



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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DEQ pre-approval of debris sites expedites cleanup

BATON ROUGE – Three years ago, the Department of Environmental Quality began a program that allows for pre-approval of debris sites to help cleanup disaster debris. The purpose of this program is to assist governments in expediting debris cleanup in order to aid the citizens of the state. These sites are approved for the staging of debris and other functions such as chipping, grinding and preparation for disposal. Once the cleanup is done, any successive debris must be transported to the proper landfill.

Currently, DEQ has pre-approved 167 sites and 90 more for use by the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development around the state. Only parishes, local governments or other agencies, such as DOTD, can apply for approval of these sites. DEQ does not pre-approve private or individual sites. First, the requesting party must complete an Emergency Debris Site request form, which must be approved by the State Historic Preservation Office to ensure the site does not have historical significance. DEQ then inspects the site to verify its suitability through a review of residential, church and school proximity, possible power line or utility intrusion and overall site accessibility.

Pre-approvals are valid from June 1 to May 31 and must be reapplied for each year. In the event DEQ denies a specific site, the requesting party may look for and submit another site that is more suitable.

These pre-approvals allow the parishes to plan ahead and secure contractors and contracts so they can begin to safely and efficiently remove debris. The sites can be activated with a call to DEQ headquarters and by submitting a written notification form. All rules and regulations must be followed, and a weekly debris management report must be completed for all sites accepting vegetative debris in accordance with a legislative mandate (R.S. 30:2413.1), which requires that “the total green and woody debris intended for final disposal in a landfill, shall be reduced fifty percent by weight and fifty percent by volume prior to transport to a landfill” (for disposal). When operations are finalized, the nearest DEQ regional office is contacted for deactivation of the site.

In certain circumstances, such as emergencies or unusual events, DEQ may allow temporary emergency debris sites. For Hurricane Isaac, DEQ approved 30 temporary sites, with 27 considered active. Debris from Isaac has largely gone to the proper landfills to be disposed of properly.

More information on debris management and approval applications can be found at:
<http://www.deq.louisiana.gov/portal/DIVISIONS/WastePermits/DisasterDebrisManagement.aspx>