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## Natural Disaster Debris Management

The following guidance is provided to facilitate and coordinate the management of debris following a natural disaster. Disaster debris resulting from man-made destructive events may have considerations that go beyond the scope of this guidance document. Proper and planned management of natural disaster debris will be beneficial in preventing a threat to human health and the environment, and will also expedite recovery efforts in an impacted area. Types of natural disasters may vary for specific geographical locations; therefore, debris management practices and plans will not all be the same. In the Midwest, and more specifically in Nebraska, some of the more prevalent weather-related disasters may be the result of tornadoes, strong winds, floods, and snow and ice storms.

The Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality (NDEQ) is the state agency that regulates the management and disposal of solid waste. Natural disaster debris must be managed in accordance with Title 132 – Integrated Solid Waste Management Regulations. The debris may ultimately be placed in a municipal solid waste disposal area or a construction and demolition waste disposal area. The Department provides a list of all permitted solid waste management facilities, their location and contacts on its website at <http://deq.ne.gov>.

Clean-up following a natural disaster event may involve sorting and characterizing the debris and disposing or managing it in several different approved manners as follows:

- **Appliances**, such as washers, dryers, water heaters, heat pumps, air conditioners, refrigerators and freezers are banned from landfill disposal in Nebraska. (Title 132, Chapter 1, §034) NDEQ recommends that they be recycled with special consideration given to those appliances that still have intact refrigeration and or contain chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). If recycling is not an option some landfills will accept Discarded Household Appliances for a fee; they are then sequestered on site until they can be recycled in bulk at a later date. As with any uncommon disposal item, contact the receiving MSW Landfill for special instruction for and acceptance of those materials.
- **Asbestos** containing material, friable and non-friable, may be disposed in a permitted municipal solid waste disposal area. Friable asbestos material may be described as being dry and powdery and capable of being airborne. Non-friable asbestos materials may be disposed in a permitted construction and demolition disposal area. Special measures should be taken when handling friable asbestos materials. Individuals certified in handling friable asbestos should manage this type of waste. Asbestos-containing products may include roofing, siding, insulation, vinyl floor tile or linoleum. Asbestos also may be found in products used for pipe and heating duct insulation. Contact the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services at (402) 471-0386 for notification documents and specific information on the proper handling of asbestos and asbestos containing materials.

- **Branches, Trees and Brush Waste** can be separated from other debris and then sent to a permitted community burn pile, disposed in an un-permitted area, shredded and used for mulch or composted, disposed in a municipal solid waste (MSW) disposal area or a construction and demolition (C&D) waste disposal area. Agricultural land owners may obtain a burn permit, if allowed, through their local fire authority. This burn permit will only allow for burn disposal of natural wood and brush.
- **Construction & Demolition Debris** is the structural debris from houses and building and other man-made structures. This material can be taken to the nearest permitted C&D disposal area or a permitted MSW disposal area. Some demolition debris from a natural disaster area also may be sorted and some of the material recycled or used as “fill” as specified in Title 132, Chapter 2, §002. Fill is solid material consisting of one or more of the following: sand, gravel, stone, soil, rock, brick, concrete rubble, asphalt rubble or similar material.
- **Exception to the Regulation** – Title 132, Chapter 2, §002.01J allows “upon permission of the director, the deposit of building demolition material resulting from the clean-up from a natural disaster” in a location other than a permitted solid waste disposal area. Also, Title 132, Chapter 2, §002.01E allows “the deposition of on-farm building demolition waste generated by an individual and disposed on location if such location is agricultural in nature”. This means that an empty farm building, following a properly conducted asbestos inspection and removal, can be demolished and buried on site. NDEQ does not allow unpermitted burning of unwanted structures or debris.
- **Hazardous Wastes** – If the disaster debris contains regulated hazardous wastes, these materials should be containerized, labeled and sent to a designated disposal facility. Household hazardous waste (HHW) may be collected from the debris, containerized and, with proper planning, disposed along with other regulated hazardous wastes. Also, household hazardous waste can be disposed at a municipal solid waste landfill. Specific circumstances may dictate the choice of disposal method. Contact NDEQ at (402) 471-2186, or after hours at (402) 471-4545, to discuss proper handling and disposal procedures.
- **Household and Commercial Waste** such as regular trash and discarded furniture, which does not fit into another category on this list, should be sent to a permitted MSW disposal area.
- **Landfill Banned Waste** – This type of waste includes used oil, lead acid batteries, household appliances (see above) and waste tires. These materials must be recycled or managed in an approved manner not to include disposal in a landfill. (State Statute 13-2039)

