



# Debris Management Plans

Tree branches, propane tanks, the shattered remains of buildings and other floating objects that are swept along by floodwater can jam at bridges and other choke-points and cause flooding during storm events. Once the storm is passed the logistics of getting rid of the debris that blocks roads, creates hazards and piles up in farm fields and neighborhoods can be overwhelming. Municipalities can anticipate the problems caused by debris during and after floods and prepare a plan to keep water channels clear of debris during floods and to organize a safe, efficient and cost-effective cleanup operation after.

## Why it Matters

Debris removal, including collecting and disposing of debris after a storm, is primarily a local responsibility. Municipalities must deal with debris on public property and in the public rights-of-way. There may also be situations where they need to help individual landowners assess and deal with debris. Debris can include a variety of materials – some hazardous, some reusable, and much of it somewhere in between.

Municipalities that have planned for debris management are better prepared to restore public services and ensure public health and safety in the aftermath of a disaster. Plus, they are better positioned to receive the full level of assistance available to them from FEMA, NRCS, and other funding organizations.

## How to Prepare a Debris Management Plan

For an effective Debris Management Plan, whether simple or complex, municipalities should aim to address the questions in the following checklist. This can be done as an extension of the [Local Emergency Operations Plan \(LEOP\)](#). For more detailed information, please review the Towns and Cities section of the [State Debris Management plan in Support Annex 6 of the Vermont](#)

### EXAMPLE

#### **Barre City: lessons learned helped prepare for Irene**

Immediately after the 2011 spring floods that caused significant damage in Barre City, officials surveyed, documented and mapped the damage. The photos were very helpful for the city's Department of Public Works to assess areas that required immediate attention while the town examined patterns of damage over a longer term period. Based what was learned from these analyses, several months later, Barre City spent a week clearing culverts and preparing for Tropical Storm Irene. Backhoes were staged at bridges and culverts where debris typically accumulates and so it could be removed during the storm. Consequently, damages to Barre City from Irene were minimized.



[Emergency Operations Plan \(SEOP\)](#). A simple Debris Management Plan Template for Vermont municipalities is attached to this document.

Municipal Debris Management plans should comply with [Appendix G of FEMA-325 Debris Management Guide](#) and be consistent with the [State Debris Management Annex](#). A Municipal Debris Management Plan is not required as eligibility for FEMA reimbursements.

✓	TASK	CONSIDERATIONS
	<b>Define roles and responsibilities</b> – who does what when?	Identify a debris project manager and depending on the size of the community, assign local officials to administration, legal, operations and planning roles.
	<b>Situation and Assumptions</b> – What kind of debris do you expect and where?	Review the history and debris removal records of past disasters in your community or if records are limited, then access those of nearby jurisdictions.
	<b>Debris Removal and Collection Plan</b> – Where will you focus your efforts during and immediately after a disaster and during the recovery operations?	Determine if heavy equipment needs to be staged at bridges where debris has jammed and caused flooding previously. Check with the ANR River Management staff to determine in advance if debris should be removed from rivers and streams. Identify where you will prioritize your debris removal efforts and how to collect hazardous and other specialized waste.
	<b>Debris Management Sites</b> – Where and how will you create safe, effective sites for collecting, sorting and processing debris?	Unless there are special circumstances most municipalities do not need to identify collection sites because Vermont’s current solid waste management system of private waste haulers, augmented by municipal forces or contractors will be capable of transporting waste to the existing, public and private collection and transfer facilities.
	<b>Contracted Services</b> – How will you obtain the assistance needed to complete the debris removal and who can provide those services?	By late 2015 the State of Vermont will establish comprehensive statewide debris management contracts and expects that municipalities will be able to procure services under these master contracts. Contact <a href="#">Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security</a> for further information. If a master contract is not available, or for smaller disasters, municipalities can benefit from preparing contracts in advance that will satisfy FEMA reimbursement requirements
	<b>Private Property Demolition and Debris Removal</b> – How and when will you condemn private property and assist with removal of hazardous materials?	Municipalities should not handle private debris removal unless it is necessary to protect public infrastructure or to ensure public safety. If the need to remove debris from private property arises, municipalities should first review relevant FEMA and State policies and consult with the Town Attorney.
	<b>Public Information Plan</b> – How will you get the word out to the public on how debris will be handled?	Determine who will serve as a Public Information Officer to coordinate information about safe debris removal and the municipality’s removal process through multiple media. Target the message to residents, businesses, institutions and the media.

## TIPS

**Maximize Reimbursements – Document Damages and Expenses!**

Costs of municipal debris removal may be approved for federal reimbursement. In the event of a Federally-Declared Disaster, a percentage of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) disaster relief funds are spent on disaster debris related activities.

