



COUNTY OF MONTEREY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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Administration Animal Services Behavioral Health Clinic Services
Emergency Medical Services Environmental Health Public Administrator/Public Guardian Public Health

2023 Winter Storm/Atmospheric River - Flood Preparedness and Response

Flood Preparedness for Operators and Agriculture Workers

Employee Housing operators and workers should be warned that when the seemingly endless rain tapers off and the flood waters recede, they will continue to face a number of hazards associated with cleanup activities. Workers and volunteers involved with flood cleanup should be aware of the potential dangers involved and the proper safety precautions.

Electrical Hazards

Work-related electrocution deaths can follow natural disasters. To prevent electrocutions, those involved in cleanup activities are urged to take the following steps:

1. 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** handle a downed power line.
2. 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. This will prevent inadvertent energization of power lines from backfeed electrical energy from the generators, and help to protect utility line workers from possible electrocution.
3. 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. If you are working on or near power lines, refer to the additional recommendations provided in that section below.

Carbon Monoxide

Flood cleanup activities may involve the use of gasoline or diesel powered pumps, generators, and pressure washers. Because these devices release carbon monoxide, a deadly, colorless, odorless gas, **operate all gasoline-powered devices outdoors** and **NEVER** bring them indoors. It is virtually impossible to assess adequate ventilation. Several carbon monoxide poisoning deaths have been related to the use of gasoline-powered engines indoors or in confined spaces. Test carbon monoxide alarms within the employee housing site to ensure they are all in good working order and have not been damaged due to the storm.

Structural Instability

Flood waters can rearrange and damage natural walkways, as well as sidewalks, parking lots, roads, buildings, and open fields. 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.

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 areas that may have been exposed to pesticides and other hazardous chemicals.

Fire

Fire can pose a major threat to an already badly damaged flood area for several reasons: inoperative fire protection systems, hampered fire department response, inoperable firefighting water supplies, and flood-damaged fire protection systems. Workers and employers must therefore take extra precautions. At least two fire extinguishers, each with a UL rating of at least 10A, should be provided at every cleanup job.

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.

Protective Equipment

For most work in flooded areas, you will need the following personal protective equipment:

- hard hats
- goggles
- heavy work gloves
- watertight boots with steel toe and insole, not just steel shank (where available)

If you have any questions call our office at (831) 755-4505. If you would like to submit a complaint about facilities that are found to be operating outside of these restrictions, you can call our office or [submit a complaint online](#).