

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 3, 2025

The Honorable David Richardson
Acting Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency
500 C Street SW
Washington, DC 20034

Dear Acting Administrator Richardson,

We are writing to raise concerns regarding recent soil testing conducted by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, in partnership with Roux Associates Inc., which found dangerously high levels of lead and other toxic metals at numerous properties cleared under the joint debris removal operations led by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and FEMA, particularly in the Eaton Fire burn zone that resulted from the devastating Los Angeles fires in January 2025. We urge the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to conduct soil testing for residential properties that were burned in the Eaton and Palisades Fires, as well as establish a process to remediate properties in the Eaton and Palisades Fire burn area that contain high levels of toxins.

The Eaton Fire burned 9,418 structures, including 6,011 single-family homes. The Palisades Fire burned 6,873 structures, including more than 3,600 single family homes. In the recent testing, it was of particular concern that 27% of soil samples from scraped portions of the Eaton Fire burn area still exceeded California's state standards for residential lead levels 80 milligrams per kilogram (80 mg/kg), with that figure rising to 44% in unscraped areas. These findings were corroborated by independent soil testing conducted by *The Los Angeles Times*, which found that two Altadena homesites remediated by federal contractors still contained dangerous heavy metal contamination. One site registered lead levels more than three times the state benchmark.

Thousands of homeowners, particularly in Altadena where nearly 96% of homes destroyed by the fire pre-dated the 1978 ban on lead paint, now face the difficult choice of incurring the significant personal expense of soil testing and remediation, or living with the potential threat of long-term exposure to hazardous substances. As experts have stressed, lead exposure, especially for children, can cause irreversible cognitive, developmental, and behavioral damage.

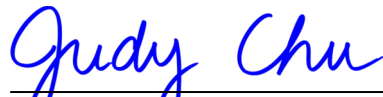
Considering the new and conclusive findings from the County, and knowing that FEMA has stated it will not do automatic soil testing of all cleared properties, we respectfully urge FEMA to:

1. Provide federal funding to offer comprehensive soil testing, on a voluntary, opt-in basis, to property owners whose properties were destroyed or impacted in the Eaton and Palisades Fire.
2. Establish a process to remediate properties that exceed California's safety thresholds for lead and other toxins, including redeploying cleanup crews to perform soil bioremediation or further soil removal as needed.
3. Work with federal and state health agencies to provide clear guidance to homeowners and builders regarding safe rebuilding practices, soil management, and personal protective measures on properties with marginal contamination levels.


Without these steps, disaster survivors are being left with an undue financial burden and potential health risks. We appreciate FEMA's longstanding commitment to disaster recovery and urge you to act swiftly to ensure that the residents of Altadena, the Pacific Palisades, and surrounding communities can safely rebuild their homes and lives with confidence that their properties are free of toxic contamination.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. We look forward to your prompt response and to working together to protect the health and safety of residents affected by the Los Angeles Fires.


Sincerely,




Judy Chu
Member of Congress




Brad Sherman
Member of Congress




Robert Garcia
Member of Congress




Raul Ruiz, M.D.
Member of Congress



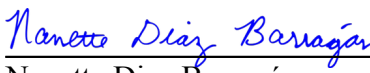
Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



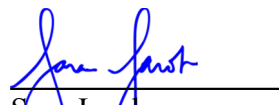
Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



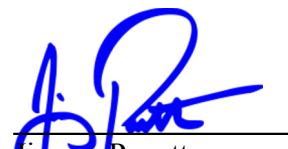
John Garamendi
Member of Congress




Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



Sara Jacobs
Member of Congress



Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



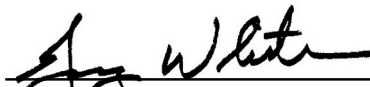
Derek T. Tran
Member of Congress



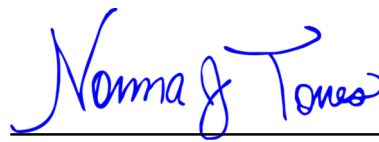
Kevin Mullin
Member of Congress




Dave Min
Member of Congress



George Whitesides
Member of Congress



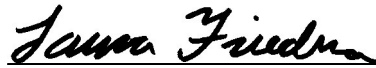
Norma J. Torres
Member of Congress



Luz M. Rivas
Member of Congress



Ami Bera, M.D.
Member of Congress



Laura Friedman
Member of Congress



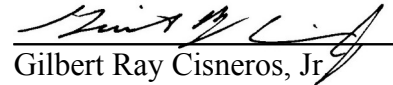
Scott H. Peters
Member of Congress



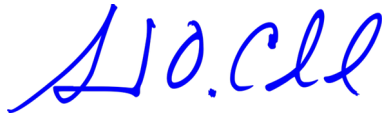
Mike Levin
Member of Congress



Mike Thompson
Member of Congress



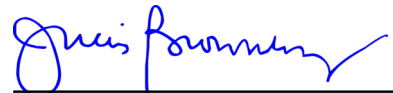
Gilbert Ray Cisneros, Jr.
Member of Congress



Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress



Pete Aguilar
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



Sydney Kamlager-Dove
Member of Congress



Eric Swalwell
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Ro Khanna
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