



Louisiana Debris Mission

Question: What was the extent of debris from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita?

Answer: Hurricanes Katrina and Rita generated 64 million cubic yards (mcy) of debris strewn throughout 21 parishes covering almost 15,000 square miles.

Question : What is the current status of demolition and debris removal?

A: In Louisiana, as of Feb. 2007, the Corps of Engineers has completed 26 percent of Katrina-related demolition and 100 percent of Rita-related demolition. Ninety-six percent of Katrina-related debris and 100 percent of Rita-related debris have been removed. (As of January 6, 2007, 50 mcy has been removed and 14 mcy remain, 50 percent can be contributed to demolition and 50 percent can be contributed to waterways, canals and private property debris removal (vegetation).)

Question: What methods are used to properly collect, separate and dispose of debris?

Answer: The Corps of Engineers, in coordination with federal, state and local agencies, determines the most cost-effective and timely manner for disposition of debris using appropriately permitted landfills.

The Corps of Engineers complies with all federal, state and local regulations. At the beginning of the mission, numerous waste streams were identified that require segregation, collection, processing, staging, recycling, and disposal. Waste streams include: (1) municipal solid waste, (2) vegetative debris, (3) construction and demolition debris, (4) small motorized equipment, (5) asbestos, (6) electronic waste, (7) household hazardous waste, (8) white goods, and (9) tires.

Question: How is hazardous waste handled?

Answer: All applicable laws and regulations are followed for the careful and appropriate handling of hazardous waste.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) handled hazardous waste disposal until November 22, 2006. Since that time, the Corps of Engineers manages the hazardous waste collection site, with ongoing coordination with the EPA whenever hazardous waste is found.

Question: How is asbestos found in hurricane-generated debris?

Answer: Through close coordination with the EPA and the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (LDEQ) to ensure careful handling of asbestos, the Corps of Engineers performs asbestos inspections, decommissioning and demolition activities once a structure has been approved for demolition by FEMA.

Question: Does the Corps of Engineers burn debris?

Answer: If approved by LDEQ, in consultation with parish officials, it is permissible to burn vegetative debris through open burning. Open burning has occurred in 36 locations within 16 parishes in southern Louisiana; the exception is Orleans parish.

Air monitoring is performed to ensure protection of the environment, workers and public health. LDEQ, EPA and Occupational Safety and Health Administration set applicable criteria.

Question: How have landfills factored into the overall management of debris disposal?

Answer: Forty-eight landfills have been used for Katrina-generated waste and 21 were used for Rita-generated waste. Currently there are nine active landfills.

LDEQ oversees landfill permitting. The Corps of Engineers does not engage in a direct contractual relationship with permitted landfills, but reimburses prime contractors for tipping fees charged for waste disposal.

Question: What are some of the federal and state regulations that protect the environment and public health?

Answer: The following are primary regulations governing debris disposal:

- National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants;
- Clean Air Act;
- Resource Conservation and Recovery Act; and
- Louisiana Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants.

Question: What other federal and state agencies are involved in debris removal?

Answer: There is extensive coordination and collaboration among a variety of agencies. Those involved in debris removal: (1) FEMA, (2) EPA, (3) OSHA, (4) LDEQ, (5) Parish officials, (6) levee boards, and (7) city of New Orleans officials.