



## State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION  
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DIVISION OF WATER QUALITY  
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### **Snow Removal and Disposal Policy**

**PURPOSE:** To provide guidelines to all government agencies and private businesses regarding snow disposal site selection, site preparation and maintenance, and emergency snow disposal options that are acceptable to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP).

**APPLICABILITY:** These Guidelines apply to public agencies and private businesses disposing of snow in the State of New Jersey.

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

Finding a place to dispose of collected snow poses a challenge to municipalities and businesses as they clear roads, parking lots, bridges, and sidewalks. While we are all aware of the threats to public safety caused by snow, collected snow that is contaminated with road salt, sand, litter, and automotive pollutants such as oil also threatens public health and the environment.

As snow melts, road salt, sand, litter, and other pollutants are transported into surface water or through the soil where they may eventually reach the groundwater. Road salt and other pollutants can contaminate water supplies and are toxic to aquatic life at certain levels. Sand washed into waterbodies can create sand bars or fill in wetlands and ponds, impacting aquatic life, causing flooding, and affecting our use of these resources.

There are several steps that communities can take to minimize the impacts of snow disposal on public health and the environment. These steps will help communities avoid the costs of a contaminated water supply, degraded waterbodies, and flooding. Everything we do on the land has the potential to impact our water resources. The purpose of these guidelines is to help municipalities and businesses select, prepare, and maintain appropriate snow disposal sites before the snow begins to accumulate through the winter.

#### **RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES**

These snow disposal guidelines address: (A) site selection; (B) site preparation and maintenance and; (C) mechanical snow melter discharge guidance.

##### **A. SITE SELECTION – UPLAND LOCATIONS**

The key to selecting effective snow disposal sites is to locate them adjacent to or on pervious surfaces in upland areas away from water resources and wells. At these locations, the snow melt water can filter in to the soil, leaving behind sand and debris which can be removed in the springtime. The following areas must be avoided:

- 1) Avoid dumping of snow into any waterbody, including rivers, the ocean, reservoirs, ponds, or wetlands. In addition to water quality impacts and flooding, snow disposed of in open water can cause navigational hazards when it freezes into ice blocks. In the event of a declared emergency, approval may be granted to utilize water bodies (see Emergency Snow Disposal Procedures below).
- 2) Do not dump snow taken from roadways onto areas adjacent to a public water supply well or reservoir.
- 3) Avoid dumping snow in sanitary landfills. Snow melt water will create more contaminated leachate in landfills posing a greater risk to groundwater.
- 4) Avoid disposing of snow on top of storm drain catch basins or in stormwater drainage swales or ditches. Snow combined with sand and debris may block a storm drainage system, causing localized flooding. A high volume of sand, sediment, and litter released from melting snow also may be quickly transported through the system into surface water.

### **Site Selection Procedures – Upland Locations**

It is important that the municipal Department of Public Works or Highway Department, work together to select appropriate snow disposal sites. The following steps should be taken:

- a) Estimate based on historic snowfall records and experience, the amount of snow disposal capacity needed for the season so that an adequate number of disposal sites can be selected and prepared. ([http://average.snowfall.findthebest.com/dla/new\\_jersey](http://average.snowfall.findthebest.com/dla/new_jersey))
- b) Identify and mark/delineate sites that could potentially be used for snow disposal such as municipal open space (e.g., parking lots or lawns).
- c) Sites located in upland locations that are not likely to impact sensitive environmental resources should be selected first.

### **B. SITE PREPARATION AND MAINTENANCE**

In addition to carefully selecting disposal sites before the winter begins, it is important to prepare and maintain these sites to maximize their effectiveness. The following maintenance measures should be undertaken for all snow disposal sites:

- 1) A silt fence or equivalent barrier should be placed securely on the downgradient side of the snow disposal site.
- 2) To filter pollutants out of the snow melt water, it is recommended that a 50-foot vegetative buffer strip between the disposal site and adjacent waterbodies should be maintained during the growing season.
- 3) Debris should be cleared from the site prior to using the site for snow disposal.
- 4) Debris should be cleared from the site and properly disposed of at the end of the snow season and no later than May 1.

### **C. MECHANICAL SNOW MELTER DISCHARGE GUIDANCE**

All discharges resulting from snow melting operations must comply with the lawful requirements of federal agencies, municipalities, counties, and other local agencies regarding any discharges to storm drain systems, conveyances, or other water courses under their jurisdiction.

If the discharge is to a storm sewer or combined sewer system (CSS), the owner/operator of the mechanical snow melter must, prior to discharge, notify the owner of the conveyance system of the date, approximate time, location, and duration of the discharge(s). The guidance included in this document in no way reduces the existing authority of the owner of a storm sewer or CSS, or other local agency, from prohibiting or placing additional conditions on the discharge.

If the discharge is to a CSS, the snow melter must not be operated or be allowed to discharge during wet weather events. Further, the discharge to a CSS must be upstream of the wet weather regulator or other point of diversion.

**Direct discharges to water bodies are prohibited.** A filter bag or similar filtration device must be used to remove suspended solids and debris. This device should be used and maintained in accordance with the manufacturers specifications. Solids collected in a mechanical snow melter must be disposed of in a proper manner.

The discharge and associated runoff should be routed so that it does not cause any erosion.

The discharge shall not result in flooding of neighboring property, streets, gutters or storm sewers.

The discharge must be diverted from building foundations or other areas that may be damaged from ground settling or swelling.

The discharge must be visibly clear and not contain floating or solid materials.

A visible sheen must not be evident in the discharge.

The addition of cleaning materials or chemicals (such as deicers) during snow melting activities is strictly prohibited.

**For further information, contact the Municipal and General Storm Water Permitting Unit in the Bureau of Nonpoint Pollution Control, Division of Water Quality at 609-633-7021.**

## **EMERGENCY SNOW DISPOSAL PROCEDURES**

As mentioned earlier, it is important to estimate the amount of snow disposal capacity you will need so that an adequate number of upland disposal sites can be selected and prepared.

Under extraordinary conditions, when all land-based snow disposal options are exhausted, disposal of snow that is not obviously contaminated with road salt, sand, and other pollutants may be allowed in certain water bodies under certain conditions. In these cases, municipalities and counties are required to obtain NJDEP authorization for the event.

**Authorizations can be requested by contacting the DEP Hotline at:  
1-877-WARNDEP (1-877-927-6337).**

**Site selection guidelines in these emergency situations:**

- Dispose of snow in open water with adequate flow and mixing to prevent ice dams from forming.
- Do not dispose of snow in wetlands, shellfish beds, small streams, or drinking water reservoirs/D&R canal.
- Do not dispose of snow where trucks may cause shoreline damage or erosion.
- Do not dispose of snow above or at drinking water system intakes which may block or reduce flow into the treatment facility.