



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DO NOT USE LEAF BLOWERS *Air Pollution Control District Can Take Enforcement Action*

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. — The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department and Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District remind the community that **leaf blowers should not be used while there are large amounts of ash in our environment, as this could result in a violation of Air Pollution Control District regulations and endanger health.** All county residents are encouraged to be good neighbors and not use leaf blowers. The Air Pollution Control District can take enforcement action against any person who uses a leaf blower in the aftermath of the Thomas Fire where a threat to public health in violation of state law and District regulations is determined.

Using leaf blowers on fire ash can harm public health. Substantial amounts of ash have fallen as a result of the Thomas Fire. Larger ash particles can cause irritation to the eyes, nose, and throat. Over time, ash particles break down into smaller, more harmful particles that can lodge deep into our lungs, causing serious health effects including aggravated asthma, bronchitis, and lung damage; the particles are also small enough to get into our bloodstream and affect our heart health. Using leaf blowers stirs up the particles and can contribute to large particles becoming smaller, hazardous particles.

Ash clean-up is not advised when the outdoor air quality is unhealthy. Windy conditions in the forecast have the potential to stir up ash and affect air quality; keep your N95 mask on hand and check hourly air quality conditions at www.OurAir.org/todays-air-quality/. If air quality conditions allow, the following is recommended for safe clean-up. **Note: clean-up should never be done by people who have lung or heart conditions.**

- Ash from burned homes and other items will likely contain metals, chemicals, and potentially asbestos, items that may be considered toxic if breathed in or touched with wet skin. If you do get ash on your skin, wash it off immediately. Some wet ash can cause chemical burns.
- Use protective wear. Wear a tight-fitting N95 respirator mask, gloves, long-sleeved shirts, and long pants when cleaning up ash.
- **Avoid getting ash into the air as much as possible.** Avoid sweeping it up dry. Use water and wet cloth or mop to clean items and surfaces.

ALTERNATIVES TO LEAF BLOWERS

- Sweep gently with a push broom, then hose lightly with water. Take care to conserve water. Ash can be bagged and put into trash cans.
- Using a shop vacuum equipped with a high-efficiency particulate filter (HEPA) and a disposable filter bag.