

Rebuilding After a Fire: Frequently Asked Questions

Date: 2.15.2025
To: Ask an Architect Volunteers
From: AIA PF
Re: Eaton Fire – Rebuilding
Altadena

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01 INSURANCE & FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

How does my insurance impact my rebuilding options?

- Your policy may dictate coverage limits, rebuild cost reimbursements, and upgrade allowances.
- It is important you get a certified copy of your full policy, read it, and understand all your insurance limits and that you get the most that is available for you.
- **United Policyholders** is a free public resource for insurance questions.
- **The California Department of Insurance** has a direct hotline at 1-800-927-4357 for Wildfire Victims who are encountering issues navigating insurance or insurance companies are not cooperating.

What if my insurance payout isn't enough to cover rebuilding costs?

- Attempt to negotiate a higher settlement with your insurance company based on the additional costs you are facing.
- A **public adjuster** is a professional who can work on your behalf to review your claim, negotiate with the insurance company, and potentially help you secure a better settlement. Obtain

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proposals from several public adjusters before committing to one.

- Consider speaking to an Attorney experienced in Fire Insurance for additional support – they can help review your policy, challenge denied or underpaid claims, explore legal action if insurance is acting in bad faith. Obtain fee agreements from several attorneys before committing to one.
- If you have maxed out your insurance policy, you may qualify for disaster assistance programs, grants, or **low-interest loans** to supplement your rebuilding budget.
- Yes, FEMA, **HUD**, and local/state recovery programs offer financial aid.

Are there grants, tax credits, or assistance programs for fire victims rebuilding?

As of 02/06/2025 (This assistance is designed to help cover costs not covered by insurance):

- There are several FEMA Individual Assistance Grants available.
 - People with insurance may receive an initial “not approved” decision. FEMA assistance may still be available. Even if your FEMA letter says you are not eligible to receive assistance due to your insurance coverage, you may still be able to receive financial assistance. FEMA may need your insurance determination to be finalized in order to continue processing your application to make sure you are not receiving financial aid for the same damage twice. By law, FEMA cannot pay for costs related to the wildfires that your insurance already covers.

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- **FEMA Application Deadline for the California Wildfires and Straight-Line Winds:** March 10, 2025
- **Small Business Administration Loans for Homeowners and Renters**
 - Homeowners: up to \$500,000 to repair or replace real estate damage and up to \$100,000 to replace personal property.
 - Renters: up to \$100,000 to repair or replace personal property.
- You can apply online or in person.
- Work with a contractor or architect to get a detailed cost estimate based on current materials and labor rates.
- Cost estimates will also be required for certain grant applications.
- Here is a template for an **Owners Residential Construction Budget** that includes both soft costs and hard costs categories that property owners can fill in with input from architects, contractors and other rebuild team members.

How can I estimate the cost of rebuilding my home?

02 DEBRIS REMOVAL

How do I determine the historic boundaries of the structure(s) on my property?

If property owners do not have a drawing record of the structure(s) prior to the fire, it is recommended they obtain a survey of the existing foundation(s) if possible before debris removal commences. This information will be helpful when applying for an expedited permit for like-for-like replacement and for insurance claims. If the debris removal occurred prior to a survey, there are other ways to document the prior structure boundaries – Google Maps, Google Street View, digital photographs, County Assessor Maps, and **Sanborn Maps** for older homes.

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What is the status of
Phase I debris removal?

You can look up the status on the **US EPA Progress** website by home address.

What is Phase II debris
removal?

Once Phase I has been completed by EPA, the **balance of general fire debris removal** (i.e. recyclable metals, **hazardous trees**, fire ash and debris removed off foundation, up to 6-inches of soil around foundation, etc.) can commence.

What are my options for
Phase II debris removal,
and what does it cost?

Option 1:

Enroll in the government-managed and funded program (**Owner must submit Right of Entry "ROE" form providing US Army Corp of Engineering legal authority for entry** – beginning 01/28/25. **Deadline 03/31/25**)

- Once you opt out, application is approved, your permit is issued, and any work is begun on your property, you cannot opt back in. You will bear the full cost of debris removal and disposal.
- No cost to homeowner.

USACOE will remove debris on your property with the exception of pools, retaining walls, driveways and decks. If the deck is connected to your foundation, they will sawcut it.

Option 2:

Manage cleanup **independently through a private Licensed Contractor** (Requires Permit from LA County)

- Prior to deciding to proceed with Option 1 or 2, determine if the existing foundation (concrete pad, footings, etc.) can remain.

