include toxic materials such as asbestos, household chemicals, pesticides and residue from treated lumber. Fire ash also poses risks to families including children and pets, and embers, falling trees and even flare-ups are possible throughout the CZU Lightning Complex fire zone. Repopulation decisions are being made based on safe road access as determined by public safety and public works officials.

The EOC advises residents to protect themselves by following the Sept. 3 Santa Cruz County Health Officer order. The use of personal protective equipment is required when accessing fire-damaged properties, and debris removal of fire-damaged residential materials may not occur without written authorization of the County. Information about that process will be posted in the Debris Removal section of the County's Fire Recovery website.

The Santa Cruz County Environmental Health Division is providing free repopulation kits, available at three locations: Bonny Doon Fire Station – at the corner of Empire Grade and Felton Empire; Felton Fire Station; and Boulder Creek Fire Station. The kits include personal protective equipment as well as information on property management following a fire. Medical and behavioral health personnel will also be available. Locations will shift as repopulation continues.

Residents staying in emergency hotel accommodations should verify the status of their property before checking out. Teams of inspectors are continuing to assess properties in the fire zone to make habitability determinations. To date, approximately 500 properties have been inspected. However, inspections are expected to continue through next week.

In neighborhoods where inspections have been completed, red tags (do not enter) or yellow tags (limited occupancy) can be found. Yellow tags will have information on occupancy and which sections of a home are safe. Houses with no tags are considered safe for full occupancy.



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However, in neighborhoods where inspections are yet to occur, residents should use extreme caution before attempting to enter any buildings, and entry into buildings with visible fire damage should be avoided.

Avoid contact with ash and wear PPE, sturdy shoes, long sleeves and gloves when inspecting your property. Do not use leaf blowers to disburse ash and avoid runoff into streams or waterways. Wash garden fruits and vegetables, as well as outdoor toys and equipment. Use high-efficiency HEPA-type vacuums to clean indoor carpets, and elsewhere gently sweep ash and dispose using plastic bags.

Avoid damaged or fallen power poles and lines. Inspect your property for ash pits and mark and block access for safety – ash pits may include hot embers and can cause serious burns. While scorched evergreen trees often survive, visually inspect other trees and root systems for weakness and consider removal. Consult an arborist if necessary.

Drive carefully. Road signs have been damaged throughout the fire zone and streetlights may not be operational. County public works crews have worked to make roads passable, but hazards may exist including falling trees.

Power remains out for thousands of residents. PG&E is working to restore power as soon as possible including the replacement of hundreds of power poles. For a current outage map, go to [www.pge.com/outages](http://www.pge.com/outages).

Water and sewer impacts exist throughout the area. Customers of the San Lorenzo Valley Water District from Brookdale north are under a DO NOT DRINK – DO NOT BOIL water notice. Bottled water is available at the district office, 13060 Highway 9, Boulder Creek. Big Basin Water Company is also issuing a DO NOT DRINK notice as it assesses the extent of damage to its system.

Do not use heavy equipment on properties unless approved by the County. Heavy equipment can damage water and sewage systems including septic, which can increase public health concerns.

Refuse hauling services will resume throughout repopulated areas. However, the use of large bins on residential properties is disallowed at this time. Debris removal must follow a two-step process including assessment and removal. Property owners may choose to utilize a county-managed Consolidated Debris Removal Process. All debris removal must follow safe practices set forth by the Santa Cruz County Environmental Health Division.

For more information on debris removal or to access information about the recovery process including a Virtual Recovery Resource Center, go to [www.santacruzcounty.us/firerecovery.aspx](http://www.santacruzcounty.us/firerecovery.aspx).

For in-person assistance in the recovery process, the CZU Lightning Complex Recovery Resource Center is open daily from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. at Kaiser Permanente Arena, 140 Front St., Santa Cruz. No appointment necessary.