



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS **FOR TEA FIRE SURVIVORS**

PLEASE NOTE: This information is being provided specifically for homeowners and property owners living within County (unincorporated) jurisdiction who were affected by the Tea Fire. Some of this information may be helpful to homeowners, property owners or residents within the jurisdiction of the City of Santa Barbara, but City residents need to check with and/or verify the information and procedures available for them directly with the City of Santa Barbara.

- ***My home was destroyed in the Tea Fire and I want to re-build. Where do I start?***

Your first step should be to contact your insurance agent as soon as possible and begin the insurance claims process. Insurance adjusters will typically want to visit the site to assess the amount of damage, so make sure your agent or company representative has visited the site before you remove any debris from the site. Any permits and plans you can provide to the adjuster will help determine what existed on the site prior to the fire. You may contact the State of California Department of Insurance at 1-800-927-4357 or at their website at www.insurance.ca.gov for additional tips on dealing with your insurance agent.

- ***Who do I contact to find out what I can or can't rebuild? Does the County have a copy of the original plans for my structure?***

A case manager has already been assigned to your property that will help guide you through the permit process in rebuilding your home. This person will have information on your parcel history, your permit history, and whether plans are available for your property. You may obtain the name of your case manager and their contact information by calling the Santa Barbara County Building and Safety Division Planning Counter at 805-568-2090 (see additional contact information below). Santa Barbara County has copies of building plans for many of the houses and other structures that were lost in the Tea Fire. If the plans exist, we will make copies for you. You may also obtain copies of any permits that have been issued for your property.

- ***My insurance agent has been to the site, inspected the damage, taken photos, and has given me the ok to clear the debris. Do I need a permit for that?***

Yes, a demolition permit is required in order to remove the debris from the property. This permit may be obtained from the Santa Barbara County Building and Safety Division Building Counter (see contact information below). The process has been expedited for all fire demolition. They will provide you with information to guide you through the process of clearing your site, finding a County-certified hauler for the waste, and protecting your property from erosion. If you want to haul the materials yourself, you need to obtain a solid waste permit from the Santa Barbara County Public Works Department (see contact information below).

- ***Do I need to pay fees for these permits?***

The payment of fees is being deferred by the County but will be required to be paid when building permits are obtained for reconstruction of your structures.

- ***Do my property taxes automatically get reassessed to adjust for the loss of improvements? Will they be reassessed at market value once I've completed the re-build?***

You must complete an application form (available from your project manager) and return it to the Santa Barbara County Clerk, Recorder, Assessors office (see contact information below) to have your property reassessed at a lower value during your re-build. You can also apply at that time to have your upcoming property tax payment deferred to a later date.

- ***Do I need to hire a professional to remove the debris from my property?***

Certainly you can perform your own site clean-up if you like, but keep the following in mind:

Don't remove the foundation. If you decide to remove the existing foundation, if at all possible, you should wait until the end of the rainy season to avoid destabilizing the ground.

Don't cut down non-burnt vegetation or remove root systems from dead vegetation until you are ready to replace it. This will help keep the soil stabilized.

Be aware of your surroundings. It is easy to trip over debris or slip on un-secure piles of debris. Watch for overhead hanging debris and be careful of the edge of slopes as they may be extra unstable now.

Use common sense. If an item is too heavy to lift, don't!

- ***Do I need to worry about asbestos during debris removal?***

Many older homes used materials that contain asbestos. Therefore, when cleaning up your property, treat all remains of structures as if they contain asbestos. Avoid stirring up the debris whenever possible and wear a mask. You can increase your safety by hiring a professional to clean up the site and dispose of the debris. All County certified haulers have been advised of disposal procedures.

- ***Do I need to worry about soil erosion on my property?***

Depending on the steepness of your property, installing erosion control measures once the debris has been cleared can be a very important and time-sensitive issue given that we are now in our normal rainy season. Measures such as slope drains, hydraulic mulch, geo-textiles and mats, fiber rolls, straw bale barriers and silt fences are among the list of measures that can be used to help control and prevent erosion control. Additional information regarding temporary erosion control measures may be obtained from the Santa Barbara County Building and Safety Division Building Counter (see contact information below).

