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Severe Storms and Natural Disaster Cleanup

This guidance document has been produced by the Nebraska Department of Water, Energy, and Environment (DWEE) to facilitate and coordinate the management of debris following storms and natural disasters. Natural disaster debris must be managed in accordance with Nebraska [Title 132 – Integrated Solid Waste Management Regulations](#).

Natural Disaster Debris Management Plan

Communities should develop a debris management plan that can serve as a basis for the community's preparation and response to a natural disaster or severe storms. The plan should address the types of natural disasters that are likely to occur in the community's geographical location. A prepared plan will also help communities in negotiating for financial aid and technical assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other government agencies.

A debris management plan should consider the following components:

- Identify types and amounts of debris based on different natural disaster types
- Develop a list of existing waste management facilities and disposal options in the area
- Pre-select temporary debris sorting and storage sites
- Identify available equipment, supplies and resources
- Develop a communication program that includes the general public, debris management team, and government agencies

Debris Management

Appliances

Appliances such as washers, dryers, water heaters, heat pumps, air conditioners, refrigerators, and freezers are banned from landfill disposal in Nebraska. DWEE recommends that appliances be recycled with special consideration given to those with intact refrigeration containing chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), such as freon. See the DWEE Guidance Document titled "Chlorofluorocarbons in Household Appliances and Vending Machines" for more information on CFCs. If recycling is not an option, many landfills will accept junk appliances for a fee. Contact the receiving landfill for any special instructions for acceptance of appliances.

Asbestos

Asbestos may be found in materials that include roofing, siding, insulation, vinyl floor tile, linoleum, and in products used for pipe and heating duct insulation. Friable asbestos materials are often described as dry, powdery, and capable of being airborne. Special measures should be taken when handling friable asbestos materials. Individuals certified in handling friable asbestos should manage this type of waste. Asbestos containing material, friable and non-friable, may be disposed of in a permitted Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) landfill. Non-friable asbestos materials may also be disposed of in a permitted Construction and Demolition (C&D) landfill. Contact the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Asbestos Program at (402) 471-0549 for specific information on the proper handling of asbestos materials.

Branches, Trees, and Vegetative Waste

Separate from other debris and send to a permitted community burn pile, dispose of in an unpermitted area, shred and use for mulch or compost, or dispose of in a permitted MSW or C&D landfill. Agricultural landowners may obtain a burn permit through the local fire authority that will allow for the burning of only natural wood and brush.

Construction and Demolition Debris

Construction debris is the structural material from houses and man-made structures that includes concrete, boards, shingles, windows, siding, and pipes. These materials can be taken to permitted C&D or MSW landfills. Some of the materials may also be separated and used as “fill” material for erosion control, erosion repair, and bank stabilization. “Fill” is described in Title 132, Chapter 1, [§041](#) as a solid waste that consists of only one or more of the following: sand, gravel, stone, soil, rock, brick, concrete rubble, asphalt rubble, or similar material. Any fill placed in waters of the U.S., which includes state or federally owned rivers, lakes, streams and wetlands, requires coordination with the Corps of Engineers to determine if a permit is needed.

Hazardous Wastes

Hazardous materials should be containerized, labeled, and sent to a permitted Treatment, Storage, and Disposal Facility (TSDF). Tracking will be required for these wastes. Regulations for the handling and disposal of hazardous materials can be found in Nebraska [Title 128 – Hazardous Waste Regulations](#). If there has been a spill involving potentially hazardous waste, immediately contact DWEE or other emergency personnel on-site and notify them of the situation.

Household Wastes

Household wastes such as regular trash and furniture should be sent to a MSW landfill for disposal.

Landfill Banned Wastes

Used oil, lead acid batteries, tires, and household appliances are banned from disposal in Nebraska landfills. These materials must be recycled or managed in a manner that does not constitute disposal in a landfill.

Floodwater Sandbag Re-use and Disposal

Sand or sandbags that have not contacted floodwater can be reused without restrictions. They may also be disposed of at a permitted construction and demolition (C&D) landfill or a municipal solid waste (MSW) landfill.

Due to the potential for contamination, sand and sandbags that have contacted floodwater should not be reused in ways that involve direct human contact such as in children's play areas or residential gardening. They may be disposed of at a permitted MSW landfill or used as "fill" in accordance with Title 132, Chapter 2, §002.01A. If used as fill, there should be no direct human contact to the material and an evaluation of potential impacts to groundwater may be required. Sand and sandbags that have been contaminated with hazardous materials should be handled and disposed of as hazardous waste.