Due to compliance with local regulations, obtaining necessary permits, and bearing the full cost of the cleanup, specific costs can vary widely based on factors such as property size, amount of debris, and

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location. Some estimates suggest that debris removal after a fire can average around \$50,000-\$175,000. It is important to obtain multiple bids prior to making any decisions.

03 STRUCTURAL & SAFETY CONCERNS

How do I determine if my foundation is still usable after the fire?

- **SEAOC Foundation Reuse Guide**
- LA County Policy - **Concrete Slabs and Foundations Damaged by the Fires**
- Intense heat and fire can render a foundation unusable, or impractical for re-use in several ways.
- Foundations:
 - “Shallow” – Raised foundation, Slab on Grade, etc.
 - “Deep” – Pile, caissons, etc.
- If the existing structure's foundation is deemed by a design professional (licensed civil engineer, structural engineer, or architect) to have suffered minimal fire damage, the existing foundation may be utilized in newly proposed construction, as long as:
 - It meets current building code requirements. The design professional shall verify that all under-slab utility systems (such as drain, waste, vent, water, mechanical, electrical, etc.) are suitable for continued use.
 - Electrical conduits may remain, but all under-slab electrical conductors must be replaced.
- Applicants who choose to demolish the slab/foundation system will need to provide a compaction report to address re-compaction of the lot after slab removal if soil was disturbed to a depth

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greater than 12 inches. A licensed geotechnical or civil engineer must prepare the compaction report.

What steps should I take before demolition begins?

Document damage for insurance and permit purposes.

My house did not burn entirely, can I rebuild using my existing remaining walls, or do they need to be replaced?

This depends on the extent of the damage. A professional assessment is necessary to determine if the walls are structurally sound.

My house did not burn entirely, how do I assess the fire damage to my home?

- Hire a licensed public adjuster and/or remediation company to inspect and evaluate the damage to your property.
- Confirm if the smell of smoke lingers in the home. The smoke may have penetrated attic and wall insulation and other permeable soft materials such as carpeting, clothing and bedding. In the case of insulation, they will need to be replaced. A professional cleaning company can confirm whether cleaning is possible for home goods.

My house did not burn, and I want to move home. What steps do I take to protect myself from airborne toxic materials from debris removal in adjacent lots?

- County Public Health website recommends certain boundaries.
- An environmental company can test the building materials and soil on your property for toxicity. Building materials are tested for asbestos and lead and soil is tested for arsenic, mercury and lead. If your home is safe to reinhabit, but you are concerned about general toxicity in the neighborhood, it is advised to wear a mask when outdoors, keep your windows closed, use air filtration systems in the home, and regularly clean all surfaces.

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My house burned but my fireplace is still standing. Do I need to demolish the fireplace?

- Intense heat and fire can weaken materials even if they appear intact.
- USACOE has indicated that for Altadena, the vast majority of the chimneys have been compromised. The fire has affected the chemical composition of the mortar, and the chimneys are deemed not structurally sound. Most of the chimneys are leaning and are posing a life and safety issue for the public, they are being considered a public health threat. As such, they will be removed/taken.
- Similar with foundations, hiring a licensed structural engineer and/or fireplace inspection to inspect the structural integrity is highly recommended to determine its useability:
 - Cracks or Shifts – Fire can cause expansion and contraction, leading to instability
 - Weakened Mortar or Brick – High heat can make masonry brittle
 - Chimney Liner Damage – The inner lining may be cracked, which can be a fire hazard
 - Foundation Integrity – If the fire compromised the foundation, the fireplace may not be stable

04 BUILDING CODES & REGULATIONS

(LA COUNTY PUBLIC WORKS + Altadena DRC)

What new fire codes and building regulations do I need to follow?

Local and state building codes may have updated fire-resistant construction requirements, such as defensible space and ember-resistant vents.

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Are there special requirements for fire-resistant construction in my area?

- Check with your local building department or state fire marshal for Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI)/ Very High Fire Hazard Zones (VHFHZ) building standards (**Chapter 7A Building Code**).
- Map expanding VHFHZ in Altadena will be released in March 2025.

Do I need a permit to rebuild, even if I'm keeping the same footprint?

Yes, a permit is required for any reconstruction, even if rebuilding on the same footprint.

Will the new structure have to comply with the current building code?

Yes, all new construction, repair work, and remodeling must meet the current requirements of the LA County Building Code.

How do I navigate zoning laws that may have changed since my home was built?

