



World Cleanup Day UK

CLEANUPS: SORTING AND WASTE MANAGEMENT

Based on World Cleanup Guidelines by Let's Do It World

Introduction

Managing waste after a cleanup can be a big task. Here are some basic guidelines to help you plan how to do this, including sorting waste, what to do about biowaste and hazardous waste, and waste management.

WASTE IN ONE PLACE

The first thing to know is that waste in one place is better than waste in lots of places. By doing a cleanup and getting as much waste as possible into one place, you've already made a huge step in the right direction.

Gathering waste in one place:

- Minimises health and environmental risks from mismanaged waste.
- Makes it easier to manage and control the collected materials.
- Makes the waste and related problems more visible to the local authority.

However, please do not leave the waste after gathering it. Contact the local authority to make sure they take care of it properly.

SORTING WASTE

Make a plan

Rather than sending all the waste collected to landfill, we recommend taking a circular approach where you separate and recycle what you can, so that the life of these materials can be extended. Aim to maximise the recycling rate during a cleanup.

If you are sorting during the cleanup, it's a good idea to use different coloured bags to make it simpler for volunteers. Alternatively, use mixed waste bags and then sort the contents later.

Get advice

Before the cleanup, think about how you can sort and recover the collected waste. The UK has good recycling facilities but it's a good idea to check in advance what can be recycled with your local authority. You can do this when you contact them to ask them to collect the waste you gather on your cleanup.

Types of waste

The local authority can advise you on what materials they recycle, and they may also have information on other local organisations that take metals, plastic, wood, glass, textiles, or construction and demolition waste for recycling. Some waste may be reusable or even sellable.

Biodegradable waste can be composted. If you manage to collect clean organic material, it can be used for compost (see BIOWASTE section below).

If you find **hazardous waste** it's best to ask skilled people to handle it. If this is not possible, find a place to store it separately (see HAZARDOUS WASTE section below).

Anything else that can't be reused or recycled will probably be sent to landfill. The aim should be to get this pile as small as possible.

BIOWASTE

Biowaste or organics means waste that naturally biodegrades. It can be composted so that it is recycled back into the soil as organic matter. This is important for soil fertility.

Biowaste should not include any packaging plastic, metal or glass. During the cleanup, do not mix it with other waste streams. If the organic waste can't be separated from other waste then it should be collected together as mixed waste and managed accordingly.

The best way to deal with biowaste is to compost it onsite. This minimises transport requirements and the fertile soil stays where it is. This is easier in rural areas. In urban areas we recommend collecting the biowaste and transporting it for composting to the closest convenient location, e.g. a garden, park, common green space or recycling station. If it is not possible to compost, then you can leave biowaste behind during cleanups as it will degrade naturally in time.

Items that can be composted include:

- Garden trimmings and grass clippings
- Kitchen waste and food scraps (eggshells, fruit and vegetable peelings, bones, skin etc.)
- Waste from rearing animals (manure, poultry litter, feed)

HAZARDOUS WASTE

Hazardous waste is waste that poses a direct threat to human health and/or the environment. It can be toxic, flammable, explosive and/or infectious.

Examples of hazardous waste include:

- Clinical/medical waste, e.g. used needles, gloves, masks, medicines, used dressings
- Waste oils or water, hydrocarbon or water mixtures such as that have leaked from boats or vehicles
- Resins, latex, plasticizers, glues/adhesives (often found in construction waste)
- Products for treating metals and plastics, e.g. stain, paint and dye residues
- Electronic and electrical waste. These can contain dangerous compounds like mercury, lead, cadmium, zinc and copper.
- Dead animals and body parts (not including food waste).

If you are not sure whether waste is hazardous or not, always treat it as if it is hazardous then let experts decide later.

What should you do if you encounter hazardous waste?

Do not touch it. Instead mark the place, take a photo if you can, and report it to the local authority environmental health team, the Environment Agency (T: 03708 506 506) or Crimestoppers (T: 0800 555 111). Don't open closed bottles or containers. Keep them leak-proof and airtight. Don't break electronic devices apart. Electric and electronic waste is the only type we recommend that you do take with you (but wear gloves to be safe). Collect and store these items separately from the rest of the waste.

If you need to store hazardous waste while you are seeking expert help, make sure all materials are stored in ventilated, dry, cool areas and are not too close to each other. Keep storage areas free from materials that may cause tripping, fires or explosions, or that may attract rats and other pests. Never burn hazardous waste - it is extremely dangerous and potentially life threatening.

TEMPORARY WASTE MANAGEMENT

You may need to set up a resource station where the waste you gathered can be stored temporarily before being collected by the local authority. This place should be suitable both for sorting the waste and for keeping it safe from being carried away again by the wind, water or anything else. It also needs to be accessible by collection trucks.

When choosing a site, try to make sure that it is not in danger of becoming an uncontrolled dumping site or a target for setting fires (burning of mixed waste should be avoided at all costs). Areas with restricted or controlled access are preferable.

IN SUMMARY

Sort and recycle as much as possible. The following materials should ideally be sorted separately for recycling during a cleanup:

Paper and cardboard Biowaste

Metal Recyclable plastics and packaging materials

Glass Electronics

Tyres Hazardous waste

Biowaste can be composted or left to decompose.

Hazardous waste should be left where it is and reported to the appropriate authorities.

Store the gathered waste safely to discourage dumping and avoid fires. Make sure that it gets collected by the local authority.

About us

World Cleanup Day UK

World Cleanup Day UK coordinates World Cleanup Day in the UK and is also a member of the international Let's Do It World network. It is a project of the Skill Mill.

The Skill Mill

The Skill Mill is the host of World Cleanup Day UK. Its core mission is to employ and train young ex-offenders to carry out environmental improvement projects across the UK in partnership with local authorities and others, leading to positive social and environmental outcomes.

Let's Do It World

Let's Do It World is the international coordinating body for World Cleanup Day, its flagship project. It is one of the world's largest environmental networks, with active leaders and teams tackling the global waste problem in 190 countries.

