



**FEMA**

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# Fact Sheet

## DEBRIS REMOVAL AND DEMOLITION

Debris removal is the clearance, removal, and/or disposal of items such as trees, sand, gravel, building components, wreckage, vehicles, and personal property. For debris removal to be eligible, the work must be necessary to:

- Eliminate an immediate threat to lives, public health and safety;
- Eliminate immediate threats of significant damage to improved public or private property;
- Ensure the economic recovery of the affected community to the benefit of the community-at-large; and to
- 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.

Examples of eligible debris removal activities include:

- Debris removal from a street or highway to allow the safe passage of emergency vehicles; and
- Debris removal from public property to eliminate health and safety hazards.

Examples of ineligible debris removal activities include:

- Removal of debris, such as tree limbs and trunks, from natural (unimproved) wilderness areas;
- Removal of pre-disaster sediment from engineered channels; and
- Removal of debris from a natural channel unless the debris poses an immediate threat of flooding to improved property.

**Private Property Debris Removal:** Debris removal from private property is generally not eligible because it is the responsibility of the individual property owner. If property owners move the disaster-related debris to a public right-of-way, the local government may be reimbursed for curbside pickup and disposal for a limited period of time. If the debris on private business and residential property is so widespread that public health, safety, or the economic recovery of the community is threatened, FEMA may fund debris removal from private property, but it must be approved in advance by FEMA.

**Demolition:** Demolition of disaster-damaged structures may be eligible for emergency work assistance if the work is necessary to:

- Eliminate an immediate threat to lives, public health and safety;
- Eliminate immediate threats of significant damage to improved public or private property;

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- Ensure the economic recovery of the affected community to the benefit of the community-at-large; and
- 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.

Eligible activities include demolition of the facility superstructure, filling in of open below-grade structures (basements, swimming pools), and other activities including capping of wells and pumping and capping of septic tanks.

**Private Property Demolition:** As with debris removal from private property, demolition of private structures requires approval by FEMA prior to start of work and agreement by the local government to save and hold the Federal government free from damages due to performance of the work. Demolition work also requires condemnation by an authorized local official in accordance with State and local law.

Examples of ineligible demolition activities include:

- Removal of slabs or foundations that do not present a health or safety hazard (except for structures in a FEMA funded buyout program);
- Removal or covering of pads and driveways (except for structures in a FEMA funded buyout program);
- Demolition of structures condemned as safety hazards prior to the Disaster ;
- Demolition of threatened but habitable (not yet damaged) structures; and
- Demolition activities are eligible for permanent work assistance when the work is required in support of eligible repair, replacement, or reconstruction of a project.

*FEMA manages federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates mitigation activities, works with state and local emergency managers, and manages the National Flood Insurance Program. FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on March 1, 2003.*

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