

"There are risks and costs to a program of action, but they are far less than the long-range risks and cost of comfortable inaction." *President John F. Kennedy*



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MS IHL OFFICE OF  
INSURANCE AND RISK  
MANAGEMENT

## SAFETY & LOSS CONTROL NEWS

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**HURRICANE KATRINA EDITION** - THIS ISSUE OF SAFETY AND LOSS CONTROL NEWS IS A COMPILATION OF PREVIOUS ARTICLES AND SOME NEW ARTICLES THAT ADDRESS ISSUES THAT MAY BE CONFRONTED AS THE MISSISSIPPI INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING RECOVER FROM DAMAGES CREATED BY HURRICANE KATRINA. AS THE FALL SEMESTER BEGINS, OUR GOAL IS TO PREVENT ANY FURTHER LOSS, DAMAGE OR INJURY AS WE MAKE REPAIRS, CLEAN UP, AND RETURN TO THE BUSINESS OF EDUCATION, RESEARCH AND SERVICE TO OUR COMMUNITIES.

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### DID YOU KNOW?

There is currently a ban on outdoor burning in most municipalities affected by Katrina.

Very dry conditions, an increased fuel supply, and first responders who are already occupied with hurricane response could lead to disaster if burning debris piles get out of control.

Avoid further destruction and potential legal problems by checking with authorities before burning. It may take several good rains to make conditions safe.

## HARD WORK IN HOT WEATHER - AVOID HEAT STRESS

With the strenuous job of picking up the pieces after Katrina, one of the many hazards is still the weather.

The National Safety Council offers these tips for working in the heat::

### Take care of your body:

Eat light, healthy, low-fat meals.

Drink plenty of fluids before, during and after exerting yourself. A good rule of thumb is eight glasses of water a day.

Avoid caffeinated and alcoholic beverages.

Keep fit. Fat acts as insulation which slows the body's ability to remove heat. The heart must also work harder in the heat if the body is carrying extra weight.

Get enough sleep.

Dress in loose-fitting cotton clothing. Cotton lets air circulate to cool your skin. Also, wearing light-colored clothes will reflect more sunlight than dark-colored clothes, which absorbs it. Wear a wide-

brimmed hat, visor or other head gear to protect against the sun.

### If working outside:

Pay attention to weather reports. When possible, plan activities for days that are not as hot. Try to schedule your most strenuous activities for in the mornings and evenings when it is usually cooler.

Take frequent rest breaks in a shaded or cool area.

Drink lots of fluids.

### Other issues:

If you take prescription medication, consult with your doctor about possible side effects from heat stress.

If you're going to be in the sun for an extended period of time, wear a sun-block. A product with an SPF of either 30 or 45 should help keep you from being overcome by sunburn. Apply the product liberally to exposed areas.

Do not take salt tablets.

Keep tabs on how you are feeling and immediately get

out of the heat if your stomach is upset or you feel dizzy or faint.

Keep tabs on those around you, especially those who might be at risk from the heat.

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Editor's notes: Caffeine is a diuretic which actually removes moisture from the body. Avoid coffee, iced tea, soda if caffeinated.

Avoid energy drinks that contain caffeine, ephedra or other "adrenaline boosters". These dry you out *and* raise your heart rate.

Sport drinks are usually good for replacing liquid and electrolytes ("salts") although higher blood pressure may occur in some people.

Water and juice are good choices for most, along with adequate salt in the diet.

Loose clothing should not be so loose that it is unsafe when working with or near machinery.

## HAZARDS OF WORKING IN FLOODED AREAS

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, it makes sense to recognize the hazards associated with cleanup activities. Whether you work on the Gulf Coast or in north Mississippi, flooding can become a problem after any thunderstorm.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) urges people involved in cleanup work to be aware of (and prepare for) the following hazards associated with areas that have been flooded:

**Electrical** - turn off any electrical equipment that has been in contact with water. Do not turn on until a qualified electrician has inspected it. Never handle downed power lines.

If using a generator to power a building, switch the main breaker (or fuse) off prior to starting the generator. This prevents inadvertent energization of lines that could shock utility workers.

Coordinate any clearing of debris near power lines with utility company. Be aware of ladder contact and under-

ground line possibilities.

**Carbon Monoxide** - many cleanup activities involve gasoline powered equipment. Many deaths have resulted from improper use indoors, or inadequate ventilation outdoors. Never run combustion engines indoors.

**Backs, Knees & Shoulders** - common injuries when lifting and handling debris. Use proper body mechanics, use team-work, use equipment. Warm-up muscles prior to work and stay within your limits.

**Heat Stress** - from cramps, to exhaustion, to stroke. Drink 12 ounces of fluid every 20 minutes. Wear light, loose (but not dangerously loose) fitting clothes. Incorporate work/rest cycles into routine. Utilize air conditioning from vehicles when possible during breaks.

**Structural Instability** - water may have weakened materials, erosion may have damaged foundations.

**Hazardous Materials** - flood waters can cause and contain spilled material that could be harmful. Wear

rubber gloves, boots, and other protective clothing as needed.

