

Disaster Recovery Policy - Waste Management

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1. PURPOSE

Large scale natural disasters have the potential to generate large amounts of waste. The cost of waste disposal by individual people, businesses, and local councils affected by the disaster can be significant due to costs associated with transport to a licenced waste facility, the waste levy imposed by State Government, and Council tipping fees that are required to cover the cost to manage the facility. All of this waste material can place an additional burden on a community already struggling to cope and a resourcing and financial burden on Council's Waste Services Team.

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- provide a rapid and concise decision matrix to empower staff to respond rapidly to urgent requests for assistance, rather than advising the affected community to wait for a Council decision.
- provide a consistent framework to respond to waste directly generated by a natural disaster;
- assist in providing immediate relief for persons affected by a disaster;
- assist in returning the affected community to its proper level of functioning after a disaster;
- assist Council in meeting its statutory obligations; and
- to provide direction to Council and any established local recovery committees and local recovery coordinators operating within the Shoalhaven Local Government Area with regard to the management of waste following a natural disaster.

2. HOW THE POLICY RELATES TO OTHER LEGISLATION

No provision of this policy or the implementation of this policy can be interpreted or allowed to jeopardise compliance of the Environmental Protection Licences governing the operation of SCC's waste facilities.

This policy does not in any way prevail over the provisions of the *NSW Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1997* and its regulations.

This policy applies only to waste that can be legally accepted at Council's waste facilities.

3. CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE THIS POLICY APPLIES

The provisions within this policy will apply when an Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) has/had been activated to Operational (Red) level by the Local Emergency Operations Controller (LEOCON) for the management of natural disaster emergencies or an event has reached the levels prescribed in this policy.

For the purpose of this policy, a natural disaster is defined as a major adverse event resulting from natural processes of the Earth causing serious disruption to the community. This includes flood, storm and tempest, earthquake, tsunami, heatwave, landslides, bushfire, plant and animal disease or plague, and pandemic.

For less severe storm events, Policy POL16/168 *No Charge Tipping of Storm Damaged Materials at Waste Depots* applies.

4. ACTIVATION OF POLICY PROVISIONS

The provisions of this policy will commence once the immediate impact from the disaster has subsided and it is safe for residents and staff to move about. They will remain in place for two full weekends after the disaster or at the discretion of the General Manager.

5. PROVISIONS

5.1. Waiving of Tipping Fees

The applicable waste disposal fee may be waived for certain residents in affected areas of the disaster to dispose of waste that has been generated as a result of the event (e.g. flood effected goods).

In general, damage to property as a result of a natural disaster and the subsequent disposal of waste is covered by insurance. Residents seeking to dispose of waste as per this policy should confirm with their insurer if disposal costs are covered before requesting Council to waive the fees.

The normal fee will be charged where the resident advises they will claim the costs from their insurer or for any waste not deemed to be as a direct result of a natural disaster.

5.1.1. State Government Waste Levy

Clause 21 of the NSW *Protection of the Environment Operations (Waste) Regulation 2014* allows the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) to waive the waste levy for any waste collected from a natural disaster that is disposed of at a licenced waste facility. This waiver is not automatic and any waiver must be approved by the EPA in writing.

5.2. Increased opening hours at licenced waste facilities

Operating hours at licenced waste facilities nearest to the natural disaster affected area will be extended. These facilities will be opened to the same hours and days as Council's main facility at West Nowra.

5.3. Household pick-ups

There is no provision for a household pick-up service for other items outside the capacity of the wheelie bins. However, affected residents requesting such service shall be informed of Council's bulky waste on-call pick up service and the ability to utilise a valid no-charge tipping voucher for this purpose.

5.4. Waste staging sites

If necessary, skip bins will be provided by Council within the disaster affected areas for free disposal by residents. The Waste Services Manager will determine the number and location of bins.

Residents without access to transport waste to these bins shall be informed of Council's bulky waste pick up service, including the ability to use a valid no-charge tipping voucher for this purpose.

6. COMMUNICATION

Effective communication to the community affected by natural disasters is critical to rapid recovery. SCC shall utilise the following to inform the community with regard to disaster recovery waste services:

- Facebook and other social media nodes
- SCC website
- Media releases
- Radio announcements/advertisements
- Waste Services telephone on-hold messages
- Information items at recovery centres, recovery committees or recovery coordinators (if established)

Depending on the circumstances, messages could provide information to the community in relation to the resumption of waste collection services (if impacted), extension of operating hours, provision of free tipping and any special instructions in relation to this (e.g. up-front payment, statutory declaration, re-imburement) and SCC's bulky goods pick up service.

For consistency and accuracy all media releases, social media updates, radio announcements, web pages etc shall be vetted and approved by the Director Assets and Works.

7. STAFFING

SCC shall ensure staffing levels are increased in order to implement this Policy. This includes increased administration officers in the Waste Services Unit to answer calls from the community and at the licensed waste facilities to monitor loads, assist affected residents, obtain records, and operate weighbridges etc.

8. COST OF IMPLEMENTATION

The cost to implement the provisions of this policy will be funded by Council's Waste Reserve. The Waste Services Manager will review tip fees each year and may increase fees to provide a contingency in the reserve to support this policy.

Opportunities to claim costs from the State/Federal Government in response to a natural disaster will be investigated.

9. IMPLEMENTATION

The Works and Services Section, Waste Unit has the responsibility for implementing this policy.

10. REVIEW

This policy shall be reviewed every time the Policy is activated or within one year of the election of every new Council.