

# FAQs: Schools and Education Settings

March 17, 2025

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH



## Schools

### Does the Public Health Advisory for those residing near burned structures in Palisades and Eaton Areas apply to schools?

As officials work to clear affected areas for recovery and people return to their regular activities, Public Health reminds people about the dangers associated with fire debris within or near the Palisades and Eaton burn areas. Individuals in these areas may face an increased risk of exposure to hazardous substances from ash, soot, and fire debris before the completion of **Phase 1 (hazardous materials removal)** and **Phase 2 (fire debris removal)**. Exposure to these materials may lead to physical health symptoms (American Chemical Society, *EST Air*, 2025, 2, 13-23) and may pose long-term health impacts. Strong winds and weather fluctuations may **increase both the exposure risk and the affected distance**.

Public health guidance and the advisory are based on the fact that the closer you are to areas with fire debris that have not yet been removed, the higher the potential risk for exposure to ash, soot, and fire dust. Being aware of this can help you take the necessary steps to reduce this risk.

Schools that are reopened have been advised to work with remediation experts and take additional precautions to reduce exposures to fire debris that may be newly blown onto school properties. This includes:

- Regularly inspect and clean outdoor areas, playgrounds, and play/sport equipment to ensure prompt removal of any ash or debris that may accumulate.
- Maintaining air filtration systems with high-efficiency (MERV 13 or higher) and keeping window and doors closed as needed. Consider more frequent checking and as warranted, replacing of air filters.
- Monitoring weather, wind, and air quality conditions. Adjust outdoor activities accordingly. Keep children and staff indoors on days with strong winds or poor air quality.
- As needed, work closely with remediation experts, especially when considering conducting soil and other environmental testing.