Consult with a local architect to ensure compliance with current zoning regulations

I want to replace my house like-for-like with the 110% maximum square footage allowance. If I also put a new ADU in the permit application, can I still obtain expedited plan check?

It is likely any new square footage exceeding 110% of the pre-fire permitted square footage will not benefit from the expedited plan check process, but this may be handled on a case by case basis by the planning and building departments.

Will we be required to put solar panels per the Code that went into effect January 1, 2025?

- The L.A. County Board of Supervisors has voted to request that the state temporarily suspend certain building regulations in wildfire-affected areas, aiming to streamline the rebuilding process and expedite the return of residents by reducing bureaucratic hurdles.
- The Current Executive Order issued by the Governor suspended CEQA and Coastal Commission Reviews.

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Does anyone know if the City of Los Angeles or Pasadena offer any assistance with the property lines that may have been blurred with the fires, or is the burden of the survey costs on each individual homeowner?

- At the very least, buildings must be "solar-ready."
- LA County indicated they are working with Public Works to potentially have a Contractor come in and reset the survey monuments on a community scale effort.
- Once this effort is complete, property owners will need to hire a surveyor to obtain a new boundary survey with utility locations.
- Planning Dept will issue a single Certificate of Compliance, to ensure parcels are properly subdivided.

What are non-conforming lots and how does this affect my rebuild? Does this affect window placement and increases to my square footage?

Planning Department is working on ensure the parcels are properly subdivided. Newer subdivisions, or private streets, may require more work to ensure lot was created in accordance with the state subdivision map act. This process will be done at a community scale.

Can I live in my trailer on my property while rebuilding my house that was destroyed by the fire?

Per LA County **Road to Rebuilding After the Fire:**

- Yes, provided that other agencies, such as the LA County Department of Regional Planning, approve the trailer and all proper permits are obtained for utility connections.
- If the property uses a septic system for wastewater disposal, the appropriate Environmental Health agency must approve the condition of the existing septic system prior to connection of the trailer.

How will the County determine the amount of square footage that was on my Property?

When determining square footage, LA County Public Works Building and Safety staff will rely on building permit records to determine what was permitted in the past. If there is a discrepancy between the

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Will I still receive expedited plan check review if I rebuild my house with an area greater than 10%?

permitted square footage and what existed on the property just prior to the fire, LA County Public Works Building and Safety will review LA County Assessor's Office record information.

Per LA County **Road to Rebuilding After the Fire:**

- Applications for repair or rebuilding to the same structure and size (with an additional **area not larger than 10%**) will be qualified to receive expedited plan check.
- Plans that increase the square footage more than 10%, will not be "expedited", but special consideration will be given to those properties needing to rebuild and can be submitted as part of the LA County One-Stop Rebuilding dedicated process.

Will I need to pay school fees when I rebuild my home?

School District approval will be required prior to rebuilding your home. If your proposed new construction exceeds the existing permitted square footage, school fees may be applicable. To confirm, please contact your applicable school district. You may use the **Service Locator** to determine the school district.

Will I be allowed to rebuild any structure(s) or portion thereof that was not originally constructed with a valid permit?

Per LA County **Road to Rebuilding After the Fire:**

Consideration of an un-permitted structure will be handled on a case-by-case basis. The rebuilding of previously un-permitted structures or portions thereof may require the submittal of additional documentation and the approval of other permitting agencies.

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If illegal grading existed on the property, will the Owner be responsible for clearing the violation prior to obtaining a permit to rebuild the structure?

Yes, violations recorded against the property must be addressed prior to issuance of additional permits.

If I am able to reuse my existing foundation, will it need to meet the slope setback requirements set forth in the LA County Building Code?

Yes, the existing foundation may be utilized so long as it meets all building code requirements; that includes slope setback requirements. However, reduced slope setbacks may be recommended by a Soils Engineer and may be approved subject to the Building Official's review.

Typically before you can get permits approved to build, you need to have a will serve letter from the local water company. Can the local planners coordinate with the water companies to streamline that process on a block-by-block basis as opposed to on individual parcels?

- Local planners and water companies can coordinate on a block-by-block basis to streamline the Will Serve Letter process, especially in a post-fire rebuilding effort. While it's typically done per parcel, there are ways to accelerate approvals for entire neighborhoods
 - Group Applications by Neighborhood – Instead of each homeowner applying separately, the county could work with the water company to assess infrastructure needs for entire blocks and issue batch approvals.
 - Automatic Reissuance of Will Serve Letters – If properties had water service before the fire, the utility might automatically reissue Will Serve Letters to past customers without requiring a full new review. Contact your local planning department and utility provider.
 - Engage in Community-Led Rebuilding Efforts – If multiple homeowners in your area are rebuilding, working together to

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request block-wide approval could
increase efficiency.

