There are potential dangers involved with cleanup operations following the devastation caused by wildfires.

If you are involved in cleanup efforts you may be exposed to ash, soot and fire decomposition products that may cause irritation and other respiratory effects. Any ash will contain small amounts of cancer-causing chemicals.

A high efficiency particulate air (HEPA)-type vacuum is recommended when cleaning surfaces contaminated with dust. A typical household vacuum should be avoided. It will re-circulate the collected dust back into the air.

**Potential Dangers During Cleanup**

- Fire
- Electrical hazards
  - Electric shock
  - Burns
  - Falls
  - Electrocuton
- Carbon monoxide
- Musculoskeletal hazards
- Heavy equipment
- Thermal stresses
- Unstable structures
- Hazardous materials
- Confined spaces

**STRESS AND FATIGUE**

Continued long hours of work, stress, and fatigue may increase the risk of injury and illness. These combined with emotional and physical exhaustion can create a highly stressful situation for cleanup workers.

**Working Near Power Lines**

Workers must take extreme caution while attempting to restore power or clear areas near downed power lines. Electrical or traumatic injuries could happen as power lines are reenergized and equipment is turned on.

Be aware of possible fire damage to poles and other structures carrying overhead power lines.
People working in all phases of cleanup work can reduce their risks of injury and illness in several ways.

Cleanup crews must work together and look out for one another to ensure safety.

- Set priorities for cleanup tasks and pace the work over several days (or weeks).
- Take frequent rest breaks BEFORE exhaustion builds up. Avoid physical exhaustion.
- Resume a normal sleep schedule as quickly as possible.
- Be alert to emotional exhaustion or strain.

**Safety First!**

**Fire**

At least two fire extinguishers*, each with a UL rating of at least 10A, should be provided at every cleanup activity.

**Electrical Hazards**

Only trained professionals, such as electricians and utility provider workers, should deal with electrical problems.

**Carbon Monoxide**

Never use gasoline- or diesel-powered pumps, generators, and pressure washers indoors.

These machines give off carbon monoxide (a deadly, colorless, odorless gas).

**Musculoskeletal Hazards**

Use teams of two or more to move bulky objects.

Avoid lifting any material that weighs more than 50 pounds (per person). Use proper automated-assist lifting devices.

**Heavy Equipment**

Only those properly trained should operate heavy equipment.

Make sure you turn it off and block it against motion when not in use.

**Thermal Stress**

Reduce the potential for heat stress.

- Drink a glass of fluid every 15 to 20 minutes
- Wear light-colored, loose-fitting clothing
- Divide workload evenly throughout the day

**Unstable Structures**

Assume all stairs, sidewalks, parking lots, roads, and roofs are unsafe. These may have structural damage and can be dangerous.

**Hazardous Materials**

Do not attempt to move unidentified dislodged containers without first contacting the local fire department or hazardous materials team.

**Confined Spaces**

Never enter a confined space unless you have been properly trained, even to rescue a fellow worker.

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*Fire Extinguishers*

UL stands for Underwriters Laboratories, Inc.

The UL rating is broken down into Class A and Class B:C ratings.

The A rating is a water equivalency rating. Each A is equivalent to 1.25 gallons of water.

Using one 10A fire extinguisher would contain 12.5 gallons of water to put out ordinary combustibles, such as wood and paper.

Additional information can be found on the NIOSH website: [www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/firefighting](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/firefighting)

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