

# EL DORADO/APPLE FIRE BURN AREA FLOOD/DEBRIS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



## WHY DID THIS FLOODING AND THESE MUDFLOWS HAPPEN?

- The wildfires of the past few years, particularly the 2020 Apple Fire and El Dorado Fire, left massive areas of the United States Forest Service areas in and around Oak Glen, Forest Falls, and neighboring areas, decimated and burnt.
- During normal storm conditions, water both soaks into the ground and runs off hillsides following natural water courses. Vegetation helps maintain the integrity of the hillsides and limits erosion.
- As fires burn, they destroy vegetation and leave behind ash and debris. In storm conditions following a wildfire, the ash prevents water from soaking into the soil and instead runs off at a higher rate, bringing the ash with it. The lack of vegetation leads to increased erosion and loose debris. All of this creates incredible volumes of water, mud, and debris flows.
- As these flows reach the natural water courses the volume builds. If flows become obstructed as a result of larger debris, it can act like a dam, slowing flows temporarily, until the debris gives way and massive flows of debris release and overwhelm natural water courses and, at times, even Flood Control facilities.
- These wildfires created these conditions and, while minor storm events over the past few years have caused only minor flooding and debris flows and helped to clear off some of the conditions, the recent tropical storm event had such significant rainfall in the area it created the mud and debris flow conditions that became dangerous and devastating.

## WHAT PROGRAMS ARE AVAILABLE FOR REMOVING MUD AND DEBRIS FROM MY PROPERTY?

- The County has identified a site in Yucaipa near the Soccer Complex where property owners can deposit soil removed from private property.
- Material that is not rock or soil will need to be taken to an active landfill. Temporary dumpsters are available at El Dorado Park.
- The National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is also evaluating properties to determine if support can be provided. More information will become available as their report is completed.
- Property owners should also contact their insurance companies to discuss potential coverage and options.

## I HAVE DAMAGE TO STRUCTURES ON MY PROPERTY. WILL THE COUNTY WAIVE MY PERMIT FEES?

- Pending Board of Supervisors' approval of a recommended fee waiver, the County intends to waive up to \$2,000 in Land Use Services building permits fees for local property owners who suffered damage as part of the storms.

## WHY DOESN'T THE COUNTY CHANGE THE DRAINAGE PATH FOR WATER FLOWS?

- Civil case law requires the national drainage flows maintain their historic alignment and not burden upstream or downstream properties.
- The County performs maintenance on drainage courses on which it has accepted maintenance easements to ensure they are clear and ready to accept water flows.
- The Army Corps of Engineers has visited the area prior to the storm event and is preparing a study that identifies significant, comprehensive system improvements (e.g. basins and channel improvements) as a long-term solution.

## WHAT IS THE COUNTY DOING TO PREVENT MORE DAMAGE FROM THE NEXT MAJOR STORM?

- The County has contacted the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and they are meeting on-site with property owners (started September 26th) to evaluate potentially installing additional protective measures (e.g. K-rail) as part of their program.
- The County will continue to maintain its section of Birch Creek and road crossings.
- To ensure public safety, the County continues to closely monitor this area with Public Works and other agency staff, both as boots on the ground, as well as using cameras.
- The County will also continue to activate evacuation warnings/orders and install road closures when the forecasted storm reaches identified trigger points. It is anticipated there will be future mud flows until the watershed has healed from the fire and vegetation has re-established.

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## WHY CAN'T THE COUNTY PERFORM WORK ON PRIVATE PROPERTY? THE DAMAGE TO MY PROPERTY IS TOO MUCH FOR ME TO HANDLE ON MY OWN, WHY ISN'T THE COUNTY HELPING ME?

- Per State Law (California Streets and Highway Code, Section 2150), the County is not allowed to do any maintenance or repair work on roads that are not in the County's system of maintained roadways. The primary funding source for roadway maintenance and repair is gas tax, which cannot be spent on private property. Similarly, Flood Control District expenditure of funding is also limited to property the District owns and maintains.

## WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS IT TO HELP PROTECT OUR PROPERTIES FROM MUD, WATER, AND DEBRIS FLOWS?

- Property owners are responsible for protecting their property. Public Works has information on its webpage that advises on options that can be implemented by homeowners to protect their property. The Federal National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has programs for select properties that meet their program criteria. The Flood Control District is coordinating with NRCS to install limited debris barriers and to assist with property clean-up. Property owners are also encouraged to discuss their damage with their flood insurance carriers.

## THE COUNTY'S WORK IN UPPER BIRCH CREEK HAS CAUSED LOWER POTATO CANYON TO FLOOD. HOW IS THIS NOT THE COUNTY'S RESPONSIBILITY?

- Birch Creek is approximately 4 miles in length from the mountain peak to the City of Yucaipa city limits. The Flood Control District maintains a portion of the creek which is approximately 0.7 miles in length. The majority of Birch Creek is on property owned by the U.S. Forest Service or on private property. The small section of the channel the District maintains was improved in 1965 and has performed as designed since that time. The water, mud, and debris generated by the post-El Dorado Fire flooding event exceeded the capacity of the channel, even with the emergency installation of additional K-rails.

## WHY CAN'T THE COUNTY DIG OUT MORE OF THE CREEKS AND BASINS TO ALLOW FOR MASSIVE FLOWS OF WATER TO REMAIN IN A CHANNEL? WHAT IS RESTRICTING YOU?

- The majority of Birch Creek is located on USFS and private property, which the County cannot readily access. Additionally, work in streambeds requires environmental permitting through various agencies such as California Fish and Wildlife. A large debris basin upstream of Oak Glen would be needed to capture mud. The construction of large basins involves tremendous cost, as well as extensive environmental permitting and property acquisition. Without a debris basin, channels quickly lose their capacity with mud flows.

## WHY CAN'T THE COUNTY PLACE K-RAIL ON OUR PROPERTY?

- The current program for private properties is through the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The Flood Control District is coordinating with NRCS to install K-rail and similar barriers on properties that meet the criteria of the NRCS program. Once approved, installation is anticipated to begin in early 2023.

## ARE THERE ANY LIMITATIONS ON WHAT I CAN DO TO PROTECT MY OWN PROPERTY?

- Yes. Some structures may require building or environmental permits. We recommend hiring an engineer or landscape architect for permanent protective measures. The County is available to meet with you and/or your engineer to discuss proposed improvements.

## CAN THE COUNTY TAKE OUT ALL THE CORRUGATED, LARGE DRAIN PIPES FOUND ALONG BIRCH CREEK? THEY GET CLOGGED UP AND CAUSE THE NATURAL PATH OF WATER TO FIND DIFFERENT ROUTES BECAUSE OF THE BACK-UPS IN THE PIPE.

- No. For regular storm events, these culverts carry water under the roads and provides all-weather circulation for residents and emergency responders.

## WHERE CAN WE GET SANDBAGS AND HOW DO WE GET THEM FILLED?

- Sandbags are available at hardware stores and sand is available at select locations found at <https://sbcfire.org/sandbags/>

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**CAN THE COUNTY PLACE K-RAIL IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD FOR RESIDENTS TO COME AND PICK-UP AND PLACE ON THEIR PROPERTY?**

- Yes. The Flood Control District is working with NRCS on installation of K-rails in neighborhood areas.

**WILL THE COUNTY BE ABLE TO HELP US FIND PLACES TO DUMP OUR MUD THE NEXT TIME SOMETHING LIKE THIS HAPPENS? WHY DID IT TAKE SO LONG IN OAK GLEN TO MAKE THAT HAPPEN?**

- The County has located a site for private residents to take dirt. Please contact Public Works (909)387-7920 for a no-fee permit.

