

# Fire Rebuild Frequently Asked Questions

## WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN REBUILDING

**Question:** What is a “like-for-like” rebuild?

**Answer:** The term “like-for-like” is defined by the Zoning Code. A like-for-like replacement structure must be the same size, in the same location, and for the same use as the previous structure. In the Palisades Fire affected area, a like-for-like replacement structure may be approved with modifications that do not increase the floor area, size, height, or building footprint by more than 10%. In the Eaton Fire affected area, a like-for-like replacement structure may be approved with modifications that do not increase the floor area, size, height, or building footprint by more than 10% or 200 square feet, whichever is greater.

If the above requirements are met, like-for-like replacement structures can have a different internal floor plan or be smaller than the damaged or destroyed structure.

Like-for-like replacement structures do not need to comply with current Zoning Code requirements. However, they need to comply with current Building Code, Fire Code, and Health and Safety Code requirements.

**Question:** How long do I have to rebuild?

**Answer:** There is no definitive timeline for the rebuilding process. LA County Regional Planning generally requires applications for temporary housing and like-for-like rebuilds to be submitted within two years of the declaration of emergency being first declared. Extensions may be granted if additional time is necessary. However, once issued, a building permit will expire in 12 months if construction does not begin.

Please note that debris removal must be completed before a building permit can be issued.

**Question:** What is a realistic timeline to be back in the house?

**Answer:** The exact amount of time it will take to recover and rebuild from the wildfires is still unknown. We can’t provide a “one size fits all” estimate on when residents can expect to be back in their homes – many factors could extend the

process, from weather, to availability of design consultants, materials and contractors.

**Question:** How do I sign up for emails to learn more about the County recovery process?

**Answer:** To sign up for text/email updates regarding the County recovery process, please submit your contact information at:

[https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/CALACOUNTY/subscriber/new?topic\\_id=CALACOUNTY\\_3684](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/CALACOUNTY/subscriber/new?topic_id=CALACOUNTY_3684)

**Question:** Will there be a designated center to help with permitting, building, and safety concerns? What services will be available there?

**Answer:** For unincorporated LA County communities, [One-Stop Permit Centers](#) have been established for residents impacted by the Palisades and Eaton fires. Walk-ins are welcome and consultation appointments can be scheduled at the Altadena and Calabasas One-Stop Permit Centers. LA County permitting agencies, including Fire Department, Regional Planning, Public Health, Geotechnical and Materials Engineering Division and Public Works Building and Safety, are available by appointment at the One-Stop Permit Centers to guide owners and their representatives through the rebuild process and answer any questions they may have. Homeowners will be provided packets with information specific to their property, including permit records, assessor records and property attributes. In addition, Southern California Edison (SCE) Planners and Billing Service Representatives are available by appointment to assist the customers in their service areas.

## PERMITS & FEES

**Question:** How long will the permitting process take?

**Answer:** LA County has committed to providing expedited services for fire rebuilds. However, the duration of the permitting process will vary based on the project's complexity. Certain types of projects will be able to move forward on accelerated timelines, such as like-for-like rebuild projects or preapproved plans. More complex projects may require additional review and approvals but will still be expedited.

Regional Planning will conduct their initial review of like-for-like rebuild projects within 10 business days and will also conduct rechecks within 5 business days. If the rebuild project does not meet Regional Planning's like-for-like standards, review periods will depend on the complexity and scope of each project. Please note that like-for-like replacement structures do not need to comply with current Zoning Code requirements, but they will need to comply with current Building Code, Fire Code, and Health and Safety Code requirements.

Once full building plans are submitted, all other permitting departments will review initial submittals within 10 business days and rechecks within 5 business

days. Over the counter or virtual appointments for rechecks may be facilitated, provided the design professional is available to attend the appointment as well.

**Question:** Will other agency approvals be required to obtain a building permit?

**Answer:** Yes, in most cases additional agency approvals will be required prior to issuance of a building permit. The applicability of review and approval of required agencies is unique to each site and will be determined by a building plan check engineer at the time of plan submittal.

**Question:** What are the minimum submittal requirements for rebuilding?

**Answer:** LA County staff needs only one application with architectural plans (i.e., site plans, floor plans, and elevations) and property ownership information to start their review. After staff determines whether your proposal qualifies as a like-for-like rebuild project, identifies additional application requirements, and finalizes the project scope, they may require additional materials to complete the zoning review.

After staff issues the zoning clearance, if you would like to move forward with the building permit process, staff will need structural plans, structural calculations by a licensed architect or engineer (if not prescriptive construction), and energy plans. You will be notified when these plans need to be submitted, but you will not need to submit another application.

For more information on Building and Safety's requirements, please refer to the Eaton and Palisades Fire Rebuild Minimum Residential Submittal Requirements at

<https://dpw.lacounty.gov/bsd/lib/fp/Building/Residential/Fire%20Rebuild%20Minimum%20Submittal%20Requirements.pdf>

Public Health requirements for rebuilding can be found at

<http://ph.lacounty.gov/eh/safety/returning-home-after-fire.htm>

**Question:** Is a debris removal permit required to remove the remnants of a structure that was damaged or destroyed by the fire?

