

Community Recovery FAQs

Date: 11 January 2020



We are here to help you get back on track.

If you haven't already, please complete the contact form so we can get in touch with you, or call us on 4780 5000. Your details will be added to a register that is used to inform make safe works, the rebuild process, fee concessions and local donations.

Below are a few things that will hopefully make the recovery process a little smoother.

Health and wellbeing

Health advice

For general bush fire health advice, visit: health.nsw.gov.au/environment/air/Pages/bushfire-smoke.aspx. If you have specific health concerns/complaints. Please call Health Direct on **1800 022 222** or your GP for clinical advice.

Wellbeing support

It's completely normal to experience a range of emotions after a fire and having someone to listen to and support you through this is very important. There are a range of free services available to help you and your family:

Free services available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week:

- Mental Health Line – 1800 011 511
- Lifeline – 13 11 14
- Men's line – 1300 789 978
- Kids Helpline – 1800 551 800
- Beyond Blue – 1300 224 636

Free services available during business hours, for people impacted by fires:

- Mountains Care – 4720 6100
- Gateway Family Services Blaxland – 4720 6500
- Gateway Family Services Katoomba – 4782 5326

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger call 000.

Pets and wildlife

Taking care of pets is also a priority. The RSPCA has a wealth of information about caring for pets and wildlife: kb.rspca.org.au

If you are missing a pet or need to update registration details, please contact Council and we will try to assist you. Contact Council on 4780 5000 or at council@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

Local Land Services offer assistance with emergency fodder, stock water and assessment of animals impacted by the fire. Landholders are also encouraged report any stock losses or animal welfare issues. Contact **Local Land Services** on **1800 814 647**.

Information on how to help local wildlife is also available on Council's website: bmcc.nsw.gov.au/documents/local-wildlife-need-your-help

Safety and site access

Accessing your property

Please do not enter your property until a property impact assessment has been completed, and you have received a clearance certificate.

Entering your property before you have approval can be very dangerous as a range of safety risks may be present, including:

- Live power lines or active solar panels.
- Buildings and other structures may be unstable to enter or walk over.
- Sewerage and septic systems may be disrupted causing health risks.
- Hot, smouldering coals and other potentially hazardous materials may be hidden under the rubble.

- Asbestos dust and fibres have the potential to present a health risk during and after a fire if not properly managed.

Getting a clearance certificate: The first step is to contact your Insurance Company. In some cases, risk assessments and make safe strategies are part of your claim.

If you are uninsured or your claim does not cover make safe works contact the **Public Works Advisory** on **1800 885 539**.

Insured or not, help is available

Insured: Clean-up can only start once you have clearance from your insurer. Once the site is made safe, we advise you to take photos or video of the damage to your property and possessions as evidence to support your claim, before you begin the clean-up.

You can contact **The Insurance Council of Australia** with any questions, complaints or concerns about insurance on **1800 734 621**.

Legal Aid NSW can provide free legal advice and minor assistance to people affected by disasters on a range of issues, including insurance, on **1800 801 529**.

Uninsured: The NSW Government is offering a Disaster Relief Grant for if you are **not insured and have limited income**. Grants are available for eligible individuals and families whose homes and essential household contents have been damaged or destroyed by a natural disaster.

To be eligible for this grant you must:

- be a low-income earner and meet an income assets test.
- demonstrate that the affected home is your principal place of residence.
- not be covered by insurance.
- demonstrate that the damage was caused by the disaster.
- lodge the application within four months of the disaster occurring.

For more information, contact the **Disaster Welfare Assistance Line** on **1800 018 444**.

The **Public Works Advisory** will arrange the clean-up, undertake demolition and removal of building waste for uninsured properties. Contact the Public Works Advisory on **1800 885 539**.

Government clean-up funding for all

The NSW Government is providing funding to help cover the cost of clean-up for **both insured and uninsured properties**. This will ensure hazardous materials, including asbestos, are removed and handled in the correct and safe way, and your insurance money is maximised towards rebuilding your home.