**IS THE COUNTY DONE CLEARING OUT ALL AREAS ON PROSPECT DRIVE IN FOREST FALLS? IT SEEMS LIKE THERE IS STILL WORK TO DO THERE AND MORE RAIN IS FORECASTED.**

- The channel upstream of Prospect Drive is on private property and is not owned or operated by the County or the Flood Control District. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) reviewed this area and identified some of these water courses as potential candidates for cleaning and re-establishment. The Flood Control District is working with NRCS to approve agreements and prepare bid packages for the work identified in their scope of work. Once approved, installation is anticipated to begin in early 2023. Private property owners may have to proceed as they see fit for their own property protection in the meantime.

**THE STATE ANNOUNCED AN EMERGENCY DECLARATION, BUT WE HAVEN'T SEEN ANY ASSISTANCE FROM THAT. WHAT HAPPENED, AND WILL THERE BE ANY STATE OR FEDERAL MONEY COMING TO ASSIST US?**

- The declaration provides potential reimbursement of government facilities damaged in the event. We will provide information as it becomes available for any private programs.

**THE DEBRIS FLOW STARTS ON FEDERAL LAND AND CARRIES TREES AND BOULDERS FROM THERE ONTO OUR PROPERTY, WHY DOESN'T THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HELP US?**

- The National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is a federal agency that is helping provide some additional protective measures and select debris clean-up on properties that meet their program requirements.

**WHY CAN'T THE COUNTY MODIFY OR DIG IN UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY BLUE-LINED STREAM AREAS?**

- Work in streambeds requires environmental permitting through various agencies such as California Fish and Wildlife. The Flood Control District is working with these agencies to explore obtaining emergency permits under the State of Emergency Declaration.

**I HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT ENDANGERED OR THREATENED SPECIES AT BOTH THE STATE AND FEDERAL LEVEL CAN PREVENT FLOOD CONTROL CHANNELS AND STREAMS FROM BEING PROPERLY MAINTAINED. WHY DO ENDANGERED SPECIES TAKE PRIORITY OVER MY LAND AND LIFE?**

- The Flood Control District has been working on system-wide maintenance permits with the regulatory agencies for a number of years as well as taking advantage of emergency permitting. For private properties, the County can provide you with the contracts at the resource agencies to discuss your individual improvement plans.

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## **LAND USE SERVICES - REBUILDING/PERMITTING INFORMATION**

### **DO I NEED A PERMIT FOR AN ELECTRICAL METER RESET OR PANEL REPLACEMENT/UPGRADE? WHAT ARE THE FEES FOR THOSE ITEMS?**

- Yes, the permit fees are as follows:
  - Electric Meter reset: \$231.00
  - Electrical up to 200 amps upgrade/replacement: \$231.00

### **CAN I PLACE A MANUFACTURED HOME OR RV/TRAILER ON MY PROPERTY IF MY HOME WAS DESTROYED DUE TO THE FLOOD?**

- Yes, once the damaged or destroyed structure(s) has been validated as a legally permitted structure, a Temporary Structure permit (TS) can be issued for an RV/Trailer. The TS will be valid for a maximum of 180 days and then becomes void if a building permit has not been issued. Once a TS permit becomes void, the temporary structure must be removed.
- The Following Items must be completed for TS permit issuance:
  - Completed TS application.
  - A legible and complete Plot Plan indicating the septic system or sewer connection, potable water connection from a permitted well or water service, and propane or gas connections.
  - Associated Fees:
    - R.V. / Mobile trailer: \$486.00
    - Temporary Power: \$231.00

### **AFTER CONSTRUCTION PERMITS ARE ISSUED, CAN THE TEMPORARY STRUCTURE (TS) PERMIT BE RENEWED ANNUALLY?**

- Yes, a one-time extension of 12 months may be granted as long as the permanent structure's permit is valid and the inspection process is being adhered to. However, a request must be provided in writing 14 days before the expiration of the permit.
- The Annual Renewal Fee is \$225.00.

