

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Air Quality Watch for Santa Barbara in Effect through Weekend  
Ash Still of Concern; Residents Cautioned about Post-Fire Cleanup**

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. — The Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District and the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department today noted the Air Quality Watch for Southern Santa Barbara County will continue in effect through the weekend. Levels of particles recorded at the Santa Barbara air monitoring station are in the “moderate” range, which can cause difficulties for people with existing heart or lung problems. In addition, much ash has been deposited on the ground, and winds and vehicles may stir up ash particles and produce localized areas of poor air quality. If you sense high levels of particles in the air where you are, be cautious and use common sense to protect your family’s health. Everyone, especially people with heart or lung disease (including asthma), older adults, and children, should limit time spent outdoors, and avoid activities that stir particles into the air. If you have symptoms of lung or heart disease that may be related to exposure to particles, including repeated coughing, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, wheezing, chest tightness or pain, palpitations, nausea or unusual fatigue or lightheadedness, contact your health care provider. Residents are also cautioned to be careful when cleaning up ash. In some cases, if properly used, masks can reduce your exposure, however, their use can provide a false sense of security, and masks can be ineffective depending on the type and fit of the mask. The decision to use a mask should be made in consultation with your health care provider.

**Ash Cleanup**

Residents are advised to be cautious when cleaning up ash to avoid stirring up particles and especially to avoid using leaf blowers (and to ask landscaping services to avoid use of leaf blowers). Anyone with heart or lung problems should not do post-fire cleanup. **Possibly the best way to clean up ash is to use a high-quality shop/industrial vacuum outfitted with a high-efficiency particulate filter and a disposable collection filter bag.** Ash can be bagged and put into trash cans, so it will not be stirred up again into the air. Special attachments can be used to clean ash from gutters, so that it will not blow back over outdoor spaces. Attachments and disposable bags are available from most hardware stores. In addition, **gentle** sweeping of indoor and outdoor hard surfaces followed by wet mopping may be effective. A damp cloth or wet mop may be all that is needed on lightly dusted areas. When cleaning up it may be useful to spray areas lightly with water; however, it is best to divert the water to lawn or garden areas so that ash-filled water does not flow into streets, runoff systems and the creeks. Do not allow children to play in ash-filled areas, avoid skin contact with ash, wash pets, remove ash from outside toys and play equipment, and take cars to the car wash.

**Asbestos from burned material**

When houses burn, asbestos fibers from building materials may become airborne, creating a potentially hazardous situation. Houses built or re-built more than 20 years ago have a higher likelihood of containing asbestos fibers. Cleanup and demolition activities can make conditions worse if not done properly. Handling materials that contain asbestos can be hazardous to your health. Additional asbestos-related tips are available at [www.sbcapcd.org/asbestos-fire.htm](http://www.sbcapcd.org/asbestos-fire.htm).

*For more information see [www.OurAir.org](http://www.OurAir.org), and for recorded advisory updates, call 805-961-8802. An Air Quality Watch is issued when there is potential for poor air quality in some areas of the county.*

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