



Alabama Department of Environmental Management  
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**MEMORANDUM**

**FROM:** Michael J. Cruise, Chief  
Removals and Response Unit  
Environmental Services Branch  
Land Division

**SUBJECT:** Disaster Debris Management and Disposal Guidance

To facilitate the removal of debris resulting from catastrophic natural events, the following guidance is provided and supersedes all previous guidance ADEM has provided to date. In addition, attached are the Department's "Guidelines on Open Burning of Natural Disaster Debris" and "Emergency Disposal Following Natural Disasters."

- The Federal Emergency Management Agency requires that all storm debris staging areas be pre-approved prior to placing storm debris at a staging location. County representatives should contact FEMA for approval well in advance of staging storm debris. In addition, ADEM is to be made aware of these locations as they are approved by FEMA.
- Vegetative debris, including but not limited to stumps, logs, limbs, brush, and leaves are not considered regulated solid wastes and do not require a permit by ADEM for staging or processing. However, vegetative debris disposal locations should be tracked by county officials and ADEM is to be notified of all changes or additions to these sites as they occur.
- Vegetative debris described herein that is contaminated with other special waste (as defined in ADEM Admin. Code r. 335-13-1-.03 (133)) is considered regulated solid waste and should be disposed of in a landfill permitted to accept that type of waste.
- Regulated solid waste debris (i.e., household, construction/ demolition waste, etc.) resulting from catastrophic natural events should be removed from all impacted areas and appropriately disposed of. The abandonment of regulated solid waste debris generated during a disaster event constitutes the establishment of an unauthorized dump (UAD) and is contrary to the requirements of the Alabama Solid Wastes & Recyclable Materials Management Act. Unauthorized dumps constitute a nuisance and a public health hazard, which can result in additional damage to adjacent property and structures. Accordingly, when establishing a disposal site for vegetative waste, regulated solid waste must be excluded. The landowner and/or person(s) responsible for the creation, contribution to, or operation of a UAD is responsible for its abatement, whether on public or private property.
- Do not place or stage vegetative debris in wetlands or standing water.
- Avoid placing vegetative debris in erosion features or low-lying areas. If this is not possible, ensure impedence to local water flow does not occur.
- If the burning of vegetative debris is to take place at an approved site, the burning must comply with the current ADEM "Guidelines for Open Burning of Natural Disaster Debris" (see above link for guidance on open burning).

Please contact Mike Cruise with any questions regarding the management and disposal of disaster debris at (334) 271-7938 or [mrcruise@adem.alabama.gov](mailto:mrcruise@adem.alabama.gov).