**Answer:** A debris removal permit is required only if you do not opt-in to the government-assisted debris removal program. For homeowners who opt-out of the government-assisted program, approval from Public Works is required for the debris removal work. More information is available by calling LA County Public Works Fire Debris Hotline at 844-347-3332 or at [recovery.lacounty.gov/debris-removal](http://recovery.lacounty.gov/debris-removal).

**Question:** How do I determine if I am able to reuse the existing foundation?

**Answer:** If you would like to attempt to reuse your foundation, you will need to retain an engineering consultant to evaluate the foundation and determine whether or not it can be reused for the rebuild. If the existing structure's foundation is deemed to have suffered minimal fire damage by a design

professional (licensed civil engineer, structural engineer or architect), it may be used in the new proposed construction as long as it meets current building code requirements. Such determination shall be based upon thorough testing and forensic analysis. The engineer must complete the following form: [Reuse of Existing Foundation Systems in a Fire Damaged Structure \(Rev 02-2025\)](#)

The design professional must verify that all under-slab utility systems (such as drain, waste, vent, water, mechanical, electrical, etc.) are suitable for continued use. Electrical conduits may remain, but all under-slab electrical conductors must be replaced.

Applicants who choose to demolish the slab/foundation system will need to provide a compaction report to address re-compaction of the lot after slab removal, if soil was disturbed to a depth greater than 12 inches. A licensed geotechnical or civil engineer must prepare the compaction report.

**Question:** Will a demolition permit be required if the previous foundation is being reused?

**Answer:** A separate demolition permit will not be required for those who opt-in to the government's debris removal program: the opt-in process already includes the demolition verification. A debris removal permit will be required for those that opt-out and the description will need to indicate that the existing foundation will remain. Note that if the foundation is not removed during the debris removal process and not suitable to remain, a separate demolition permit will then be required to remove the foundation.

**Question:** If I am able to reuse my existing foundation, will it need to meet the current slope setback requirements set forth in the building code?

**Answer:** Yes, the existing foundation may be utilized as long as it meets all building code requirements; including slope setback requirements. However, reduced slope setbacks may be recommended by a soils engineer and may be approved subject to the building official's review.

**Question:** Will a soils report be required to rebuild?

**Answer:** Not necessarily, if your foundation is a conventional raised or slab on grade with continuous footings that are designed to meet specified minimum standards, you will not need a soils report. Soils reports are still required for foundations with caissons or deep piles, for geotechnical hazards, basement walls and certain other criteria. In addition, Public Works Geotechnical and Materials Engineering approval may be required prior to rebuilding a home where a geologic hazard is present.

**Question:** Will a grading permit be required after the debris removal of the structures, foundation, and the layer of contaminated soil?

**Answer:** The need for a grading permit will be determined by how much soil is removed, if below grade/basement walls are backfilled, and the site condition.

**Question:** If I plan on rebuilding on a lot with oak trees, do I need an Oak Tree Permit?

**Answer:** Be aware that damaged oak trees cannot be removed because oak trees may resprout within a two-year monitoring period. However, if an oak tree is deemed a hazard by the County Forester, it may be removed with a valid Oak Tree Permit Exemption.

Like-for-like rebuild projects do not need to comply with current Zoning Code requirements, including the Oak Tree Ordinance. However, no oak trees can be removed, and if the structure that was damaged or destroyed encroached into the protected zone of any oak tree, the like-for-like replacement structure cannot encroach further into the protected zone.

If the rebuild project does not meet Regional Planning's like-for-like standards, it will need to comply with current Zoning Code requirements, including the Oak Tree Ordinance. If you have oak trees on your property, please contact Regional Planning for more information regarding the Oak Tree Ordinance and Oak Tree Permits.

**Question:** Will permit fees be waived for properties affected by the fires?

**Answer:** No fee waivers are in place at this time.

**Question:** What is the estimated building plan check and permit fee for rebuilding a home?

**Answer:** Regional Planning's fee is \$1,429 for like-for-like rebuild projects and \$1,623 for not-like-for-like rebuild projects that do not require a public hearing. Fees for not-like-for-like rebuild projects that require a public hearing will depend on the project's scope.

Building and Safety's building plan check and permit fee varies depending on the size and cost of the construction. For a 3,000-square-foot home, the current fee is approximately \$22,000. For a 1,500-square-foot home, the current fee is approximately \$12,000.

Fire Department fees include a \$565 building plan review fee and a \$565 fire sprinkler plan review fee. The fuel modification plan review fee is \$735 for homes smaller than 2,500 square feet and \$845 for homes larger than 2,500 square feet. Inspection fees will be \$390 for the building inspection and \$390 for the fire sprinkler inspection.

Public Health plan check fees for Onsite Wastewater Treatment Systems vary depending on the type of rebuild (i.e., like-for-like or not-like-for-like), and whether the approved original plan is available. The current fee for a like-for-like rebuild project is \$447 if the approved original plan is available and \$527 if the approved original plan is not available. The current fee for a not-like-for-like

rebuild project is \$1528 if it has a Conventional Onsite Wastewater Treatment System and \$1986 if it has a Non-Conventional Onsite Wastewater Treatment System.

