

# DNR GUIDE TO FLOOD CLEAN-UP IN RURAL AREAS

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES DIVISION | [WWW.IOWADNR.GOV](http://WWW.IOWADNR.GOV)

Catastrophic floods have left an indelible mark on many rural Iowa landscapes. This guide was developed by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to aide Iowa farmers and rural residents in their clean-up activities. Following the guide will help Iowans in their recovery efforts and protect our natural resources at the same time.

## FARM FLOOD DEBRIS AND WASTE

Debris and waste on farms related to the floods may be disposed of on the farm. Prior to burying or burning farm flood-related debris or waste, contact the nearest DNR field office for details on restrictions.

Generally, dead farm animals, farm buildings, trees, brush and ashes may be buried on the farm where the debris or waste is located. Landscape waste (trees, brush, stumps) and other similar types of debris and damaged farm buildings may be burned on site, providing there is not a more restrictive local ordinance and all chemicals and asphalt shingles are removed. See below for more information.

## ANIMAL CARCASSES

A fact sheet on disposal of a small number of animals can be found at [www.iowadnr.gov/afo](http://www.iowadnr.gov/afo) under AFO Resources. Options for emergency disposal of large numbers of animals include on-farm composting, rendering plants, landfills and burial. Some restrictions apply for burial in a catastrophic situation. Consult the local DNR field office for technical assistance. Check the DNR disaster recovery website for information on repairing fields with heavy sand or sediment deposits, scour holes, altered stream channels and private levees.

## BURNING IN RURAL AREAS

During declared emergencies, tree and wood waste may be open burned in rural areas only. Standard discretion should be used. Prior to burying or burning farm flood-related debris or waste, contact the nearest DNR field office for details of restrictions. Burning should be done at centralized locations, but away from residential areas by at least one-fourth mile and under the supervision and control of the appropriate governmental officials. Burning should be done when weather conditions are favorable with respect to surrounding property.

However, hazardous waste such as tires, asphalt and asbestos cannot be burned. Because already demolished



*Floods leave behind some nasty materials — acres of land covered with sand, chemical tanks and other debris. Fortunately, rural landowners have some options.*

buildings often contain asbestos contamination, they should be land filled. If the asbestos material can be separated from the partially demolished buildings, the remainder of the building can be burned. However, a partially damaged structure that will be demolished or renovated may be subject to federal asbestos requirements, including an inspection, state notification, and asbestos removal and disposal. There are some exceptions. Contact the DNR for more information (see back).

Hazardous waste is defined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA). Hazardous waste should be handled and disposed of according to RCRA requirements. Asbestos should be disposed of in a landfill. Tires should be reused or recycled. If disposed of in a landfill, tires must be processed. Find hazardous waste definitions and disposal requirements at [www.epa.gov/rcraonline/](http://www.epa.gov/rcraonline/).

More information on asbestos disposal can be found on the DNR disaster recovery website.

## PESTICIDES

Pesticides should not go to the landfill for disposal. If pesticides in damaged containers are not sealable or usable, they should be sent back to the manufacturer, if possible. Or, they should be land applied at no more than the recommended rate.

## TONNAGE FEES

Flood debris and waste generated as a result of flood cleanup may be exempt from the tonnage fee imposed by the state only if the county from which the waste is generated has been declared a disaster area by the governor. This exemption does not apply to normal municipal solid waste. A protocol should be established that landfill staff uses to determine which waste coming into the facility is attributable to the flood. In the absence of a protocol to separate tonnage attributable to the flood, an analysis of past tonnage records can be used to estimate the amount of waste disposed as a result of the flood.

## SAND AND SANDBAG DISPOSAL

Cities and counties may want to consider stockpiling sand from sandbags impacted by floodwater. If sand can be removed from the bags economically and effectively, it could be used next winter to sand streets, on gravel road surfaces, or spread on agricultural land or public ground. Or, it could be returned to the sand company for reuse. Full bags should not be disposed of as rubble (e.g., in a ravine), but can be used for fill material under buildings, roads, parking lots and so forth. Bags of sand may also be used for daily cover in a landfill.

The DNR does not recommend flood-control sand be used in sand boxes, on beaches or in school yards. However, the sand could be reused by spreading it on a backyard flower garden or in another limited access area. Empty sandbags can be landfilled and should not be reused.

Disposal of a few sand bags on commercial property or in the yards of residents: At residences, sand from sand bags can be used as fill material, such as on gravel streets and alleys, parking lots and eroded areas in ditches and low-lying areas.

Exposing flooded sand to sunlight and allowing it to dry destroys most disease organisms – resulting in an insignificant public health risk from the sand.

## TANKS AND DRUMS

Call DNR's 24-hour spill line at 515-281-8694 to report tanks and drums such as fuel or pesticide containers that are discovered as flood waters recede.

## INFORMATION RESOURCES

### Iowa Department of Natural Resources

[www.iowadnr.gov/](http://www.iowadnr.gov/) Search for Disaster Assistance.

Solid Waste Section: 515-725-8307

Field Office 1: Manchester 563-927-2640

Field Office 2: Mason City 641-424-4073  
Field Office 3: Spencer 712-262-4177  
Field Office 4: Atlantic 712-243-1934  
Field Office 5: Des Moines 515-725-0268  
Field Office 6: Washington 319-653-2135  
Floodplain Permits 866-849-0321 or [floodplain.iowadnr.gov/](http://floodplain.iowadnr.gov/)  
Asbestos Information

### Iowa State University Extension

[www.extension.iastate.edu/topic/recovering-disasters](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/topic/recovering-disasters)

**Answer Line:** 800-262-3804

Questions relating to home and family  
8 a.m. to noon; 1 to 4 p.m., Monday-Friday

**Hortline:** 515-294-3108

Lawn, garden, and landscape plant questions  
10 a.m. to noon; 1 to 4:30 p.m., Monday-Friday

**Iowa Concern:** 1-800-447-1985

Disaster related clean-up, financial questions, legal issues, family transitions and stress counseling.

Open 24 hours. "Storm Recovery Guide" at  
[www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/SP327.pdf](http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/SP327.pdf)

### American Red Cross

[www.americanredcross.com](http://www.americanredcross.com)

Cedar Rapids 319-393-3500

Council Bluffs 712-322-4017

Des Moines 515-243-7681

Omaha, Neb. 402-343-7700

Ottumwa 641-682-1359

Sioux City 712-252-4081

Sioux Falls, S. D. 605-336-2448

Waterloo 319-337-2119

Generally have free clean up kits available at their distribution center. Food vouchers also are available for persons living in a flood area (verification of address, driver's license, or utility bill).

## HELPFUL LINKS AND AGENCIES

Iowa Homeland Security & Emergency Management  
[www.homelandsecurity.iowa.gov](http://www.homelandsecurity.iowa.gov)

Iowa Department of Public Health  
<https://dhs.iowa.gov/disaster-assistance-programs>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[www.cdc.gov/](http://www.cdc.gov/)

