



**COUNTY OF VENTURA
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NEWS RELEASE

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County Continues Fire Recovery Efforts for Fire Victims, Approves Fire Debris Cleanup Program and Ordinance, Waives Certain Permit Fees

VENTURA, Calif. – On Tuesday, December 26, the County of Ventura Board of Supervisors held a special meeting to consider ongoing recovery efforts in response to the Thomas Fire.

At Tuesday's meeting the Board of Supervisors approved the County's participation with the California Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) Debris Removal Program for Fire Damaged Properties, undertaken by CalRecycle on behalf of the County. This program is available to homeowners with destroyed or significantly damaged structures located within the unincorporated areas. Also known as Phase II of the debris removal process, CalRecycle will coordinate the removal of structural debris, automobiles, building slab and foundation, and approximately 6" of soil from the property. Additionally, CalRecycle will complete the necessary soil testing for contaminants to confirm background standards are met.

Debris Cleanup under the CalRecycle Program can be completed at no up-front cost to the property owner, with only those insurance proceeds specifically set aside for debris removal in the property owner's insurance policy required to be paid to the County, to partially reimburse the State for the cost of the debris removal. If no such specific debris amount is specified in the owner's policy, only those insurance proceeds remaining after rebuilding is complete, if any, is due to the County. CalRecycle estimates that Phase II teams could be on-site removing debris as soon as mid-January. The City of Ventura is separately considering their options for debris removal at an upcoming City Council meeting.

Unincorporated area residents choosing not to participate in the voluntary CalRecycle program will be required to submit a Ventura County Local Program Fire Clean-up application and work plan to ensure the work is completed pursuant to the same standards set by the County and the State for the CalRecycle program. The ordinance approved by the Board today sets the requirements for self-directed debris clean-up under the local program.

"It is critical we assist our residents in rapidly rebuilding after the fire, and working with the City and the Californian Office of Emergency Services, the CalRecycle Debris removal program has been made available in record time to County residents" noted County CEO Mike Powers.



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“The CalRecycle Program provides a critical and significant step in such rebuilding, while at the same time reducing both the costs and stress associated with this effort” added Powers.

At this same meeting the Board of Supervisors also approved waiving certain Planning, Building and Safety, and Environmental Health fees related to replacing residential structures damaged by the fire. Approximately 250 dwelling units in the unincorporated area have been destroyed or significantly damaged. In order to ease the burden on these homeowners attempting to recover from the fire, a total of sixteen different fees will be waived for properties where residential units have been destroyed or significantly damaged. Examples of these fees include: Permitting Temporary Dwelling during construction fee; Building and Safety Reconnection of Gas Service fee; and Environmental Health Permit to Construct (Repair).

Additionally, the Board of Supervisors approved the extension of the Proclamation of Local Emergency, and the Declaration of Local Health Emergency, which were both previously extended at the December 12th Regular Board Meeting. These declarations allow the County to continue its application for significant reimbursement of disaster-related response and activities, and must be reviewed and renewed every 30 and 14 days, respectively.

The Board was also briefed on the progress of the mandatory Phase I debris removal program. Teams from the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) continue to make rapid progress in removing household hazardous wastes from damaged structures. To date, DTSC teams have cleared over 400 homes at no cost to property owners, and will continue their work through the month of January.

Additional information about fire recovery efforts, a complete list of waived Planning, Building and Safety, and Environmental Health fees, and forms and instructions for homeowners wishing to participate in the Phase II debris removal program can be found at www.VenturaCountyRecovers.org.