



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Health Effects of Ash and Dust Leaf Blowers Not Advised in Areas with Ash and Drying Mud

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. — The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department and Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District today reflect on continuing health effects of the ash that fell during the Thomas Fire and the health effects of dust from the drying mud of the Montecito mudslides.

The amount of ash that fell throughout the county during the Thomas Fire was unprecedented. Dry weather conditions are expected to continue, and any future windy conditions can stir up remaining ash and dust.

County residents and landscapers are encouraged to be good neighbors and not use leaf blowers if ash and drying mud are present, and especially in areas affected by the mudslides. Using leaf blowers stirs up ash and dust. Ash and dust are larger particles, but over time, they break down into smaller, more harmful particles that can lodge deep into the lungs and cause serious health effects; using leaf blowers contributes to the larger particles becoming smaller, hazardous particles.

Consider alternatives to leaf blowers. If ash or dust are present in your area, sweep gently with a broom before mopping; HEPA vacuums are also recommended. For mud cleanup tips, see: <http://countyofsb.org/asset.c/3809>.

The Air Pollution Control District has deployed a portable monitoring device in Montecito to measure the amount of those small particles (known as PM 2.5) in the air. The device will provide hourly readings of PM 2.5 and allow people to make informed decisions to protect their health. When data are available, data can be found at this webpage: www.ourair.org/todays-air-quality/.

Particle levels can vary greatly depending on location, wind conditions, and activities in the immediate area. If you are unusually sensitive to air pollution, be aware of your local air quality conditions and take precautions to minimize your exposure.

- Stay indoors.
- Keep indoor air as clean as possible by using a HEPA air filter.
- Wear an N95 mask if being outside during dust events is necessary, or when cleaning up ash or dry mud in your area. Distribution of N95 masks will begin in the Montecito area next week.
- Consult your doctor if you are experiencing symptoms.