If possible, determine eligibility and any requirements before beginning work on debris removal. If work must proceed before, it is important to document why the debris removal is in the public interest. Take photos and track all expenses associated with debris removal. Main sources of funding are:

[Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\) Public Assistance](#)

[Natural Resource Conservation Service \(NRCS\) Emergency Watershed Protection Program](#)

In the event of a federal disaster declaration, the state and local communities generally share in the financial match required for federal assistance, and will work together to find the most cost-effective means to achieve the restoration of both the community and environment.

**Is the Debris Removal in the Public Interest?**

To be eligible for FEMA reimbursement, debris work must be in the public interest, which is defined as work necessary to meet the following:

- Eliminate immediate threats to life, public health and safety;
- Eliminate immediate threats of significant damage to improved public or private property;
- Ensure economic recovery of the affected community to the benefit of the community-at-large; or
- Mitigate the risk to life and property by removing substantially damaged structures and associated appurtenances as needed to convert property acquired through a FEMA hazard mitigation program to uses compatible with open space, recreation, or wetlands management practices.

Inquiries regarding FEMA Public Assistance and eligibility should be directed to the Public Assistance Coordinator at the Vermont [Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security](#).

**Template****Simple Debris Management Plan**

Municipalities of all sizes can create a simple debris management plan with the following template prepared by the Rutland Regional Planning Commission.

## Municipality

# Debris Management Plan (TEMPLATE)

(Town should fill in or revise underlined text as appropriate throughout plan)

**Town Point of Contact:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Plan Overview

The purpose of this plan is to provide for effective and efficient management of disaster generated debris within the Town/City/Village of \_\_\_\_\_. Vermont was struck by Tropical Storm Irene in August of 2011 and since that time several other declared disasters have occurred. The direct experience with debris management and the FEMA reimbursement process during these recent disasters underpins the format and principles in this plan.

This plan was developed by local officials in the Town of \_\_\_\_\_, including the Road Commissioner/Foreman, Emergency Management Director/Coordinator, Health Officer, and others. Resources utilized in the writing of this plan include: the [State of Vermont Emergency Operations Plan Support Annex 6 – Debris Management](#), 2014 (the state Annex), Town of Loxahatchee Groves Disaster Debris Management Plan (2009), and [FEMA resources](#).

A public meeting was held on date \_\_\_\_\_ to present the Debris Management Plan and to gather input, and the Selectboard adopted this plan on date \_\_\_\_\_.

### 1. Events and Assumptions

In the Town of \_\_\_\_\_, severe thunderstorms and wind, snow and ice storms, and flooding and fluvial erosion are the most likely events to occur. In recent years these types of storms have generated vegetated debris, in addition to structural debris, hazardous waste and sediment. The Town of \_\_\_\_\_ had number cubic yards of debris from Irene or other \_\_\_\_\_ storms, and can expect to have similar amounts of debris from future incidents that overload the municipalities waste management capacity and would require special debris management strategies.

The Town of \_\_\_\_\_ is mostly rural/urban with (Insert brief description of topography/terrain, land use and major roads in your town)

The town of \_\_\_\_ is a member of the \_\_\_\_ Solid Waste District. The majority of residents contract with private waste haulers for collection services. Residents also have access to the \_\_\_\_ household hazardous waste collection events, \_\_\_\_ recycling center, and the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ transfer stations.

### 2. Debris Collection and Removal

#### *Facilities*

The major facilities in Town that are likely to be impacted by disaster debris in order of priority are (for each category below specify facilities in your town):

1. Roads- specifically egress for fire and police; specify roads
2. Critical facilities- hospital, nursing home, utilities, shelter, etc. (specify)
3. Public buildings- town office, garage, schools, etc. (specify)
4. Private Property- homes, businesses, etc.

#### *Response and Recovery Priorities*

During the response and recovery, operations to protect public health and safety will be given highest priority. The following are other *response* phase priorities:

- To remove debris to facilitate search and rescue efforts
- To clear roads to allow access to critical facilities
- To prevent or mitigate flooding

During the *recovery*, the following are the priorities:

- Collect the remaining debris
- Reduce or recycle debris to the extent feasible
- Arrange for disposal of the remainder of the debris

### *Roles and Responsibilities*

The Selectboard/Legislative Body/Town Manager is the lead entity responsible for debris clearing and removal.

The Town Highway Department is the lead entity that will carry out all operations of emergency debris clearance on essential transportation routes and town property, and for coordinating the permanent removal and disposal of all debris deposited in and along public rights of way.

The Emergency Management Director is responsible for the Town's Local Emergency Operations Plan and for coordinating all planning, training and disaster recovery activities.

The identify local official is responsible for coordination the communication of critical information to residents, the public and the media.

The Town Clerk/Administrator/Other will provide for the collection and compilation of all labor, equipment hours, materials/supplies and expenditures related to disaster response and recovery, and assure coordinated submittals for reimbursement. This task also includes assuring coordination of federal and state financial assistance, through available reimbursement programs. He/she will also manage the receipt and submission of all Debris Contractor payables via load tickets and load ticket data base information, as well as any labor and equipment hours eligible for reimbursement.