**Hazardous Animals** - such as snakes, injured or disoriented pets, many species of wildlife including the occasional alligator. Recognize habitats and be on the lookout. If bitten, get immediate first aid.

**Contact with Dirty Water** - Water that has been stagnant for a period of time may contain any number of chemical or biological agents that can easily infect and compromise your immune system. Some bacteria and poisons found in this water can be deadly. Protect all wounds with waterproof barriers. Use Antibiotic ointment and clean dressings on wounds. Wash frequently with soap and clean water. Utilize gloves, boots, face shields and other barriers as needed. Seek treatment for illnesses immediately.

**Fatigue** - long, stressful hours of hard work can impair judgment. Take breaks and ask for help when needed.

### Workers' Compensation Help:

If employees who were receiving compensation from AmFed Companies are not currently able to receive mail, please contact AmFed @ 1-800-264-8085 to report an alternative address. Ask for Charles Hooker or Angela Brooks.



Many animals like this water moccasin are displaced from floods. Look for them where you would not normally expect them. Avoid contact. If bitten, seek medical attention immediately.

From tree limbs to acorns, obstacles for walking have increased.

Slips, trips and falls were common before the storm. Debris from Katrina has made walking quite a challenge in some areas. Prioritize sidewalks and high pedestrian areas for clean-up to protect students, visitors, faculty and staff.

The Mississippi Department of Health has a wealth of information concerning hazard and injury prevention during this time of recovery. Topics such as: **Flooded Areas, Sewage, Diarrheal Illness, Tetanus, Mosquitoes, Generators, Chemicals, Animals, Rats, Snakes, Sanitizer, Drinking Water, Boiler Systems and Caskets** are addressed. For more information, visit their website at [http://www.msdh.state.ms.us/msdhsite/\\_static/23,3005,263.html](http://www.msdh.state.ms.us/msdhsite/_static/23,3005,263.html)

## SEVERAL SOURCES WILL HELP DEAL WITH STRESS

Help with getting through the stressful situations resulting from Hurricane Katrina is available through several public sources.

The **Mississippi Department of Mental Health** has established a toll-free **crisis helpline** to help victims and families @ 1-877-210-8513. Trained staff members are

manning the phones until further notice.

**Crisis counseling** is also available through **FEMA** at their Disaster Recovery Centers or by calling 1-800-261-3362.

The **Mississippi Department of Health** also offers assistance with a variety of

**critical incident stress** issues. Contact your local office or call toll free @ 1-866-458-4948.

Stress, anxiety and depression are all normal reactions to an abnormal event. If you or someone you know needs help, the sooner the call is made, the better the results.

## PREVENT INJURY FROM CHAINSAW OPERATIONS

Hurricanes always bring out the chainsaws. Each year 36,000 people are treated in emergency rooms nationwide for chainsaw injuries. Whether you have already responded to a storm this year, or just want to be prepared for the next one, here are some very basic tips offered by the CDC and my own experience:

**Consult the owner's manual** for best instructions on operation, adjustment and maintenance of the saw. Follow those instructions! Note that all saws are not the same, so don't apply one set of instructions (like proper fuel mixture or file size) to all saws.

**Keep chains sharp and bars oiled.** Periodically stop to check for proper tension. Remember, a chain will tighten some as it cools, so don't tighten a hot chain too much!

**Choose the right saw for the job.** Is it large enough to cut the material you will be cutting? Is it too large for the situation you are in?

**Are all the built-in safety features in place?** This includes: chain brake, front and rear hand guards, kill switch, anti-kickback device, chain catcher and spark arrester. If you don't know what those are, consult the owner's manual!

**Wear personal protective equipment (PPE).** Minimum recommended PPE includes: hardhat, hearing protection, face shield and/or safety glasses, leather gloves, chainsaw chaps that extend from waist to top of foot (past top of boot), Sturdy work boots with good ankle support and good traction.

**Include supporting tools in chainsaw kit.** Items such as a first aid kit (with "blood-stopper" bandages), a correctly sized file for sharpening chain, wrenches to adjust bar/chain tension, screwdriver, spare chain, spare sparkplug, bar oil, plastic wedges (for getting out of a bind), axe (for tapping plastic wedges) can all be helpful while on cleanup duty.

**Properly mixed fuel should also be on hand.** It should be mixed according to the owner's manual and stored in an approved container. The container should be clearly labeled as to mix ratios or equipment it is assigned to.

**Do not cut debris near downed power lines** until absolutely positive that they have been de-energized.

**Always cut and keep saw at waist level or below.**

**Clear area as needed to ensure good footing.** Remove vines, limbs, debris or other tripping hazards before starting a cut.

**Keep bystanders at a safe distance.** If felling a standing tree, that's 2 tree lengths. If cutting downed timber, at least 30 feet. A "lookout" may be needed to warn others of danger.

**Use extra caution when cutting "spring poles."** Find point of most tension and *slowly* shave underside to release tension under your control.



**Hidden hazards for chainsaw operators and clean-up crews! Note the water line, and if you look very closely, you can see the electrical ground wire as well. Even if not energized, they could cause injury if contacted by a spinning chainsaw or simply tripping the inattentive worker. Beware of underground utilities!**

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