05 CHOOSING PROFESSIONALS & CONTRACTORS

Do I need an architect for my rebuilding, or can I use a contractor directly?

- If making significant design changes, it is recommended to work with an architect for a holistic approach, guiding you through the process from design to move-in
- Regardless of who you choose to work with, it is recommended to always hire licensed professionals whose credentials can be confirmed on the State of California Department of Consumer Affairs website.
- **AIAPF Directory**
- California Architects Board – **Consumer's Guide to Hiring an Architect**

How soon can I start the design process?

- You can start the design process for rebuilding your home immediately, but the physical rebuilding timeline depends on several factors, including debris removal, insurance, permitting, and contractor availability.
- You must also obtain a debris removal clearance.

What should I look for when hiring an architect or contractor?

Verify licenses, insurance, references, a complete written proposal with invoicing terms, and experience with fire-resistant construction.

Should I join a group rebuild with my neighborhood?

- It is recommended to talk with neighbors and organize as a community to confirm what architects, contractors and vendors are being hired. This will make finding a trustworthy building team easier as a

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whole and potentially strengthen collective negotiating power.

- Group construction can help reduce overhead costs for the Contractor, in addition:
 - Bulk Material Discounts – Ordering materials in larger quantities (wood, concrete, bricks, etc.) can lead to bulk pricing from suppliers, reducing individual costs
 - Efficient Construction Scheduling – Contractors can optimize workflow, reducing downtime between tasks like framing, plumbing, and electrical work, also saving on travel, setup, and coordination
 - Shared Resources – Equipment like cranes, scaffolding, and dumpsters can be used across multiple sites, reducing rental costs.

What project delivery options do I have for rebuilding?

Explain the various delivery methods:

- Design-Bid Build. A homeowner can hire an architect or structural engineer to complete the permit plans and then the homeowner can use the plans to obtain bids from contractors.
- Design-Build. Some contractors directly hire architects or engineers and collaborate on the creation of the permit drawings.

Will a Design-Build company expedite rebuilding my home?

- Design-Build allows construction to begin while parts of the design are still being finalized.
- Reduced Bid & Contractor Selection Time
- Potential Limitations:

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- If you want a highly customized or intricate design, the speed benefit may be reduced.
- Limited Owner Control Over Design
- Potential for Conflict of Interests (Architect + Contractor are same entity)
- Less competitive Bidding
- Higher Risk for the Owner if Scope Changes
- Quality Control Challenges
- Not Ideal for Complex or High-Design Projects

What deposit should I give a Contractor so that I can be at the top of their list?

- Contractors installing residential solar, constructing accessory dwelling units (ADUs), performing home improvement work, or rebuilding homes in declared disaster areas (including new home rebuilding) **shall not receive a down payment of more than \$1,000**, or 10 percent of the contract price, whichever is less.

- **A Consumer Guide to Home Improvement Contracts**

What kind of Contract should I enter with the Contractor?

- Strongly recommend an AIA format and include the A201 General Conditions for Owner Protection: **Purchase AIA Contracts here.**
- Emphasize having an Attorney review Contractor's Agreement.
- Contractor Compensation:
 - Lump Sum (Fixed Fee) – Contractor agrees to complete the project for a fixed total price.
 - Cost plus fixed Fee – Owner reimburses the contractor for actual

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	costs incurred plus a pre-agreed fee (percentage or fixed amount)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Guaranteed Maximum Price – Contractor may be conservative with estimates, leading to higher initial pricing○ Time & Materials – not recommended. No incentive for efficiency; costs can escalate.
How many Contractors should I interview?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recommend interviewing and receiving complete bids (with detailed pricing and any exclusions and clarifications) from at least 3 contractors to form a basis for comparison.• If electing to proceed with a traditional design-bid-build, an Architect can assist you in reviewing the Bids and see that the Contractor understood your requirements in the design.
Where do I find a reputable Contractor?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CSLB• Obtain recommendations from neighbors and friends in the area for contractors who have done least a few projects like yours.
How do I make sure my contractor follows fire-resistant building practices?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specify fire-resistant materials in your contract and request compliance with WUI and local fire codes.• An Architect can help you through the Construction process to ensure the Contractor follows the drawings and specifications.
Are there pre-approved plans available that meet fire-resistant standards?	Some municipalities offer pre-approved WUI-compliant home designs that expedite permitting. Los Angeles County has adopted some <u>pre-approved plans</u> .