**Question:** Will I need to pay school fees when I rebuild my home?

**Answer:** School fees are required only if your proposed new construction adds 500 sq ft or more of habitable space from the existing permitted square footage. To confirm, please contact your applicable school district. You may use the Service Locator tool to determine the school district:  
[dpw.lacounty.gov/general/servicelocator/](http://dpw.lacounty.gov/general/servicelocator/)

**Question:** Will I need to pay library fees when I rebuild my home?

**Answer:** No, library fees are not required for reconstruction of one individual single-family residence.

**Question:** Will I need to pay Sanitation District fees when I rebuild my home if it was already on sewer?

**Answer:** Reconstruction of one individual single-family residence is not subject to Sanitation District fees. Fees will apply if your home was previously on a septic system or cesspool and you connect the new home to sewer when you rebuild.

## **PLANNING & CODE REQUIREMENTS**

**Question:** Can I submit my plans now?

**Answer:** Yes, plans can be submitted at this time. However, construction work cannot begin until debris removal has been completed. You can submit your plans electronically through the County's [EPIC-LA online permit system](https://epic.lacounty.gov/) or by visiting your local field office. For more information on Building and Safety's requirements, please refer to the Eaton and Palisades Fire Rebuild Minimum Residential Submittal Requirements at <https://dpw.lacounty.gov/bsd/lib/fp/Building/Residential/Fire%20Rebuild%20Minimum%20Submittal%20Requirements.pdf>

**Question:** Will codes be waived for rebuilds?

**Answer:** Like-for-like rebuild projects do not need to comply with current Zoning Code requirements, but they need to comply with current Building Code, Fire Code, and Health and Safety Code requirements.

If the rebuild project does not meet Regional Planning's like-for-like standards, all new construction, remodeling, and repairs will need to comply with current Zoning Code requirements, in addition to current Building Code, Fire Code, and Health and Safety Code requirements.

Please note that some Zoning Code requirements may be modified for rebuild projects. For example, Altadena Community Standards District front yard setback

requirements do not apply. The minimum required front yard setback for all rebuild projects is 20 feet. Please check with your assigned land use planner for the most up-to-date information.

In the Eaton Fire affected area, the following provisions are suspended for “like-for-like” single-family residential rebuild projects and duplex residential rebuild projects:

- Installation of electric vehicle-ready infrastructure.
- Cool roof requirement.
- Graywater-ready plumbing system.
- Low impact development requirements for buildings built prior to 2009.

**Question:** Are Low Impact Development (LID) requirements waived?

**Answer:** In the Eaton Fire Area only: Like-for-like fire rebuilds are exempt from review under the current LA County LID guidelines if they meet the following criteria:

1. Residence constructed prior to 2009
2. Residences constructed after 2009 if the building remains on the same footprint, and the total proposed impervious surface area (including walkways, driveway, and pool) does not exceed 50% of the impervious surface area that existed prior to the fire.

Pre-Existing BMPs must be reinstalled, and current LID covenant will remain valid. Note that should the pre-existing BMPs be amended, a new LID covenant will be required to be recorded and previous recorded covenant rescinded.

LID requirements are not waived in the Palisades area.

**Question:** What are the requirements for cross-lot drainage?

**Answer:** There are two options regarding cross-lot drainage:

1. Any impact to an adjacent property would either need to be mitigated onsite or an offsite drainage acceptance covenant would need to be signed by the adjacent property owner and recorded.
2. If the pre and post construction’s onsite drainage net effect at the property line is deemed by the architect or engineer of record to be negligible, the findings would be reviewed and if accepted, the architect or engineer would need to place a statement on the plans declaring their findings for permanent record.

**Question:** Can I resubmit my old building plans?

**Answer:** If permits for a new home or an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) were recently issued during the 2020 or 2023 code cycle, the same permits for the new home or ADU can be issued again without plan review.

**Question:** How will LA County determine the amount of square footage that was on my property?

**Answer:** LA County will review all available information, including but not limited to previous land use and zoning approvals, building permit records, Coastal Commission records, County Assessor's Office records and photographs, to determine the square footage.

**Question:** Does Building and Safety have the construction plans on file for existing homes?

**Answer:** Typically, Building and Safety does not keep residential building plans on file. However, files may be available if a residential building passed final inspection within the last 90 days, if it was part of a developer-built subdivision, or if residential building plans were submitted electronically through EPIC-LA.

**Question:** Is there a consideration of providing county preapproved building plans that are cost effective for owners?

**Answer:** Yes. Homeowners may be able to use a pre-approved standard plan for their rebuild project. These plans comply with the applicable Zoning Code and Building Code requirements. Some plans are only for the Palisades Fire affected area and other plans are only for the Eaton Fire affected area.

If a homeowner wants to use a pre-approved standard plan, they will need to contract with the design professional that created the plan. The homeowner will also need to submit an application, complete a site plan, and provide additional site-specific details. LA County staff will review the application to complete the permitting process.

For more information, please visit <https://planning.lacounty.gov/disaster-recovery/pre-approved-standard-plans/>.

