



State of Illinois  
Pat Quinn, Governor

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency  
John Kim, Interim Director

## Fact Sheet

# Debris Issues from Storms or Floods

### Dealing with Flood Debris and Water Concerns

Even after floodwaters recede and the storms have passed debris remains that can cause serious pollution problems and potentially result in ill health effects. The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (Illinois EPA) has developed this fact sheet to outline what you can do to ensure that the waste and debris are disposed of in a safe and environmentally sound manner. Please follow these guidelines to dispose of the debris.

Any questions about which materials can be landfilled, burned or recycled will be answered promptly by calling:

Landfill waste material – 217-524-3300  
Open burning waste – 217-782-2113  
Immediate emergency – 800-782-7860  
Outdoor chemical contamination – 217-782-3637.

### Recycling Flood Waste

Household appliances, also known as “white goods,” can be recycled by taking them to a local scrap dealer, who will remove potentially harmful components. For information on scrap dealers in your area check the yellow pages or call a local appliance retailer.

Tires must be disposed at a registered commercial processing facility. Units of local government may accumulate used and waste tires recovered via flood cleanup. It is important to drain all used tires collected from the flood of standing water and to store them in a manner that prevents the further accumulation of water. Contact the Illinois EPA at 217/785-8604 for further information and possible assistance.

In addition, we encourage other recyclable materials to be separated and recycled such as glass, metal debris and plastics.

### Flood Water Sand Re-use and Disposal

Flood water sand may be contaminated with human and animal waste, oil and gasoline residue, and farm chemicals such as fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides.

- Sand or sandbags that did not contact floodwater can be reused without restrictions;
- Sand or sandbags that contacted floodwater should not be reused in ways that would involve direct human contact, such as in children’s play areas or in residential gardening;
- Sand or sandbags that are visually contaminated, with oil or fecal matter, for example, should be disposed as waste at a landfill.

Visual inspection of the sand as well as local emergency responder knowledge can be used to assist in determining if sand has come into



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contact with flood waters. When in doubt, it is generally safer to assume that the sand has come into contact with flood waters.

**Household Hazardous  
Flood Waste Disposal**

Household hazardous waste (HHW) and other chemical products should be disposed of properly to avoid health and pollution risks. HHW should be placed in plastic bags and left with traditional household garbage at the curb for normal collection.

**Sealed Drum and Propane  
Tank Disposal**

Sealed drums, propane tanks and other pressurized gas cylinders with unknown contents should not be handled by untrained persons. Please notify the Illinois EPA Office of Emergency Response at 217-782-3637 or Illinois Emergency Management Agency at 800-782-7860.

To dispose of propane tanks, contact the nearest propane distributor. Propane tanks have serial numbers that will allow for identification of tank owners and locations.

**Landfilling Flood  
Waste**

You may dispose of the following items in your local landfill: lumber, sandbags, plastic sheeting, shingles, insulation, animal carcasses, grain, animal feed, food, carpet, furniture, metal debris and machinery. Additionally, you may want to check with the operator of your local landfill to see if trees, branches, brush and other flood debris similar to landscape waste may be temporarily accepted there for disposal and, if so, for how long. Landscape compost facilities may also accept this type of material as long as it is not mixed with other types of flood debris.

**Flood Sediments**

Care should be taken not to cause nuisance conditions in removing and accumulating flood sediment. If the sediments are contaminated and removed from the property at which they were found after the flood, these materials must be disposed of in a permitted landfill.

**Burning Flood Waste**

**Tree limbs, brush, natural wood and plant debris:**

- Burned on site where generated: No Permit Necessary
- At community sites under supervision by unit of local government: No Permit Necessary

**Agricultural Waste (bags, cartons, dry bedding, structural materials and crop residue):**

- Burned on site where generated: No Permit Necessary

**Clean wood building debris, lumber, and canvas sandbags:**

- Permit is necessary from Illinois EPA: Permit Needed

**If Permit is Required:**

Complete an Open Burning Permit Application Form found at:  
<http://www.epa.state.il.us/air/permits/openburn/index.html>

**General Conditions for the Open Burning of Disaster Debris:**

- 1) Coordinate the burn with the local Fire Protection District;
- 2) Conduct the burn when the wind is blowing away from roadways, railroad tracks, airfields, and populated areas;

**..Burning Flood Waste,**

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- 3) Provide on-site supervision of the burn location;
- 4) Burning should occur only from approximately 9 am to 6 pm to achieve the best natural smoke dispersion conditions.

**Asbestos-containing materials and tires – burning not allowed under any circumstances!**

**Drinking Water Concerns After the Flood**

**Public Water Supplies:** Be sure to listen to special announcements about local boil orders that may be in effect regarding public water supplies. If a local advisory is issued, the safest route is to drink bottled water or juices. If you must use water during boil order conditions, it must be boiled vigorously for at least five minutes. Water used to make ice, brush teeth, or wash dishes must also be boiled.

**Private Wells:** Your local public health department or the Illinois Department of Public Health regional office will provide you with information and assistance in testing your well. Additional tips on safety of private wells may be found at: <http://www.epa.state.il.us/well-water/index.html>.

**Is there a concern about oil from electrical transformers on downed power poles leaking into the environment?**

Yes. After storms, electrical transformers on downed power poles have the potential to leak oil into the environment. Some transformers still contain polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), which are persistent and toxic environmental pollutants. If you see downed transformers, please alert local officials who can then contact the appropriate electrical utility company about disposal or cleanup. If you observe leaks from a transformer, you may contact an Illinois EPA Regional office during business hours at <http://www.epa.state.il.us/land/regions/> or call Illinois Emergency Management Agency at 800-782-7860 or 217-782-7860 and time.

**What about electronics waste?**

A new law went into effect at the beginning of 2012 that bans most electronics items from landfills. You will find information on the link <http://www.epa.state.il.us/land/electronic-waste-recycling/index.html>, and you may see a list of retailers that take certain electronics at <http://epadata.epa.state.il.us/land/eWaste/crr-list.asp>.

**Electronics Banned from Illinois Landfills as of January 2012**

Televisions	Monitors
Printers	Computers (laptop, notebook, tablet, desktop)
Electronic Keyboards	Facsimile Machines
Videocassette Recorders	Portable Digital Music Players
Digital Video Disc Players & Recorders	Video Game Consoles
Small Scale Servers	Scanners
Electronic Mice	Digital Converter Boxes
Cable Receivers	Satellite Receivers
Cell phones	