

## Emergency Use of Gulf Coast Landfill

Thank you for inquiring about the temporary reopening of the Gulf Coast Landfill.

Hurricane Ian left an estimated 10 million cubic yards of hurricane debris in our community. Many of our neighbors have experienced extensive property damage or even lost their homes and automobiles entirely, while others have had to close their businesses. The reopening of Gulf Coast Landfill will accelerate the cleanup of Lee County neighborhoods, speed the rebuilding process, and allow displaced residents and businesses to recover more quickly.

It is important to know that the incredible amount of storm debris would overwhelm our existing disposal sites. Hurricane Ian is estimated to have generated the equivalent of nearly a decade's worth of construction debris that would typically be managed by Lee County. Taking all of this debris to the Lee-Hendry Landfill could potentially leave residents paying dramatically higher costs to dispose of regular garbage that would have to be transported to facilities in other regions.

Based on the enormous impacts of Hurricane Ian on Southwest Florida, Waste Management's Gulf Coast Landfill has been opened on an *emergency basis only*. A number of steps are being taken to limit the impact of this disaster recovery operation:

1. The landfill will accept Hurricane Ian related construction and demolition debris only – not household garbage or horticultural waste;
2. The emergency reopening will last only until our community has cleaned up Hurricane Ian's destructive aftermath;
3. Truck traffic will be limited to major public roads and the landfill's internal roadway;
4. Disposal will only be allowed during daylight hours;
5. View-blocking berms will be constructed to limit landfill visibility; and
6. The landfill will be capped using the latest technology in order to provide enhanced odor control and environmental benefits.

We understand that we must clean up all of the hurricane debris in order to restore the local economy, rebuild our homes and return to normal. Using Gulf Coast Landfill along with other disposal sites will help us achieve that goal in a much shorter time frame—up to one-third faster—and preserve other landfill capacity that is needed for everyday garbage.

If you weren't able to attend one of our public meetings where we detailed the emergency operation of this critical facility, please refer to the FAQs below or send any questions to [gulfcoastlandfill@leegov.com](mailto:gulfcoastlandfill@leegov.com).

Finally, you can track Lee County's Hurricane Ian debris removal progress here: <https://lee-county-fl-debris-removal-thompsoncs.hub.arcgis.com/>

Thank you for considering the necessity of temporarily using Gulf Coast Landfill for Ian construction debris, as well as the many other emergency actions taken throughout this event. Together we can overcome the obstacles created by this unprecedented disaster, help our hardest-hit neighbors recover, and build a stronger Lee County.

## Gulf Coast Landfill FAQs

1. What hours will the landfill operate?

The landfill will only accept hurricane debris materials during daylight hours. Additionally, the County has clarified to Waste Management that heavy equipment can only be operated during daylight hours while the emergency order is in effect.

Please be aware that Waste Management stages regular solid waste collection equipment at this site and that these garbage trucks do operate during non-daylight hours.

2. What materials will be accepted at the landfill?

Waste Management is only accepting hurricane debris at the landfill (Class III and construction and demolition debris). The landfill will not accept municipal solid waste (household garbage), special waste, or hazardous waste.

3. How high will the landfill be when it is full?

The landfill will be 120 feet in elevation.

4. How long will it take to fill the landfill?

It is estimated to take between 18-24 months to fill and close the landfill. However, this could happen sooner depending on the daily amount of inbound hurricane debris.

5. Will the landfill accept hazardous waste?

No, the landfill is not permitted to accept hazardous waste.

6. What happens if non-permitted waste materials arrive at the landfill in a hurricane debris load?

Landfill operators are trained and certified by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to identify and properly contain hazardous or non-permitted materials if they are received at the landfill. The landfill has a permitted operating plan that outlines steps to be taken if unacceptable materials are received.

7. How is hazardous waste kept out of the debris piles?

Citizens are asked to separate hazardous materials and household hazardous waste (gasoline cans, old paint, pool chemicals) from their storm debris piles. Household hazardous waste can be taken to any of the citizen drop-off areas free of charge. Storm debris collection teams go through neighborhoods collecting these items along with e-waste and appliances prior to the arrival of the trucks that remove vegetative and structural debris.

