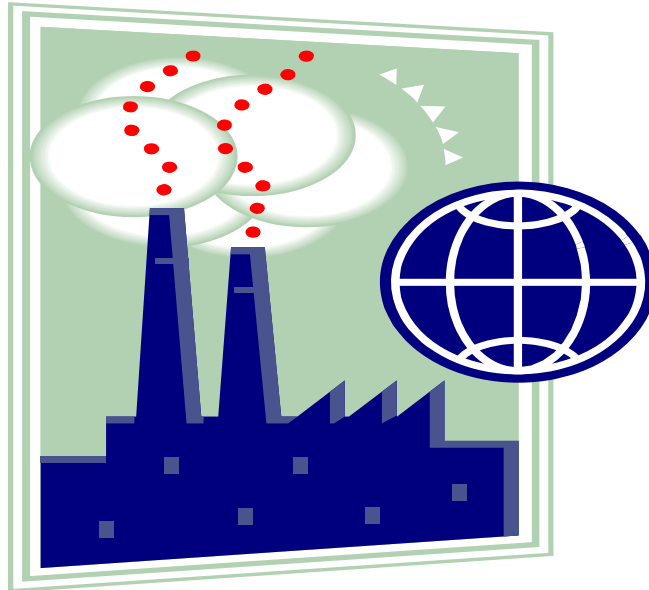


## SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PITTSBURGH

Joint Labor/  
Management Safety  
Committee



THE JOINT LABOR/MANAGEMENT SAFETY COMMITTEE asks that all employees of the District join us in raising awareness of the monthly safety topic by sharing the enclosed information with others.

School District of  
Pittsburgh

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February 2011 is

**Illness and Injury Prevention Awareness**

**Month**

**Please post in a prominent location at  
your workplace for the other  
employees to see.**

# Post Storm Cleanup

After a storm has passed, failure to remove contaminated materials from your home can cause health risks. If there is flooding along with a storm, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) advises homeowners that water must be removed as quickly as possible since it may contain material from overflowing sewage systems.

If there has been a backflow of sewage into the house, the following measures should be taken to ensure proper clean-up:

- Walls, hard-surfaced floors and many other household surfaces must be cleaned with soap and water and disinfected with a solution of one cup of bleach to five gallons of water.
  - Thoroughly disinfect surfaces that come in contact with food and children's play areas.
  - Wash all linens and clothing in hot water or dry-clean.
  - Items that cannot be washed or dry-cleaned, such as mattresses and upholstered furniture, must be air dried in the sun and sprayed thoroughly with a disinfectant.
  - Steam-clean all carpeting.
  - Fiberboard, fibrous insulation and disposable filters that have contacted floodwater or sewage should be replaced in your heating and air conditioning system.
  - Wear rubber boots and waterproof gloves during cleanup.
  - As you clean up your home, be careful about mixing household cleaners and disinfectants, as combining certain types of products can produce toxic fumes and result in injury or death.
  - It can be difficult to throw away items in a home, particularly those with sentimental value. However, keeping certain items soaked by sewage or floodwaters may be unhealthy. In general, materials that cannot be thoroughly cleaned and dried within 24 to 48 hours should be discarded.
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## Illness Prevention During Storm Cleanup

To help prevent the spread of diseases that can cause illness it is important to wash your hands often, especially during cleanup efforts after a storm. Debris, floodwater and other remnants of the storm may harbor disease-causing bacteria and viruses. Germs are spread when people forget to wash their hands or don't wash their hands thoroughly.

Basic hygiene is very important during a disaster period. Always wash your hands with soap and water. If your tap water source has been contaminated in some way, wash your hands with water that has been boiled and cooled:

- After using the bathroom or changing a diaper
- After handling uncooked food
- After playing with a pet
- After handling garbage
- After tending to someone who is sick or injured
- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- After participating in flood cleanup activities
- After handling articles contaminated with flood water or sewage
- Before preparing or eating food
- Before treating a cut or wound
- Before inserting or removing contact lenses

### How Should You Wash Your Hands?

- Use soap and warm running water, or boiled and cooled or disinfected water.
- Wash all surfaces thoroughly, including wrists, palms, back of hands, fingers and under fingernails.

- Rub hands together for at least 10 to 15 seconds and then rinse.
  - Dry with a clean and/or disposable towel.
  - Use the towel to turn off the water faucet.
  - If soap and water are not available, alcohol-based hand sanitizers can be used.
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## **Injury Prevention**

When the wind and waters recede, people in the areas affected by severe weather will continue to face a number of hazards associated with cleanup activities. Follow these tips to stay safe following a storm.

### **Wear Protective Gear**

- For most work in flooded areas, wear hard hats, goggles, heavy work gloves and watertight boots with steel toe and insole (not just steel shank).
- Wear earplugs or protective headphones to reduce risk from equipment noise. Equipment such as chain saws, backhoes and dryers may cause ringing in the ears and subsequent hearing damage.
- Wear eye goggles while removing or cleaning up debris to prevent eye injuries.

