

# Hawai'i Wildfires: Private Property Debris Removal

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Fire debris removal cleanup is one of the major challenges facing residents, business owners and government agencies during recovery from the historic wildfires that swept across Maui County on Aug. 8. Debris removal is taking place in phases to ensure the safety and cultural sensitivities of the affected communities. For more information on the process, visit [mauirecovers.org/recovery/debrisremoval](https://mauirecovers.org/recovery/debrisremoval), Maui County's comprehensive source of information and resources for survivors of the Hawai'i wildfires.

## Hazardous Materials

- In the first phase, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency removes hazardous materials such as paints, solvents, oils, batteries and pesticides from all fire- impacted properties.
- Once local officials are informed that the site is safe, they will notify residents when they may return to their property to retrieve any belongings that may be saved.

## Role of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

- For the second phase, the State of Hawai'i announced that FEMA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will lead the removal of fire-damaged debris from private property.
- Property owners are not required to use this service. However, for the safety of the community, property owners who choose to do their own cleanup must still follow local, state and federal requirements.
- The Corps of Engineers is committed to protecting not only the health and safety of those impacted by the fires but also to respecting the culture of the community.



## Cultural Safeguards

- The State of Hawaii and the Corps of Engineers have instituted safeguards to protect sites and treat them appropriately and respectfully.
  - Cultural (archaeological) monitors with expertise and knowledge are working within the affected communities and are trained to be sensitive to the cultural significance of their work.
  - Cultural monitors will be present during the removal process. These monitors are local, Maui-based experts and have extensive experience in their community culture.
  - Even with painstaking efforts to recover all of those who died in the fire zone, the extent and heat of the fire may have left behind human remains that cannot be distinguished from the fire debris for respectful removal, identification and return to family members. Fire debris removal efforts will include additional resources to address these circumstances,

## Debris Removal Efforts

- Property owners who opt into the debris removal program are required to sign a right-of-entry form and submit it to Maui County officials before removal begins.
- Maui officials will provide these completed forms to the Corps of Engineers so they can access fire-damaged private property.
  - Maui County is required to collect right-of-entry forms from property owners participating in the debris removal program.
  - Your permission is needed so government-authorized contractors can go onto your property and remove fire-damaged debris.
- Signing a right-of-entry form does not transfer ownership of the property. It only allows the government and/or its authorized contractors to go onto private property to remove the debris.
- After the Environmental Protection Agency has removed hazardous materials, it is your right as the property owner not to participate in the private debris removal program. If you choose to remove all or some of the debris through a private contractor, (see Private Fire Debris Removal opt-out option at [MauiRecovers.org](https://mauirecovers.org)), you are required to meet or exceed the standards set by local, state and federal agencies. More information will be provided by Maui County.



FEMA

- [MauiRecovers.org](https://mauirecovers.org) is Maui County’s comprehensive source of information and resources for survivors of the Hawai’i wildfires.

