

Managing Fire Debris and Ash to Protect Water Quality

Fire Debris and Ash

Fire debris and ash lying in the wake of an urban wildfire contains a suite of heavy metals and organic chemicals that are toxic to people and lethal to some aquatic wildlife. The post-fire materials are a hazardous concentration of contaminants that needs to be managed appropriately to protect human health and the environment, and the best way to provide that protection is to contain it where it is and safely collect it for appropriate disposal.

Containment Strategy

Stormwater runoff carrying ash and debris that enters the storm sewer will ultimately discharge contaminants to groundwater or the Spokane River. In order to minimize downstream impacts from polluted stormwater, compost filled filter tubes (wattles) and sandbags have been placed at key locations on properties that were devastated by the Old Trails wildfire. The wattles and sandbags act as containment barriers for the ash and debris until it is removed, and they will also serve to filter contaminants from the polluted runoff.



Property Access

The wattles and sandbags are not intended to prevent property access, but they should not be driven over. The wattles and sandbags can be temporarily moved so equipment and vehicles can get on the property, if necessary. They need to be **returned to their original positions** to keep the harmful materials onsite and remove contaminants from stormwater runoff.



Clean-up Activities

Moistening the fire debris and ash during clean-up activities can prevent the dangerous materials from becoming airborne. However, water should be used sparingly to avoid washing the materials offsite or into drains where it will harden and plug. As the last of the ash and debris is being removed from the property, the wattles and sandbags can be thrown in with the hazardous fire debris for disposal. ***Please notify the City if the wattles or sandbags become damaged to have them repaired or replaced, and/or when the property clean-up is complete to have them removed if they were not disposed of with the ash and debris.***

Contact Information

Please call the Wastewater Management Department at **509-625-7900** to make the requested notifications, for additional information, or if there are any questions or concerns.