### **Beware of Electrical Hazards**

- If water has been present anywhere near electrical circuits and electrical equipment, turn off the power at the main breaker or fuse on the service panel. Do not turn the power back on until electrical equipment has been inspected by a qualified electrician.
- Never enter flooded areas or touch electrical equipment if the ground is wet, unless you are certain that the power is off.
- Never touch a downed power line.
- When using gasoline and diesel generators to supply power to a building, switch the main breaker or fuse on the service panel to the off position prior to starting the generator.
- If clearing or other work must be performed near a downed power line, contact the utility company to discuss de-energizing and grounding or shielding of power lines. Extreme caution is necessary when moving ladders and other equipment near overhead power lines to avoid inadvertent contact.

### **Avoid Carbon Monoxide**

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas that is poisonous to breathe. During flood cleanup, operate all gasoline-powered devices such as pumps, generators and pressure washers outdoors and never bring them indoors. This will help to ensure your safety from carbon monoxide poisoning.

### **Prevent Muscle and Bone Injury**

Special attention is needed to avoid back injuries associated with manual lifting and handling of debris and building materials.

To help prevent muscle and bone injury:

- Use teams of two or more to move bulky objects.
- Avoid lifting any material that weighs more than 50 pounds.
- Use proper automated-assist lifting devices.
- Use caution or seek professional assistance when removing fallen trees, cleaning up debris or using equipment, such as chain saws.
- Wear eye goggles while removing or cleaning up debris to prevent eye injuries.
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### **Beware of Structural Instability**

Never assume that water-damaged structures or ground are stable. Buildings that have been submerged or have withstood rushing flood waters may have suffered structural damage and could be dangerous.

- Don't work in or around any flood-damaged building until it has been examined and certified as safe for work by a registered professional engineer or architect.
- Assume all stairs, floors and roofs are unsafe until they are inspected.
- Leave immediately if shifting or unusual noises signal a possible collapse.

#### **Avoid Hazardous Materials**

Flood waters can dislodge tanks, drums, pipes and equipment, which may contain hazardous materials such as pesticides or propane.

- Do not attempt to move unidentified dislodged containers without first contacting the local fire department or hazardous materials team.
- If working in potentially contaminated areas, avoid skin contact or inhalation of vapors by wearing appropriate protective clothing and respirators.
- Frequently and thoroughly wash skin that may have been exposed to pesticides and other hazardous chemicals.

#### **Be Prepared for Fires**

Fire can pose a major threat to an already badly damaged flood area because of inoperable fire-protection and firefighting water supply systems, hampered fire department response and flood-damaged fire-protection systems. To protect yourself against fires after a natural disaster, keep at least two fire extinguishers, each with a UL rating of at least 10A, at every cleanup job.

#### **Candle Safety**

- Use a flashlight instead of a candle whenever possible.
- Extinguish all candles when leaving the room or going to sleep.
- Keep candles away from items that can catch fire such as clothing, books, curtains, or flammable liquids.
- Use candle holders that are sturdy, won't tip over easily and are made from a material that can't burn.
- Keep candles out of reach of children.
- Try to avoid carrying a lit candle.
- Never use a candle for a light when checking pilot lights or fueling equipment.

#### **Prevent Drowning**

When entering moving water, you are at risk for drowning, regardless of your ability to swim. Because those in vehicles are at greatest risk of drowning, it is important to comply with all hazard warnings on roadways and to avoid driving vehicles or heavy equipment into water of an unknown depth.

#### **Reduce Risk of Heat Exhaustion and Cold Temperature Injuries**

While cleaning up after the hurricane, you are at risk for developing health problems from working in hot or cold environments.

To reduce heat-related risks:

- Drink a glass of fluid every 15 to 20 minutes.
- Wear light-colored, loose-fitting clothing
- Work during the cooler hours of the day.

To reduce cold-related issues or working in water which is cooler than 75 F (24 C):

- Wear rubber boots.
- Ensure that clothing and boots have adequate insulation.
- Take frequent breaks out of the water.
- Change into dry clothing when possible.

## **Prevent Fatigue-Related Injuries**

Continued long hours of work combined with exhaustion can create a highly stressful situation during cleanup. People working on hurricane and flood cleanup can reduce their risk of injury and illness in several ways:

- Set priorities for cleanup tasks and pace the work.
- Avoid physical exhaustion.
- Resume a normal sleep schedule as quickly as possible.
- Be alert to emotional exhaustion or strain.
- Consult family members, friends or professionals for emotional support.

## **Mosquito-Borne Disease Prevention**

- Protect against mosquito bites by wearing long, loose and light-colored clothing.
- Use insect repellent with the smallest percentage of DEET necessary for the length of time you are exposed to mosquitoes, but no more than 50 percent for adults and 30 percent for children under 12.
- Turn over or remove containers in your yard where water collects, such as toys, plant trays and buckets.

## **Food Safety Precautions**

- Perishable foods including meats, dairy products and eggs that haven't been refrigerated for more than two hours should be discarded because they are no longer safe to consume.
- Foods that have been contaminated by flooding should also be discarded.
- Be particularly careful to thoroughly disinfect surfaces that may come in contact with food, such as counter tops, pantry shelves, pots and pans, dishes and inside refrigerators, etc.

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## **First Aid For Injuries**

How to Perform First Aid for Injuries

First aid is extremely important during exposure to waters potentially contaminated with human, animal or toxic wastes.

- Immediately clean out all open wounds and cuts with soap and clean water.
  - Apply an antibiotic ointment to discourage infection.
  - If a wound develops redness, swelling, or drainage, seek immediate medical attention.
- If you are injured, contact a physician to determine the necessary type of treatment (for example, the need for tetanus shot).