**Question:** Will solar panels (PV) and fire sprinklers be required for fire rebuilds?

**Answer:** Rebuilds will need to comply with current code requirements, which includes the installation of solar panels and fire sprinklers.

**Question:** Will electric stoves and appliances be required instead of gas in rebuilds?

**Answer:** The current code requires a new building to be electric ready, but you are still able to install gas appliances.

**Question:** Will a survey identifying the property lines be required?

**Answer:** Prior to start of construction, most rebuilds will require a corner record survey to identify the property boundaries. It's the owner's responsibility to hire a private surveyor to mark their property lines.



**Question:** Regarding setbacks, many structures are built on the property lines and properties would need to be reworked to meet new requirements. Can we be grandfathered in?

**Answer:** Like-for-like replacement structures can have the same setbacks as the legally established damaged or destroyed structure. They do not need to comply with current setback requirements. If the rebuild project does not meet Regional Planning's like-for-like standards, the new structures will need to comply with current setback requirements. A property owner can request modifications to the current setback requirements, but these requests require a public hearing and approval is not guaranteed. Please contact Regional Planning for more information about requesting modifications to the current setback requirements.

**Question:** Will there be an effort to preserve (especially historic) facades that have survived the fire? And for those that did not or cannot survive, will there be an effort to rebuild these buildings, and Altadena, to original designs, so our historic community is one that we recognize when we return?

**Answer:** LA County will rely on historic preservation experts to inform our decisions on this topic. If historically significant portions of the historic structure remain, and there are original plans available, it is possible to rebuild the structure in an historically appropriate manner. Please contact the Los Angeles Conservancy for additional advice.

**Question:** I intend on rebuilding my house plus an additional area not larger than 10%. Will I still receive expedited plan check?

**Answer:** Yes. These rebuild projects are considered like-for-like replacements and will receive an expedited plan check. For the Eaton Fire area only, you may increase the floor area by up to 200 SF or 10%, whichever is greater. Although like-for-like replacement structures do not need to comply with current Zoning Code requirements, they will need to comply with current Building Code, Fire Code, and Health and Safety Code requirements.

**Question:** I had an addition in progress to my home before it burned down. Does that square footage get included in the allowable square footage determined for a like-for-like rebuild?

**Answer:** Yes. If you had an addition to your home approved by Regional Planning that was in progress, you can rebuild the house with the approved addition as a like-for-like rebuild. A five-year extension will be granted for any unused Planning entitlements in fire impacted areas. A three-year extension will be granted for any unused Coastal Development Permits on properties impacted by the Palisades Fire.

## **RETURNING TO YOUR PROPERTY**

**Question:** What does it mean if my property is "Yellow" tagged?

**Answer:** A “Yellow” tag typically indicates that your property has been assessed and deemed safe for limited access, but certain areas are restricted due to safety concerns. Restricted areas may include parts of the property that are structurally compromised (e.g., living room, garage, etc.) and areas with unstable structures. Access is permitted only to retrieve essential contents (e.g., important documents, medications, clothing and personal items needed for immediate use).

**Question:** What does it mean if my property is “Red” tagged?

**Answer:** A “Red” tag indicates that your property has been assessed and deemed uninhabitable due to severe damage or safety hazards resulting from the wildfire. The house or accessory structures, if red tagged, shall not be entered or occupied.

Properties may be red tagged if they have damaged pool or spa enclosures that had previously acted as pool barriers. Here’s why:

1. **Safety Concerns:** Pool or spa enclosures are critical for safety, especially in residential areas with children or pets. If these barriers are compromised, there is an increased risk of accidental drowning or injury.
2. **Building Code Compliance:** Properties must comply with local building codes and regulations regarding pool safety. If the enclosure is damaged to the extent that it no longer meets safety standards, the property may be red tagged until the issue is resolved.
3. **Hazardous Conditions:** A destroyed or damaged pool enclosure can create hazardous conditions on the property, such as unsecured access to the pool area, which can lead to liability issues for the property owner.

If a property has been red tagged for this reason, it is essential for the owner to contact the appropriate building department for their area to understand the specific requirements for repairing or replacing the enclosure and to ensure compliance with safety regulations before the tag can be lifted.

**Question:** Is there a contact information included on the “Yellow” or “Red” tags?

**Answer:** Yes, the local Building and Safety District Office contact information is provided on the yellow or red tags placed on your property. Residents in unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County, please contact your local Building and Safety District Office for any inquiries. You can also schedule group or one-on-one appointments for in-person expert help at the [One-Stop Permit Centers](#). All other residents must contact the building or planning department overseeing their specific community (i.e. City of Los Angeles, City of Pasadena, City of Malibu, City of Sierra Madre).

**Question:** When will contractors be allowed to return and resume work on standing homes that were under construction before the fire?

**Answer:** Contractors may commence work with the appropriate permits if the home was not affected by the fire, however if Phase 2 debris removal is required for the particular parcel, then once Phase 1 hazardous waste has been completed and depending on whether the property owner chooses to opt-in or opt-out of the government debris removal program and the appropriate debris removal has taken place, then the contractor can resume the work.

