



Supplemental Guidance For Riparian Areas Cleanup Activities within Wildfire Affected Riparian Areas

The scale and intensity of the 2023 wildfires has had an unprecedented impact on waterfront properties. There is an urgent need for cleanup actions to address wildfire-related contaminants in riparian areas. This document provides supplemental guidance to assist in Wildfire recovery. Provincial guidance is provided through Environmental Management Act (EMA): [BC Guidance for Owners of Property Impacted by Wildfire Contaminants](#). To address the unique situations for waterfront homes, the province is providing this supplemental guidance to support fast and effective cleanup of contaminants in order to support environmental protection, riparian ecosystem recovery, and reduce delays in helping people get back home.

Definition of “Cleanup”:

For the purpose of this exemption, “cleanup activities” within the riparian area (30m – 60 m from top of bank) include the following:

- Removal of burnt materials (components of permanent structures, concrete foundations, septic tanks, holding tanks, retaining walls, non-permanent materials including trailers, boats, sea cans, fencing, etc.).
- Removal of contaminated soil and/or ash.
- Removal of danger trees (trees that have been burnt and pose a risk to public safety).

For the purpose of this guidance, “cleanup activities” within the riparian area (30m – 60 m from top of bank) does not include:

- Removal of bed rock
- Reconstruction of buildings

Operational Best Practices:

- (a) **Riparian Protection:** Cleanup activities should protect natural riparian features, minimize disturbance to natural materials and live vegetation, and remove danger trees.
- (b) **Monitoring.** A Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP) is recommended on-site. In the absence of a QEP, property owners should maintain photographic documentation.
- (c) **Ground Disturbance.** Minimize ground disturbance, use hand tools when possible. When heavy equipment is necessary, minimize access into the riparian area.
- (d) **Worksite Management.** Clearly mark work areas, store waste outside riparian areas, and prevent the introduction of deleterious substances into watercourses. Conduct cleanup activities during favourable weather conditions to prevent erosion and sedimentation.
- (e) Wherever possible, seek to meet the riparian area management standards as outlined in the RAPR Technical Manual [Riparian Areas Regulation \(gov.bc.ca\)](#)

Additional Resources:

- [Post-Wildfire Hazardous Materials Guidance for Local Authorities and First Nations](#)
- [Fact Sheet: Dealing with Hazardous Materials After a Wildfire](#)
- [Managing Waste Asbestos by Homeowners](#)

For more information, please email RiparianAreas@Victoria1.gov.bc.ca.