

# Storm Debris Removal Ops: What Does It Take?

By Jason Baker, Pine Knoll Shores Fire Chief

Debris hauling operations following Hurricane Florence are now over, with the appearance of the town and right of ways getting somewhat back to normal. The cleanup effort, which had to be accomplished based on FEMA regulations to ensure the town is reimbursed for the money it spends on debris removal, required a major commitment of manpower and time to accomplish.

As soon as the storm passed, in addition to my responsibilities with the Fire Department, my job was to get in touch with the company we had contracted with and get them started with Phase I of the cleanup, which is identified as "emergency access clearing." While the Fire Department goes out and removes trees that are blocking roadways to allow for emergency equipment access, the Phase 1 work involves the clearing of roadways and pushing debris into piles on the right of ways. Once that is accomplished throughout town, we move into Phase II, described as "vegetative and C/D [construction and demolition] debris removal."

Because of flooding on all major roads leading into Carteret County, there was a delay in the contractor's ability to begin Phase I. The beginning was delayed until September 17, and was completed on September 20. Phase II, which involved the use of the big hauling trucks seen throughout town, began on September 21 and continued until November 6.

It was essential during the entire cleanup operation that FEMA rules were followed to the letter to ensure that the town would be reimbursed for the monies spent to conduct the cleanup. The main rules dictated that pickup of debris be only from the town right of ways (not private property) and that all trucks be monitored to be sure that only eligible debris was collected. The town chose to do our own monitoring, meaning that a person follows the truck and observes the process as it loads. For each loaded truck, a ticket was completed with the town name, date/time/location of the debris collected and signed by the monitor. These tickets were given to the truck driver when he departed for the dump site. A yellow ticket was returned to us the next day, which was recorded to allow the town to be sure billing and reimbursement amounts were in agreement.

While the bookkeeping was an essential part of the work involved in getting reimbursement from FEMA, the manpower involved in monitoring the trucks was equally important and could not have been achieved without the help of town volunteers.

We started with six big trucks and what I called the "goose neck" truck, a small 40-cubic-yard truck that had a skid steer for loading. Trucks were assigned throughout town to begin the cleanup process. Once a truck was loaded and left for the dump site, it took roughly two hours for it to return to resume cleanup. Onsite logistics involved timing the trucks in and out of town and assuring that there was a monitor available for each truck as it returned from the dump site.

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), led by Civilian Leader Tom King, was key in helping to provide monitors to accomplish the necessary monitoring of the trucks. Mr. King began arranging for monitors before the storm actually arrived. Additional volunteers signed on at a special meeting held at town hall for that purpose. Volunteers were given instruction on what their work as monitors would entail and how to write the tickets. In coordination with the town's firefighters, the volunteers performed the work—which was an enormous undertaking. As with any large project, it took a short time to work out the kinks, but after only a few days of tweaking the process, we had a great system in place and all worked well from that point forward.

Some of the trucks arrived as early as 6:30 a.m., and the drivers were usually texting me by 5:30 a.m. to get their destination within the town. Pine Knoll Shores firefighters would monitor the trucks with one CERT volunteer from 6:30-11 a.m. At 11:00 more CERT volunteers would arrive to give the firefighters a break until 3

p.m. At 3:00, the firefighters would go back to monitoring duties, assisted by a CERT volunteer as was done in the early morning. While this system worked well at most times, we would call in extra CERT volunteers if the Fire Department had a call. In the event that the fire or emergency call took more time than expected, we would make the tough decision to have the truck drivers stop work until there was a monitor in place. In the end, all worked out well and FEMA rules were carefully followed.

The cleanup was a huge undertaking that involved many man hours. I came to work on September 12 when the hurricane was about to hit and didn't take a day off for six or seven weeks. When I did take a day "off," I stayed on my phone coordinating trucks. The incredible teamwork between the CERT volunteer crews and the firefighters helped us to achieve the good results that you see around town now. Many streets were visited five or six times by the truck as the piles of debris continued to grow. After we began to see the end of the tunnel, we established a cutoff date of October 28 for debris to be put on the right of ways. We made a final pass to all streets after that date and were able to declare the operation completely finished on November 6.

While the active debris-hauling operations are over, the work is not yet done. The cubic yards of debris billed on each ticket must be recorded and later matched with the bill the town receives from the contractor. On a recent workday, I recorded 700 tickets that covered a period of just six days and represented hauling fees of \$312K.

To put our most recent debris removal in perspective, following Hurricane Irene we hauled a little over 11,000 cubic yards of vegetative debris. Following Hurricane Florence, we hauled a little over 100,000 cubic yards of debris. When the final numbers are tallied, I suspect the number will be around 105,000 cubic yards of vegetative debris for Hurricane Florence. We will add approximately 20,000 cubic yards of construction/demolition debris to that number.

As we often hear when Pine Knoll Shores volunteers are involved, we could not have accomplished this task without those who were able to step up and give of their time to make it happen.

## Compare Our CD Rates

Bank-issued, FDIC-insured

3-month **2.25%** APY\* Minimum deposit \$1,000

6-month **2.35%** APY\* Minimum deposit \$1,000

1-year **2.65%** APY\* Minimum deposit \$1,000

\* Annual Percentage Yield (APY) effective 11/14/2018. CDs offered by Edward Jones are bank-issued and FDIC-insured up to \$250,000 (principal and interest accrued but not yet paid) per depositor, per insured depository institution, for each account ownership category. Please visit [www.fdic.gov](http://www.fdic.gov) or contact your financial advisor for additional information. Subject to availability and price change. CD values are subject to interest rate risk such that when interest rates rise, the prices of CDs can decrease. If CDs are sold prior to maturity, the investor can lose principal value. FDIC insurance does not cover losses in market value. Early withdrawal may not be permitted. Yields quoted are net of all commissions. CDs require the distribution of interest and do not allow interest to compound. CDs offered through Edward Jones are issued by banks and thrifts nationwide. All CDs sold by Edward Jones are registered with the Depository Trust Corp. (DTC).

Call or visit your local financial advisor today.



**Kirby Sloan**  
Financial Advisor

4219 Arendell St Suite F  
Morehead City, NC 28557  
252-648-8410

[www.edwardjones.com](http://www.edwardjones.com)  
Member SIPC

**Edward Jones**  
MAKING SENSE OF INVESTING