### **CAN I HAVE THE TRASH AND DEBRIS REMOVED FROM THE SITE? IF SO, IS A PERMIT REQUIRED FROM BUILDING AND SAFETY?**

- Yes, a permit is not required from Building and Safety for trash and debris removal as long as no further demolition of the structure is required.

### **DO I NEED A DEMOLITION PERMIT TO REMOVE AND REPLACE MY FOUNDATION?**

- Yes, a permit would be required, and the Air Quality Management District (AQMD) must be notified.
- The Demolition permit costs are as follows:
  - Permit Cost: \$266.00
  - The South Coast AQMD website: <http://www.aqmd.gov>

### **WILL ROAD DEDICATIONS/IMPROVEMENTS BE REQUIRED AS PART OF THE REBUILDING OF A DAMAGED OR DESTROYED STRUCTURE?**

- Not if the damaged/destroyed home has a valid permit and no additional square footage is being added. However, if a rebuilt home is adding additional square footage, it may trigger new construction requirements. Please note, if an existing home does not have a valid permit, then all the new requirements shall apply.
  - For additional road dedication/improvement information please contact the Land Development Unit at (909) 387-8311.

### **WILL THE APPLICANT NEED TO PAY FOR A ROAD DEDICATION?**

- There is no fee for a road dedication. However, if a dedication is required, the owner will be required to provide the grant deed for the property.
  - For additional road dedication/improvement information please contact the Land Development Unit at (909) 387-8311.

### **CAN I REUSE THE EXISTING FOUNDATION?**

- Yes, if the structural observation report validates that the existing foundation follows current standards, it can be reused. The structural observation report must be prepared, stamped and signed by a licensed professional engineer or a licensed structural engineer and provided to the County at the time of plan check submittal.

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## WILL AN EXISTING FOUNDATION HAVE TO BE ELEVATED IF WITHIN A FEMA FLOOD ZONE?

- Yes, FEMA does not recognize, or grandfather, structures located in a Flood Zone. The new enclosed, habitable structure must be elevated per the County's Development Code.

## IF A SITE IS LOCATED IN SEISMIC ZONE E OR OTHER GEO-HAZARD OVERLAYS WILL A GEOTECHNICAL/GEOLOGY REPORT BE REQUIRED?

- Not if the damaged/destroyed structure is being rebuilt utilizing the exact same design (size, shape, room configuration), on the existing foundation. However, if adding additional square footage to the original structure, or removing the existing foundation system, then a geotechnical/geological report may be required.

## WHAT IF A SITE IS LOCATED IN SEISMIC ZONE D, WILL A GEOLOGICAL/GEOLOGY REPORT BE REQUIRED?

- No, only a compaction report and pad certification is required, for sites located in seismic zone D. However, if the site is within a geo-hazard overlay, (landslide, liquefaction, etc.), then a geological/geology report may be required.
  - Sites will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

## WILL I HAVE TO PAY SCHOOL FEES?

- Fees are required to be paid to the School District for any additional square footage over the original permitted square footage. If you are rebuilding a destroyed or damaged home without any changes, the school district shall determine if any fees are applicable.

## WILL I BE ABLE TO PLACE THE HOUSE EXACTLY WHERE THE DAMAGED/DESTROYED STRUCTURE WAS LOCATED PRIOR TO THE FLOOD?

- Yes, if the damaged/destroyed structure does not conform with the current setback regulations, the structure may be constructed in its previous location, provided the cost of the reconstruction, repairing, or rebuilding does not exceed 75 percent of the replacement value of the structure at the time the damage occurred.
  - Please consult with Planning staff and the Land Development unit for a site-specific answer and potential design requirements.
  - Regardless of the age or location of the structure, the minimum setbacks established by the fire safety overlay must be adhered to.
  - For additional information on setbacks, please contact the Planning Division at (909) 387-8311 or (760) 995-8140.

