



North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Division of Water Quality

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Hurricane and Tornado Storm Debris Stream Clearing Guidelines

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The N.C. Division of Water Quality, in conjunction with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, provides this guidance for debris removal from streams, channels and other drainage ways in the aftermath of hurricanes and tornadoes. Debris removal that follows the conditions below will not require a Section 404 Permit or State 401 Water Quality Certification.

1. Removal of debris will be limited to the removal of vegetation and trash, construction and residential materials washed into a stream. Excavation of soil or sediment from wetlands or a stream is prohibited. Uprooted stumps directly in the channel may be pulled from the ground (no excavation), but shall include no more than minimal amounts of soil attached to the roots. Debris removal is restricted to that associated with hurricanes and tornadoes.
2. Debris shall be disposed of on uplands where practicable.
3. Debris placed in wetlands shall be spread in a manner that does not impede lateral water flow and shall be sufficiently anchored (no excavation or fill) so that material will not be displaced back into the stream channel.
4. Equipment used may include hydraulic excavators equipped with a mechanical thumb or grapple attachment, loaders, winches mounted on equipment that has rubber tires or tracks, portable winches and chain saws.
5. Heavy equipment working in wetlands must be placed on mats, or, other measures must be taken to minimize soil disturbance.
6. Equipment shall operate adjacent to the stream and not within the stream unless prior approval has been granted. Where necessary, trees may be cut for access to work sites. However, mechanized land clearing will not occur in wetlands at any time. Crossing a stream to access the opposite bank is permissible, but the crossing sites shall be selected to minimize damage to the streambank and aquatic habitat.
7. No activity may cause a hazard to navigation.
8. In the event of a spill of petroleum products or any other hazardous waste, immediately contact the National Response Center at (800) 424-8802. Management of such spills shall comply with provisions of the [North Carolina Oil Pollution and Hazardous Substances Control Act](#).
9. The contractee will be responsible for inspection and will ensure that all of the previously listed conditions are met.
10. A representative of the Division of Water Quality will periodically inspect the work for compliance with these conditions and to ensure that water quality and wetland standards are not being violated. Deviations from these conditions or violations of water quality standards will likely result in the cessation of work until the problem is resolved.
11. [State Buffer Rules](#) must be complied with when conducting storm debris removal.