

Helpful Hints:

Sandbag cleanup after a flood

Once the danger of a flood fight is over, clean-up efforts begin for local residents. Questions may arise about the proper disposal of soiled and unsoiled sandbags. Please use this quick reference guide to assist with answering questions about proper sandbag disposal after a flood event has occurred.

Sandbags should be managed depending on the type of bag; the quality of flood waters; any additives used in the sand; and the possible use, reuse or disposal of the bag and the sand.

Types of Sandbags and Sand

- Sandbags made of burlap or plastic (polypropylene) are used to hold back floodwaters and prevent damage to property and buildings.
- Sand used in sandbags often includes granules of all different sizes, including coarse grains that can scratch the skin and fine grains that can be easily blown around by wind. The sandbags also can contain clay, which can stain clothing and surfaces. Some sandbags may contain salt mixed with the sand.

Use Caution

- Sand that has been contaminated by oil-based or fuel products, hazardous chemicals, salt, sewage or septic waste can cause impacts on public health and the environment if they are not handled properly.
 - *Sand that came in contact with flood waters may contain more bacteria than normal soil.*
- **Do not place in playgrounds, sandboxes or other areas of direct human contact.**
- Bacteria will dissipate with time and exposure to the elements.
 - Improper management of sandbags following a flood emergency can lead to unwanted blowing of sand and litter from broken or leaking sandbags.

Disposal of Sandbags Proper sandbag disposal varies based on what has come into contact with the sandbags.

Soiled Sandbags or Sand:

- ***Empty or full sandbags or sand/dirt which has come into contact with chemicals, wastes, fuel, oil, salt, sewage or septic tank waste*** could negatively impact the environment and must be disposed of at a municipal landfill or other approved facility.
 - ***Call your local landfill disposal site for detailed disposal instructions***

Unsoiled Sandbags and Sand:

- Unused sandbags can be saved for future use.
- Full sandbags can be used as general fill.
- Full sandbags of both cloth and plastic material may be reused at other flood sites or in the construction of permanent earthen structures.
 - In these cases, the bags are not considered a waste if they are reused within a short time and are not stockpiled for a long period of time.
 - Once sand has been removed from sandbags, the empty bags can be reused, recycled or disposed of to avoid litter. The sand may be reused in an area where fill placement is not prohibited, such as a base for concrete. Sand also can be stored and used for winter road sand, fill, or concrete or mortar sand.
- With landfill operator approval, sand may be sent to a municipal landfill for use as cover.

Follow these safety guidelines to ensure proper sandbag disposal and reuse, including:

- ✓ Use caution to avoid slipping and tripping when working around wet sandbags.
- ✓ Wear gloves and boots for protection from abrasions and possible contaminants.
- ✓ *Check with local **landfill** officials about disposal options for your sandbags, **especially for sandbags containing salt or other contaminants.***
- ✓ Use clean sand from sandbags to add to soil in gardens or flower beds, for snow and ice control, or as base for paving blocks or sidewalks.
- ✓ ***Never use the sand from sandbags to fill children's sandboxes or playgrounds, as it is not high-quality sand and the sandbags may have been contaminated.***
- ✓ ***Never dispose of sand in a wetland, flood plain, waterway or any other sensitive area.***