TIPS FOR RETURNING HOME SAFELY & BEGINNING RECOVERY AFTER THE FIRES

As evacuations are lifted, it’s important to take steps to ensure your safety as you return home and begin recovering from the fires.

BEFORE RETURNING HOME

1. **Return home during the day**, wear protective clothing, bring water and a fully charged cell phone.
   
   *Residents can access comfort kits, Personal Protective Equipment and bottled water at a Commodity Point of Distribution (C-POD). C-PODS have been set up at Greenfield Memorial Hall (615 El Camino Real), in Carmel Valley Village near the Chevron and at the intersection of Tassajara Rd and Carmel Valley open today, August 26th through Friday, August 28th from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm.*

2. **Leave children and pets with a relative or friend** while you conduct your first inspection of your home after the fire.

3. **Watch for hazards**, including wildlife that have fled their homes due to the fires. If you find a wild animal in need, don’t move it. Contact the SPCA at [www.spcamc.org/wildlife/found-wildlife-in-need/](http://www.spcamc.org/wildlife/found-wildlife-in-need/) or call 831-264-5427.

BEFORE ENTERING YOUR HOME

1. **Check the outside of your home** for loose power lines, broken or damaged gas lines, foundation cracks or other damage. See if porch roofs and overhangs still have all their supports.

2. **Be aware of and use extreme caution** around trees, power poles, and other tall objects or structures that may have lost stability during the fire.

   - **⚠️ If you see downed power lines** near your home, treat them as if they are "live" or energized. Keep yourself and others away from them. Call 911, then notify PG&E at **1-800-743-5000**.

   - **⚠️ If you see damage on the outside of your home**, it could indicate that the inside of your home is seriously unsafe. Ask a building inspector or contractor to check the structure before you enter. For more information on building inspections and permits call: 831-755-4800 (M-F 8am-4pm) or go to [co.monterey.ca.us/government/departments-i-z/resource-management-agency](http://co.monterey.ca.us/government/departments-i-z/resource-management-agency)

WHEN ENTERING YOUR HOME

1. **Enter carefully**, open cabinets and doors with caution and watch for hazards

2. **Check for the smell of gas or rotten eggs**. Don’t turn on lights/flashlights or spark matches/lighters indoors until verifying there is no gas leak or electrical issues. If you detect the odor of gas or hear a hissing noise, leave the property immediately and get well away from it. Call your local fire department and PG&E at **800-743-5000**

3. **If the electricity is off**, before turning it on, make sure all appliances are turned off and check the electrical system for sparks, breaks, or frayed wires. Once you are sure all appliances are turned off, there is no fire damage to your building, and the meter does not have any visible damage you may turn on the main circuit breaker.
INSPECTING YOUR HOME

1. **Inspect your home** for sagging ceilings and floors, damaged furniture, smoke and embers

2. **If the house has been closed up for several days**, enter briefly to open doors and windows to let the house air out for a while (at least 30 minutes) before you stay for any length of time.

3. **If you have a landline and/or a security system**, check if they are working.

4. **Start a list of damaged belongings and document damage with photographs**

5. **Contact your insurance provider.**

CLEANING AND REPAIRING YOUR HOME

1. **If your house has been damaged** and you find nonperishable food items that survived the fire, we recommend that you **DO NOT** use them. Although the containers may appear to be intact, high temperatures may have caused the seams to fail, thus exposing the contents to potential contamination. When in doubt, throw it out!

2. **If you lost power during the fires**, it is strongly recommended that you discard the contents of your refrigerator or freezer. Perishable food such as meat, poultry, seafood, milk, and eggs that are not kept adequately refrigerated or frozen may cause illness if consumed, even when they are thoroughly cooked. When in doubt, throw it out!

3. **Talk to your health care provider about replacing medicine** that was exposed to fire or smoke, and/or medicine that was not properly stored (ex. insulin that was not properly refrigerated due to power outages)

4. **Check your water systems** by turning on a faucet to see if water comes out. If you hear air escaping from the faucet with water intermittently spurting out, that is an indication that the well and household plumbing had a loss of pressure and should be checked to make sure it is bacteriologically safe. Learn more at [www.mtyhd.org/EHBfires](http://www.mtyhd.org/EHBfires). This website also includes information regarding waste and debris management as you clean up.

5. **Cleaning up debris and waste**: Decide whether to participate in a government-run debris removal program, hire a private contractor for debris removal at your expense; or conduct debris cleanup yourself.

6. **Be sure to take care of yourself**: Rest when you need to, prioritize tasks, work with other people, and get support from family members, friends, counselors, or therapists when you need it.

⚠️ **Avoid scams**: ask questions, verify the identity of anyone trying to sell you something or asking for money, & make sure written contracts match verbal promises that were made. Learn more: [www.consumerfinance.gov/ask-cfpb/](http://www.consumerfinance.gov/ask-cfpb/)

ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE

- **Insurance** delivers most of the financial help in disasters. For losses not covered by insurance, people can register for assistance at disasterassistance.gov, through the [FEMA App](https://www.fema.gov/ask) or by calling 800-621-3362 or 800-462-7585 (TTY).

- **If you lost a pet**, go to [www.co.monterey.ca.us/government/departments-a-h/health/monterey-county-animal-services/find-a-lost-pet](http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/government/departments-a-h/health/monterey-county-animal-services/find-a-lost-pet) or call the SPCA at 831-264-5400

- **To replace vital documents** go to: [https://www.usa.gov/replace-vital-documents](https://www.usa.gov/replace-vital-documents)

*For more information about local assistance and post fire recovery check out Monterey County’s Virtual Local Assistance Center, the link can be found at the top of our [2020 Fires webpage](http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/2020fires) or call 2-1-1 (or 833-814-1211), a free information and referral call center open 24/7 and available in 170 languages.*