## TEMPORARY HOUSING

**Question:** Temporary housing – will it be allowed and where?

**Answer:** Temporary housing is allowed. Temporary housing units may include recreational vehicles, manufactured homes, or mobilehomes. The temporary housing unit must have a water connection for drinking, a sanitary waste disposal system and an electrical connection. [Click here to apply for a Temporary Housing Permit.](#)

Temporary housing approvals expire two years after the beginning of the emergency declaration. Temporary housing units must be removed from the property within 24 hours after the approval expires. However, the Director of Regional Planning can grant up to three one-year extensions of the expiration date if additional time is necessary. Otherwise, temporary housing units must be removed from the property within 30 days after the County issues a Certificate of Occupancy for the replacement.

If there is a pre-existing ADU on a property, it can be temporarily occupied by a household while they wait for a replacement primary dwelling unit to be built on the same property, although it is not a temporary structure and will not need to be removed from the property at a future time. However, Phase 1 hazardous materials removal must occur on the entire property before the household can move into the pre-existing ADU.

**Question:** Are manufactured or prefab homes allowed as permanent replacement structures?

**Answer:** Manufactured housing or mobilehome registration is overseen by the State of California Housing and Community Development (HCD). Building and Safety issues permits and inspects units being placed on private property, but not within a mobilehome park. If the property is located within the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, BSD requests documentation that the unit being placed meets the fire-resistant construction requirements prior to issuing a permit. The units come with an insignia/label affixed to the unit so BSD inspectors can identify properly approved units. For permanent use, they must be installed on a foundation system consisting of a continuous concrete footing. In addition to the footing and anchorage of the unit, BSD inspects the utility connections for code compliance.

In addition, HCD oversees the factory-built housing program in the state of California. Factory-Built Housing is a residential building, dwelling unit, individual dwelling room, or combination of rooms, or building components, assembly, or system manufactured so that all concealed parts or processes of manufacturing cannot be inspected before installation. Similar to manufactured housing and mobilehomes, factory-built housing is approved by HCD and affixed with an insignia that BSD verifies during installation. The permitting process described above is applicable to factory-built housing as well.

**Question:** Can I build and live in an ADU on my property while rebuilding my home?

**Answer:** Yes. A new, “standalone” ADU can be built on a property and occupied by a household until the primary dwelling unit is rebuilt on the same property. A household may temporarily occupy a “standalone” ADU until January 7, 2030. The ADU will not be considered a temporary structure and will not need to be removed from the property at a future time. LA County staff will require an application and permits for the new ADU, which will be expedited. The new ADU will need to comply with current Zoning Code and State law requirements as well as current Building Code, Fire Code, and Health and Safety Code requirements.

**Question:** Where can I find more information about temporary housing for fire affected properties?

**Answer:** Please see the Rebuilding page on [recovery.lacounty.gov](https://recovery.lacounty.gov). Additional informational guides can be found on Public Health’s website at [lacounty.gov/eh/safety/returning-home-after-fire.htm](https://lacounty.gov/eh/safety/returning-home-after-fire.htm)

## **FIRE RESISTIVE CONSTRUCTION**

**Question:** What are Fire Hazard Severity Zones and Wildland-Urban Interface Areas?

**Answer:** A Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) is a geographical area identified by the state as a “Fire Hazard Severity Zone” in accordance with the Public Resources Code Sections 4201 through 4204 and Government Code Sections 51175 through 51189, or other areas designated by the Los Angeles County Fire Department to be at a significant risk from wildfires.

Fire Hazard Severity Zones are geographical areas designated by the California Public Resources Codes and classified as Very High, High or Moderate in State Responsibility Areas or as Local Responsibility Areas in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. The California Code of Regulations entitles the maps of these geographical areas as “Maps of the Fire Hazard Severity Zones in the State Responsibility Area of California.”

**Question:** What does Chapter 7A of the building code require?

**Answer:** This chapter applies to building materials, systems, and/or assemblies used in the exterior design and construction of new buildings, and to additions,

alterations, or repairs made to existing buildings, erected, constructed, or moved within a Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) Fire Area. The purpose of this chapter is to establish minimum standards for the protection of life and property by increasing the ability of a building located in any Fire Hazard Severity Zone within State Responsibility Areas or any WUI Fire Area to resist the intrusion of flames or burning embers projected by a vegetation fire and contributes to a systematic reduction in conflagration losses.

**Question:** Where does Chapter 7A of the Building Code apply when people rebuild?

**Answer:** Chapter 7A applies to any Fire Hazard Severity Zone or Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Area of the State Responsibility Area or Local Responsibility Area.

**Question:** What does Section R337 of the Residential Code require?

**Answer:** To view this Section of the Residential Code, go to [https://codes.iccsafe.org/content/CARC2022P3/chapter-3-building-planning#CARC2022P3\\_Pt03\\_Ch03\\_SecR337](https://codes.iccsafe.org/content/CARC2022P3/chapter-3-building-planning#CARC2022P3_Pt03_Ch03_SecR337)

To view Los Angeles County amendments to this section, go to [https://library.municode.com/ca/los\\_angeles\\_county/codes/code\\_of\\_ordinances?nodeId=TIT30RECO\\_CH3BUPL\\_R337MACOMEEXWIEX](https://library.municode.com/ca/los_angeles_county/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT30RECO_CH3BUPL_R337MACOMEEXWIEX)

**Question:** Will the county support or require fire-resistant building codes?

**Answer:** The State Fire Marshal's Office creates the fire zone maps that trigger the application of Chapter 7A requirements. When the maps are updated, they will be enforced per the implementation date. Public Works encourages the use of Chapter 7A requirements in areas not within a Fire Hazard Severity Zone, but application of the requirements will be voluntary at the owner's discretion.

