

Flood

INFORMATION



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT of HEALTH

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www.ndhealth.gov/flood

Sandbag Cleanup After a Flood

Once the danger of flooding is over, many community officials and homeowners will be faced with cleaning up sandbags that were used for flood control.

Is disposal necessary or can the sandbags be re-used? Proper management of the leftover bags and sand will help prevent potential public and/or environmental health impacts.

Disposal

- Sandbags that have been contaminated by high concentrations of oil-based or fuel products, hazardous chemicals, salt, sewage or septic waste must be disposed of at a municipal or industrial solid waste landfill or other approved facility.
- Sand in sandbags is not high-quality, and it may have come in contact with flood waters and contain more bacteria than normal soil. Consequently, it should not be used in playgrounds, sandboxes or other areas where direct human contact may occur.
- If sandbags have come into contact with manure, the sand from them may be applied on agricultural land at an application rate consistent with state rules. However, the empty bags must be disposed of at a municipal or industrial solid waste landfill.



- Sand should never be disposed of in a wetland, floodplain, waterway or other environmentally sensitive areas.

Reuse

- Full sandbags can be used as general fill or for the building of berms. The bags must be covered with at least 6 inches of soil and planted with grass to prevent the bags from being exposed, breaking up and/or rotting. This practice also will prevent the bags and sand from blowing or washing away.
- Full sandbags made of either cloth (burlap) or plastic material may be reused at other flood sites or in the construction of permanent earthen structures if the sandbags are not stockpiled for long periods of time.
- Once sand has been removed from sandbags, the empty bags can be reused, recycled or disposed of to avoid litter problems.
- Unused, unfilled bags can be saved for future use.
- Sand removed from sandbags may be reused in areas where fill placement is not prohibited, such as a base for concrete.
- Sand may be added to soil in gardens or flower beds.

- Sand may be stored and used for winter road sand, fill, or concrete or mortar sand.
- Sand may be sent to a municipal or industrial solid waste landfill or inert waste landfill for use as cover.

Safety

Follow these guidelines to ensure safe sandbag/sand disposal and reuse:

- Use caution to avoid slipping or tripping when working around wet sandbags.

- Wear gloves and boots for protection from abrasions and possible contaminants. The sand often contains coarse grains that can scratch skin. In addition, sandbags can contain clay, which may stain clothing and surfaces.

More Information

For a list of North Dakota municipal solid waste disposal sites, or if you have any questions about the proper disposal/reuse of sandbags, please contact the North Dakota Department of Health, Division of Waste Management, at 701.328.5166 or www.ndhealth.gov.

