

SAFETY, PRECAUTIONS & PPE FOR MAJOR PROPERTY CLEANOUTS

FIELD RESOURCE

A printable planning guide for recognizing hazards, selecting precautions, determining PPE and knowing when cleanup work should stop for specialized evaluation.

Safety Decisions Come Before Removal Decisions

Major hoarding and property cleanout work can expose crews to conditions that are not present in ordinary junk removal. Before work begins, the site should be evaluated for access, physical hazards, sanitation concerns, environmental conditions, lifting risks, animals, utilities and materials that may require specialized handling. PPE is only one layer of protection; the safest approach is to identify hazards first, control or avoid them where possible, and use appropriate protective equipment for the remaining exposure.

IMPORTANT: No checklist can make an unknown environment automatically safe. If a condition cannot be identified, controlled or handled within the crew's training and capabilities, work in that area should pause until an appropriately qualified professional evaluates it.

Pre-Entry Safety Determinations

Access & Egress	Can workers enter and exit safely? Are doors, hallways, stairs or emergency routes blocked?
Structural Conditions	Are floors, stairs, ceilings, porches or walls visibly unstable, sagging, burned, water-damaged or otherwise questionable?
Utilities	Are electricity, gas and water conditions known? Are there exposed wires, leaking fixtures, damaged panels or utility concerns?
Air & Odor Conditions	Are there unusual chemical, sewage, fuel, decomposition, smoke or other strong odors that suggest an unidentified exposure?
Biological / Sanitation Conditions	Is there visible animal or human waste, bodily fluid, spoiled food, needles, decomposition, heavy mold-like growth or other contamination requiring additional controls or specialists?
Pests / Animals	Are aggressive animals, rodents, insects, fleas, ticks, wasps or wildlife present?
Sharps & Hidden Objects	Could needles, broken glass, nails, blades or other puncture hazards be concealed beneath debris?
Chemical / Unknown Materials	Are there unlabeled containers, pesticides, fuels, solvents, cylinders, powders, liquids or materials that should not be disturbed until identified?
Heat / Cold / Ventilation	Can the crew safely work for the expected duration given temperature, ventilation and hydration needs?
Manual Handling	Are heavy or awkward items present that require team lifting, dollies, mechanical assistance or a different removal plan?

Printable Site Safety & Precautions Checklist

Use this as an observational planning tool before or during a cleanout. Check only conditions that are known or observed. A checked item does not automatically mean the project is unsafe; it means the condition should be considered in the work plan.

ACCESS / PHYSICAL SAFETY	
☐ Clear entrance available	☐ Clear exit / emergency route
☐ Stairs appear stable	☐ Floors appear stable
☐ Adequate lighting available	☐ Loading path identified
☐ Trip hazards can be controlled	☐ Heavy-item plan established
SANITATION / BIOLOGICAL	
☐ Animal waste observed	☐ Human waste / bodily fluid observed
☐ Needles / sharps observed or suspected	☐ Spoiled food / organic waste
☐ Rodent / insect activity	☐ Strong decomposition / sewage odor
☐ Heavy mold-like growth observed	☐ Specialized evaluation may be needed
UTILITIES / ENVIRONMENT	
☐ Electrical condition known	☐ Exposed / damaged wiring observed
☐ Gas / fuel concern	☐ Water leak / standing water
☐ Unknown chemical containers	☐ Compressed cylinder / tank present
☐ Ventilation concern	☐ Extreme heat / cold concern
WORK CONTROLS	
☐ Restricted work zone established	☐ Occupants / bystanders separated from work area
☐ Crew communication plan	☐ First-aid supplies available
☐ Handwashing / hygiene plan	☐ Break / hydration plan
☐ Mechanical lifting aids available	☐ Waste streams / special disposal separated

PPE Selection: Match Protection to the Hazard

Work Gloves	General handling protection. Cut-resistant or puncture-resistant gloves may be appropriate where sharp materials are present.
Protective Footwear	Sturdy, closed-toe work boots with slip-resistant soles; safety-toe or puncture-resistant features may be appropriate for heavy or sharp debris.
Eye Protection	Safety glasses with side protection for general debris; sealed goggles may be appropriate for splash or high-dust tasks.
Protective Clothing	Durable work clothing; disposable or task-specific coveralls may be appropriate where contamination or heavy soil is present.

Respiratory Protection	Dust masks and respirators are not interchangeable. Respirator selection depends on the hazard. Tight-fitting respirators require an appropriate respiratory-protection program, including medical evaluation and fit testing, when required by OSHA.
Hearing Protection	May be needed when demolition tools, saws, vacuums or other equipment create hazardous noise.
Head Protection	May be appropriate where overhead, falling-object or impact hazards exist.
High-Visibility Apparel	Useful where crews work around traffic, roll-offs, loading zones or moving equipment.

Stop-Work / Escalation Triggers

Some conditions should trigger a pause rather than an improvised cleanup response. The correct next step may be isolation of the area, consultation with the referring party, or evaluation by a properly qualified contractor, utility, environmental professional, pest-control provider, law-enforcement agency, emergency service or other specialist.

■ Suspected asbestos-containing material or other regulated building material that would be disturbed
■ Unknown chemical, powder, liquid, pesticide, fuel or compressed-gas container
■ Strong or unexplained chemical / gas odor
■ Visible structural instability, collapse risk or unsafe floor / stair condition
■ Exposed energized electrical components or other serious utility hazard
■ Needles / sharps or biological contamination beyond the established work plan
■ Firearms, ammunition, explosives or suspicious devices
■ Active aggressive animal / wildlife condition that cannot be safely controlled
■ Conditions requiring respiratory protection beyond the crew's established program
■ Any condition the crew cannot identify or safely control within its training and equipment

Rules, Regulations & Professional Boundaries

Applicable requirements depend on the exact work being performed, the materials encountered, employee exposures and the disposal method. Relevant obligations can include OSHA workplace-safety requirements, respiratory-protection requirements, hazard communication, bloodborne-pathogen precautions where occupational exposure exists, local building or demolition requirements, landfill / transfer-station rules, and federal or state requirements for regulated materials. A cleanup provider should not represent itself as performing environmental remediation, structural inspection, hazardous-material abatement or other licensed/specialized work unless it is actually qualified and authorized to do so.

For current requirements: OSHA: osha.gov Kansas Department of Health and Environment: kdhe.ks.gov Local jurisdiction / disposal facility requirements should also be confirmed for the specific project.		
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Crew Safety Brief - Before Work Starts

■ Scope and areas authorized for work reviewed	■ Known hazards and restricted areas reviewed
■ Required PPE identified and available	■ Emergency exits and communication plan reviewed
■ Heavy-item / lifting plan reviewed	■ Special disposal streams identified
■ Stop-work triggers reviewed	■ Who can authorize scope changes identified

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