

REGION 8 SAFETY ALERT



No. R8 SA 17-01

August, 2017

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

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

STOP

Please take a few minutes and counter the propensity to action. Before gearing up to help, engage in thought and dialogue and have your team share their knowledge and experience. 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? Is our PPE appropriate? 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;
- ▶ Refer to easily searchable online references such as these to help learn precautions to take:

- <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/hurricane/recommendations.html>
- <https://www.osha.gov/dts/weather/hurricane/response.html>
- https://www.osha.gov/OshDoc/data_Hurricane_Facts/Bulletin1.pdf
- <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/cleanup/index.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/emres/emhaz.html>
- <https://www.epa.gov/natural-disasters/hurricanes>
- <https://tools.niehs.nih.gov/wetp/index.cfm?id=2472>
- http://ehstoday.com/safety/management/safety_tips_hurricane_cleanup
- <http://www.tdi.texas.gov/pubs/videoresource/fshurricane/clea.pdf>
- <http://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/8819-ppe-help-flood-cleanup-workers>

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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 other responders with appropriate gear who specialize in this task?
Have we determined the best way to mitigate exposure from known & unknown hazards, such as:

- ▶ *Unfavorable weather* that may or may not be predicted;
- ▶ *Weakened or damaged levies and dams* nearby causing *unforeseen flooding*;
- ▶ *Risk of cave-in or land slide*, facilitated by *loosened or saturated soils*;
- ▶ *Water contaminated with sewage or hazardous materials*, and *unknown water depths*;
- ▶ *Exposure to harmful components* found within debris, such as lead or asbestos;
- ▶ *Unknown working environments*, such as enclosures and facilities with *unknown ventilation*;
- ▶ *Air contamination from mold and fungi or toxic fumes/vapors*;
- ▶ *Downed power lines* may unknowingly energize soil, ground water, or other debris;
- ▶ *Falling objects* from wind damaged trees & structures in close proximity;
- ▶ *Slips, trips, and falls* from slippery and/or uneven work surfaces;
- ▶ *Crush & impact potential* from heavy debris shifting or striking while under tension;
- ▶ *Flammable materials* that may be flashy or combustible if ignited;
- ▶ *Impacts* from close proximity to machinery, tools, traveling public or other responders;
- ▶ *Unreliable egress routes* as conditions of ingress/access routes may deteriorate;
- ▶ *Unexpected encounters* with insects, animals, loud noises, contagious people, etc.;
- ▶ *Lack of training* from mission creep or use of unfamiliar Personal Protective Equipment (PPE);
- ▶ *Proper disposal* of PPE or other contaminated materials?

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS- What are we missing? Do we have an EMT on our team?
How quickly could EMS and other help arrive by ground or air if someone did get hurt?
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?
Do we have adequate supplies and gear? Are folks current (last 10 years) on their tetanus shot?

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? Do we have trigger points for when to reassess, alter, or curtail the mission 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 (unexpected, suspicious, or out of place) am I supported in saying something about it?

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