**Question:** If someone lives outside the Fire Hazard Severity Zone, will they be required to comply with Chapter 7A?

**Answer:** The State Fire Marshal's Office creates the Fire Zone Maps which triggers application of Chapter 7A requirements. If the maps are updated, they will be enforced per the implementation date. Public Works encourages the use of Chapter 7A requirements in areas not within a Fire Hazard Severity Zone, but application of the requirements will be voluntary at the owner's discretion.

**Question:** Can officials assist in expediting approvals for fire-resistant materials like ICCF block construction, which is already approved by the City of LA but pending LA County approval?

**Answer:** Any alternate materials proposed will be reviewed by our Research Section with an expedited review timeline.

**Question:** Will I be able to rebuild or repair my deck with exposed wood?

**Answer:** If your structure is located within the Fire Hazard Severity Zone, there are requirements for the size of exposed lumber used to construct decks, patios, carports, and trellises.

## **UTILITIES**

**Question:** Can I keep my existing septic system during rebuild?

**Answer:** You may keep your existing septic system if it is in good working order, and you are rebuilding your property with the same number of units and bedrooms for which the septic system was originally approved. If you intend to add a bedroom, pool, an Accessory Dwelling Unit, or other change that will increase wastewater flow, you will be required to upgrade your septic system to meet current standards.

**Question:** Will I be required to connect to county sewer lines?

**Answer:** If the proposed building is within 200 linear feet of a sewer main without crossing a neighbor's property, the Department of Public Health is unable to issue a permit for the construction or repair of a septic system. You may rebuild your property on your existing septic system but any change to the property that would increase wastewater flow or any need to repair the septic system would require a connection to the sewer main.

An exemption to connecting to the sewer main can be provided by the Department of Public Works if your property is unable to connect to the sewer. For example, if the sewer line is on a street located above your property making a connection impractical.

**Question:** What is the process for connecting to the County's Consolidated Sewer Maintenance District?

**Answer:** The circumstances for residents who want to switch from septic/cesspool to municipal sewer will depend on the specific location of your property and whether a municipal sewer line is already constructed in the street in front of your house. For additional information on this topic, we invite you to email [AltadenaSewer@pw.lacounty.gov](mailto:AltadenaSewer@pw.lacounty.gov). We will be glad to review the specifics of your property and help guide you through what it would take to convert from septic/cesspool to municipal sewer, along with an estimated timeframe for this potential change.

**Question:** If I chose to connect to the county's sewer, who pays the lateral connection?

**Answer:** Homeowners are responsible for the cost of a lateral connection to underground utilities, including sewer, gas, water, and power within the public right of way.

**Question:** Does the County plan to extend sewer service to all Altadena homeowners who are not served by the existing sewer system?

**Answer:** The County does not have a plan to extend sewer service to all Altadena homeowners. There is an existing process to get sewer service to homes that didn't previously have it, called the County Improvement District (CID) program. This is a community driven program, whereby the County fronts the cost to construct new sewer lines, and residents pay them back through assessments on their property taxes spread out over time. We also requested funding from State and Federal government agencies for this but have not received any information yet if that will come through.

**Question:** Which neighborhoods have been analyzed and approved thus far for connection to sewer service?

**Answer:** Public Works has received dozens of inquiries about this, and is currently meeting with various neighborhoods throughout Altadena to explain the process. So far, one community has taken the first step to create a new CID by submitting signed petitions. Residents can email [AltadenaSewer@pw.lacounty.gov](mailto:AltadenaSewer@pw.lacounty.gov) if they are interested in learning more about how the CID program works.

**Question:** Are there any neighborhoods not slated for conversion to sewer systems?

**Answer:** There is not a plan to extend County sewer to neighborhoods at this time aside from through the community driven CID program.

**Question:** If the County decides that certain areas are not eligible for sewer extension, what financial help will be offered to these households/residents who need to upgrade their septic systems to rebuild?

**Answer:** Funding collected by Public Works for sewer service must go towards operation and maintenance of the existing sewer lines, and cannot be spent on upgrading septic systems or expanding the sewer network. To date, we have not been able to identify another funding source that can support expansion of the County's sewer system or provide subsidies for septic system upgrades.

**Question:** What is the projected timeline for conversion to sewer systems? When will the work be completed?

**Answer:** Public Works is committed to expediting design and construction for neighborhoods that want to proceed with sewer expansion through the CID program. Public Works is ready to start the process of developing a scope of work and construction estimate as soon as petitions demonstrating resident support are received. The details of how long it will take to complete the work will depend on the specific area and how complex the system needs to be. Our rough estimate is that it could range from 1-2 years.

**Question:** Will the County mandate that homeowners convert septic/cesspool systems to sewers, or will homeowners be permitted to maintain their existing (undamaged) septic/cesspool systems?