The NDEQ has developed guidance documents that may address specific types of disaster debris and information on how they should be managed. These guidance documents can be found on the Department’s website: <http://deq.ne.gov/> under “Publications & Forms”. The titles of these selected guidance documents are:

- CFCs and Household Appliances/Vending Machines
- Construction and Demolition Waste in Nebraska
- Disposal of Animal Carcasses
- Flood Damaged Grain & Hay
- Flood Damaged Structure Demolition and Disposal
- Flood Sediment Cleanup
- Floodwater Sandbag Re-use and Disposal

- General Asbestos Information
- Guidance for Cleanup Following Tornadoes and Severe Storms
- Household Hazardous Waste Regulations
- Treated Wood Disposal Procedures

Preparation prior to a natural-disaster is very important in the management and disposal or handling of natural disaster debris. A natural-disaster debris management plan will aid in an efficiently organized response to a natural disaster. An in-place plan will also aid communities in negotiating for financial and technical assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other government agencies. A debris management plan may still have shortcomings; however it can be a basis for a community's preparation and response to a natural disaster.

A natural-disaster debris management plan should consider the following components:

- Identify possible types of debris and amounts of the debris
- Develop a list of applicable federal, state and local agencies
- Develop a list of debris-management facilities in the area
- Pre-select temporary debris sorting and storage sites
- Identify equipment, supply needs and resources
- Develop a communication program to include a debris-management team, the general public and government agencies

In summary, communities need to develop a debris-management plan to address the types of natural disasters that are likely to occur for their geographical location. An understanding of the type and possible sizes of natural disasters will dictate the type and amount of debris that may be generated. A list of existing waste-management facilities, local temporary storage/staging areas and various disposal options should be a major part of the plan. Also, an inventory of pre-negotiated contracts or a list of pre-qualified contractors for managing debris will help the process of the clean-up to move in an efficient manner. It will also be important to make sure that administrative supplies and equipment are available to help ensure the activation of the debris-management plan. Once the disaster debris management plan has been established it will be important to communicate with the public so they have a general understanding of the procedure and when the plan would be activated.

## **RESOURCES:**

- NDEQ Home Page: <http://deq.ne.gov/>

## **Contacts:**

- NDEQ Waste Management Section (402) 417-4210
- NDEQ Toll Free Number (877) 253-2603
- NDEQ Hazardous Waste Compliance Assistance (402) 471-8308
- Email questions to: [NDEQ.moreinfo@nebraska.gov](mailto:NDEQ.moreinfo@nebraska.gov)

## **Guidance Documents and Regulations:**

- [Title 128 – Nebraska Hazardous Waste Regulations](#)
  - [Title 132 – Integrated Solid Waste Management Regulations](#)
- Titles are available on the NDEQ Home Page under "Laws/Regs & EQC", "Rules & Regulations"*

- NDEQ Guidance Document – Floodwater Sandbag Re-use and Disposal
- NDEQ Guidance Document – Flood Damaged Grain & Hay
- NDEQ Guidance Document – CFCs and Household Appliances/Vending Machines
- NDEQ Guidance Document – Construction and Demolition Waste in Nebraska
- NDEQ Guidance Document – Disposal of Animal Carcasses
- NDEQ Guidance Document – Flood Damaged Structure Demolition and Disposal
- NDEQ Guidance Document – Flood Sediment Cleanup
- NDEQ Guidance Document – General Asbestos Information
- NDEQ Guidance Document – Guidance for Cleanup Following Tornadoes and Severe Storms
- NDEQ Guidance Document – Household Hazardous Waste Regulations
- NDEQ Guidance Document – Treated Wood Disposal Procedures
- NDEQ Guidance Document – Waste Determinations & Hazardous Waste Testing
- NDEQ Guidance Document – Waste Service Providers Directory

*NDEQ Guidance Documents can be found on the NDEQ Website under "Publications & Forms"*

#### **Additional Resources:**

- United States Environmental Protection Agency – Office of Solid Waste – EPA – 530-K-08-001 (publication), website: [www.epa.gov/osw](http://www.epa.gov/osw) \*
- EPA's Disaster Debris Website: <https://www.epa.gov/large-scale-residential-demolition/disaster-debris-planning> \*
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) "Public Assistance: Debris Management Guide" (publication 325) updated July 2007. This guide can be found on FEMA's website at: <http://www.fema.gov/pdf/government/grant/pa/demagde.pdf> \*
- FEMA's Emergency Management Institute (EMI) has several courses on debris management and etc. A complete listing of EMI's training courses can be found at: <http://training.fema.gov> \*

**\* This document contains links to non-NDEQ websites; these links will open in a new tab or window.**