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How much do Architectural Services cost? Do I also need Structural, Mechanical, Electrical, and Plumbing Engineers?

Services can vary depending on the complexity of the project, level of involvement by the architect and engineers, and other factors. The best way to confirm if an architect's fees are reasonable is to obtain at least three proposals and compare them. An architect can confirm what engineered drawings need to be involved to pull permits.

I don't want an architectural gem, I just need a house, a home. How can I reduce soft costs because I am also underinsured.

There are individuals spearheading volunteer services and pro-bono work however they are still in progress and cannot guarantee availability at this time.

- **Help Draw Together** is gathering a group of volunteer architects to provide pro bono services to those affected.
- **Foothill Catalog** is looking to provide a collection of pre-approved home designs retaining the local architectural character of the neighborhood
- There is a cost to having an architect involved, but there is a trade off if you don't hire one and your vision is not executed during construction. Reference guide to why to hire an architect.

How soon should an architect or contractor be contacted and do you have to have both? Since most of us are under insured, I would like to know about ways to design a building that would make it more cost effective to build?

It's best to contact an architect or contractor as early as possible, ideally when you first start planning your project. Whether you need both depends on the complexity of your build.

- Architects help with design, layout, functionality, and meeting codes. They're best for complex or custom projects.
- Contractors focus on the actual construction. A design-build contractor can handle both design and construction, which can streamline the process and save money.

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To make your building more cost-effective, consider:

- Simplified Design – Avoid complex shapes and unnecessary details.
- Efficient Materials – Use cost-effective, durable materials like prefab components.
- Energy Efficiency – Design with natural lighting, proper insulation, and passive solar heating to save on long-term costs.
- Modular or Prefabricated Elements – Prefab sections can reduce labor costs and construction time.
- Multi-Purpose Spaces – Reduce square footage by designing rooms for multiple uses.
- Straightforward Rooflines – Simple roofs (like gable or shed styles) are cheaper to build than complex designs.
- Standard Sizing – Designing around standard material sizes minimizes waste and custom cutting costs.

06 DESIGN & PLANNING

Can I redesign my home, or do I have to rebuild it exactly as it was?

You can redesign your home as long as it complies with current building codes and zoning regulations.

What are the best fire-resistant materials and designs for my new home?

Use non-combustible siding, fire-resistant roofing, dual-pane windows, and defensible landscaping to reduce fire risk.

What are cost effective fire hardening techniques everyone should consider?

There are many different options. On the cost-effective side, one can replace wood siding and roofing materials with composite materials. On the more expensive side, non-combustible construction is an option. There

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are different cost, aesthetic and logistics considerations with all options. We recommend reviewing the following resources and discussing fire hardening options with an architect and contractor simultaneously.

- [USGBC Wildfire Defense Education](#)
- [Fire Marin Hardening](#)
- [USGBC Wildfire Defense Rebuilding Support](#)

What is an expensive fire hardening technique but worth it for safety?

See resources above.

How can I incorporate defensible space and fire-smart landscaping?

Maintain a 30-100 ft defensible space, use fire-resistant plants, and keep vegetation well-trimmed and away from structures.

What are the benefits of building a fire-resistant home vs. a traditional one?

Fire-resistant homes offer increased safety, lower insurance costs, and better resilience against future wildfires.

Are there specific materials that are more fire-resistant for rebuilding?

Yes, fire-resistant materials include concrete, brick, plaster, adobe, fire-rated drywall, metal roofing, and tempered glass.

My home was a designated historic property, what are my options?

- It is understood currently that any rebuild matching the original historic attributes of a completely burned structure, regardless of whether it is designated historic, is totally voluntary. However, the AIAPF can support any property owner who wants to go this route by connecting them with experts in historic architecture.
- If there is an active Mills Act contract in place for a property, and the building was completely burned down in the fire, it is most likely the property owner's contract will be canceled. The [City of LA](#) has documentation (Refer to Section

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19.143 Paragraph 3) of this specific scenario, and we are working to confirm if the County of LA is aligned. It is recommended to consult with the **County of LA Planning Department**, and especially if your property was not a total loss.

- Check with California's Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) or local Altadena historic committees for guidance.
- Check with Los Angeles County Building & Safety and Altadena Heritage for guidance on restoring historically significant homes.
- There are Architects who specialize in Historical Preservation and would be an excellent resource to help homeowners navigate through this process.