8. Is the hurricane debris inspected prior to disposal at the landfill?

Yes. Each of the debris removal trucks is followed by a monitor to ensure that only appropriate material is collected. The truck is again inspected by a monitor at the debris management site, and a third time at the landfill prior to final disposal.

9. Will asbestos from the debris being landfilled impact my health?

No. The construction debris being collected from Hurricane Ian is unlikely to contain regulated asbestos containing materials.

10. Is ambient air testing for asbestos required for landfills?

No governmental agency requires the testing or management of asbestos in ambient air. This is because neither the Florida Department of Environmental Protection nor Florida Department of Emergency Management have considered hurricane debris to be an asbestos risk. Further, our collectors, monitors, and disposal operators inspect the debris for any hazardous components.

However, in an abundance of caution given public concern, Lee County will sample the ambient air around the landfill perimeter and compare the results to accepted standards.

11. Will mold from the hurricane debris being landfilled impact my health?

No. Mold is natural to the Florida environment and the presence of allergens in the outdoor air quality changes daily with weather and other environmental conditions.

The Gulf Coast Landfill has operating procedures in place to ensure that airborne particles that may be contained in debris from Hurricane Ian are managed safely. These procedures include operating a water truck to manage dust and covering all waste with soil at the end of every week.

12. Will the debris generate large quantities of Hydrogen Sulfide that will cause odors?

The Hurricane Ian storm debris that will be accepted at the Gulf Coast Landfill is construction and demolition (C&D) debris. C&D material is generally inert and has only 25% as much degradable material as household garbage.

Any gas generated by the landfill will be managed with an active landfill gas collection system, which operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This system prevents release of gas to the atmosphere by creating an inward air pressure gradient and moving any gasses to a safe combustion device. Weekly cover soils will mitigate gas release during operations.

There have been no onsite odors or odor complaints from neighbors adjacent to the landfill in more than 10 years.

However, due to concerns expressed by residents related to nuisance odors, Lee County will sample the air ambient air around the landfill perimeter for the presence of hydrogen sulfide gases. The County will develop a sampling plan and share with the community.

13. Why was an emergency vote taken on this action?

On November 1, 2022, the Board voted for emergency approval to use the Gulf Coast Landfill for Hurricane Ian debris because of the tremendous amount of demolition debris (4 million cubic yards). The Gulf Coast Landfill capacity is key to Lee County's debris clean-up as Hurricane Ian created up to ten times the system's annual quantity of demolition debris, and the entire region has a lack of permitted and available capacity to handle such massive quantities.

14. How will you manage noise from operations?

Noise from the site activities will be mitigated by multiple factors including the use of earthen berms to absorb noises, use of low-frequency backup alarms on landfill equipment, minimizing the use of trailer tippers, and natural dissipation over the distance to the property boundary.

15. Will the reopening of this landfill impact our property values?

The landfill operations are temporary and directly related to recovery of the hardest-hit areas of Lee County. Faster recovery of our beaches and tourist areas will keep our area desirable, and rebuilding will replenish our tax base so we can continue to provide the amenities that keep people coming to our beautiful area. Hurricane Ian has reduced home availability in Lee County for the immediate future, which often supports housing prices.

16. Why don't you build a new landfill on vacant property or a park or ballfield?

Solid waste management facilities are highly engineered and regulated and take years to site, develop and permit. The environmental containment infrastructure has already been permitted and constructed at the Gulf Coast Landfill. Opening the Gulf Coast Landfill will speed recovery of the hardest hit areas from Hurricane Ian and safely dispose of the debris. We are presently using parks and sports facilities as debris management sites where yard waste is being mulched and demolition debris is compacted and transferred to final disposal sites such as at Gulf Coast Landfill.

17. There is enough space in the Lee County Landfill so why don't you take it there?

Estimates indicate that Hurricane Ian has generated about 10 years' worth of the construction and demolition waste that Lee County annually takes into its system. Managing Hurricane Ian debris safely and efficiently requires multiple final disposal sites, which is why the Gulf Coast Landfill was re-opened on an emergency basis. The use of this site will speed debris removal and help our community recover in less time. It will also preserve critically needed space at the Lee-Hendry Landfill for everyday garbage disposal.