

# **Managing Debris from Texas Wildfires**



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# **Managing Debris from Texas Wildfires**

## **1.0 Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to provide clear guidance on options for managing and disposing debris from Texas Wildfires.

Large volumes of debris are generated following natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods, wildfires and tornados. The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) has developed the following guidance to assist in managing and disposing of debris associated with the cleanup of areas affected by wildfires.

During cleanup and recovery efforts following a severe event, large volumes of various types of debris will need to be disposed. Debris includes:

- Partially-burned trees, brush, and other vegetative matter;
- Burned, partially-burned or whole building/construction waste (sheet rock, roof shingles, treated wood, plastics, etc.);
- Other municipal solid waste (including putrescible waste and special waste); and
- Hazardous waste

## **2.0 Disaster Declarations**

Significant fires are often declared a disaster area either by the Governor of Texas or the President of the United States. Among other considerations, the Declaration will be specific to certain counties and allow those counties to obtain financial and technical assistance for managing the debris.

In order to qualify for that assistance, refer to Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) information available on the FEMA website at <http://www.fema.gov>.

Applicants who will be requesting federal financial assistance from FEMA need to submit a project worksheet and complete the "Emergency Debris Management Site Certification Form for Texas Wildfires". For more information, please contact your FEMA representative.

## **3.0 Sorting and Stockpiling Debris Prior to Disposal**

Various state and federal regulations apply to the disposal of specific types of debris. The TCEQ recognizes that under the difficult conditions following a severe event, full compliance with these regulations may significantly delay the removal of debris from affected areas. With this in mind, wastes should be sorted to the maximum extent possible prior to disposal. Options for disposal of segregated debris are summarized in the table on pages 3 and 4, "Options for Management of Segregated Debris," and discussed in later sections of this document.

## **4.0 Options for Management of Segregated Debris**

Numerous options are available for management of segregated debris. The table on pages 3 and 4, "Options for Management of Segregated Debris," summarizes disposal options for these materials.

### **4.1 Construction-Demolition Debris Disposal**

Construction-demolition waste is defined in TCEQ rules (30 TAC 330.3(33)) as "waste resulting from construction or demolition projects: includes all materials that are directly or indirectly the by-products of construction work or that result from demolition of buildings and other structures, including, but not limited to, paper, cartons, gypsum board, wood, excelsior, rubber, and plastics."

#### ***How should construction-demolition waste be disposed?***

Construction-demolition waste should be disposed in a permitted Type I, Type I -AE, Type IV, or Type IV-AE MSW landfill. Clean wood and other materials can also be recycled.

### **4.2 Household Hazardous Waste Collection**

The TCEQ is working to implement a collection method to safely dispose of household hazardous waste (HHW) that is no longer usable. Counties, cities, businesses and residents in the affected areas can segregate for later collection all potentially hazardous substances. Those normally found in homes include:

- paints, thinners and turpentine, furniture strippers, wood preservatives, stains and finishes;
- pesticides, insecticides, flea collars and sprays, roach and ant killers, rat and mouse poisons, and herbicides;
- oven, toilet, drain, and rug and upholstery cleaners;
- bleaches, disinfectants, mothballs, ammonia-based and powdered cleansers, and swimming pool chemicals (i.e. chlorine tablets, muriatic acid, etc.);
- floor and furniture polish;
- household and automobile batteries;
- automotive products, including antifreeze, transmission and brake fluids, motor oil, and gasoline wastes.

This material should be segregated as residents and businesses remove debris from their property. These HHW should be stored in a safe place for later disposal. Normally, municipal landfills are able to accommodate the small quantities of hazardous wastes generated by households without threat to the environment. However, the extent of the wildfires may have increased the volume of household hazardous waste to levels that may be unsuitable for landfilling.

Usually counties, cities, businesses and residents collect the household hazardous waste and have a staging area to store the waste for collection and disposal by an emergency response contractor. If this occurs and anyone wishes to have the household hazardous waste collected, a county, city or business can contact their local Disaster District Office (list available online at [www.dps.texas.gov/dem](http://www.dps.texas.gov/dem)) and inform them that they have a need

to arrange for the TCEQ emergency response contractor to pick up the collected household hazardous waste.