I know I may potentially be in a high-fire hazard zone, but I want my house to look exactly like it did before, what are my options?

- Use Fire-Resistant Materials That Mimic Original Design
 - Roofing: If you had wood shingles, switch to Class A fire-rated composite shingles or metal that resemble wood.
 - Siding: Traditional wood siding can be replaced with fire-resistant fiber cement or treated wood.
 - Windows: Upgrade to dual pane tempered glass while keeping historical window designs.
 - Doors: Replace wooden doors with fire-rated solid-core or metal doors that maintain the same aesthetic.
 - Porches & Decks: Use non-combustible composite decking instead of traditional wood.

What documents do I need to have before I

- Proof of Phase II Debris Removal completion.

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can start my design process?

- Soils Report. Consult with a licensed geotechnical engineer who can perform the soils testing.
- Boundary Survey
- Information about prior building boundaries/dimensions if trying to rebuild under "fast-tracked" like-for-like process.
- **Estimated project budget.**

Will water and sewer lines that run from the street through the yard to the foundation be damaged by the debris removal?

- Heavy Equipment Damage – The weight and movement of machinery can crack or break pipes, especially if they are shallow
- Excavation & Grading – If workers dig into the ground to remove deep debris, they might accidentally hit the lines
- Heat Exposure from the Fire – If pipes were exposed to extreme heat, they may already be weakened or brittle, making them more vulnerable to damage.

Does the Building Department keep home plans on file for existing homes?

Typically, LA County Public Works Building and Safety does not keep plans for residential buildings on file. However, files may be available if a dwelling passed final inspection within the last 90 days or if it was part of a developer-built subdivision.

What should I do with my septic system while the house is being rebuilt?

To prevent the collapse of the septic tank, drain field, and seepage pits, it is recommended that you identify their locations using stakes and caution tape to prevent heavy equipment from driving over the areas.

What are SMART updates to homes that owners should consider if they want future proof (like POE, 23AWG)?

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My main structure was 600 square feet. Can I use a pre-approved ADU plan for a main single-family residence?

Yes. As long as the ADU plan meets the zoning and code requirements for a primary dwelling (ie. full bathroom, kitchen, minimum setbacks, etc.), it should be allowed. An architect can confirm whether a specific plan would comply with the requirements.

How might owners save money on the front-end of a rebuilding project?

Those with old septic tanks, can the septic tank be removed as toxic waste? Can sewers be constructed in those few pockets left in unincorporated areas so owners are not burdened with the cost of new septic tanks? And if we have a well-functioning septic system will it remain intact and undisturbed during debris removal?

- Septic tanks are not included in the removal by USACOE.
- Under consideration. The County is looking at the distribution of the septic tanks along with Public Health partners and looking at opportunities to expand the sewer system that could allow Owners to connect to the sewer system.
- Inquire as part of the rebuilding process if there is availability of local sewer system to make the connection.

Can more square footage be added by adding a story on the existing footprint?

This depends on local planning and zoning regulations, including height restrictions and setback requirements. Consulting with an architect is recommended to determine feasibility and ensure compliance with local codes.

How to Prepare a Scope of work to get a realistic bid from Contractors.

What is std electrical service these days?

200 amps for the primary dwelling is standard.

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07 ENERGY EFFICIENCY & SUSTAINABILITY

Are there incentives for making my home more energy-efficient?

Yes, rebates and tax credits are available for energy-efficient upgrades like solar panels, high-efficiency HVAC, and insulation.

What are the best fire-resistant and eco-friendly materials?

Plaster and adobe are the most eco-friendly and fire-resistant building materials.

Can I rebuild to meet net-zero energy standards?

Yes, incorporating solar power, passive design, and energy-efficient appliances can help achieve net-zero status.

What are the best insulation and ventilation choices for fire-prone areas?

Can greywater systems be done during the rebuild?

- Designing and installing a greywater system during reconstruction is much easier and more cost-effective than retrofitting one into an existing home, you will need to consult with a Landscape Architect or Greywater Irrigation Specialist
 - Building Codes & Permits – Greywater use is regulated in California under the state's plumbing code (Title 24), so proper permits may be needed
 - Soil & Plant Compatibility – Greywater is best suited for trees, shrubs, and other drought-tolerant plants rather than lawns or edible crops (unless using drip irrigation)
 - Soap & Detergent Choices – Only biodegradable, plant-friendly soaps should be used in a greywater system to prevent soil contamination.

08 ADDITIONAL RESOURCES <-CLICK HERE