To find out more visit: service.nsw.gov.au/assistance-bushfire-affected-communities or call the **Disaster Welfare Assistance Line** on **1800 018 444**.

The clean-up

Demolition and clearing land

Removing rubble does not require Council's consent, but demolishing partial structures or heritage items might. Please contact Council to find out what approvals you may need.

Structures over 4 metres in height do require demolition by a licensed contractor.

When cleaning up your property, make sure you:

- moisten ash with water to minimise dust and keep it damp, but do not use high pressure water sprays.
- don't spread ash around your property, particularly if asbestos materials were used in your home or other structures, or CCA-treated timber was burnt.
- don't bury building rubble as it may contain hazardous materials.

Asbestos

Any structure built before 1987 is likely to have Asbestos Containing Materials (ACM). If in doubt, it's safest to assume asbestos is present unless you have confirmation in an Asbestos Assessment Report.

You must have an appropriately licensed contractor remove asbestos materials. A list of licensed asbestos removalists can be found on the SafeWork NSW website: safework.nsw.gov.au/asbestos-and-demolition-licence-holders.

Talk to your insurance company to see if asbestos remediation is covered by your policy, and whether they organise demolition and or removal. If so, request a copy of the site clearance certificate. If not, you will need to engage a qualified specialist who is licensed to remove asbestos.

If asbestos is present, after the clean up works you will need an Asbestos Assessment Report or an Asbestos Clearance Report. This document is required before you can rebuild.

Fire retardant

The NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) drops coloured fire suppressant retardants and gels from aircraft during firefighting operations to help slow the spread of a fire. These retardants are not hazardous. But there are some precautions that you need to take.

For more information about what to do if these suppressants have been used on your property, please read the fact sheet: [emergency.nsw.gov.au/Documents/factsheets/using-fire-retardants.pdf](https://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Documents/factsheets/using-fire-retardants.pdf)

Trees and vegetation

Trees and vegetation are protected under legislation and planning policies.

In an emergency you can remove trees if it is necessary to protect human life and property from imminent danger from a bush fire burning in the vicinity. Where possible, you should keep evidence that demonstrates why the tree removal was necessary, such as photographs or video footage, or a written opinion from an arborist before removing the tree.

If you feel that trees on your neighbour's property pose a bush fire risk to your property, you can contact the RFS and request they make an assessment of the neighbour's property and if necessary, issue a bushfire hazard reduction notice to that property owner.

10/50 vegetation clearing

The 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Scheme gives people living near the bush an additional way of being better prepared for bush fires. The scheme allows people in a designated area to:

- Clear trees on their property within 10 metres of a home, without seeking approval; and
- Clear underlying vegetation such as shrubs (but not trees) on their property within 50 metres of a home, without seeking approval.

Check if your property is in a 10/50 Vegetation Area: [rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/1050-vegetation-clearing/tool](https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/1050-vegetation-clearing/tool)

The 10/50 scheme is supported by the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Code of Practice: [rfs.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/18453/1050-Vegetation-Clearing-Code-of-Practice.pdf](https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/18453/1050-Vegetation-Clearing-Code-of-Practice.pdf)

Disposing of waste and debris

Waste disposal declaration form

You must present a completed 'Waste Disposal Declaration form' when you arrive at any facility, with your waste. If you don't, the facility may not accept your waste or you may be charged full fees, in addition to the Waste and Environment Levy. A copy of this form is included with these FAQs, and is also available online: [bmcc.nsw.gov.au/recovery](https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/recovery)

Waste generated as a result of a bush fire needs to go to a lawful facility, no matter who is transporting it, to ensure soil, water and human health is protected. A list of where to take your waste is below. You must keep proof of the 'lawful disposal' – that means you need the receipt or a copy of the receipt. If a contractor is used, you'll need to request that they provide you with a copy.

