



Maui Wildfire Recovery

Frequently Asked Questions About Using Soiltac® Soil Stabilizer on Properties with Ash and Debris

November 1, 2023

Maui gives so much to the world. As guests, we are honored to give our support back.

Ash and debris on properties affected by wildfires on Maui may impact wildlife, marine life, and people's health as they can contain harmful contaminants like asbestos, lead, and arsenic. Ash and debris can spread by wind, rain, re-entry, Phase 2 debris removal, or events where ash is disturbed.

Who made the decision to use a soil stabilizer?

Maui County—with input from the Hawai'i Department of Health (DOH), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) — approved the use of soil stabilizer to control ash and dust in the areas impacted by the wildfires.

EPA began applying soil stabilizer in Kula in late September 2023. EPA began applying Soiltac in Lāhainā in mid-October, after the Mayor of Maui approved its application.

What are the implications of ash and debris on human health?

Ash and debris can contain harmful contaminants like asbestos, lead, arsenic, and other hazardous substances. **Wearing recommended personnel protective equipment (PPE) when disturbing the ash will reduce the likelihood of these adverse health impacts.**

- Ash and debris contain particles that are small enough to enter a person's airway and cause short-term symptoms such as coughing, nasal irritation, shortness of breath, allergic reactions, and intensified asthma symptoms.
- The ash also has a high pH which can cause eye and skin irritation.
- Ash and debris have also been shown to contain harmful contaminants, such as asbestos, lead and arsenic. Long-term exposure to these contaminants could cause adverse health effects such as heart disease, strokes, lung cancer and diseases that impact breathing.

For more information on the impacts of ash on human health, please go to: health.hawaii.gov/mauiwildfires/

What are the benefits of using a soil stabilizer?

- Using a soil stabilizer reduces the chance of people breathing in or ingesting ash.
- It also helps prevent ash from spreading off site.

- Applying a soil stabilizer will reduce the risk of ash run-off reaching the ocean, where it could cause harm to the reef and coastal marine environments.

Where will the soil stabilizer be applied?

- EPA teams will apply a soil stabilizer on the ash footprint on a parcel by parcel basis (excluding areas of cultural significance). The ash is considered the primary source of contamination that needs to be controlled. The soil stabilizer (Soiltac) will be removed with the debris by the USACE during Phase 2 operations.

What is the protocol to apply Soiltac?

Before application, EPA teams and cultural monitors will closely inspect the parcel to ensure wildlife, cat feeding stations, or other sensitive items are not impacted by application.

Soil stabilizer **will not** be applied to historic or cultural areas or items previously known or flagged by cultural monitors.

- In the event an item of cultural significance is identified by cultural monitors, crews will work around the item and it will be further investigated for next steps.
- Examples of cultural and historic structures that **will not** be sprayed include:
 - burial sites,
 - walls,
 - temple bells, historic structures, such as Waiola Church, Pioneer Mill Co. Office, and the Lahaina Store, and
 - known collections of artifacts and ancestral ashes at the Baldwin House, Wo Hing, and Shingon Mission.

What does ash and debris look like after it is treated with soil stabilizer?

- Soiltac® dries transparent. It is non-toxic when dry, and commonly used for dust and soil control.
- Its transparency will allow the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to see what is underneath during Phase 2 ash and debris removal and will not obscure the ability for residents to view and recover their belongings.

Will people be able to sift through their properties after the soil stabilizer has been applied?

- Yes, people searching properties can easily see underneath the clear coating and break through to sift ash, if desired.
- EPA requests people wait 24-hours after application to sift through debris when it becomes fully effective. EPA will post signs at the property to indicate the time of application.

What if I disturbed the soil stabilizer? Can you come back to re-apply it?

We anticipate there may be a need for reapplication based on significant disturbances (after it has been applied). But our first objective is to apply the soil stabilizer to all ash footprints. For more information, please contact our hotline at: **(808) 539-0555**.

How long will the soil stabilizer be effective?

The soil stabilizer is effective for four to six months if it is not disturbed.

How long will the soil stabilizer remain on properties and when will it be removed?

Soil stabilizer is not intended to permanently control ash. After residents visit their properties, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will remove ash, debris, and the soil stabilizer during Phase 2.

Can residents opt out of soil stabilizer application?

Residents **cannot** opt out of soil stabilizer application. Soil stabilizer will be applied to **all** impacted properties in Lāhainā to protect residents' health and fragile coastal and marine ecosystems.

Can I remove Soiltac® from something I retrieve from my home?

Yes. Run it under hot water or steam it, then wipe the surface with a soft cloth. The Soiltac® will remain non-toxic, even during removal.

-

For more information regarding the above uses please visit: soilworks.com/reference-library

Find more information about EPA's support of the Maui wildfires response at: epa.gov/maui-wildfires

For more info about EPA's work, contact us at:

Email: R9Wildfiresinfo@epa.gov

Phone: **(808)-539-0555**

Or visit: epa.gov/maui-wildfires

facebook.com/EPAregion9

twitter.com/EPAregion9

instagram.com/epagov or

mauicounty.gov and mauinuistrong.info