

Disaster Debris Management

Background

This fact sheet provides guidelines for local governments on how to manage debris resulting from storms or other weather disasters to protect public health and the environment. This information includes:

- 1) DEQ's role in coordinating information and assisting local communities
- 2) Disaster debris best management practices
- 3) DEQ approval for changes at permitted solid waste sites
- 4) How to get approval for temporary disaster debris sites

A local government must coordinate and communicate with DEQ on disaster debris location and handling to facilitate federal government reimbursement for emergency response costs. Tell DEQ about debris collection sites so DEQ can inform residents. DEQ will issue news releases to local media and put information on its website.

Best management practices for disaster debris

- First priority is health and safety. Approach buildings and other debris areas only if safe to do so.
- First remove waste that will rot. This includes all food wastes, dead animals and household garbage.
- Sort as much debris on site as possible.
- If safe to do so, secure containers of liquids to prevent spills.
- Contact Oregon Emergency Response System, also known as OERS, if there are containers that may have breached and contents are unknown. Secure the spill area.
- **Take caution in disturbing asbestos-containing material.** Keep this material damp, covered and isolated to prevent release of hazardous asbestos fibers.
- The property owner may be able to provide information on the presence of asbestos-containing material.
- Use respiratory protection if handling suspected asbestos-containing material.

At debris collection sites

- Follow any applicable emergency operations plan that addresses disaster debris management.
- Set up the collection site to provide surfaces to contain spills. Do this by providing berms around paved areas and closing off storm drains and/or using a liner. Mark areas for different types of debris. Mark off the site with caution tape to control access, as appropriate.
- Sort debris for better recovery and disposal. Keep clean wood that is not treated or painted, yard debris and fallen trees separate from other wastes to ease grinding/chipping. Use chipped wood and yard/tree waste on site for berms or groundcover, or move woody debris offsite for composting or hog fuel boiler fuel.
- Send commercial demolition debris to approved landfills. Sort demolition debris at the site where it occurred, if possible. Sort waste into wood, metal, glass and other categories. Identify materials for recycling.
- Provide separate entrances and exits from the disaster debris collection site for commercial haulers and local residents. This will prevent vehicle accidents and provide safe areas for individuals to unload waste.

Handling hazardous materials

Isolate containers of hazardous materials, including household materials such as cleaning products, paints and oils, and place these containers within spill containment areas if safe to do so.

Since hazardous materials require special handling, call the local county hazardous waste specialist for technical assistance or Oregon Emergency Response System at 1-800-452-0311 for spill response, or contact local collection depots if one is available.

Get DEQ approval for disaster debris sites

Existing permitted solid waste facilities, transfer stations, landfills, material recovery facilities and compost facilities may need to make operations changes in response to a disaster.



State of Oregon
Department of
Environmental
Quality

Eastern Region Solid Waste Program

Contact: Liz Clark
541-298-7255 ext. 221
Email:
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Western Region Hazardous and Solid Waste Compliance and Permitting Section

Contact: Craig Filip
541-686-7868
Email:
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Northwest Region

2020 SW 4th Avenue
Suite 400
Portland, OR 97201
Phone: 503-229-5263
800-452-4011
Fax: 503-229-6945
Contact: Audrey O'Brien
503-229-229-5072
Email:
Obrien.audrey@deq.state.or.us

Contact the appropriate local DEQ office if you need to do any of the following:

- Increase the volume of acceptable wastes beyond any permit limits.
- Set up areas for collection of wastes not allowed under the permit. This should only apply to those wastes that staff or contractors at the site can safely handle.
- Open to the public or to haulers who do not usually use the site. Assure that the public has safe access to the site.
- Process waste on site that is not part of normal operations.

Use alternatives to burning

DEQ strongly recommends using alternatives to burning to protect public health from harmful fine particles and toxic air pollutants in smoke. Give priority to chipping or grinding wood waste and yard debris for reuse. DEQ will help by finding locations to use or store chipped wood waste and yard debris.

If burning waste is deemed necessary to protect public health, contact the local DEQ office for the legally required DEQ approval and emergency burn permit **before burning**. DEQ may determine that the site, the wastes and the need to burn are not warranted and offer alternatives. Burning certain wastes, including rubber and plastics, is prohibited.

For a temporary disaster debris facility

- If possible, identify temporary sites that are large, flat, paved and publicly owned for temporary disaster debris sorting and storage.
- To protect surface water and groundwater, provide a hard work surface instead of working on the ground, close off access to stormwater drains and use physical barriers to prevent spills from going off site.
- **DEQ can issue a temporary Solid Waste Letter of Authorization for a temporary facility.** Having this letter helps the facility comply with state law, which can affect the ability to get Federal Emergency Management Agency reimbursements. DEQ would need the following as soon as possible before site use:
 - Written statement of land owner's permission
 - Land Use Compatibility Statement from the local land-use authority or planning department.

- If using a site for temporary storage that was used in previous emergencies or is identified in your emergency response plan.
- Location and size of site on a map
- Roads and road conditions leading to and from site
- Distance to surface water, including wetlands
- Actions taken to prevent release of contaminants to surfacewater and groundwater.
- Site operation information: operator, hours, fees, security, emergency/spill response

DEQ may need additional information. If the site is located in a sensitive area and cannot be operated in a way that protects the environment, DEQ may not be able to permit it.

Contacts:

For help on debris management, including setting up temporary disaster debris sites and hazardous waste collection at those sites, contact:

Northwest Region - Clackamas, Clatsop, Columbia, Multnomah, Tillamook and Washington Counties:

Audrey O'Brien, 503-229-5072

Western Region - Benton, Coos, Curry, Douglas, Jackson, Josephine, Lane, Lincoln, Linn, Marion, Polk and Yamhill Counties:

Craig Filip, 541-686-7868

Eastern Region - Baker, Crook, Deschutes, Gilliam, Grant, Harney, Hood River, Jefferson, Klamath, Lake, Malheur, Morrow, Sherman, Umatilla, Union, Wallowa and Wheeler Counties: Liz Clark, 541-298-7255, ext. 221

Hazardous materials management,

Dave Kunz (Northwest Region), Portland, 503-229-5336; Bart Collinsworth (Western Region), Salem, at 503-378-5071, or Lissa Druback (Eastern Region), The Dalles, 541-298-7255, ext.222. To report a hazardous spill, contact Oregon Emergency Management, 800-452-0311 for spill response.

Water quality or air quality issues,

Call **800-452-4011** and ask for the DEQ contact.

Alternative formats

Alternative formats (Braille, large type) of this document can be made available. Contact the DEQ Office of Communications and Outreach, Portland, at 503-229-5696, or call toll-free in Oregon, 800-452-4011, ext. 5696.