Types of waste after a fire

Waste resulting from a fire is called fire damaged debris. There are 4 types of fire damaged debris, and where your waste can go will depend on the type of waste it is. There are four categories of waste:

- **Minor site clean-up waste (uncontaminated property)**

Fire damaged debris where significant structural damage has not occurred to the residence on a property, but there is damage to other things on the property like trees, plants, landscaping, fences, sheds, vehicles, etc. Minor site clean-up can be typically undertaken without the need for specialist equipment or personnel and the resulting quantities of waste can usually be transported by ute, trailer, small truck or skip bin. Minor site clean-up waste is from sites confirmed not to contain ACM.

- **Bulk uncontaminated waste**

Fire damaged debris (that is not contaminated with ACM) where significant structural damage has occurred to the residence on a property that requires partial or total demolition of the structure. Bulk uncontaminated waste also includes any additional uncontaminated items damaged by fire on the property (e.g. trees, plants, landscaping, fences, sheds, vehicles, etc.).

- **ACM contaminated waste**

Fire damaged debris that has been identified by visual assessment only as potentially contaminated

with ACM. Fire damaged debris identified as being potentially contaminated with ACM is deemed to be contaminated with ACM, unless confirmed otherwise by an occupational hygienist or, in the case of friable asbestos, a licensed asbestos assessor. This means that there is no need for forensic testing to confirm the presence of asbestos in situations where there is a high likelihood that the fire damaged debris is indeed contaminated with ACM.

• **Non-ACM hazardous waste**

Any other hazardous items that may be present in fire damaged debris such as unvented gas bottles, pesticides, petrol, oils, lead acid batteries, pool chemicals, paint, unidentifiable chemicals etc. Non-ACM contaminated waste will almost always be discrete items as opposed to bulk quantities of waste.

Transport and delivering waste

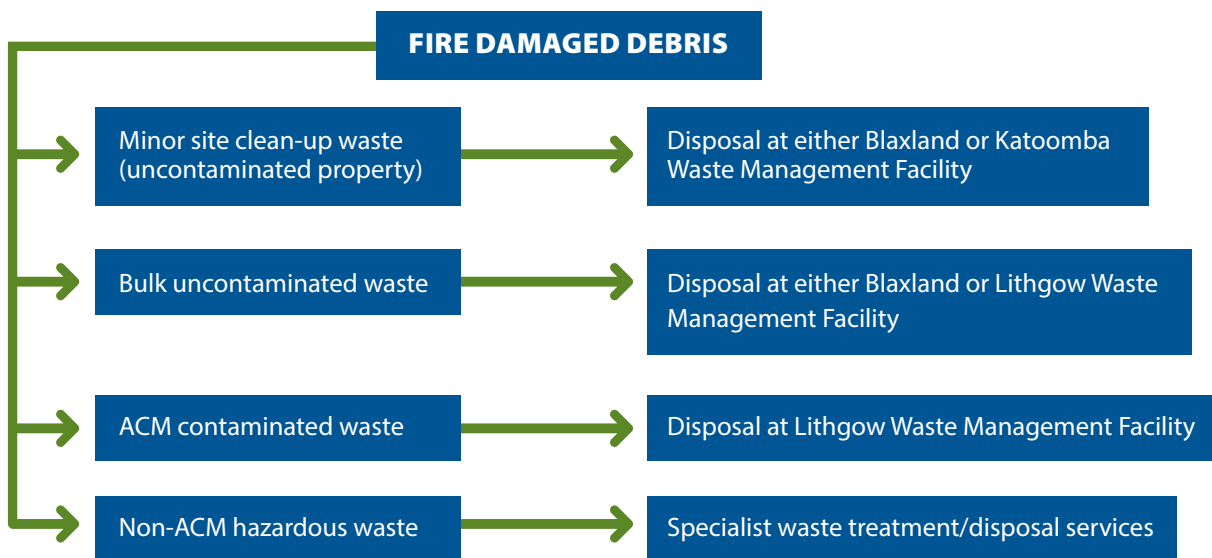
All wastes from fire damage debris must be transported lawfully. That means you must:

- secure the load so it is not able to fall off the vehicle transporting it
- cover the load to prevent waste blowing out of the vehicle transporting it (e.g. with a tarpaulin or retractable cover or similar)
- take it to a facility that can lawfully receive it

You don't need to let the facility know you're coming if you have uncontaminated waste, at both the Blaxland and Katoomba Waste Management Facilities.

