

ABCs of Tornado Debris Removal and Demolition

After a severe storm or tornado, one of the biggest jobs for residents, business owners and governments is cleaning up the debris left behind.

Initial debris removal efforts generally focus on clearing main streets and then shifts to clearing debris from the public rights-of-way and other public areas. This is generally a function of local and state governments. In some instances, the federal government may provide assistance for these activities.

Private property debris removal after a disaster typically is the responsibility of an individual property owner. Debris may be removed either through their own personal efforts or with help from insurance settlements and/or assistance from citizen volunteers, the private sector or voluntary organizations.

If your property is littered with storm-related debris that poses a threat to public health or safety and must be removed, contact your local emergency manager. Emergency managers know which governmental agency to contact about having the debris removed.

Under the presidential disaster declaration for the Dec. 10-11 tornadoes, local governments in 17 counties can seek FEMA assistance for debris removal: **Barren, Caldwell, Christian, Fulton, Graves, Hart, Hickman, Hopkins, Logan, Lyon, Marion, Marshall, Muhlenberg, Ohio, Taylor, Todd and Warren.**

Private Property Debris Removal

(Private property lots, residential areas)

Debris can be removed from your private property several different ways. Besides doing it yourself, here are some options:

1. **Contact your insurance company.** Request that the company arrange for a contractor to remove the debris. Make sure the contractor picks up all debris and hauls it away to a proper disposal site.
2. **Sign up for help from citizen volunteers, voluntary organizations or businesses offering to help with debris removal.** It's important to plan ahead to schedule this work. Volunteers may not be immediately available the day you call.
3. **For private property owners in the hardest-hit areas,** you may be able to have debris removed from your property by government-funded contractors. Before that happens, you must complete a signed Right-of-Entry form provided by local officials.

FEMA does not provide assistance directly to private property owners. Before the debris can be removed, the property owner must provide a signed a Right-of-Entry form and insurance information to the local government. Contact your local government for more information on what assistance may be

available in your area, and to learn more about on the application process and the documents you're required to submit.

Q: When will the debris be cleared from my property?

A: It is hard to pinpoint the exact day your debris will be removed because there may be several crews working at the same time in different locations. Also, this will be ongoing for some time. In many areas, the sheer volume of debris will require more than one pass to clear the area. Please be patient.

Q: When do I need to have my belongings off my personal property?

A: If there are items you want to save, it's important to remove them now or as soon as safely possible. Contact the City of Mayfield for more information.

Q: What if I can't get to my belongings because they are under debris? Will the debris-removal contractors retrieve them for me?

A: The best way to ensure that you save what you want is to hire a contractor to clear the debris so those items can be retrieved. Government-authorized debris removal operations move quickly and workers are not able to sort through debris to salvage personal items.

Q: Why am I signing a Right-of-Entry (ROE) form?

A: Local governments that request FEMA assistance are required to collect Right-of-Entry forms from participating property owners. Your permission is needed so government-authorized contractors can come onto your property and remove tornado-related debris. Any other Right-of-Entry forms – such as those that cover volunteer help – are not valid for this purpose. Also, be aware that signing a Right-of-Entry form is not a guarantee that your property will be cleared under this initiative. For more information about Right-of-Entry forms, contact your local officials.

Q: Does signing a Right-of-Entry form mean that I lose ownership of my property?

A: No. Signing a Right-of-Entry form does not transfer ownership of the property. It only allows the government and/or its authorized contractors to go onto private property and take away tornado-related debris.

Q: Given the information I'm asked to provide for the Right-of-Entry form, should I be concerned about identity theft?

A: Identity theft is the crime of obtaining someone's personal or financial information and using their identity to commit fraud. Everyone should be concerned about identity theft. But you should always take steps to guard your personal information by ensuring that you're providing the information to a legitimate governmental agency. In this case, share your concerns with the local officials collecting the Right-of-Entry form.

Q. What is DOB?

DOB means Duplication of Benefits. The government cannot, by federal law, duplicate assistance a property owner has received or may receive from other sources. If you have insurance that will pay for debris removal, you must declare those proceeds. The insurance proceeds will be deducted from the cost to the government of any debris removal activities conducted by government contractors. For this reason, you are asked to provide your insurance policy information when you submit an application for government-funded debris removal on your property. That information will be asked on the Right of Entry form you submit.

Q: What if I want to keep something such as a tree, fence or part of a wall?

A: This operation is for debris removal, not demolition. However, in some circumstances, partial walls, fences and severely damaged trees will be removed as part of the debris. The Right-of-Entry form does not provide for saving severely damaged trees, fences and walls that qualify as debris.

Q: Will my yard (grass, sprinkler system) survive the debris cleanup process?

A: This debris removal effort should be clearing only what's loose and on the ground. However, depending on the type and volume of debris on your property, heavy machinery may be needed to remove it. This could impact grass, shrubs or other below-ground items such as a sprinkler system so there is no guarantee that these items will remain intact.

Additional Information:

Please visit the website **Mayfielddebris.com** for more information on how to apply for PPDR, what documents you will need and download the right of entry form.

Residents may also call the **debris helpline at 270-356-8171** to speak to someone regarding your needs.

Demolition of Disaster-Damaged Residential Structures

Some homes may need to be demolished for the public health and safety of the community. Sometimes, FEMA provides assistance to state and local governments for costs associated with eligible demolition work when partial or complete collapse is imminent and threatens public health and safety. FEMA does not pay demolition costs incurred by individuals or businesses. Structures condemned before the Dec. 10-11 tornadoes are not eligible for FEMA assistance.

Q: Who decides which houses to demolish?

A: Local governments decide which buildings to demolish, based on recommendations of local building officials. FEMA does not decide which structures need to be demolished.

Q: Who handles the demolition?

A: If FEMA assistance for demolition of eligible structures is requested and approved by the local government and the commonwealth, the demolition is handled by government-funded contractors.

Q: When does demolition of houses begin?

A: If FEMA assistance is requested, the removal of unsafe structures can begin after the commonwealth and FEMA approve a written demolition plan submitted by the local government. Before demolition, property owners will need to sign a Right-of-Entry form and provide insurance information. Contact your local officials and monitor local media for information on when demolition starts in your area.

Q: Will FEMA purchase my damaged home?

A: FEMA does not directly purchase disaster-damaged properties. FEMA may provide special funding to the commonwealth for demolition projects that will reduce or prevent future disasters or damage.

Additionally ...

Q: What is the difference between debris removal and demolition?

A: It is important for local emergency managers to clearly distinguish between debris removal and demolition as FEMA has specific requirements under each category.

- **Demolition**, as defined by FEMA, is the removal of a structure that is an imminent threat to health and public safety. In some cases, the immediate threat may be alleviated by securing the unsafe structure and surrounding area with a fence. That may also be more cost-effective.
- **Debris removal**, according to FEMA, is the clearance, removal and disposal of materials generated by the Dec. 10-11 tornadoes. Debris removal includes, but is not limited to, vegetative debris; some construction and demolition debris; sand, silt, gravel, rocks and boulders; vehicle and vessel wreckage; hazardous waste, and large appliances such as refrigerators, water heaters and air conditioners. (Do not leave doors unsealed or unsecured.) Contact your local government before demolishing any damaged structure.

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