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City and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Announce all Chipped Tree Debris from Hurricane Sandy to be Reused

Nearly 160,000 Cubic Yards of Tree Debris Collected at Floyd Bennett Field

City and Army Corps Working to Remove Waste and Reduce Risk of Combustion and Spread of Asian Longhorned Beetle

New York City, in partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, today announced a plan to reuse all chipped tree debris caused by Hurricane Sandy, including as biofuel, mulch, and landfill cover. More than 15,000 trees were downed and damaged in the storm, and the City has collected the trees and broken limbs at Floyd Bennett Field and other collection points. In total, nearly 160,000 cubic yards of chipped and non-chipped tree debris have been collected. The City anticipates additional non-chipped debris will be collected at Floyd Bennett Field as the clean-up continues. Federal requirements provide that all non-chipped debris must be processed to less than one inch in two dimensions or be destroyed before May 1, 2013 to prevent the spread of the Asian Longhorned Beetle.

The City and the Army Corps are encouraging companies and municipalities to take the chipped and non-chipped tree debris. The Army Corps has already contacted more than 70 reuse companies and six of them have already begun hauling chipped debris from Floyd Bennett Field, helping reduce the risk of combustion in the woodchip piles. To date, approximately 31,000 cubic yards of shredded debris has been removed from Floyd Bennett Field. Contractors capable of hauling and further processing the wood debris may register with the Army Corps at https://apps.swf.usace.army.mil/Hurricane/.

In addition to the risk of combustion in debris piles, to prevent the spread of the Asian Longhorned Beetle, all tree debris at Floyd Bennett Field, Cunningham Park and other locations in the City must be managed prior to May 1, 2013 when larvae begin hatching. The Asian Longhorned Beetle is an invasive beetle known to attack maple, elm, willow, birch, poplar, and ash trees, all of which are common local species, putting roughly half of the City's five million trees at risk. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has spent $395 million since 1996 to address the Asian Longhorned Beetle threat, and over 10,000 trees have been removed in New York City alone to control the beetle's spread. Currently the only effective means of controlling the beetle is to remove infested trees and destroy them by chipping or burning. To prevent further spread

of the insect, quarantine zones have been established to avoid transporting wood to non-infested areas.

To limit the risk of the spread of the Asian Longhorned Beetle, the City and the State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) have authorized ECC, a debris removal company contracted by the Army Corps, to incinerate non-chipped tree debris using the air curtain system that was successfully tested at Floyd Bennett Field in November. An air curtain burner is a ceramic lined firebox approximately the size of a shipping container that uses large fans to create a curtain of air that prevents embers and ash from escaping. The Army Corps has successfully used this disposal method in previous disasters in Texas and Alabama.

ECC may begin use of the air curtain burner system today, December 27, 2012 and the material to be burned will be strictly controlled and limited to downed trees and limbs. Air quality monitoring stations will operate as they did during the pilot program and results will be posted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) website at www.epa.gov/sandy. The readings will continue to be monitored closely by EPA, DEC, and DEP.

DEP air quality modeling based on the best available information shows that incinerating tree debris will have little effect on overall air quality. During a two day pilot test of the air curtain burning system at Floyd Bennett Field on November 28 and 29, EPA conducted perimeter air monitoring of fine particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$), the primary pollutant of concern. Levels of $PM_{2.5}$ were measured over a 24-hour period and were found to be below the National Ambient Air Quality Standard -- a health-based standard for fine particles.

ECC will continue to investigate alternative disposal methods and report their efforts to DEP on a weekly basis. DEP may order the cessation of air curtain burning if it is determined that there are sufficient viable alternatives for managing all remaining trees debris in a timely manner or if monitoring shows significant effects on air quality.

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