

# After Fargo's flood, 6 million sandbags remain

Now that the flood risk is over, officials wonder what to do with sand

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FARGO, N.D. — Millions of bags filled with sand were used to battle record flood crests in Fargo and neighboring Moorhead, Minn. But now that the flood risk is over, city leaders wonder: Where will the sand go?

Cleanup efforts in the two cities are facing about 6 million bags of sand used to prop up dikes, built in a week after the National Weather Service bumped up its Red River flooding forecast by several feet in March.

"We were in crisis mode when we were filling the bags, and that gave people a lot of energy," said Bruce Grubb, a Fargo city official who managed sandbagging operations. "Now that the adrenaline is gone, it's just work."

Most of the sand can be recycled and reused if it's not contaminated with sewage or petroleum products, said David Glatt, environmental chief for the North Dakota health department.

"Obviously, we don't want to see it put in the child's sandbox," Glatt said.

## Sand could be used for icy roads

Fargo, which has about 3.5 million sandbags, likely will use most of it as a barrier on top of its plastic liner at the landfill, Grubb said. The city has equipment to separate the sand from the bag and screen the material, he said.

Moorhead, which has about 2.5 million bags, planned to use the sand for icy roads and other projects, said city manager Michael Redlinger.

"We're trying to not take up precious space in our landfill with material that doesn't need to be there," Redlinger said. "We anticipate that we'll be able to keep quite a bit of it."

In Mandan, a shortage of sand forced officials to fill as many as 10,000 sandbags with a sand-salt mixture that's used on icy roads. Public Works Director Jeff Wright said the city used "any material that was not frozen in chunks at the time" to help in the flood fight on the Heart River.

"We did not have a lot of choice," he said.

But after the flood threat passed, Mandan officials quickly urged residents to drop off their sandbags at designated sites, warning that the sandbags filled with the salt mixture might be harmful to grass and garden plants.

"I really do not know for sure if a 4 percent salt mixture would harm garden plants or not. I just did not want to take the chance after it is too late," Wright said.

He said the returned bags would be put to good use on roads this winter.

"We used much of our 2009 budget this year already, and we have November and December to go yet," he said.



Dave Kolpack / AP

Sandbags cover the parking lot of the FargoDome, an indoor football stadium and concert arena in Fargo, N.D., Thursday, April 9.