**Answer:** Properties, located beyond 200 linear feet of a public sewer, with an existing septic system, verified by a qualified licensed contractor and determined to be in good working condition may use the existing septic system if the property is:

Rebuilding Like-For-Like:

- Same number of bedrooms or bedroom equivalents (a possibility of floor plan modification of up to 10%)
- Fully accommodated by the existing septic system
- All setback requirements are met

Rebuilding as a New construction:

- Equivalent structure with original floor plan, using existing septic system, sized correctly for the number of bedrooms or bedroom equivalents
- Proper distance between the septic system and structures (house, retaining walls, pools, decks, and other features) must meet system components standards

Rebuilding with New/Modified floor plan:

- Proposing additional bedrooms or bedroom equivalents will require Public Health permits for a compatible septic system.

Properties, located within 200 linear feet of a public sewer line (Sewer Pipes cannot cross a neighboring property line when connecting to the public sewer), a sewer connection may be required if:

- a qualified licensed contractor determines an existing septic system is NOT in good working condition,
- a modification is proposed (e.g. additional bedroom or bedroom equivalents, increasing the building's footprint by more than 10%, adding a pool, etc.)

Properties on cesspools:

- Cesspools are regulated by the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board. For more information, contact the Waste Discharge Requirements Program at [DWQ-WDR@Waterboards.ca.gov](mailto:DWQ-WDR@Waterboards.ca.gov) or visit: [https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/owts/](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/owts/)
- The Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board (LARWQCB) will permit the continued use of existing cesspools during Like-For-Like fire rebuild. This requires that the cesspool remains functional and that homeowners do not increase wastewater flow by adding bedrooms or bedroom equivalents, an accessory dwelling unit (ADU), or any other



additions that may increase the wastewater flow from the replacement structures.

- If a property owner wishes to rebuild with additional bedrooms or other additions that increase wastewater flow, it is required to upgrade the cesspool to a septic system when properties are located beyond 200 linear feet of public sewer or connect to a public sewer when properties are located within 200 linear feet of a public sewer. Approvals must be obtained from appropriate regulatory agencies.

For properties within 200 feet of an existing public sewer, Public Works can determine if property is able to connect to the public sewer or if that is infeasible from a technical standpoint. If PW determines that the nearest connection cannot service the property, the property owner may obtain a waiver from PW to continue the use of an existing septic system by emailing [AltadenaSewer@pw.lacounty.gov](mailto:AltadenaSewer@pw.lacounty.gov), provided it has been evaluated by a qualified licensed contractor and determined to be in good working condition. If a connection to the public sewer is not possible, and the existing septic system is not in good working condition, a Public Health permit for a new or modified septic system will be required. For more information, please contact LA County Public Health at (626) 430-5380.

**Question:** Some fire victims are already filing plans with the County to rebuild their homes. Can they assume that sewers are a certainty on the timescale for rebuilding? If not, are fire victims supposed to replace damaged septic/cesspool systems and then pay later to convert to sewers?

**Answer:** There is not certainty that municipal sewer will be available unless the neighborhood goes through the process to create a CID.

**Question:** If a homeowner converts from a septic/cesspool system to sewers, will they be required to remove the non-functioning septic/cesspool systems? If so, what is the anticipated protocol and costs? Will the old systems be classified as hazmat? Can the old system simply be emptied and filled with dirt or pulverized in their existing location?

**Answer:** The Public Health Department (PHD) EH does not regulate the abandonment of septic or cesspool systems. If a homeowner plans to decommission an existing system following a sewer connection, they need to contact Building and Safety to obtain a sewer permit to abandon an existing septic tank and connect to the sewer line and comply with their specific requirements for proper abandonment.

**Question:** What will be the 'hook-up cost' to the homeowners who choose to convert to sewers? How will those costs be assessed and paid?

**Answer:** Permit fees would be charged by Building and Safety (\$147.33) and a Tap and Saddle Fee (\$154) for connection to Consolidated Sewer Maintenance District to connect the lateral if there is no stub-out.

**Question:** Will the County expect displaced – and geographically dispersed – homeowners to self-organize and create a local sewer district?

**Answer:** The County will support and coordinate homeowners in the creation of local sewer districts. Public Works recognizes that many fire victims are displaced and has been meeting virtually with several neighborhoods to explain the process and organize local homeowners who want to proceed. If any residents are interested in learning more, they can reach out to [AltadenaSewer@pw.lacounty.gov](mailto:AltadenaSewer@pw.lacounty.gov).

**Question:** Will the County rapidly and globally ensure that representatives in the field permitting offices be informed of the most recent changes regarding septic/cesspool/sewer systems?

**Answer:** Yes, Public Health Department management ensures that all permitting inspectors, both in-office and in the field, are promptly and uniformly informed of the most recent changes regarding septic, cesspool, and sewer systems. Public Works is keeping representatives from Building and Safety and staff at the Altadena One Stop Center apprised of the latest information regarding this topic. These processes ensure consistent implementation and compliance across all relevant departments.

