

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 7
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Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, and Nine Tribal Nations

EPA Teams Collected Nearly 3,000 Tons of Residential Debris and Hazardous Materials from December Flooding in St. Louis

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(Lenexa, Kan., March 22, 2016) – EPA Region 7 and its contractors collected almost 3,000 tons of residential debris and hazardous materials during a nearly two-month-long mission to help residents of Missouri's Franklin, Jefferson, St. Charles and St. Louis counties recover from severe flooding caused by heavy rains in late December 2015.

Final figures show EPA crews picked up a total of 2,982 tons (5,964,000 pounds) of residential debris across the four St. Louis metro area counties. EPA was assigned the residential debris collection mission by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which coordinated the overall response to the flooding event.

EPA teams deployed to the St. Louis area in early January and continued on a schedule of curbside debris pickups in affected residential areas through February 15. EPA also operated a drop-off collection facility in Eureka, conducted aerial assessments to identify affected areas and locate flood debris, and deployed boats to collect various types of orphaned containers and debris from area lakes, streams and shorelines. A small team of EPA staff remained on duty through February 26 to assist community volunteers in a final effort to collect lingering debris, and close out the agency's response operations.

Overall, EPA's work resulted in the recycling, treatment or disposal of approximately 8,913 cubic yards of residential flood debris. Among the collections—besides common construction, demolition and vegetative debris—were 317 drums, 20,852 assorted small containers, 112 large containers, 179 propane tanks, 266 compressed gas tanks, 1,032 white goods (major appliances like refrigerators and stoves), 403 batteries, 177 small engines, and 6,037 electronic items.

EPA also handled the collection and disposal of 1,310 tons (2,620,000 pounds) of sandbags.

"EPA's goals in this mission were to help St. Louis metro residents recover as quickly as possible while minimizing expenses to taxpayers and impacts on the environment," EPA Regional Administrator Mark Hague said. "As a key part of the broader response led by FEMA, we are proud to have accomplished these goals."

With experience acquired from its work following other major natural disasters—including the Joplin tornado in 2011 and severe flooding in Iowa in 2008—EPA Region 7 brought its "lean and green" approach to the St. Louis area response. That approach was demonstrated in how the agency handled the collection, transportation and disposal of each category of flood debris:

- Construction and demolition debris from homes traveled no farther than two local landfills—in Maryland Heights, Mo.; and East St. Louis, Ill.—for proper disposal, minimizing transportation costs and saving time.

- Large accumulations of vegetative debris—tree limbs and similar material—were kept out of landfills, and instead were ground into mulch for landscaping.
- Refrigerant gases and hazardous components were safely captured and stripped from discarded refrigerators and freezers so that they and other discarded major appliances could be recycled for scrap metal through a firm in Valley Park—again minimizing time, transportation costs and environmental impacts.
- Discarded electronics goods were sent to the American Military Veterans Assistance Corporation in St. Louis, which specializes in the recycling of such materials. This kept discarded televisions, computer equipment, lamps, small appliances, stereos and similar items out of landfills—and minimized EPA's time and transportation costs—while also helping a local non-profit community agency that supports veterans.
- Household hazardous wastes collected at curbsides—as well as orphan containers, which include drums, tanks, fluid totes, canisters and similar containers found floating in or washed up near waterways—were gathered at EPA's staging area near Eureka, where crews sorted and grouped items by type, prior to shipping them off for safe, proper treatment and disposal as hazardous wastes at approved facilities.

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Learn more about recovery from Missouri's December 2015 flooding:

<http://www.mo.gov/flood-recovery>

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