

Preparing for the Next Storm



Municipalities faced considerable challenges in the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy when it hit Long Island on Oct. 29, 2012. Most villages, towns, and cities struggled to handle the massive amounts of storm debris and landscape waste that was generated in the wake of the storm. Budgets and resources were strained due to the costly and prolonged clean up.

Today, the challenges presented by extreme weather events are as great as ever. Long Island is a densely populated area. Additionally, trees have naturally grown and aged over the past 11 years, resulting in a mature tree canopy that can create large amounts of storm debris. Collecting, transporting and disposing of storm debris will be a daunting task across the region.

The following are recommendations to help ensure timely clean ups:

1. All municipalities should develop or update their storm debris management plans.

- Plans should identify the locations of both temporary storage/transfer sites and permanent disposal sites.
- Various types of wastes will be generated during a storm event including landscape waste, residential waste, construction waste, household hazard waste, flood waste marine debris, etc... Management plans should address what types of waste will be accepted at each location.
- Plans should be in place for the transportation and disposal of storm debris.

2. Municipalities must work together.

- Although there are numerous municipalities that normally operate independently within Nassau County and Suffolk County, coordination among municipalities will allow multiple municipalities to utilize temporary debris management locations and would likely improve the cleanup process.
- Municipalities across Nassau and Suffolk should maintain open communication regarding their storm debris management plans, possibly with an annual meeting to share ideas and attempt to address previous challenges that were encountered following a significant storm event.

3. Be prepared.

- Use the following checklist as a reference document when a storm is forecasted to strike Long Island:

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Checklist: Storm Preparedness Reminders

Below are some of the more critical aspects of operations when a storm threatens Long Island:

Monitor the Storm

Forecasting has improved and the National Hurricane Center is an excellent resource to track the probable path and the strength of hurricanes.

Fuel

Contact suppliers to confirm supply and delivery options before/during/after the storm. Evaluate fuel consumption and top off all trucks and storage tanks accordingly.

Power

Check back up power system/generator if equipped. Use a licensed electrician to ensure the system is properly set up. Consider renting/leasing a generator if necessary and confirm availability. A small generator may be necessary to power essential fuel pumps.

Disposal Sites

Confirm hours and conditions of operation at Long Island transfer stations and disposal facilities. Be mindful some may close if there are sustained winds of 40 mph. Establish a means of communication to keep up to date on operational status. Develop plan for extended storage of solid waste onsite to minimize fire hazards.

Local Authorities

Coordinate with local authorities in the event a state of emergency is declared. The priority is often to get solid waste and recycling routes back out as soon as possible.

Employees

Identify essential and non-essential personnel to determine who needs to come to work and who can stay home or work remotely. Establish a communication plan or call-in number for employees to call to stay up to date on work status. Update employee address and phone numbers. Establish criteria to close/suspend operations (for example, when major roads are flooded and when winds are in excess of 50 mph.)

Customers

If your municipality provides collection services, notify key/sensitive customers of storm response plan and establish means of communication to keep up to date.

Facility

Evaluate facilities and storage areas to identify areas vulnerable to wind and flooding. Secure/relocate equipment that may be blown or damaged by the wind or falling debris. Relocate trucks and equipment in low areas where flooding is possible. Ensure storm drains are free of debris and working properly.

Supplies

Check inventory on essential consumables and stock up as necessary including batteries, PPE, water, snacks, etc. Fully charge phones and radios.

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