

after the fire



Wildfire is not only devastating to the land, but also to homes and lives. This document is a brief guide to help inform you about new hazards that have been created as a result of a fire.

What to do now:

Personal and Public Safety

Walk your property and look for safety issues along property boundaries, roads and buildings. Check for the following:

- Are there fire damaged trees within one tree height of your home, other structures or access roads? If so, refer to the Washington DNR publication "Assessing Tree Injury" for steps to evaluate and remove trees at: <http://centralwashingtonfirerecovery.info/2012/wp-content/uploads/NRCS/AssessingTreeInjury.pdf>. The fact sheet is also available on the Washington NRCS website at www.wa.usda.gov.

After a fire the risk of flash floods, debris and mud flows are much greater. Consider the following to evaluate your flooding risks:

- How close is your house and outbuilding to the closest streams, seasonal draws or valley bottoms (floodplains?)
- Could your home become inaccessible? Do you have a bridge or culvert, stream or drainage crossing that could be destroyed by a flash flood?

Manage your risk and protect your property

If your home survived the wildfire, it may still be at risk of post-fire flooding or debris flows. Consider the following questions and steps to take to manage your risk and protect your property:

1. Are there National Weather Service rain gauges in your watershed. If so, is there an emergency alert system associated with them?
2. Contact your insurance agent or FEMA about The National Flood Insurance Program even if you are out of the 100 year flood plain. The following websites provide additional information:
 - <https://www.floodsmart.gov/>
 - https://www.floodsmart.gov/floodsmart/pages/flooding_flood_risks/flood_after_fire.jsp
3. Remove debris in and near culverts and cross drains. This includes rocks, grass clippings, decking, structures, vegetation, fences across draws, etc.
 - When walking your property, look for items that may potentially plug stream channels and/or culverts, particularly at road crossings.
 - Additional runoff may cause channels to shift, creating additional streambank erosion.
4. Secure/anchor outdoor items. Move lawn furniture, barbecues, propane tanks, pool covers, etc. inside.
5. Identify sources of surface runoff onto property and around your house. (See NRCS fact sheet "Hillside Home Drainage" at www.wa.nracs.usda.gov)

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What to do within the next year:

Soil Erosion Protection

Fires can cause the soil in your area to become very unstable and prone to erosion. Soil erosion can cause a significant increase in sediment and debris delivery to streams. The high rate of erosion can cause streams to fill in, reducing their ability to pass flood water. NRCS has several practices and treatments that can help to keep soil in place and not in your streams. The following treatments can help to protect your erodible soil.

- Diversions
- Dikes
- Straw Waddles
- Log Erosion Barriers
- Sandbags Barriers
- Straw Bale Sediment and Dikes
- Rock Check Structures
- Natural duff, litter and debris
- Mulch

Insect Infestation Protection

Insect infestations in the fire-killed and fire-stressed trees are a hazard.

- Remove or make sure woody slash is dried out.
- If clumps of live trees are overstocked thin them.
- Removed the most damaged trees and leave the best.

Reseeding

Loss of vegetation and forest cover reduces grazing for livestock and wildlife, degrades habitat, and increases the risk of weed infestations. If possible, these areas should be reseeded or mulched. Seeding should occur late fall after October 15th, preferably in November.

Rehabilitation and Restoration

It may be difficult to visualize the rebirth of a forest or rangeland following a wildfire. However, nature is well equipped for regenerating some fire resistant species such as ponderosa pine trees and shrub-steppe species. You may already notice some grasses and plants recovering on the landscape. Revegetation of burned areas is also imperative for restoring the health of the ecosystem. Some possible treatments include:

- Grass seeding a pasture mix for livestock forage or native for wildlife or livestock forage (May need to defer grazing for up to 2 years).
- Forest tree planting (primarily ponderosa pine) May potentially need hand scalping for site preparation to get through the ash down to mineral soil.
- Riparian plantings along stream corridors.

Financial and Technical Assistance

NRCS is available to assist with site specific questions and may be able to provide financial assistance for agricultural and non-industrial private forest landowners as they begin to restore the landscape following the fire.

Please contact your **local NRCS field office** for more information.

Visit the NRCS website at www.wa.nrcs.usda.gov for more information.