

Private Property Debris Removal After a Tornado

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Debris removal from private property is the responsibility of property owners and is usually ineligible for reimbursement under FEMA's Public Assistance Program. Sometimes, FEMA may determine that debris removal from private property is eligible for program funding. But there are factors that affect that decision. Those factors are based on the severity of the disaster and whether debris on private property is so widespread that it threatens public health and safety or the economic recovery of the community. In such cases, FEMA works with state and local governments to designate *specific areas* where debris removal from private property is eligible for funding. In those cases, debris removal must be in the public interest, not merely benefiting an individual or a limited group of individuals.

Removing debris can be a challenging job for residents, business owners and governments. Owners may remove debris themselves or get help from insurance settlements and/or assistance from citizen volunteers, the private sector and voluntary organizations. Often, local or state governments dispose of disaster-related debris that private property owners place at the curb for pickup on a scheduled date.

Tips for cleaning up debris on private property

- **Stay safe.** Wear protective gear such as gloves and masks when handling debris. Contact your local emergency manager if your property is littered with storm-related debris that poses a threat to public health or safety and must be removed. Emergency managers know which government agency to contact about having hazardous debris removed. As you clear debris, look carefully for any visible cables. If you see any cables, wait for professionals to handle them.
- **Toxic substances.** If you suspect the debris contains dangerous ingredients, seal them in plastic bags to prevent them from becoming airborne. **Never burn debris**; it can be toxic.
- **Contact your insurance company** early to [file a claim](#). Photograph/videotape the damage and debris and keep all receipts for the work performed.



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- **Check with local officials** before placing debris for collection to determine where and when pickups will be conducted.
- **Separate debris** into six categories when disposing along the curb:
 - **Electronics** (such as televisions, computers, phones)
 - **Large appliances** (such as refrigerators, washers, dryers, stoves or dishwashers. Be sure to seal or secure the doors so they are not accessible)
 - **Vegetative debris** (such as tree branches, leaves or plants)
 - **Construction debris** (such as drywall, lumber, carpet or furniture)
 - **Household garbage, discarded food, paper or packaging**
- **Place debris away** from trees, poles or structures including fire hydrants and meters.
- **Don't block the roadway with debris.**

For the latest information on Tennessee's recovery from the severe storms, straight-line winds and tornadoes, visit [FEMA.gov/Disaster/4701](https://www.fema.gov/Disaster/4701). You may also follow [TN.gov/TEMA](https://www.tn.gov/TEMA); [Twitter.com/TEMA](https://twitter.com/TEMA), [Facebook.com/TNDisasterInfo](https://www.facebook.com/TNDisasterInfo), [@FEMARegion4/Twitter](https://twitter.com/FEMARegion4) and [Facebook.com/FEMA](https://www.facebook.com/FEMA).

