

# Declared Disaster Zones: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

## 1. What is the “declared disaster zone”?

The Santa Barbara County Sheriff’s Office declared areas of Montecito severely impacted by the January 9<sup>th</sup> debris and mud flows as “disaster zones” (also known as the Long-term Exclusion zones). These areas require ongoing and intensive debris removal and clean-up. The general public is currently not permitted to enter these areas. Unauthorized entry will be subject to Penal Code 409.5(5) and violators will be subject to arrest.

## 2. Who is allowed in the declared disaster zones?

Property owners and renters will be permitted into this area with proof of residence. Contractors and guests of homeowners may be granted access with proof of official business in the area.

## 3. My home is in a declared disaster zone. I have been told that I must secure my property. What can I do to secure my property?

Property owners should take whatever measures they are most comfortable with and believe are necessary to secure their property. There are many steps that can be taken to secure property, including:

- removing/moving valuables and other belongings and storing them in a safe place
- installing fencing
  - Fencing taller than 8 feet requires a County permit
  - Keep fencing close to structures to avoid creating a dam effect in future storms
  - Keep fencing out of and away from waterways
- installing security cameras
- installing motion activated outdoor lighting
- boarding up windows, doors and other access points

The level of security property owners decide to implement is at their own discretion.

## 4. Why am I being asked to secure my property?

While there will still be a significant Sheriff’s Office presence to provide security in the area for some time, we request that property owners take action now to secure their property completely in preparation for the disaster zone declaration to be lifted. It is ultimately up to property owners to ensure that their property and valuables are safe.

## 5. What activity is permitted in the declared disaster zones?

Unless the homes have been red tagged as uninhabitable, property owners may occupy their residence in the declared disaster zone.

Mud and debris can be set aside in an area on the property for now. Doing so will minimize the amount of mud and debris being deposited in landfills and traffic congestion in the impacted areas. The County is currently developing a debris removal plan and will

communicate this plan to the community in the coming weeks. Mud and debris should never be piled in a location (such as creek beds or other water channels) that will cause an impact in future storms. For more information on debris removal on private property, refer to the County's [Private Property Debris Removal FAQs](#) or go to [www.CountyofSB.org](http://www.CountyofSB.org).

Property owners removing mud and debris through private contractors can consult Public Work's [Waste Removal Options](#) handout for information on facilities accepting mud and debris.

The cost to dispose of these materials is typically less if materials can be separated by material type rather than mixed. For example, facilities typically charge less for a load of soil only rather than a load of soil, rocks, and a damaged couch.

**6. I am concerned about unauthorized entry and possible looting in the declared disaster zones. What can the community do to prevent this from happening?**

Montecito residents are urged to look out for each other especially during this recovery process and help safeguard each other's property. No one should be in the area without a legitimate and lawful reason to be there. Report any suspicious people or activity to law enforcement right away.