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## **EPA Tools for Communities Cleaning Up after Hurricane Laura**

**DALLAS** - (Sept. 2, 2020) The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reminds communities, families, and business owners affected by Hurricane Laura to take steps to make storm cleanup as safe and effective as possible. Cleanup activities related to returning to homes and businesses after a disaster can pose significant health and environmental challenges. Use caution to assure that all waste materials are removed and disposed of properly, following local guidelines.

Disasters can generate tons of debris, including building rubble, trees and plants, personal property, and household hazardous wastes. How a community manages disaster debris depends on the debris generated and the waste management options available. EPA offers several resources and tips for managing debris during storm cleanup.

### **Maintain personal safety**

Always wear proper safety equipment, such as goggles, an N95 respirator mask, and gloves when handling debris. Be on the alert for leaking containers and reactive household chemicals, such as caustic drain cleaners or chlorine bleach. Clean up and discard chemicals separately, even if you know what they are. Use caution when disturbing building materials to prevent physical injury or other health effects, as they may contain hazardous materials such as asbestos that, when carried by the air, can be inhaled and cause adverse health effects. If you suspect asbestos-containing materials may be present, the materials should not be disturbed.

### **Separate wastes by type**

Storm damage creates many types of household and building debris. Some of these include building materials, such as drywall, brick, and wood; white goods or appliances, such as refrigerators and washing machines; clothes, furniture, and other personal items; and household hazardous wastes, including paint, cleaners, automotive fluids, batteries, and pesticides. Separating wastes is crucial for communities to effectively manage the large volume of debris following a storm. Please check with your city or local government for specific guidelines on when and how to separate waste. Learn more about types of debris and how to manage them here: <https://www.epa.gov/natural-disasters/dealing-debris-and-damaged-buildings#cautions>

### **Be aware of local resources**

EPA has developed this interactive mapping tool of 12 types of recyclers and landfills that manage disaster debris. This tool provides information and locations of over 20,000 facilities capable of managing different materials which may be found in disaster debris. The tool was created in EPA Region 5 in 2010 and has expanded to include data for all 50 states, Puerto Rico and US Virgin Islands. Learn more about this tool here:

<https://www.epa.gov/large-scale-residential-demolition/disaster-debris-recovery-tool>

For more information on how your community can plan for future disaster cleanups, see:

<https://www.epa.gov/large-scale-residential-demolition/disaster-debris-planning>

EPA continues to support FEMA, state, local, and tribal partners in response to Hurricane Laura. EPA's Region 6 headquarters office in Dallas is taking action to ensure Superfund sites are secure following the storm, to assist public drinking water systems with rapid assessments, and to seamlessly integrate emergency response activities with Texas, Louisiana, and other federal response agencies. EPA encourages affected communities to continue staying alert for instructions from local authorities. Additional information about EPA's efforts can be found at <https://response.epa.gov/hurricanelaura>

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