

Governor Cuomo Announces Clean Up, Debris Removal, and Disposal Efforts to Begin In Fire Island

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FEMA has approved \$30 million for clearance, removal and disposal efforts in Fire Island which will include demolition of destroyed homes

Farmingville, NY - Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced that New York State, FEMA and local municipalities will begin the process of debris removal efforts in Fire Island. An estimated \$30 million has been approved for clearance, removal and disposal of debris from Hurricane Sandy in Fire Island. The Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) will oversee this project, and will continue to support cleanup efforts with New York State and the Fire Island communities devastated by Hurricane Sandy once Right of Entry applications have been submitted by homeowners.

"Fire Island is enormously important to the economy and quality of life for Suffolk County and our State," Governor Cuomo said. "I am incredibly proud of the cooperation between the communities, their leaders and government agencies in tackling the logistical issues looking to hamper cleanup efforts in Fire Island."

"Fire Island has distinct challenges to face as we begin the process of clean-up, removal and disposal," said NYS Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Services Commissioner Jerome M. Hauer. "The inherent and unique challenge is that there is no 'normal' infrastructure to haul large volumes of mixed debris, which includes ruined appliances and demolition wreckage from homes. There is also vegetation, wood and construction debris that will take careful planning to conduct removal and disposal."

"The resources provided by FEMA and the US Army Corps of Engineers to address debris removal on Fire Island is essential to the Suffolk County economy," said Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone. "The expertise and in depth knowledge of these two agencies is welcomed as the Fire Island community faces particular challenges relating to debris removal. I thank Governor Cuomo for his continued leadership to ensure all communities affected by Super Storm Sandy receive the resources needed to rebuild."

"Removing debris from our Fire Island communities is a top priority and I thank the Governor for responding so quickly," said Brookhaven Town Supervisor Ed Romaine. "It is only through the support of the federal, state and local municipalities that a job of this magnitude can be accomplished in time for the summer season. I have had several meetings with Fire Island home owners and local associations and I am confident that we will have a high level of success with securing at least 75% of the ROE's, as well as their full cooperation throughout the entire project."

"Support and cooperation from our federal and state partners is essential as we work to restore Long Island's critical natural levee, Fire Island," said Islip Town Supervisor Tom Croci. "Our Town has moved expeditiously to ensure our residents are aware of the assistance that FEMA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have pledged to Islip and Fire Island property owners and we are poised to meet the reach the response threshold of 75% through the holidays."

Fire Island's Ocean Beach Mayor James Mallott said, "We are all very appreciative of the Governor's help in cleaning up the storm debris in our community, and we especially appreciate the commitment the Governor has given us to taking the further steps we will need to restore our village - and all of Fire Island - to full health."

Saltaire's Mayor Robert L. Cox said, "The Village of Saltaire and our neighboring Fire Island communities have a lot of work ahead of us as we rebound from this historic storm. We are grateful to Governor Cuomo for his leadership and support of the Army Corps' debris clearance effort, and we look forward to that same spirit of cooperation between federal, state and local jurisdictions as we rebuild our infrastructure and beachfronts back to pre-storm condition."

"As the barrier island that protects Long Island's south shore, we took a devastating hit from Sandy," said Suzy Goldhirsch, president of the Fire Island Association. "But we are very resourceful and resilient communities. With the crucial support of the Governor, County Executive Steve Bellone and the Towns, we will work with the Army Corps to clear away the debris and then rebuild our dune system as soon as possible."

Efforts in Fire Island will have many obstacles. Unlike the mainland communities where there is room on sidewalks

and utility strips in front of people's homes to temporarily store such items until municipal sanitation trucks or private haulers can collect it, there is no room on the narrow boardwalks and passageways that run through Fire Island. Additionally, there are weight restrictions on bridges and walkways, which will make reaching and hauling out debris a challenge.

Local municipalities will mail residents a Right of Entry application which is required for the Corps to begin cleanup. A Right of Entry is a legal form that gives the Corps and its contractors permission to enter private property and remove debris. This agreement clarifies the homeowner's rights and establishes the limits and responsibilities of the Army Corps of Engineers.

Work is scheduled to begin in late January and it should be completed in time for tourist season.

Detailed information on the cleanup and instructions regarding Right of Entry process will be provided to residents by each municipality and will be made available online at each municipality's public website.

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