



Kentucky Department for Environmental Protection

FACT SHEET

Disposing of storm and flood debris



The Kentucky Department for Environmental Protection (DEP) has specific guidelines for proper disposal of debris left in the aftermath of severe weather. DEP wants storm-affected Kentuckians to be aware of health, safety, and compliance hazards associated with debris handling and disposal. These hazards include, but are not limited to, burning of debris, asbestos removal, and mold growth.

Kentuckians should contact their local [solid waste coordinator](#) to learn if debris will be picked up curbside or if debris must be taken to a designated location.

Recycling is the preferred disposal method for many kinds of debris. Local governments are strongly encouraged to recycle woody and vegetative debris by composting, shredding or chipping for reuse as mulch. Those lacking the equipment should consider commercial shredders or seek help from other cities and counties. Information on recycling is available on the Division of Waste Management's [recycling page](#).

Kentucky restricts [open burning](#). Burning is permitted only in limited circumstances and under specific conditions. The burning of household trash other than uncoated paper products is illegal year-round.

If it is not feasible to recycle all debris, cities or counties should identify staging areas where debris can be temporarily stored or, in the case of woody and vegetative debris, burned. At a minimum, staging areas must be well away from residences and businesses. They also must be out of floodplains, away from sinkholes, drainage channels and overhead power lines.

Local officials should contact the [DEP regional office](#) with proposed staging areas. DEP staff will inspect the site to ensure it meets specific environmental criteria. Once a staging area is approved, material may be disposed using any combination of the following methods:

- Chip or shred for reuse. Use the material for landscaping or allow the public to take it for landscaping purposes; take it to a permitted composting facility; contact animal clinics/farms for use as animal bedding; contact industrial plants for use as supplemental fuel source; contact manufacturers who may be able to use it as raw materials; chipped material may also be used as ground cover or a soil amendment.
- Storm-generated vegetative debris managed at a staging area may be disposed of in a permitted construction and debris landfill.
- Use controlled burning. Local fire departments should oversee the burning and ensure there are adequate fire breaks. To be in compliance with state regulations, all trash, tires, white goods, construction/demolition debris, etc. must be removed prior to burning. To minimize environmental impact, debris should not be burned until dry, at least on exterior surfaces. Small amounts of clean diesel fuel or kerosene, not to exceed five gallons, may be used to aid ignition. Storm-damaged building materials, appliances and furniture may not be burned. After burning, storm debris ashes may not be buried. **There are three options for ash disposal.** 1) Small amounts of ash may be incorporated into the soil at the staging area using a tractor and disc. 2) The ash may be given away to farmers for use as a soil amendment. 3) The ash can be disposed at a permitted landfill. If this option is used, please notify the landfill before transporting the waste to them to ensure this meets their waste acceptance criteria. This option cannot be used if the waste is hot, smoldering, or if other fire hazard concerns exist.

Residents and property owners should separate storm and flood debris for curbside pickup or hauling by the local government to a central stage area or an appropriate landfill along these lines:

- **Woody and vegetative waste** – Recycling by shredding or chipping is encouraged. If recycling is not feasible, contact the local [solid waste coordinator](#) for additional disposal information. Local governments should contact a [Division of Forestry regional office](#) and [DEP regional office](#) for approval of burning of woody and vegetative waste.
- **White goods** – This includes refrigerators, stoves, water heaters, air conditioning units and washer/dryers. Damaged appliances can be picked up by a hauler and taken to a recycling center or county staging area. Information on recycling centers is available on the Division of Waste Management's [recycling page](#). Freon must be recovered prior to crushing or recycling.
- **Construction and demolition debris** – **All storm-related construction/demolition debris should be treated as potentially asbestos contaminated material (ACM) and maintained in a wet condition from demolition to final disposal activity.** Building materials – bricks, concrete, masonry, rock, wood or lumber, insulation – may be disposed of at a permitted construction and demolition landfill or a contained landfill. Landfill locations are available by calling the Division of Waste Management's Solid Waste Branch at 502-782-6369. For questions regarding asbestos, consult the Division for Air Quality's website at air.ky.gov/asbestos or call 502-564-3999. For information on handling debris that could pose other public-health problems, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website at <https://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/floods/>.
- **Contained landfill/household garbage** – Garbage and residential waste must go to a contained landfill. Please contact the county to see if they will have a special household hazardous waste (pesticides, dried latex paint) collection. If there is no household hazardous waste pickup, waste can be disposed at a permitted landfill. All paint and liquid waste must be disposed in solid form. This can be accomplished by adding an absorbent, such as cat litter, to the material.
- **Mold problems-** For information on addressing mold problems, visit DEP's and the EPA's websites at <http://air.ky.gov/Pages/Mold.aspx> and <http://www.epa.gov/mold/moldresources.html>.

Special handling applies to:

- **Livestock carcasses** – Contact the Department of Agriculture's [Office of the State Veterinarian](#) at 502-782-5901 for information and assistance on proper disposal.
- **55 gallon drums or tanks** – Do not attempt to move a drum/tank, since it may contain hazardous materials or waste. Note the location and contact either the local disaster services office or a [DEP regional office](#).
- **Waterways** – Any cleanup of waterways impacted by recent flood events, including cleanups conducted by KY Transportation Cabinet or local/county entities, should contact the appropriate [DEP regional office](#) for siting permit requirements and proper management of the waste.

Other sources of online storm-recovery information include:

- **Kentucky Department of Insurance** – [Before and After the Storm: Settling Disaster Claims](#)
- **American Red Cross** – [After a Disaster](#)

Department for Environmental Protection contacts:

- **Division for Air Quality:** 300 Sower Boulevard, Frankfort KY 40601
Phone: 502-564-3999 E-mail: burnlaw@ky.gov Web site: <http://air.ky.gov/>
- **Division of Waste Management:** 300 Sower Boulevard, Frankfort KY 40601
Phone: 502-564-6716 E-mail: waste@ky.gov Web site: <http://waste.ky.gov/>

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