- ***Can I use my existing access driveway/easement?***

We are encouraging people to contact the Montecito Fire Protection District (MFPD) as early as possible to determine if any improvements will be required for the access driveway in order to meet current MFPD standards. Your case manager will assist you in coordinating with the District. Call 969-7762 to schedule a site visit.

- ***Can I re-use my existing foundation?***

Under certain conditions, concrete slabs and footing may be re-used to rebuild on. However, because the heat of the fire may have compromised the strength of the concrete, you will need to have a testing agency perform certain tests and certify that the concrete slab and footings may be re-used.

- ***Can I re-use my existing septic system?***

It may be possible to re-use your existing septic system if the new house is substantially the same as the old house regarding the number of bedrooms and bathrooms. For this reason you should protect the existing system during site clean up and through-out the rebuilding process by identifying the location of the septic tank and leach field or drywells. For more information regarding septic systems please contact your case manager.

- ***My house was several years old and I'm sure that architectural plans no longer exist for it. I'm not even sure exactly how large it was in terms of area. How do I obtain this information?***

The County Clerk, Recorder and Assessor's office has historic information on your property which your case planner can use to determine what was on your property prior to the fire. You will need to sign a form allowing the release of this information. Contact your case manager for a copy of this form.

- ***I had several accessory structures that were destroyed on my property in addition to the house? Will I be able to replace these?***

Consult with your case manager with regard to replacement of accessory structures. These will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Structures that meet current zoning regulations will be allowed to be rebuilt.

- ***I have a set of plans from a few years ago when we remodeled our house. Will I be able to use these or have building codes changed since then?***

Previously drawn plans may be useful if they were prepared within the past few years, but only plans that have been drawn since January 1, 2008 can be used “as is”. State law requires that your home be rebuilt to comply with currently adopted codes. This means that even plans which were drawn within the past few years will need some work to be brought into compliance with current code.

- ***What will be the permit process to rebuild the same house? Will I need to go through design review?***

If you rebuild the same structure in the same location, this will be exempt from current zoning regulations, including design review, but will require a building permit that will be subject to current building codes. Slight increases in floor area and minor revisions to the building footprint may be able to be accommodated without requiring planning permits. You need to:

- 1) Bring in the plans you will be using to rebuild the structure to the Santa Barbara County Building and Safety Division Planning Counter.
- 2) Fill out an application for a building permit.
- 3) Give the application and plans to a planner working at the Planning Counter who will stamp the plans exempt.
- 4) Submit the application and plans to the building technician at the Building Counter who will take in the plans and route them to the appropriate person for review.

Your case manager will assist you in this process.

- ***Suppose I want to build a different house?***

If you plan to build a substantially different structure (e.g., increase the floor area, add an additional story, or build the house in a different location) then the normal planning permit process including design review will be required, as will a building permit that meets current building codes.

- ***I'm concerned about how long this is all going to take. Can the County do anything to speed up the process?***

The County will expedite the process for all required permits. Once you have met with your case manager and you have decided how you want to proceed, your designer should be able to proceed with preparing your building plans. Once your case manager has conceptually approved your drawings, and assuming your building plans are to current code, you will be able to submit for both your land use permit and building permit at the same time so that they are processed concurrently.

- ***Can I hire someone to obtain these permits for me?***

Yes, you can certainly hire an agent, architect, and/or contractor to obtain any permits; however, we must have a “agent authorization form” signed by the property owner so we know that this person is authorized by you to obtain permits on your behalf. Ask your case manager for a copy of the form, fill it out, sign it, and return it to your case manager.

- ***I don't really know any architects, designers or contractors. Can you recommend anyone?***

As a public agency, we are restricted from making these types of recommendations. Two excellent sources for help on finding the right kind of help are your local chapters of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and the Santa Barbara Contractors Association (SBCA). You can contact the AIA by visiting their office at 229 East Victoria Street, by calling (805) 966-4198, or by navigating to their website at www.aiasb.com. You can contact the SBCA by mail at P.O. Box 23409, by calling (805) 884-1100, or by navigating to their website at www.sbcontractors.org.

- ***May I live in a trailer on the property while I am rebuilding my house? Do I need a permit for that?***

Yes, you can live on the property in a recreational vehicle or a mobile home as long as it is self-contained (contains facilities for living, cooking, sleeping, and sanitation). You may obtain a temporary trailer permit for this and for a temporary power pole at the Santa Barbara County Building and Safety Division Building Counter (see contact information below). The costs of these permits are deferred. Once you are ready, you can call the Building and Safety Division and a building inspector will come out and verify that you are safely situated and verify that your power can be safely hooked up.