Flood Damaged Grain, Hay, and Cornstalks

Drying Soaked Material

Storing wet grain, hay, and cornstalks in stacks or bundles should be avoided to limit the possibility of spontaneous combustion. Wet grain and hay should be spread out for drying. The dried material will be unusable for its original purpose and is not safe for consumption.

Land Application

Grain, hay, and cornstalks that are suspected to be contaminated with hazardous waste must be handled according to Title 128 and cannot be land applied.

Grain, hay, and cornstalks that are spoiled but not contaminated with hazardous materials can be taken to a permitted Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) landfill or land applied based on Title 132, Chapter 13, §003. Requests for land application can be made by submitting a DWEE Special Waste Characterization and Land Disposal Form. If the request is approved, DWEE will provide information on application procedures with the approval. Approval from DWEE must be obtained before beginning land application. Land applied material must be disked into the soil within 24 hours of application. Material should only be stockpiled for a short period of time before land application.

Cornstalks may be used to fill low spots in a field to promote growth and amend the soil if they are mixed with a significant amount of soil.

Burning

Flood damaged material may be burned as an exception to the general prohibition of open burning in Nebraska [Title 129 – Air Quality Regulations](#). A permit for open burning will not be required if the flood damaged material originated from the flooded site and there is no other debris or waste included in the material to be burned. A local burn permit should be obtained from the local fire department. The ash resulting from the burn must be disposed of at a permitted MSW.

Burial

Flood damaged grain, hay, and cornstalks cannot be buried and must be disposed of at a permitted MSW unless they are burned or land applied.

Flood Sediment Cleanup

During cleanup, measures should be taken to minimize the discharge of sediments and debris from cleanup operations into surface waters and the surrounding environment. Sediment and debris from flood waters are likely to contain microbial contaminants. When possible, allow accumulated material to naturally dewater and receive sunlight after floodwaters recede. UV radiation from sunlight will inactivate most of the microorganisms but will not render the material completely harmless.

Trash, debris, and other wastes should be separated from sediment and disposed of properly. Sediment accumulations should be disposed of at a landfill or stockpiled for use as “fill.” If sediment will be stockpiled for later use, the stockpile should be located away from wellheads and other sensitive areas.

Floodwaters can carry hazardous materials such as pesticides, petroleum products, and agricultural and industrial chemicals that are deposited into sediment. Toxic and hazardous material residues may also be deposited by floodwaters. Sediments containing hazardous materials must be handled as hazardous waste.

Residues may remain on surfaces after the removal of sediment accumulations. Residues on exterior surfaces may be removed with water with no restriction on discharge when detergents are not used. Wash waters generated from interior locations, or when detergents are used, must be directed to a sanitary sewer for treatment at a municipal wastewater treatment facility. Downstream locations should be monitored during cleanup to determine if discharge is affecting aquatic life. If there are signs of impact on aquatic life, cease activity immediately and contact DWEE.

Flood Damaged Structure Demolition

Refer to the DWEE Guidance Document titled “ABC’s of Demolition” for information on demolishing structures and buildings.

RESOURCES:

- DWEE Home Page <https://dwee.nebraska.gov/>
- Nebraska DHHS Website <https://dhhs.ne.gov/>

Contacts:

- DWEE Main Number (402) 471-2186
- DWEE Toll Free Number (877) 253-2603
- DWEE Hazardous Waste Compliance Assistant (402) 471-8308
- Email questions to: DWEE.moreinfo@nebraska.gov

DWEE Publications:

- Environmental Guidance Document – “General Asbestos Information”
- Environmental Guidance Document – “ABC’s of Demolition”
- Environmental Guidance Document – “Construction and Demolition Waste in Nebraska”
- Environmental Guidance Document – “Treated Wood Disposal Procedures”
- Environmental Guidance Document – “Household Hazardous Waste Regulations”
- Environmental Guidance Document – “Chlorofluorocarbons in Household Appliances and Vending Machines”
- Environmental Guidance Document – “Disposal of Animal Carcasses and Non-Disease Related Mass Mortality Events”
- DWEE Form – “Special Waste Characterization and Land Disposal Request Form”
Guidance documents are available on the DWEE website by clicking “Visit Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy (DEE),” selecting “Forms,” and “Publications, Grants & Forms.”
- [Title 128 – Nebraska Hazardous Waste Regulations](#)
- [Title 129 – Nebraska Air Quality Regulations](#)
- [Title 132 – Nebraska Integrated Solid Waste Management Regulations](#)
Titles are available on the DWEE website by clicking “Visit Nebraska Department of Environment and Energy (DEE),” selecting “Resources and Services,” “Laws & Regulations,” and “Rules & Regulations.”

