

BOX 4.2 Continued

goods inside of them in situ, preserving the archaeological record for future researchers. Residents, however, objected to the phrase “waste in place,” because it implied that their lives, homes, and possessions that were destroyed were merely “waste.” Scientists familiar with New Orleans’ geology and soil also rejected the “waste in place” strategy, arguing that the weight of decaying buildings and abandoned material culture would eventually cause the new buildings to sink into the ground. Finally, government officials raised concerns over the chemicals left behind in the

soils from refrigerators, cleaning products, and air conditioners.

Taking these discussions into account, a decision was made to relocate buildings and possessions destroyed or significantly altered by Katrina to a neighboring landfill. While the provenience of these ruins and objects will not be maintained for future archaeologists to study, the rubble will still be somewhat close to its original context. Based on the case study of Katrina, Dawdy (2006) concludes that taphonomy is an emotional, political, and cultural process.