



# Tetanus and First Aid Guidance

After a fire or flood, there is risk of injury as cleanup efforts begin. Tetanus is a concern for persons with both open and closed wounds, and a tetanus vaccination is recommended for all residents returning to the area and cleanup crews who have not had a documented dose within the past five years. Prompt first aid management for wounds and prevention of infection is another important consideration. If you receive a puncture wound or a wound contaminated with feces, soil, or saliva, a health care professional should determine if a tetanus booster is necessary, based on individual records.

## **Wound Care**

- Seek medical attention as soon as possible if:
- There is a foreign object embedded in the wound.
- The wound is at special risk of infection (such as a dog bite or a puncture by a dirty object).
- A previous wound shows signs of becoming infected (e.g. increased pain, heat, swelling, redness, draining, or fever).

## **Care for Minor Wounds**

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and clean water.
- Avoid touching the wound with your fingers while treating it.
- Remove obstructive jewelry and clothing from the injured area.
- Apply direct pressure to any bleeding wound to control bleeding.
- Clean the wound after bleeding has stopped.
- Examine wounds for dirt and foreign objects.
- Gently flood the wound with clean water, then gently clean around the wound with soap and water.
- Pat the wound dry and apply an adhesive bandage or dry clean cloth.

## **Other Considerations**

- Wounds in contact with soil and sand can become infected.
- Puncture wounds can carry bits of clothing and dirt into wounds and result in infection.
- Crush injuries are more likely to become infected than wounds from cuts.

The ash deposited by forest fires is relatively nontoxic and similar to ash that might be found in your fireplace. However, ash and debris from burned structures may contain toxic substances that can be harmful to human health and the environment because of the many synthetic and hazardous materials present in homes and buildings. In addition, older buildings have a greater potential of containing asbestos and lead.

Fire ash may irritate the skin, nose, and throat and can trigger asthmatic attacks or worsen other chronic respiratory disease symptoms. Those who suffer from heart and lung disease, children, and the elderly are more likely to be affected by ash inhalation.

To avoid possible health issues:

- Do not allow children to play in the ash. Wash ash from toys before allowing children to play with them.
- Wash ash off household pets.
- Wear gloves, long-sleeved shirts, and long pants when cleaning ash, and avoid skin contact. If ash does get on your skin, wash it off as soon as possible.
- Well-fitting dust masks may provide some protection during cleanup. See Section 5: “Respiratory Health and Mask Guidance” for more information.

Debris and ash should be handled in a way that will reduce your exposure to any potentially hazardous materials.

- To prevent drinking water and wastewater treatment system damage, the wellhead and septic system (including the soil treatment area) should be located and clearly marked prior to removal of debris. Once located, driving over the area or any other water/wastewater components should be avoided.
- To prevent groundwater contamination due to a damaged wellhead, it is recommended that ash and debris should not be removed until the wellhead is properly covered or protected. If you believe your wellhead has been damaged, a well industry professional assessment is recommended.
- Avoid circulating ash into the air as much as possible. Do not use shop vacuums, other non-HEPA filter vacuums, or air blowers.
- If you wet down ash, use as little water as possible. Avoid washing ash into storm drains whenever possible.
- Collected ash may be disposed of in the regular trash. Ash may be stored in plastic bags or other containers to help prevent it from being disturbed.
- In order to minimize dust, first wet then package debris inside a 6-mil plastic sheeting liner or 6-mil (thick plastic, puncture-resistant) sealed bag and cover during transportation to secure the contents.
- Soil under the area where the ash/debris was deposited should be scraped to ensure that all ash and building debris has been removed from the site.
- Before debris can be removed from the property, a demolition permit may be required from the Pikes Peak Regional Building Department based on the type of structure.