Japan Tsunami Marine Debris

What to do if you see debris

GENERAL GUIDANCE

Be safe: Use common sense and follow general safety guidelines. If you don't know what an item is, don't touch it. If it appears hazardous, contact appropriate authorities.

Marine debris items or significant accumulations potentially related to the tsunami can be reported to DisasterDebris@noaa.gov with as much information as possible (including its location, the date and time you found it, photos, and any relevant descriptions). It is important to remember that not all debris found on U.S. shorelines is from Japan, so please use your discretion when reporting items.

Contact Information

U.S. Coast Guard National Response Center
Toll Free: 1-800-424-8802
Online: www.nrc.uscg.mil/nrchp.html

U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area Command
510-437-3701

For more information, please visit:
www.marinedebris.noaa.gov

- GUIDELINES BY DEBRIS TYPE -

Litter and other typical marine debris items
Examples: Plastic bottles, aluminum cans, buoys, Styrofoam
Common marine debris types may vary by location. If practical, we encourage you to remove the debris and recycle as much of it as possible.

Potential hazardous materials (HAZMAT)
Examples: Oil or chemical drums, gas cans, propane tanks
Do not contact DisasterDebris@noaa.gov for response assistance. Instead, contact your local authorities (a 911 call), state environmental health agency, or the National Response Center to report the item with as much information as possible. Do not touch the item or attempt to move it.

Derelict vessel or other large debris item
Examples: Adrift fishing boat, shipping containers
Contact your local authorities (a 911 call) and state environmental health agency to report the item. If the debris item is a hazard to navigation or has a pollution risk, contact the National Response Center or the USCG Pacific Area Command for assistance. Do not attempt to move or remove vessels.

Mementos or possessions
Examples: Items with unique identifiers, names, or markings
If an item can 1) be traced back to an individual or group and 2) has personal or monetary value, it should be reported to DisasterDebris@noaa.gov. NOAA will work with local Japan consulates to determine if they can help return the item to Japan.

Remains
It is highly unlikely that remains from the tsunami will reach the United States, but if you see human remains anywhere, contact local authorities (a 911 call) and report what you observed. Do not touch or attempt to move them.

Unknown item
If you don't know what it is, don't touch it. If you believe it is a hazardous item, contact local authorities and report it.