If you have any questions regarding household hazardous wastes issues or you are a public official in one of the affected counties declared eligible for relief and need assistance for household hazardous wastes issues, please contact your local Disaster District Office or the TCEQ.

### 4.3 Non-Household Hazardous Waste Disposal

If drums or other containers of hazardous or unknown wastes are identified in any of the affected counties, you can call the TCEQ's 24-hour Spill Response hotline at 1-800-832-8224.

### 4.4 Animal Carcass Disposal

For complete guidelines on disposing of animal carcasses left behind by wildfires, go online to [tceq.texas.gov/goto/wildfirecarcasses](http://tceq.texas.gov/goto/wildfirecarcasses).

**Table 1. Options for Management of Segregated Debris**

To find an appropriate landfill near you, go online to

<http://www.tceq.texas.gov/response/smoke/wildfires#find-an-appropriate-landfill>.

| Waste Type                       | Examples of Waste Type                                                                                       | Disposal Option                                                                                                                              |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Vegetation                       | Trees, Brush                                                                                                 | Preferred: Recycle<br>Option: Type IV MSW Landfill<br>Option: Type I MSW Landfill                                                            |
| Clean Lumber                     | Lumber, siding, plywood and similar wood materials that have not been painted, stained or chemically treated | Preferred: Recycle<br>Option: Type IV MSW Landfill<br>Option: Type I MSW Landfill                                                            |
| Animal Carcasses                 | Non-diseased Poultry, cattle, domestic animals                                                               | Preferred: On-site Burial/mounding<br>Preferred: MSW Type I Landfill                                                                         |
|                                  | Diseased poultry, cattle                                                                                     | Outdoor burning. Coordinate with local authorities and firefighters                                                                          |
| Household or Commercial Waste    | Putrescible waste                                                                                            | MSW Type I Landfill                                                                                                                          |
|                                  | Garbage, refuse, rubbish                                                                                     | MSW Type I Landfill                                                                                                                          |
| White Goods                      | Refrigerators                                                                                                | Preferred: Recycle<br>Option: MSW Type I Landfill                                                                                            |
|                                  | Stoves                                                                                                       | Preferred: Recycle<br>Option: MSW Type I landfill                                                                                            |
|                                  | Washer/Dryers                                                                                                | Preferred: Recycle<br>Option: MSW Type I landfill                                                                                            |
| Construction or Demolition Waste | Asbestos containing debris -shingles, siding, insulation, tiles                                              | MSW Type I Landfill w/ Special Waste Authorization                                                                                           |
|                                  | Painted/stained/treated wood                                                                                 | Preferred: MSW Type IV Landfill<br>Option: MSW Type I Landfill                                                                               |
|                                  | Roof shingles                                                                                                | Preferred: Fuel source for cement kilns with appropriate air authorization<br>Option: MSW Type IV Landfill<br>Preferred: MSW Type I Landfill |

| <b>Waste Type</b>         | <b>Examples of Waste Type</b>           | <b>Disposal Option</b>                                                                                             |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                           | Sheet rock                              | Preferred: MSW Type IV Landfill<br>Option: MSW Type I Landfill                                                     |
| Batteries                 |                                         | Preferred: Recycle (Lead-acid batteries are not allowed in MSW landfills).<br>Option: HHW Collection Event         |
| Household Hazardous Waste | Cleaning products                       | Option: HHW Collection Event<br>Option: MSW Type I Landfill<br>Option: Permitted HW facility                       |
|                           | Paints, Solvents                        | Option: HHW Collection Event<br>Option: MSW Type I Landfill<br>Option: Permitted HW facility                       |
|                           | Pesticides                              | Pesticide Collection Event                                                                                         |
|                           | Automotive products                     | Option: HHW Collection Event<br>Option: MSW Type I Landfill<br>Option: Permitted HW facility                       |
|                           | Electronics: VCRs, Computers, TVs, etc. | Preferred: Recycle<br>Option: HHW Collection Event<br>Option: MSW Type I Landfill<br>Option: Permitted HW facility |
| Compressed Gas Containers |                                         | Recycle                                                                                                            |
| Tires                     |                                         | Pick-up by authorized Scrap Tire Transporter or delivery to authorized processing or end-use facilities.           |