

# CLEANING UP AFTER A DISASTER

Cooperative Extension Service \* University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign \* Disaster Resource

## Dealing with Flood Garbage and Water Concerns

After the flood waters recede, the debris that remains can cause serious pollution problems and result in ill health effects.

Please follow these guidelines developed by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA) to dispose of the flood waste and debris. Any questions about which materials can be land filled, burned, or recycled will be answered promptly by calling:

Landfill waste:	217-524-3300
Household hazardous waste:	217-785-8604
Immediate emergency:	800-782-7860
Open burning waste:	217-782-2113
Outdoor chemical contamination:	217-782-3637

## Recycling Flood Waste

Sand and sandbags can be recycled for other household and industrial uses, or they can be used as fill for roads and holes. Common sense should be used. For example, sand that may have come into contact with sewage should not be used in children's sand boxes. Remove bags strewn about the flood area, they can cause a serious pollution problem if they are not disposed of properly.

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

The IEPA may provide free handling and recycling of damaged metal appliances after the flood waters recede. If local scrap metal dealers are not available to properly remove the potentially dangerous components, which include Freon and mercury switches and PCB capacitors, an option may be to deliver them to an IEPA collection site. Specific locations and other

necessary details may be provided when clean-up needs are determined. Please do not dump these items along roadsides, in ditches or in creeks.

Tires also must be disposed of properly. Many tire dealers will take back used tires. Consult your local tire retailer or call the IEPA at 217-782-6760. Used tires should never be burned. Your local Cooperative Extension Service may also have this information.

## Household Hazardous Flood Waste Disposal

Household hazardous waste products should be disposed of properly to avoid health and pollution risks. After some disasters, the IEPA may offer free disposal of unusable household chemical pollutants in the disaster areas. Until they can be disposed of properly, store the unusable products in a safe location.

The following are just a few examples of common hazardous household products. These contain the same chemicals found in industrial hazardous waste and must be disposed of properly: weed killer, paint, drain cleaner, motor oil, fuel solvents, and insect poisons. Please review the expanded list in this fact sheet.

*(Continued on the next page)*

For more information contact your local Extension office:



Disaster Resources Web site:  
<http://www.ag.uiuc.edu/~disaster>

**Sealed Drum and Propane Tank Disposal**

Sealed drums with unknown contents should not be handled by untrained persons. Please notify the IEPA Emergency Response Unit at 217-782-3637. 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: sand, sandbags, plastic sheeting, shingles, insulation, animal carcasses, grain, animal feed, food, carpet, furniture, metal debris and machinery, household appliances.

Although appliances can be disposed of in landfills, components on the appliances that contain Freon, mercury, PCBs and other hazardous chemicals must first be removed by licensed professionals. The IEPA strongly recommends that household appliances be recycled through a local scrap dealer or delivered to an IEPA collection site, if one is available.

**Burning Flood Waste**

Individuals may safely burn tree limbs, brush, natural wood or plant debris, agricultural waste-bags, cartons, dry bedding, and crop residue.

If you want to burn materials that are not on the list, you must first contact the IEPA at 217-782-2113. A permit may be required and a simplified permit application is available. However, local restrictions on open burning may apply and should be considered before burning waste.

When you burn waste, please take the following steps:

- Coordinate the burn with the local fire station.
- Conduct the burning when the wind is blowing away from roadways, railroad tracks, airfields, and populated areas.
- Supervise or provide supervision on site of the burn location.
- Avoid exposure to the smoke from the fire.
- Burn between 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. to achieve the best natural dispersion of smoke. Be sure to check your local burning ordinance.

**Do Not Burn** asbestos-containing materials, used tires, shingles, insulation, plastics, plastic sheeting, wood painted with lead paint, household or hazardous chemicals. Those materials can cause serious pollution and health effects if burned.

*Issued by Charlotte Crawford and Lois E. Smith, Extension Educators, Consumer and Family Economics. February 1995.*

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Recycle	Sand	Sandbags	Tires
<b>Dispose at IEPA Collection Site</b>	Aerosol products	Furniture polish	Paint
	Air fresheners & deodorizers	Household appliances	Prescriptions
	Antifreeze	Insect poisons	Pool chemicals
	Carpet and rug cleaners	Lawn chemicals	Oven cleaner
	Disinfectants and germicide	Metal polishers	Silver cleaner
	Drain cleaner	Moth balls	Toilet bowl cleaner
	Floor wax and stripper	Motor oil	Wood preservatives
<b>Landfill</b>	Animal carcasses	Grain	Metal debris
	Animal feed	Household appliances *	Sand
	Carpet	Insulation	Sandbags
	Food	Machinery	Shingles
	Furniture		
<b>Burn**</b>	Agricultural waste-bags/cartons	Crop residue	Tree limbs
	Brush	Dry bedding	Natural wood or plant debris

\* Household appliances must have hazardous chemical components removed before they are placed in a landfill.

\*\* To burn unlisted materials, contact your local fire official and the IEPA at 217-782-2113. A permit may be required.