**Question:** Will the County permit or encourage the rebuilding homeowners to install greywater systems? If the homeowner adds an ADU or increases square footage, it will likely require an upgraded septic system. Incorporating greywater systems into new builds would decrease the load on septic and potentially eliminate the need for any septic upgrades.

**Answer:** Incorporating greywater systems into new construction can significantly reduce the demand on septic systems. This is especially beneficial when homeowners add an ADU or increase the home's square footage, situations that often trigger the need for a septic system upgrade. However, while greywater systems offer clear environmental and infrastructure benefits, it's important to note that the current Local Agency Management Program (LAMP) does not provide specific policies or regulations for approving greywater systems in the context of new ADUs or expanded development.

**Question:** Will all overhead utilities, including power and telecommunications, be placed underground?

**Answer:** We anticipate there will be a combination of above and below ground utilities. Power utilities are prioritizing undergrounding utilities in High Fire Risk Areas.

The undergrounding of both power and telecommunications lines will be done using a joint trench approach.

**Question:** Why do utility companies need an easement in my property to underground overhead lines? What happens if I refuse to sign the easement?

**Answer:** While most of the work to underground utilities takes place within the public right of way, there will be cases where utilities will need to install equipment on private property. To facilitate this work, homeowners will need to execute an easement, which gives utilities permission to carry out the work.

Failure to execute all required easements will prevent utilities from installing the infrastructure needed to underground overhead lines.

## **SWIMMING POOLS**

**Question:** What should I do about my swimming pool/spa?

**Answer:** Swimming pools and spas are required to be surrounded by a 5ft. high fence or barrier. The home and/or garage may be part of the pool barrier, and in the case where either the fence or the home was destroyed, temporary fencing must be installed. A chain link fence shall be 11 gauge with openings not more than 1 ¾" measured horizontally. A permit is not required to install a temporary fence.

If someone opts-in to the government run debris-removal program, the U.S Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) will remove fire debris from the pool if the pool is within the ash footprint. USACE may use the contaminated water to wet down debris during the removal process. They will not refill or remove the pool.

Chlorination requirements, mosquitos breeding prevention and other swimming pool topics can be found at [ph.lacounty.gov/eh/safety/returning-home-after-fire.htm](http://ph.lacounty.gov/eh/safety/returning-home-after-fire.htm)

**Question:** Should I drain my swimming pool?

**Answer:** While draining a pool is not recommended, if damage to the pool requires it to be drained, residents in the unincorporated area may drain their pools to the sewer. To discharge into the sanitary sewer, the LA County Department of Building and Safety requires a three-inch P-trap legally installed with a sewer permit. A pool P-trap is piping that sticks up vertically from the ground and is typically installed near the pool equipment. This only applies to freshwater pools (no saltwater pools) connected to public sewer. Opening manholes and draining directly to manholes is not allowed. Property owners should remove any floating debris by skimming and should filter the pool water prior to draining to reduce the discharge of solids and debris into the sewer system. In addition, there shall be no drainage of pools to the sewer during or within 24 hours after active rainfall. If the pool does not have a P-trap, or the P-trap was damaged by the fire, owners will need to hire a private water hauler to drain the pool.

If the property is on a septic system and is not connected to the sewer, homeowners will need to hire a private water hauler to drain their pool.

## SEPTIC SYSTEM

**Question:** If my home is on a septic system, may I use the existing septic system in the rebuild?

**Answer:** For guidance, please refer to this guide:

[ph.lacounty.gov/eh/docs/safety/septic-systems-assessment-following-fire-en.pdf](https://ph.lacounty.gov/eh/docs/safety/septic-systems-assessment-following-fire-en.pdf)

on the Environmental Health website. Please contact LA County Public Health at (626) 430-5380 if you have additional questions.

**Question:** If the above-ground components of my septic system's supplemental treatment were damaged, do I need a permit to repair or replace them?

**Answer:** Yes. Please contact LA County Public Health at (626) 430-5380 for further information.

**Question:** What should I do with my septic system while the house is being rebuilt?

**Answer:** To prevent the collapse of the septic tank, drain field and seepage pits, it is recommended that you identify their locations using stakes and caution tape to prevent heavy equipment from driving over those areas.

## NEW BUYER RIGHTS

**Question:** If a lot is sold now, does expedited permitting and temporary housing apply for the buyer (new owner) or are they only available to the owner at the time of the disaster?

**Answer:** The buyer is not eligible for temporary housing on the site, which requires evidence that the buyer has lived at the site within the past twelve months.

Expedited permitting will be available to everyone within two years of the beginning of the emergency declaration. It does not matter if the property has changed hands. More specifically, applications for like-for-like rebuild projects must be submitted to Regional Planning within two years after the beginning of the emergency declaration. However, the Director of Regional Planning can grant up to three one-year extensions of the application submittal deadline if additional time is necessary. If a rebuild project does not meet Regional Planning's like-for-like standards, the application can be submitted at any time.

**Question:** Are there any other rights during the rebuilding process that are only available to the original owner at the time of the event, or do the rights run with the land itself?

**Answer:** If the buyer does not utilize the previous home's building footprint for the fastest path towards rebuilding, they will be required to comply with the new Community Standards District regulations for setbacks, among other requirements.