The Town will coordinate with other entities including the Solid Waste District, VTrans, Agency of Natural Resources, and Division of Emergency Management and Homeland Security.

### *Methods to Remove Debris*

During the response phase, the Town Highway Department will clear key roads for emergency access by pushing debris to the edge of the right of way, rather than removing debris. This will be followed by collecting the remaining debris, reducing or recycling, and final disposal.

Large woody debris is beneficial in natural stream systems as it contributes greatly to the roughness of the stream channel, reducing the overall velocities and the stream power acting on the bed and banks of the stream. Importantly, large woody debris provides critical ecological benefits. Before removing debris from a waterway the town will contact the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation Rivers Program for an assessment and removal authorizations: [http://www.watershedmanagement.vt.gov/rivers/docs/RME\\_districts\\_12.14.pdf](http://www.watershedmanagement.vt.gov/rivers/docs/RME_districts_12.14.pdf).

### **3. Temporary Debris Management Sites and Disposal Locations**

As feasible, debris will be separated into the following categories at the site of generation:

- Vegetative Waste
- Construction and Demolition ("C&D") Waste
- Household Hazardous Waste ("HHW");
- Putrescible Municipal Solid Waste
- Household Appliances;
- Scrap Metal;
- Soil, Sediment, Silt and Sand;
- Electronic Waste (E-Waste)

Debris will be brought to the following certified solid waste facilities to be further segregated, reduced and recycled, with the remainder to be transported for disposal. (List Facilities). If existing local facilities lack operational capacity to manage the waste load, the ANR has designated and certified Temporary Debris Storage and Reduction Sites (TDSRSs) capable of upgrading operations in the event of a catastrophic debris-generating disaster. Contact ANR Solid Waste Management Program (802-828-1138) for the nearest, certified TDSRS.

#### **4. Debris removal on private property**

The Town shall not seek or accept requests from private property owners to perform debris clearing or removal activities. The Town of \_\_\_\_\_ will not remove debris from private property unless it threatens public infrastructure or public safety. If it is found to be necessary, it will be performed in keeping with [20 V.S.A. § 36](#), the Vermont Debris and Wreckage Removal statute. An attorney was consulted prior to taking action.

FEMA policy regarding:

- Demolition of private structures is set forth in FEMA DAP9523.4 which is found at: [http://www.fema.gov/government/grant/pa/9523\\_4.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/government/grant/pa/9523_4.shtm)
- Debris removal from private property is set forth in FEMA DAP9523.13 which is found at: [http://www.fema.gov/government/grant/pa/9523\\_13.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/government/grant/pa/9523_13.shtm)

The Town will seek federal reimbursement for this through FEMA and/or FHWA.

#### **5. Use and procurement of Contracted Services**

Beginning in late 2015, the State will have stand-by contracts for pre-qualified debris management contractors, which municipalities may utilize if debris management overwhelms State and local government resources.

#### **6. Use of Force Account Labor**

Force account labor will be used for debris management and monitoring. The Town staff will communicate with federal, state and local emergency officials, notify contractors to ensure response readiness and activate Town staff and equipment, provide public information, and other pre-event operations as needed. Post event, Town staff will take actions necessary to coordinate town-wide debris collection processing and disposal operations, provide public information, and prepare documentation necessary for reimbursement.

#### **7. Monitoring of Debris Operations**

All eligible work on public property and in the public right of way, and any municipally-owned solid waste management facilities will be monitored either by Town staff or contractors. This includes monitoring the collection of disaster debris, removal of hazardous trees, limbs and stumps, management of any municipally-owned solid waste management facilities household hazardous waste collection events, and the reduction, recycling, and disposal of debris, if applicable.

#### **8. Health and Safety Requirements**

Town staff and contractors will comply with all local, state and federal safety regulations. All contracts shall include safety requirements and safety of the contractor's personnel and equipment is the responsibility of the contractor. The Town or contractor(s) shall provide all safeguards, safety devices and protective equipment and take any other needed actions as it determines to be reasonably necessary to protect the life and health of employees on the job and the safety of the public and to protect property in connection with the performance of the necessary work.

#### **9. Environmental Considerations and Other Regulatory Requirements**

All debris operations shall comply with federal, state and local environmental laws. This includes the fueling of equipment, staging areas, removal of hazardous waste such as asbestos and lead-based paint, debris removal from waterways, storage and segregation of debris, work at historic and archaeological sites, and debris disposal.

#### **10. Public Information**

The Town Manager/Administrator/Clerk/Emergency Management Director/Other will serve as the Public Information Officer and will be responsible for coordinating the communication of critical information to residents, the public and the media. Efforts will be made to use multiple outreach channels including notices at the town office, radio, internet (Town's website and Front Porch Forum, if applicable) and television.

#### **11. Identification of Debris Removal Contractors**

The Town has identified the following prequalified debris removal contractors for local emergency incidents that do not qualify for the state contracted debris management services addressed above:

- List one or more contractors