

Central Coast Water Board Response to Thomas Fire and Mudslides

The primary focus of the response to the Thomas Fire and catastrophic mudslides has been rescue, recovery, and protection of human life and property. As the situation evolves from the rescue stage to recovery, the Central Coast Water Board and other agencies are shifting their attention to cleanup and minimizing further damage to property and natural resources.

Multiple agencies, including the Central Coast Water Board, are working together to assess and reduce the risk of further flooding and mudslides. These agencies are also working to control fire-related debris, pollutants, and sediment. Our mutual goal is to protect human health, critical infrastructure (bridges, roads, culverts, and flood protection facilities), wildlife, and the natural environment including our creeks and beaches.

The Central Coast Water Board is working with the Santa Barbara County Flood Control District to clear sediment from roads, waterways, and debris basins. The Central Coast Water Board has issued a permit for these activities, including placement of sediment at Carpinteria and Goleta Beaches. The permit includes testing of sediment, and is available here:

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralcoast/water_issues/programs/401wqcert/docs/sbcfcd_emerg_sediment_remove.pdf

The latest beach water quality testing results from the County of Santa Barbara are here:

http://cosb.countyofsb.org/phd/default_all.aspx?id=20068&pghead=18958&footer=18960&menu2id=174

The Central Coast Water Board has also issued emergency permits to wide variety of agencies and organizations for emergency response actions, including Montecito Water District, Carpinteria Valley Water District, Caltrans, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, and Southern California Gas Company.

Central Coast Water Board staff is also coordinating with agencies involved in upland disposal of cleared sediment and debris.

For Residents

Residents should not place sediment, debris, or other material in creeks. This can worsen flooding. Working in creeks and other natural water features, including clearing of sediment, may require a permit from the Central Coast Water Board. Information on

emergency permits is available here (see information for “RGP 63”):

https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/cwa401/generalorders.shtml

For further information on permits for work in creeks and water features, contact Mark Cassady at 805-549-3689.

Residents should not wash ash down into streets or drains. The County of Santa Barbara has developed a Fact Sheet for ash cleanup:

http://cosb.countyofsb.org/uploadedFiles/phd/Press_Release/2017_Press_Releases/Safe_Clean_Up_and_Work_Practices_During_and_After_Thomas_Fire1.pdf

A fact sheet with debris removal questions and answers developed by Cal OES and FEMA is available at wildfirerecovery.org:

<http://wildfirerecovery.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/FAQs-December-Wildfires.pdf>

Additional debris management information is available at the following Cal OES website: <http://wildfirerecovery.org/debris-removal/>

For septic system management after a flood, see the following fact sheet by the County of Santa Barbara:

<http://cosb.countyofsb.org/uploadedFiles/phd/EHS/18STM1%20Septic%20Systems%20-%20What%20to%20Do%20After%20a%20Flood.pdf>