



State of Vermont, Agency of Natural Resources

After a Flood - River and Stream Debris Management

Flood events can alter Vermont's landscape and rivers, depositing unwanted natural and human-made debris. This document provides guidance on managing the removal of flood-related debris both in and along rivers and streams for individuals, municipalities, and other entities that consider debris removal necessary.



Debris Location

During the response and recovery of a flood event, debris spotter teams, municipalities, property owners, and concerned citizens may locate and report debris piles.

Individuals and property owners should first report debris locations to their town.

Towns should report all debris information to Vermont Emergency Management and State Emergency Operations Center at 800-347-0488.



Human-Made or Natural Flood Debris Removal

Human-made debris left behind in the river, stream, or adjacent land after a flood – such as appliances, furniture, tires, or construction materials – may be removed without restrictions. Human-made debris must be disposed of or recycled at a solid waste management facility.

Natural debris left in the river after a flood – such as trees, large rocks or excess gravel and sediment – cannot be removed without notification of and review by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). This includes areas around culverts and bridges. [Use the online form](#) to contact the Rivers Management Program or call 802-828-1115.

Natural debris left on land after a flood may be removed by property owners without restrictions. This material will be a low priority for removal by the state due to low potential future risk.



Debris Pick Up

Debris, once removed from waterways and land, may need to be picked up. During the response and recovery from a flood event, towns are responsible for debris management. To the maximum extent practicable, debris needs to be moved to a public right-of-way to facilitate pick-up and disposal. Efforts should be made to avoid commingling natural debris and human-made debris, as these materials will ultimately need to be separated and managed separately.

Individuals and property owners should contact their town with flood debris pick-up requests.

Towns should report all debris information to Vermont Emergency Management and State Emergency Operations Center at 800-347-0488.

Vegetative debris that does not need to be picked up can be composted and placed outside the river or stream.



Support and Funding

Emergency Watershed Program

The Emergency Watershed Program (EWP), administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), covers 75% of the cost to remove debris and/or stabilize streambanks that pose an imminent threat. These projects require government sponsorship. In Vermont, this is typically the local entity, which means Towns and Cities.

- No costs incurred prior to the sponsor entering a formal agreement with the NRCS are eligible for reimbursement.
- If a town is interested in the EWP, contact the [NRCS](#).

FEMA Public Assistance

If FEMA reimbursement under Public Assistance (PA) for debris removal, disposal, or both, will be requested – debris should go to a permitted disposal facility. Documentation is required showing where and how the debris has been removed, staged, and disposed.

- **Natural flood debris** can be managed with support from the State Debris Management Coordinator, who can be reached through Vermont Emergency Management (800-347-0488). Disposal options may include a municipal stump dump, trash transfer station, or a categorical site” with an Insignificant Waste Management Event Approval (IWMEA).
- **Human-made flood debris** must be managed and disposed of as solid waste in accordance with state and FEMA guidelines.

Potential Financial Assistance for Debris Removal

Costs associated with picking-up, transporting, and disposing of debris that was removed from the channel or floodplain may be eligible for FEMA reimbursement under PA, provided FEMA requirements are followed for managing flood debris waste.

FEMA reimbursement is unlikely for costs associated with debris removal not posing an immediate or imminent threat (e.g., vegetative debris in a floodplain).