



The Contractors State License Board, which operates under the umbrella of the California Department of Consumer Affairs, licenses and regulates California's 285,000 contractors, and is regarded as one of the leading consumer protection agencies in the United States.

Disaster Debris Removal after Los Angeles County Fires

When removing debris after a disaster, the Contractors State License Board (CSLB) urges property owners to be cautious and make sure that anyone who offers to assist after a disaster is licensed in the appropriate classifications.

The key is to avoid rushing into any agreement with contractors until you have verified their qualifications with CSLB and their work through recommendations from others who have previously contracted with them. Construction work that costs \$1,000 or more in combined labor and materials must be performed by a licensed contractor. Any project requiring permits or workers needs to be performed by a licensed contractor regardless of cost.

Consumers should be aware of options for debris removal before making a decision, including checking with their city/county building department to see if there are any government-funded debris removal programs available.

A structured debris removal process is divided into two main phases:

[Phase 1: Hazardous Material Removal](#)

This phase involves the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) removing potentially dangerous everyday products like paint, cleaners, solvents, oils, batteries, and pesticides from properties affected by fires. This service is provided at no cost to property owners and is a prerequisite for Phase 2.

[Phase 2: Debris Removal and Cleanup](#)

After Phase 1 clearance, property owners have two options for Phase 2:

1. Opt-In to the Government-Run Debris Removal Program: By completing a Right of Entry (ROE) form, property owners can authorize the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to access their property and conduct debris removal at no out-of-pocket cost.
2. Opt-Out and Manage Cleanup Independently: Property owners may choose to hire specialized contractors to remove the remaining fire debris, following all necessary requirements, rules,

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and regulations. An approved Opt-Out Application and an Opt-Out Fire Debris Removal permit are required before commencing debris removal.

Opt-Out Fire Debris Removal in Los Angeles County

Property owners who opt-out of the government-run debris removal program must use appropriately licensed contractors for any fire debris removal. Los Angeles County will only issue an Opt-Out Fire Debris Removal permit to a contractor that holds the [CSLB Hazardous Substance Removal Certification](#), and one of the following contractor license classifications: (A) General Engineering, (B) General Building, or (C-12) Earthwork and Paving AND (C-21) Building Moving/Demolition.

The licensed prime contractor for the Opt-Out Fire Debris Removal permit performing debris removal must meet other requirements as an employer, such as ensuring employees have the required Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER) training.

More details can be found on the CSLB [Disaster Help Center](#) or [LA County Recovers website](#).

In a disaster area, it's a good idea to check with your local building department for any additional permit requirements or guidelines.