Produced by: Nebraska Department of Water, Energy, and Environment, 245 Fallbrook Blvd. Ste.100, Lincoln, NE 68521; (402) 471-2186. To view this and other information related to our agency, visit our website at <https://dwee.nebraska.gov/>.

Attachment 1 Natural Disaster Clean-Up Directory

- **Appliances:** Not allowed in any landfill. Separate from other waste and recycle if possible or pay for disposal.
- **Asbestos:** Contact Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Asbestos Program at (402) 471-0549 for asbestos inspection and removal information prior to cleanup and disposal activities. Asbestos must be removed from any structure before disposal of associated building materials can occur.
- **Batteries:** Lead-acid batteries are not allowed in any landfill. Smaller batteries should be recycled if possible or may be disposed of in a Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) landfill. Try to prevent the ends from contacting each other and discharging, as it is a possible fire hazard.
- **Burning:** Burning of any structure damaged by a natural disaster is generally not allowed. Burn permits issued locally are only intended for the burning of natural wood, trees, and brush. Nebraska State Statute allows for the burning of a structure to educate and train members of an organized fire department. Before any structure can be destroyed by fire it must be reported to the State Fire Marshal and have a permit issued for that purpose. Nebraska State Fire Marshal: (402) 471-2027.
- **Construction and Demolition Waste:** Collect and aggregate in a single area, remove all recyclable materials before disposal. This waste must be disposed of at a permitted MSW landfill or a Construction and Demolition (C&D) landfill.
- **Electronics:** Remove recyclable materials and dispose of at a MSW landfill. Cathode ray tube (CRT) televisions and monitors from businesses must be handled as hazardous waste.
- **Household Hazardous Waste (HHW):** Segregate from solid waste. If there is no HHW service or collection point available, the waste may be disposed of at a MSW landfill.
- **Industrial Hazardous Waste:** Report all spills and releases to DWEE at (402) 471-2186 or (877) 253-2603. For after hours, holidays, and weekends, report to Nebraska State Patrol Dispatch at (402) 479-4921. Contained wastes must be handled, contained, and disposed of as per Nebraska Title 128.
- **Infectious Waste:** Must be rendered non-infectious before disposal in a MSW landfill. Often this material is handled by a waste service provider that will render the waste non-infectious by incineration.
- **Municipal and Industrial Waste:** Must be disposed of at a MSW landfill.
- **Oil and Oil Wastes:** All spills over 25 gallons must be reported to DWEE at (402) 471-2186 or (877) 253-2603. For after hours, holidays, and weekends, report to Nebraska State Patrol Dispatch at (402) 479-4921. Contained oils must be recycled or properly disposed of through a used oil marketer or waste service provider.
- **Scrap Metal:** Sheet metal, damaged large appliances, vehicles, etc. Professionally drain all fluids from vehicles, safely remove Freon from appliances, and prepare all scrap for safe recycling before disposal.
- **Tires:** Tires are not allowed in any landfill. Segregate from other waste and wait for a local tire collection or pay for disposal.
- **Trees, Brush, and other Storm Debris:** Pile on-site away from other solid waste and remove any treated wood. Transport to a local permitted burn site, C&D landfill, local temporary storm debris accumulation area, or obtain a burn permit through the local fire department for natural wood, trees, and brush.

Debris removal guidelines

In efforts to expedite the debris removal process, please follow these rules

Placing debris **near or on trees, poles or other structures** makes removal difficult. This includes fire hydrants and meters.

Debris separation

Please separate debris into the **six categories**, shown below.

Electronics

Television, computer, stereo, phone, DVD player

Large Appliances

Refrigerator, washer/dryer, air conditioner, stove, water heater, dishwasher

Do not leave doors **unsealed or unsecured**

Hazardous waste

Oil, battery, pesticide, paint, cleaning supplies, compressed gas

Vegetative debris

Tree branches, leaves, logs, plants

Construction debris

Building materials, drywall, lumber, carpet, plumbing

Household garbage

Bagged garbage, discarded food, paper, packaging, furniture.

Debris should be placed curbside

Debris should not **block roadway**

10 feet

NEBRASKA

DEPT. OF WATER, ENERGY, AND ENVIRONMENT

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