

## Q&A about Storm Debris Removal in the City of Georgetown

1. So what is the City going to do about removing all the debris placed on the right-of-way?

We signed an agreement with the SC Dept. of Transportation who will be using a private contractor, State Tree Service, Inc. to pick up roadside storm debris in Georgetown and Horry County. This contractor may appear in your neighborhood picking up debris and cutting “hangers” (dangling limbs on public right-of-way) under different names.

2. Why did the City elect to have storm debris removed this way? It basically boiled down to cost to the local taxpayer.

It is almost certain SC and Georgetown County will receive a FEMA declaration whereby a large portion of the cost of debris removal will be reimbursed by FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency. This federal agency has traditionally helped local citizens deal with the aftermath of such storms like the recent ice storm, an event now called “Pax”. You may remember the most recent declaration being super-storm Sandy, the late fall storm that battered New England. FEMA has offered debris removal assistance since the 1980’s to communities that have met thresholds for property damage and have received a Presidential Declaration declaring it a disaster area.

FEMA will reimburse according to a cost schedule up to 85% of the actual cost of removing debris generated by the storm. By debris it is mean tree limbs, brush and other vegetative matter generated by in this case ice damage. The other 15% is borne by the local government. Actually over a period of 180 days from Feb.10<sup>th</sup>, the declared date of ice storm Pax, the reimbursement will drop incrementally to 75% of the total cost.

The SC Department of Transportation by virtue of its maintenance of 59 miles of roads and streets within the City will be responsible for the 15% local match.

3. Is there a schedule? No, though the City did request through the local SCDOT that pick-up begin in the City limits because of the amount of debris already at the curb on Sunday February 23<sup>rd</sup>. Two “grapple” trucks begin working after 1 pm on Feb. 25<sup>th</sup>.

The City staff hopes to develop a working relationship with the private contractor to direct them quickly to areas with the most debris. The organization of this effort is a work in progress. Contractors depending on federal reimbursement must have independent monitors to verify the quantity of their work and the contractor’s compliance with FEMA debris removal rules. Having the requisite number of qualified monitors seems to be an issue after the first day.

4. What should we do as homeowners or residents? Here are a few tips:

- Storm debris should be taken to the public right-of-way. Debris means only loose, not bagged, vegetative matter such as broken limbs. No household or other refuse should be co-mingled with the storm debris.
  - The public right of way is generally described as at the curb line or where the curbing meets the pavement or where no curbing exists, an area inside the utility poles within easy reach from the travel lane of the street. No collection on private property can take place.
  - Do not put any debris near a fire hydrant or in front of mailbox that would prevent access to either.
  - Remember, only debris generated as a result of the storm can be collected.
  - Try to have your yard debris to the curb no later than March 9<sup>th</sup>.
5. When will the City resume its regular debris pickup schedule? We will begin pick up of yard maintenance waste as soon as we can get back in the area cleaned up by the private contractor. Clippings and leaves won't be removed by SCDOT contractors. That service will resume as soon as practical by the City.
6. Who can I call if I want more information? Well the actual local contact for the SCDOT contact is Nicky Lewis, PE of the SC Department of Transportation, Georgetown Maintenance Office. phone 843-546-2405. The City will attempt to monitor the contract pickup through its Public Works Department: 545-4700.
7. Anything else you can share? It appears this effort in the City alone will take three weeks. It is in our (city government) interest to make sure the job is fully completed before the contractors leave. Even though we are not a party to the contract we realize the importance of timely removal of the storm debris in our City.