If you have ACM contaminated waste, you must contact the Lithgow Waste Management Facility at least 24 hours before you arrive, to let them know you'll be bringing ACM contaminated waste from a bush fire. If you don't do this, they may not accept the waste when you arrive.

Where to dispose of your waste



<p>Blaxland Waste Management Facility (02) 4723 5000</p> <p>Attunga Road, Blaxland NSW Open 7 days a week 8am to 4.45pm</p>	<p>Katoomba Waste Management Facility (02) 4780 5000</p> <p>49 Woodlands Road, Katoomba NSW Open 7 days a week 8am to 4.45pm</p>	<p>Lithgow Waste Management Facility (02) 6351 2486</p> <p>Geordie Street, Lithgow NSW Open 7 days a week 8am to 5pm</p>
<p>Note: Blue Mountains residents can only take green waste to the Blaxland and Katoomba Waste Management Facilities.</p>		

Financial assistance

NSW and Australian Government

A range of financial assistance is available for people and families impacted by the bush fires:

- NSW Government: [emergency.nsw.gov.au/Pages/for-the-community/disaster-assistance/disaster-assistance-for-individuals.aspx](https://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Pages/for-the-community/disaster-assistance/disaster-assistance-for-individuals.aspx)
- Federal Government: [humanservices.gov.au/individuals/subjects/nsw-bushfires-september-2019](https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/subjects/nsw-bushfires-september-2019)

Relief funds and services

- Mayoral Relief Fund – assisting local Blue Mountains residents. Contact Council on 4780 5000
- Thrive Services – 4782 1555
Subsidised food parcels, donated fresh food, assistance with utility bills.
- Salvation Army emergency relief team – 1300 371 288
- Red Cross disaster recovery and relief – 1800 268 772
- St Vincent de Paul Society Bushfire Appeal – 13 18 12

Rates assistance

Council can offer some assistance with rates payments, including extended instalment payment plans for ratepayers and a reduction Domestic Waste Management Charge (included in your rates notice).

Call Council on 4780 5000 and ask to speak to the Revenue team.

Other assistance is available for small businesses, pensioners and RFS volunteers. Find out more on our website: [bmcc.nsw.gov.au/recovery](https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/recovery)

Council is required to collect rates under the Local Government Act 1993, which does not allow us to waive rates and charges.

Rebuilding

Development Application fees waived

Council will waive development application fees for those whose homes have been lost or rendered uninhabitable in the current bush fire emergency including: pre-lodgement advice, development application fees, tree removal fees, Roads Act applications fees, pool inspection fees, relief on-site sewage systems and developer contributions.

Rebuilding

Depending on the age of the building we may have a copy of the existing plans. You may however take the opportunity to redesign structures. Current building codes will apply and often this means that buildings in bushfire prone areas will need additional measures in place.

Before you start to talk to building designers, take advantage of a free advisory service offered to fire affected properties. Bookings can be made with Council on 4780 5000.

Detailed information on the design and construction process, and information about living on site during a rebuild, is available on Council's website:

[bmcc.nsw.gov.au/recovery](https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au/recovery)

Katoomba Office

2 Civic Place, Katoomba
Open 8.30am - 5pm weekdays
Phone: 02 4780 5000

Springwood Office

104 Macquarie Road, Springwood
Open 9am - 5pm weekdays
Phone: 02 4723 5000

Locked Bag 1005 Katoomba NSW 2780
Email council@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

[bmcc.nsw.gov.au](https://www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au)