

Update on debris removal and returning to fire damaged property in Chinese Camp 9/17/2025

The **Public Health Officer of Tuolumne County** has declared a public health emergency which states:

1. That conditions of certain hazardous waste in Tuolumne County in the form of debris resulting from a fire beginning on September 2, 2025 as part of the TCU September Lightning Complex Fire, and which involved destruction of several structures, poses a **substantial present or potential hazard to human health and the environment unless immediately addressed and managed**; and
2. That during the existence of said local emergency the powers, functions, and duties of the Tuolumne County Public Health Officer shall be those prescribed by state law, including the provisions of Sections 101040 and 101085 of the Health and Safety Code, and by ordinances and resolutions of this county approved by the Board of Supervisors.

All destroyed structures that have been **RED-TAGGED** by the Tuolumne County Community Development Department are **UNSAFE**.

RIGHT NOW: Tuolumne County is completing the property and damage assessment gathering necessary information for the County to apply with the State of California for assistance to safely remove all debris on eligible affected parcels. This process is detailed and requires significant cooperation from property owners, residents, insurance companies and various government agencies. Tuolumne County is requesting Phase-1 Household Hazardous Waste removal from the state at no cost to the property owner. Phase-1 is performed by CA Dept of Toxic Substance Control. This may take 2-4 weeks. Once completed, property owners will then have an option to opt into Phase II. Details to come on completing the Right of Entry and coordinating activities.

See: [2024Nov6WILDFIRE survivors handbook ENGLISH \(5\).pdf](#)

Phase-1 – Household Hazardous Waste (mandatory, coordinated and conducted by CA DTSC teams)

Phase-2 – Right of Entry & Debris Removal (property owners may opt into program)

PENDING A DECISION ON STATE ASSISTANCE: We ask that property owners DO NOT START REMOVING DEBRIS from destroyed structures on their property. Property owners are not prohibited from entering their property to recover items at their own risk, however any significant site disturbance or removal of debris or ash from their parcels is likely to disqualify owners/occupants for public financial assistance and may also interfere with their insurance claims. All parcels affected, regardless of whether a home was destroyed or not, will be included in Phase-1 of the program. Inspection results will be communicated to property owners and County offices.

The Community Development Department will be able to begin issuing permits for affected properties as they are cleared as safe by the issuing authority, however no CDD permits for affected properties will be approved prior to Phase I work being satisfactorily completed on the property and depending on the parcel conditions at the conclusion Phase II, may require site inspection by a County Building Inspector.

If you need verification of the status of your home as to eligibility for Phase-2 debris removal, please contact our office at (209) 533-6395. Updates on the hazardous debris process will be posted at the OES Incidents, TCU Complex webpage. Contact TuoCo Environmental Health Dept. for guidance on protecting wells and questions related to proper treatment of water resources during recovery process: (209) 533-5633.