- ***Do I have to be hooked up to my septic system, or are holding tanks allowed?***

Either system of sewage disposal is acceptable. At the time of inspection, a building inspector will assure you are properly connected to the septic system. If you choose to use a holding tank, you must have a signed contract with a sewage removal service (minimum six month contract). You will need to present a copy of the signed contract at the building counter to have your temporary trailer permit issued.

- ***I can't maneuver a large trailer on to my property, and need more space than a small travel trailer will provide. Can I have a second trailer on the site?***

Building and Safety will work with you to meet your temporary living needs and can authorize an additional trailer on your property.

- ***How long may I live on the property in my temporary trailer?***

Temporary trailer permits will be issued for an initial 180 days, and may be extended if good progress is being made to rebuild the permanent residence. Also, an additional permit to use a trailer as a temporary dwelling is available once the foundation for the permanent residence has been poured and inspected. This permit is good for an initial period of one year. This permit may also be extended if necessary.

- ***Can I live on my property in a tent or some other temporary structure?***

A property owner is not prohibited from camping on their own property. However, no temporary trailer permits or temporary power permits may be issued for these purposes.

- ***I lost my birth certificate in the fire. How do I get it replaced?***

You may visit the County Clerk, Recorder, and Assessor's office for help if you have lost vital and official documents such as certificates of birth, death, fetal death, or marriage, as well as deeds required to obtain assistance from federal, state and local governmental agencies, make claims for and collect insurance, or find new employment. The address is listed below.

- ***What do I do if I have lost all of my tax records?***

If you have lost your tax records, you should contact the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) for replacements. You can call the local Santa Barbara IRS office at (805) 564-7518 or visit their website at www.irs.gov. The local Santa Barbara IRS office is located at 1332 Anacapa Street, Suite 101. To reach the State of California Franchise Tax Board, you may call 1-800-852-5711 or visit the Franchise Tax Board website at www.ftb.ca.gov.

- ***A vehicle of mine was destroyed in the fire and I also lost my driver's license. What should I do?***

If your car has been destroyed, contact your insurance company. If you lost your driver license or identification card, contact the State of California Department of Motor Vehicles at a DMV field office, on-line at www.dmv.ca.gov, or call 1-800-777-0133

WHERE DO I GET HELP?

Building and Safety Division – Planning Counter
123 East Anapamu Street (second floor)
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

General Information Line: (805) 568-2090

County website: www.countyofsb.org

- Case Planner Information
- Land Use Permits
- Questions regarding what you can rebuild
- Temporary on-site housing land use permits

Building and Safety Division – Building Counter
123 East Anapamu Street (second floor)
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

General Information Line: (805) 568-3030

County website: www.countyofsb.org

- Demolition Permits
- List of pre-approved haulers
- Temporary on-site housing building permits
- Temporary power permits

Internal Revenue Service
1332 Anacapa Street, Suite 101
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Local Office Phone Number: (805) 564-7518

IRS website: www.irs.gov

- Federal tax record replacement
- Tax treatment of lost property

County Clerk, Recorder and Assessor's Office
105 East Anapamu Street, Room 204
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

General Information Line: (805) 568-2550

County website: www.countyofsb.org

- Tax reassessment
- Marriage, birth, and death certificates
- Deed replacement

State of California Department of Motor Vehicles
535 Castillo Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101
1-800-777-0133

DMV website: www.dmv.ca.gov

- Driver's license replacement

State of California Franchise Tax Board
1-800-852-5711

Franchise Tax Board website: www.ftb.ca.gov

- State tax record replacement
- Tax treatment of lost property

County of Santa Barbara Environmental Health Services
225 Camino del Remedio
Santa Barbara, CA 93110
(805) 681-4900

County website: www.countyofsb.org

- Information on septic systems, leach fields, and water wells

State of California Department of Insurance
1-800-927-4357

www.insurance.ca.gov

- Questions regarding insurance claims

County of Santa Barbara Public Works Department
123 East Anapamu Street (second floor)
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Carlyle Johnson-contact: (805) 568-882-3600

- Solid waste permits