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Friday Update: It's All About that Debris

Well, not quite *all* about debris, but mostly!

Essentially the whole state of Florida needs debris removal right now, so access to equipment is limited. This will improve as less hard-hit communities complete their work. Your Solid & Hazardous Waste Management Division, part of your Public Utilities Department, is focusing first on the most hazardous debris, and the most immediate needs. For instance, they began today with the schools, so that they will be ready to receive students on Monday. [HERE](#) is more information on the short-term (next few days) debris removal plan, and [HERE](#) is the map of removal zones that later updates will reference. There will be locations for you to drop off storm debris on your own, but the only location

currently open is the Immokalee Transfer Station. We'll provide more updates as we get them.

See below for more about the County's debris removal plans, including today's Most Frequently Asked Question, about gated communities.

Also, all the way at the bottom of the newsletter is a link to a voluntary data collection tool. Please consider helping the Emergency Operations team gather data to help refine our plans for the next big storm, 'cause we know another will eventually come.

Many County facilities are closed until we can be sure they are safe and ready for you to return. [HERE](#) is a list of facilities which are fully or partially closed. Best bet for the next week or so: call a facility before heading out there. You might save yourself a trip.

As I drove to the office this morning, I marveled at how much we've accomplished together over the last 12 days. I am so proud of the County staff and the incredible work they've done, and of each citizen who helped a neighbor or friend or donated to one of the drives. It has been great to communicate with you each day as we made our way through the initial aftermath of Irma. Thanks to all of you who have reached out through calls and emails with feedback and encouragement. Now that we've made it this far, Angela and I are going begin sending emails as needed rather than daily. Until the next time, have a great weekend, everyone!

Andy

What *NOT* To Do With Your Storm Debris



As we begin the long, long process of removing storm debris from our streets and neighborhoods, there are some things to keep in mind. (I apologize for the quality of these photos, I snapped them on my phone as I was driving by.) In the picture above, we actually get 2 "DON'Ts" for the price of 1!

- **DON'T bag your debris!** This will all go to be composted, so we don't want bags, especially plastic ones, which will just interfere with that process. Also,
- **DON'T block the gutters and storm drains!** You can't quite see it in this photo, but there's a storm drain at the other end of the driveway. On the next heavy rain, all these leaves will either block the flow of water, backing it up into the street, or get swept down to clog the whole drain.



Can you see how this person piled their tree debris on top of the remains of his pool cage? Here's another big DON'T:

- **DON'T mix your construction debris with your landscape debris.** They will be handled very differently. Remember, if your landscape debris is contaminated with other kinds of debris, the contractors will not pick it up. You get to keep it!

Today's Most Frequently Asked Question: "What about Debris Removal in Gated Communities?"



There's been some confusion about this issue. Here's how I understand it now.

The County's emergency debris management plan includes collections in gated communities and on private roads. To minimize the cost to local taxpayers for this cleanup, County staff has submitted a formal request to FEMA for authorization to collect in these areas, which would make FEMA responsible for potentially up to 90% of costs incurred. We did this during Hurricane Wilma recovery efforts and were ultimately approved for debris collection in gated communities and private roads.

The requested FEMA authorization process should not be lengthy and will not delay scheduled collections in these areas. But it is important to understand that debris collection efforts during the next few weeks will be focused on hardest hit areas first, including Everglades City, Goodland, Copeland and Immokalee, as well all 55 public school sites in the County and County Community Parks, followed by public roads. *The entire debris pick-up process will take several months.*

HOAs in gated communities may choose to use their already contracted landscapers to help them with debris collection and disposal rather than wait several months with debris in their yards. As for private roads, you are encouraged to work with your neighbors to handle debris management as it will be some time before we can get to you.

Finally, should FEMA unexpectedly deny our request, the County can still

collect debris from gated communities; however, we would have to bear all the costs locally.



We've gotten some questions from new subscribers who aren't familiar with our coffee gatherings. Once every quarter the Commissioner buys everyone a cup of coffee (and maybe some donut holes, as well!). Originally intended as a way to chat informally with constituents, we've had to create some structure as attendance has grown. Basically, he will talk about topics and initiatives he thinks you should know about and take questions from the audience. We hope you'll be able to attend; just click the image above to send an email RSVP and be sure to include how many are in your party. We want to be sure to have enough coffee!

Help Our County-Wide Assessment

To help your Emergency Management team better assess the highest impacted areas of the county and the kinds of damage our community is facing, residents

and business owners are encouraged to use [this voluntary tool](#) to self-report damage from Hurricane Irma. A couple of things to note:

- You needn't give identifying personal information, but if you do, know that once completed, this form becomes a public record.
- This form is NOT an application for local, state or federal assistance. It's just to provide data to help improve recovery efforts and planning for the next disaster.

Another sign of getting back to normal: The Collier County Information Hotline will shut down at 6 pm today. After that, residents within Collier County can dial still 311 with questions. Information can also be found [at our website](#) or on our social media channels, including [Facebook](#) and Twitter (@CollierPIO).

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