



LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT REFERENCE GUIDE

ROUTING

Local District Superintendents
Local District Directors of School
Services
Local District Operations
Coordinators
Local District Facilities Director
Principals
Plant Managers

TITLE: Procedures for Re-entry and Clean-up of Fire Damaged Buildings

NUMBER: REF-1902.1

ISSUER: Office of Environmental Health and Safety

DATE: July 27, 2005

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Reference Guide is to specify a procedure for the safe re-entry and clean up of fire-damaged buildings.

MAJOR CHANGES: This Reference Guide replaces Bulletin No. 53, "Reentry of Fire Damaged Areas," Environmental Health and Safety Branch, April 22, 1988.

BACKGROUND: Fires present physical hazards and produce toxic substances which can be inhaled or absorbed through the skin. To prevent exposure to such substances, the Office of Environmental Health and Safety (OEHS) is required to assess fire damaged areas prior to re-entry by District staff.

Following the local Fire Department's response to a structure fire on District property, School Police, Maintenance and Operations Branch, and OEHS should receive *same day notification* of the event from the Site Administrator or Local District Office. Upon arrival on scene, OEHS will assess and make recommendations for necessary corrective actions. The following procedures apply only to fire damage incidents in which no known asbestos or lead containing materials have been impacted. When these materials are disturbed, additional requirements apply (see Safety Alert 02-08 for asbestos and Safety Alert No. 03-10 for lead prevention).

PROCEDURES: A. PRIOR TO ENTRY

1. After the fire is extinguished, District staff may not enter the damaged buildings for any reason until cleared by the Fire Department. Access shall be restricted by use of barricades, caution tape, or other means.
2. If there is structural damage and potential shifting of building materials or structural collapse, the fire damaged building shall be inspected and certified "safe for re-entry" by a registered professional engineer or architect.
3. OEHS will evaluate the areas for the presence of hazardous materials (i.e., asbestos, lead, carbon monoxide, etc.) and determine if conditions are suitable for entry by maintenance staff using the attached "Re-entry of Fire Damaged Areas" form.
4. Following evaluation of the affected areas, OEHS will recommend appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for workers entering fire-affected areas. Workers must be medically cleared prior to using respirators. Workers conducting cleanup of small amounts (less than 3 square feet) of asbestos-containing materials must have at least 16 hours of asbestos training.



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5. A minimum of two fire extinguishers with a UL rating of at least 2A10BC must be maintained on site for the duration of the cleanup. Fire extinguishers must be located no more than 75 feet of horizontal travel from school staff.
6. If water was present anywhere near electrical circuits or equipment, the power must be shut down at the service panel. Electrical power shall not be restored until inspected and approved by a qualified electrician. Do not enter flooded areas with the power on. Never touch electrical equipment if the ground is wet unless you are absolutely certain that the power has been shut down.

B. DURING CLEANUP

1. Workers involved in fire cleanups may be exposed to ash or soot which may cause respiratory symptoms. Controls should be employed to provide fresh air when working indoors. High efficiency particulate air (HEPA) vacuums are recommended when cleaning surfaces contaminated with dust. If a non-HEPA vacuum is used, ash and dust must be dampened prior to cleanup to prevent dispersing it in the air. Employees may also need to wear a NIOSH-approved air-purifying respirator, which will be provided by OEHS.
2. Carbon monoxide gas may accumulate in enclosed areas following fires. OEHS shall conduct air monitoring to assess carbon monoxide levels in buildings prior to cleanup. Use of gasoline or diesel-powered devices indoors is prohibited.
3. Unstable work surfaces create a risk for injury, and caution is necessary when working on these surfaces. In addition, appropriate PPE such as goggles, leather gloves, and hard hats should be used.
4. Workers may be at risk for injuries during debris handling. Teams of two or more should be used where possible to move heavy or bulky items, and lifting over 50 pounds per person should be avoided. Use of mechanically assisted lifting devices is advised.
5. Provide prompt first aid as necessary during fire cleanup activities. Any open wounds/cuts should be immediately cleaned with soap and clean water, and first aid applied, with referral to a physician as needed.

C. DISPOSAL OF FIRE-DAMAGED MATERIAL

1. Ash, charred debris, and other contaminated materials from burned structures may be hazardous waste (see Safety Alert No. 04-04 for hazardous waste disposal procedures.) Care should be taken to prevent ash or debris from entering into storm drains or gutters. Minimal amounts of water should be used when wetting ash during cleanup.

**RELATED
RESOURCES:**

Information on these procedures may be downloaded from the OEHS website at <http://www.lausd-oehs.org>

ASSISTANCE:

For assistance or further information, please contact the Office of Environmental Health and Safety (213) 241-3199.