## WILL THESE PLANS BE EXPEDITED?

- We are attempting to provide expedited plan reviews. However, depending on the volume of plans, review times may be extended.

## WILL I BE REQUIRED TO INSTALL FIRE SPRINKLERS?

- Yes, per County Fire Department regulations, if a home is destroyed by more than 50%, then fire sprinklers are required.
  - A Fire Letter will be required for every rebuild regardless of whether sprinklers are required.
  - For additional information on fire sprinklers, please visit the County Fire Department website at [www.sbcfire.org](http://www.sbcfire.org)

## CAN I REBUILD MY OWN HOUSE BY MYSELF WITHOUT A CONTRACTOR?

- Yes, an owner that desires to rebuild their own home will need to complete Building and Safety's Owner Builder form prior to permit issuance.

## DO I NEED TO SUBMIT A WATER QUALITY CONTROL PLAN (WQMP) TO REBUILD MY HOUSE?

- Yes, if the project falls within the thresholds of a WQMP, then one will be required.
  - For thresholds, please contact the County Land Development unit at (909) 387-8311.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

- County Land Use Services - (909) 387-8311 / [www.lus.sbcounty.gov](http://www.lus.sbcounty.gov)
  - County Land Development Unit
  - Building and Safety
  - Planning Division
- County Fire Department website - [www.sbcfire.org](http://www.sbcfire.org)
- The South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD) website - [www.aqmd.gov](http://www.aqmd.gov)

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**RESOURCES AND  
CONTACTS**



- **Behavioral Health**  
<https://wp.sbcounty.gov/dbh/admin/>
- **California Department Fire and Forestry**  
General Line - (909) 797-1000
- **California Department of Insurance -**  
(800) 927-4357
- **California Geological Survey (USGS)**  
<https://www.conservation.ca.gov/>  
brian.swanson@conservation.ca.gov
- **California State Highway Patrol Office**  
Business Office - (805) 662-2640  
Dispatch (24 hours) - (805) 477-4174  
[www.chp.ca.gov](http://www.chp.ca.gov)
- **Caltrans District 8 -** (909) 383-4631  
<https://csr.dot.ca.gov/>
- **District Attorney -** (909) 382-3800
- **Federal Emergency Management Agency -**  
Region IX  
(510) 627-7100  
[www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)
- **Flood Map Information -**  
(877) 336-2627 or (877) FEMA-MAP
- **Flood Map Service Center**  
<https://msc.fema.gov/portal/home>
- **Governor's Office of Emergency Services -**  
(916) 845-8644
- **Inland Empire Resource Conservation District**  
<https://www.iercd.org/>  
[skirschner@iercd.org](mailto:skirschner@iercd.org)  
(909) 307-4934
- **Land Use Services -** (909) 387-8311  
<https://lus.sbcounty.gov/contact-us/>
- **National Flood Insurance Program -**  
<https://www.floodsmart.gov/>
- **National Weather Service -** (805) 988-6610  
[www.weather.gov](http://www.weather.gov)
- **Natural Resources Conservation Services -**  
(805) 984-2358  
[www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov)
- **Public Health -** (800) 722-4777  
<https://wp.sbcounty.gov/dph/>
- **San Bernardino County Fire Department  
Office of Emergency Services -** (909) 356-3998  
Dispatch (non-emergency) - (909) 356-3805
- **San Bernardino County  
Office of Emergency Services**  
<https://sbcfire.org/oes/>
- **San Bernardino County Public Works**  
(909) 387-8063  
<https://dpw.sbcounty.gov/flood-control/>
- **San Bernardino County Sheriff**  
Dispatch (non-emergency) Desert - (760) 956-5001  
Dispatch (non-emergency) Valley - (909) 387-8313
- **SigAlert**  
<http://www.sigalert.com>
- **Southern California Edison**  
Report an Outage - (800) 611-1911
- **United States Forest Service**  
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/sbnf>  
[joseph.jordan@usda.gov](mailto:joseph.jordan@usda.gov)