

CAUTION: HURRICANE SANDY CLEANUP CAN BE HAZARDOUS!

As the flood waters recede, we all want to get our homes, our places of employment, our communities, and our roads, rails, bridges, and tunnels clean and back to normal as quickly as possible.

Warning - Hurricane cleanup and restoration work may have serious risks. Doing the wrong thing can endanger your safety, your health, and possibly your life.

IMMEDIATE SAFETY HAZARDS:

Building collapse or shift - Do not enter a space that has any sign of not being structurally sound (for example, large cracks in the walls). If in doubt, stay out until it can be professionally evaluated.

Debris piles - Where possible, avoid direct contact with unstable surfaces. Use bucket trucks, stable and secure scaffolding, and/or fall protection with secure anchor points.

Electrocution - Assume that all power lines are energized unless you know they have been de-energized and tested. Do not enter any space that still contains flood waters until you are 100% certain that the electricity is off and will remain off.

Explosion - Do not enter any space where there is a natural gas odor. If possible, do not enter any impacted space until you are sure that gas feeds have been shut off and will remain off.

Asphyxiation (death from lack of oxygen) - Do not work in poorly ventilated areas which may be subject to emissions from gasoline-, diesel-, or propane-powered generators, vehicles, or equipment. Carbon monoxide poisoning can occur outdoors as well as indoors. **Do not operate generators inside.**

CHEMICAL HAZARDS:

Toxic particulates (poisonous airborne dusts) - During cleanup or restoration work, you may be exposed to **asbestos, lead, silica, cement dust**, or other toxic chemicals. Inhaling (breathing in) any of these chemicals can cause serious, permanent, long term harm to your health. Exposure to asbestos or silica may cause cancer.

To protect against toxic airborne dust, you may need to wear a respirator. A disposable N-95 or greater respirator can provide adequate protection against inhaling silica or cement dust. For protection against asbestos or lead, you will need at least a half face elastomeric (rubberized) respirator equipped with N, R, or P-100 HEPA (high efficiency particulate air) filters. *Do not use paper dust masks - they do not provide significant health protection.*

BIOLOGICAL HAZARDS:

Mold - Water and dampness can cause mold growth on building materials and furnishings, including sheet rock, ceiling tiles, wood, and carpets. Inhaling airborne mold can cause wheezing, respiratory distress, allergic reactions, and severe nasal, eye, and skin irritation. To protect against breathing in mold, use a disposable N-95 or greater respirator.

ABOUT PROPER PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

1. Avoid skin contact with chemical or biological hazards. Wear protective gloves and clothing.
2. Using a respirator, even the right respirator, probably will not provide proper protection unless you have been fit-tested, trained, and qualified to use a respirator. Learn more:

<http://www.njwec.org/PDF/WECfactsheetonPPE.pdf>

3. If you are an employee and are required to use a respirator, your employer must provide you with a respirator at no cost, along with annual training, fit-testing, and medical clearance.

Note: This fact sheet does not address all hazards. Additional hazards may be present.

FLOOD CLEANUP RESOURCES

If you see a chemical spill or other environmental incident, call the NJ Department of Environmental Protection hotline at **(877) WARN-DEP**. For immediate answers regarding health concerns call **2-1-1** or to speak with a public health expert, call **1-866-234-0964**.

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) have excellent resources for workers and communities on staying safe and healthy during flood cleanup. Please visit: www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/floods/index.asp
To see a list of topics that include identifying and dealing with electrical, mold, carbon monoxide, biological, and chemical hazards. **If you have questions, call NIOSH at (800) CDC-INFO (800-232-4636).**

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) *Emergency Response Resources: Storm/Flood and Hurricane Response*: www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/emres/flood.html

NIOSH *Storm, Flood, and Hurricane Response Recommendations for the Cleaning and Remediation of Flood-Contaminated HVAC Systems: A Guide for Building Owners and Managers*:
www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/emres/Cleaning-Flood-HVAC.html

NIOSH: Returning Home After a Disaster: Be Healthy and Safe:
<http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/returnhome.asp>

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) *Flooding*: www.epa.gov/naturalevents/flooding.html

EPA *Flood Cleanup and the Air in Your Home*: www.epa.gov/iaq/pdfs/floods.pdf

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) *Floods*: www.osha.gov/dts/weather/flood/index.html
OSHA's website contains fact sheets, concise "quick cards," frequently asked questions, safety and health guides, and information in English and Spanish to keep disaster site workers safe during hurricane and storm cleanup and recovery operations. **To request an inspection of a hazardous working condition, call OSHA at (800) 321-6742.**

OSHA Hurricane Preparedness and Response: www.osha.gov/dts/weather/hurricane/index.html

OSHA Keeping Workers Safe During Hurricane Sandy Cleanup & Recovery: www.osha.gov/sandy/index.html

University of Michigan *Suggested Guidelines for Remediation of Damage from Sewage Backflow into Buildings*: www.oseh.umich.edu/pdf/guideline/fdrappe.pdf

For some NJ specific information go to:

NJ Office of Emergency Response: www.state.nj.us/njoem/index.html

Public employees should utilize the NJ Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health Program.
For safety issues, call the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development at (609) 624-1644.
For health issues, call the NJ Department of Health at (609) 984-1863.



This factsheet was originally produced by the New York Committee on Occupational Safety and Health (NYCOSH) and was revised and reproduced with permission by NJ Work Environment Council (WEC).

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