

REGION 8 SAFETY ALERT



No. R8 SA 16-01

October, 2016

Page 1

Subject: Dangerous Post-Disaster Field Conditions
Area of Concern: Field Operations
Distribution: All Field Personnel
Discussion: Hurricane Damage Assessment & Clean-Up

Before we head out to do hurricane damage assessments or assist with clean-up & recovery, please take extra time to **STOP, THINK, and DISCUSS** before you **ACT**.

STOP

It is great our employees are very helpful, but our agency knows we have a propensity to action. It is easy to just gear up and jump in without stopping to adequately assess and prepare. Often just waiting a day to let conditions improve will increase safety.

- ▶ Please take the time to do *risk management* before implementing action.
- ▶ Fully consider if we have done everything possible to ensure we all go home safe today.

THINK

What mission have we been asked to do? Is this task within my scope of employment?
Have I been trained and qualified to do this specific mission? Are we noticing any "mission creep" toward something different than what we have experience doing?
Can we do this work safely? How am I feeling right now?
Am I noticing any "human factors" within me (or others) that may affect our performance?
Do I fully understand leader's intent, and do the leaders fully understand the potential hazards?
Are we encouraged to speak up and contribute utilizing respectful inquiry?
Is there a good JHA or Risk Assessment completed and signed for this task available on site?
Is this job necessary? Is there a better, smarter, safer way to do this?
Should I refuse this mission until we ensure a safer way to accomplish our goals/objectives?

- ▶ Include review of prior agency learning and similar articles in your mission preparation.
- ▶ There are good references available, such as the following obtained via a simple online search:
 - <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/hurricane/recommendations.html>
 - <https://www.epa.gov/natural-disasters/hurricanes>
 - <https://tools.niehs.nih.gov/wetp/index.cfm?id=2472>
 - <https://www.usa.gov/disaster-clean-up>
 - http://ehstoday.com/safety/management/safety_tips_hurricane_cleanup
 - <http://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/8819-ppe-help-flood-cleanup-workers>
 - http://www.apic.org/Resource_TinyMceFileManager/Practice_Guidance/Emergency_Preparedness/Flood_Education_resources_20086-23-08.pdf

Continued Next Page

REGION 8 SAFETY ALERT



No. R8 SA 16-01

October, 2016

Page 2

DISCUSS

Have you and/or others on the team shared how you are feeling about the mission?
Are there pressures- external or internal to "get the job done"? Should we refuse this mission?
Should this job be left for trained responders with appropriate gear who specialize in this task?
Have we determined the best way to mitigate exposure from known & unknown hazards, such as:

- ▶ Predicted unfavorable weather and unknown working environment;
- ▶ Weakened or damaged levies and dams nearby;
- ▶ Soil loosened, which may facilitate increased risk of cave-in or land slide;
- ▶ Unknown water depth, or water contaminated with sewage or hazardous materials;
- ▶ Air contaminated with mold and fungi or toxic fumes/vapors;
- ▶ Enclosures and facilities with unknown ventilation;
- ▶ Soil, ground water, or debris becoming energized by downed power lines;
- ▶ Wind damaged objects like trees & structures in close proximity that could fall down;
- ▶ Slippery and/or uneven work surfaces (slips, trips, and falls);
- ▶ Crush & impact potential from the tension or weight of shifting debris;
- ▶ Flammable materials that may be flashy if ignited;
- ▶ Debris that may contain harmful components like asbestos;
- ▶ Other responders using machinery or tools in close proximity;
- ▶ Public traveling in close proximity;
- ▶ Alternate egress routes if primary ingress access becomes unusable;
- ▶ Lack of training on use of specialized Personal Protective Equipment (PPE);
- ▶ Disposal of PPE or other materials that may become contaminated?

Do we have adequate supplies and gear? Are folks current (last 10 years) on their tetanus shot?
Is our check-in/check-out being tracked and length of exposure being monitored?
Have we verified both cell coverage/911 service and radio/repeater communications?
How quickly could help arrive by ground or air if someone did get hurt?
Do we have an EMT on our team? What are we missing? ? ?

THEN ACT

Have we done robust "GO/NO-GO" risk-based decision making here?
If mission implementation is approved, are we maintaining a heightened situational awareness?
Is there adequate oversight and supervision? Are we using best practices and following all protocols/procedures without breaking any rules? Does the mission need to be altered or curtailed due to unexpected hazards, difficulties, or failure to achieve goals/objectives?
Am I taking ownership and accountability for my actions and those of my co-workers?
Should I use my safety empowerment authority to stop the operation? If I see something that looks unexpected, suspicious, or out of place, am I saying something about it?

- ▶ Look up, down, and around....and expect the unexpected.
- ▶ The safer we are.....the more successful we are.....