

Safety after a disaster

Wildfire

After a disaster, property damage may cause unusual and additional safety hazards. Many disaster-related injuries and deaths occur during cleanup. Here’s what to check:

Item	Action	Status
Particulate in air	Check with local health authorities about any special hazards created by particulate in your location. Particulates from wildfires generally contain ash, but can contain chemical residues or fibres if the fire consumed agricultural facilities, warehouses or industrial properties. Follow the authorities’ precautions without exception.	
Particulate on surfaces	Workspace surfaces may be covered with fine particulate. Do not disturb these settled materials. Rather, contract a qualified cleaning contractor. The use of HEPA-filtered vacuums in the building should be required to limit the likelihood of putting more particulate into the air. Cleaning should be done before re-occupancy.	
Heating/air conditioning system	Your heating/air conditioning system may have captured particulate during the fire. Ask your HVAC contractor to replace the air conditioning system’s filters and assess the need for cleaning air handlers, ductwork, etc. System cleaning should be done before re-occupancy.	
Electronic equipment	Fine particulate may have also entered computer systems and other sensitive electronic equipment. Assess and clean as needed with a HEPA-filtered vacuum before re-energizing this equipment.	
Gutters and drains	Flying ash could clog gutters and drains, preventing proper water drainage. Blocked drains can cause water damage to your building. Inspect and clear drains.	
Exterior	Stay away from burnt areas. Trees may be weak and could fall unexpectedly. Holes in the ground may be covered with ash and not visible.	

