

## Hurricane debris removal a top priority for county

By Hector Flores

While the vast majority of Charlotte County residents and businesses had some impacts from Hurricane Ian, everyone was and is affected by the debris it created. Even if your debris amounted to nothing more than a few downed limbs, the debris remaining to be cleared is a constant reminder of what we went through and how far we have to go to get our community back to normal. I want to assure everyone that debris removal is among our highest priorities, but patience is requested as we complete this huge task.

Charlotte County's debris contractor, AshBritt, passed a major recovery milestone Wednesday when it collected its 1.75 millionth cubic yard of debris. More than 170 crews are collecting about 50,000 cubic yards of debris per day, seven days a week. We estimate the final debris tally will far exceed our revised estimate of 2.5 million cubic yards and will still take several more months.

To give you some context of the progress we're making on debris collection, in just six weeks more debris has been collected than during the entire debris collection effort following Hurricane Charley in 2004. That's a testament to the great work being done by AshBritt and their crews who came here from around the country.

To view a dashboard featuring a heat map of where debris has been collected, visit [www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov/debris](http://www.CharlotteCountyFL.gov/debris).

Debris is being temporarily managed at four locations around the county. To get an idea of the magnitude of the debris operation, we posted a video of just one of the debris management sites to our Emergency Management Facebook page this week. Visit [www.Facebook.com/oemcharlottecounty](http://www.Facebook.com/oemcharlottecounty).

We continue to operate two temporary debris drop-off sites, one at 7000 Florida St., east of Punta Gorda and another next to the Placida West boat ramp at 12560 Placida Road. Residents can also use the mini-transfer facilities on 19765 Kenilworth Blvd., in Port Charlotte and 7070 Environmental Way in Englewood.

Tens of thousands of residents already have taken advantage of these debris drop-off sites. Between Oct. 6 and Nov. 14, more than 24,000 loads of debris have been dropped off at the four locations.

Florida Department of Emergency Management is now accepting applications from private and commercial property owners who would like assistance for the assessment and removal of qualifying debris, including vehicles.

To apply, visit [www.IanDebrisCleanup.com](http://www.IanDebrisCleanup.com) or call 850-961-2002. For information, call the Hurricane Ian Debris hotline 8 a.m.-8 p.m., Monday-Friday and 9 a.m.-5 p.m., weekends or email [IanDebrisCleanup@em.myflorida.com](mailto:IanDebrisCleanup@em.myflorida.com).

Waterway debris removal from county waterways began Tuesday, Nov. 2 in the Hayward Canal in El Jobean. Our contractor, Zulu Discovery, began collecting in navigable marine waterways to remove hazards to navigation and will then proceed to freshwater canals and lakes and primary ditches.

Please keep in mind, the contractor will be using county boat ramps to get in and out of the water. Patrons are advised to use caution around the areas where equipment and debris is being handled.

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