

# COMMON POST-DISASTER HAZARDS AND THEIR CONTROLS

## Unstable/Dangerous Walking and Work Surfaces

- Debris piles, standing water, cracks/voids in ground, recent fire
- Assess the area and choose the safest path
- Walk and work on surfaces you know are stable
- Look for smoldering material on/beneath surfaces
- Wear protective equipment including hard hats, safety glasses, leather gloves and safety shoes with slip resistant soles
- Watch for fall hazards to other levels
- Watch for entrapment hazards

## Unstable Structures and Confined Spaces

- Disasters can rearrange and damage structures
- Never assume that damaged structures or ground are stable-have it certified safe by a registered professional engineer or architect
  - Assume all stairs, floors and roofs are unsafe until inspected
  - Unstable ground or flooring could give way
  - Watch for leaning structures and trees and avoid them
  - Entering confined spaces could kill you! Only trained and authorized personnel should enter confined spaces
  - If you find a trapped person, call 911 IMMEDIATELY and do not attempt rescue as you could become the victim

**Leave immediately if you hear shifting or unusual noises - A COLLAPSE MAY BE OCCURRING**

## Pressure Washers

Hazards include chemical and thermal burns, lacerations, CO production, projectiles and electric shock. Safe use guidelines include:

- Follow manufacturers safe use recommendations
- Inspection of washer
- Training and proper use
- PPE (including insulating rubber boots)
- Understanding chemicals used with the washer
- Use with Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCI) and proper electrical safety

## Debris Removal

- Wear safety shoes with non-skid soles, safety glasses, leather work gloves, hard hat, long pants and shirt.
- Do not handle broken chemical containers
- Do not remove debris that may destabilize piles or structures
- Do not lift too much, call for heavy equipment
- Segregate debris according to FEMA or Local/State requirements

## Damaged Utilities

- Utilities can cause electric shock, poisoning, explosions, fires, burns and death
- Call 911 if you suspect damaged utilities, do not enter area
  - Fuel leaks will have a distinct odor (gasoline, oil, rotten eggs)
  - Electrical contact can cause falls
  - Stay away from downed power lines. Report downed lines and assume they are live

## Harmful Dusts

Dusts created by a disaster or during cleanup may have asbestos, heavy metals, silica or other toxic materials. Try not to disturb dust. Protect yourself in dusty environments. **If in doubt ask your local government authority.**

### If you must disturb dust use:

- Water to mist material and keep it wet
- High Efficiency Particulate Air (HEPA) vacuum

### Do not use:

- Common shopvac that does not have a HEPA filter
- Do not dry sweep

Avoid walking or working in dusty areas as you may inhale harmful dust and/or become contaminated with dust

Respirator use may be required. Respirator use requires training. Respirators must be fit tested and you may need medical clearance to wear certain respirators (business use only). An N-95 or greater respirator is acceptable for most activities. Use an elastomeric, half-mask respirator with N,R, or P-100 series filters if asbestos, ash or fire retardants may be present. For residence and volunteers seek guidance from your local government authority.

**Surgical masks should not be used because they do not provide adequate protection.**

## Hazardous Chemicals

Household and industrial (small business use or displaced from other property) chemicals

- Do not handle any containers that are damaged/leaking
- Do not handle any chemical containers if you are unsure of its contents
- Do not handle any industrial chemical containers
- Use gloves and safety glasses when handling household hazardous chemicals
- Do not mix chemicals
- Do not place chemicals near open flames/hot surfaces (running motor)

**Procedure for communicating hazardous materials are present: Yellow Tag**

