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TO ALSAFETY

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SUBJ: HURRICANE SAFETY & ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH GUIDANCE

A. Safety and Environmental Health Manual, COMDTINST M5100.47 (series)

B. Coast Guard Occupational Medicine Manual, COMDTINST M6260.32 (series)

C. Motor Vehicle Manual, COMDTINST M11240.9 (series)

1. Hurricane response involves high-tempo operations in environments with chemical, physical and biological hazards. Below are common hazards to recognize and avoid during hurricane operations to keep responders safe and readiness high. Incident Management Team Safety Officers and HSWL Service Center safety professionals can provide additional information upon request.

2. Water Quality:

A. Water supplies can become contaminated during hurricanes and require action to ensure safety before consumption. Monitor local public announcements for water safety bulletins.

B. Consume only bottled, boiled, or properly disinfected water.

C. Water Treatment. In the event of a health department advisory, boiling tap water is the best method for making water safe to drink. Boiling water will kill bacterial, parasitic, and viral causes of diarrhea. Boil water for at least one minute. Then disinfect the water by adding eight (8) drops of unscented liquid bleach per gallon of water, mix thoroughly, and let water stand for 30 minutes before consuming. Water potentially contaminated with chemicals cannot be made safe through conventional means and should not be treated or consumed.

D. Potable water storage. After boiling, disinfect water intended for storage as noted above. Store water in clean plastic containers such as soft drink bottles with tight-fitting lids. Keep at least a three-day supply of potable water on hand (one gallon per person per day).

3. Food Safety:

A. When in doubt, throw it out. Discard any food that has been at room temperature for two hours or more, and any food that has an unusual odor, color, or texture. A refrigerator will keep foods cool for approximately four hours without power and freezers will keep foods frozen for about two days if doors are unopened. Twenty-four (24) hours prior to hurricane impact, move cooked meats from the refrigerator to a freezer to help prevent spoilage.

B. Do not eat foods that have been in contact with contaminated water. Do not prepare or eat food requiring reconstitution with water unless the water is from a confirmed safe source or has been properly disinfected.

C. Be cautious when using ice. Waterlines may have been contaminated during a disaster. If using an automatic icemaker and contamination is suspected or confirmed, ensure that you do not consume the first few cycles of ice. Disinfect ice making equipment and storage bins after following ice flushing cycles.

#### 4. Wastes and Garbage:

A. Ensure all biodegradable food waste is placed in heavy duty plastic bags.

B. If necessary, use non-potable water to flush toilets. If permanent lavatories are not available, use commercial chemical toilets or portable lavatories with fly-tight doors and toilet lids.

#### 5. Wildlife and Insects:

A. Be vigilant of snakes, rodents, insects and other animals hiding in debris. Displaced animals may be disoriented and aggressive. Use caution when encountering any animal during a response.

B. Protect yourself against mosquitos and ticks with permethrin (on clothing only) or 30% DEET on skin for adults and 10% DEET for children.

#### 6. Moisture Intrusion and Mold:

A. A primary public health concern following these storms, aside from building structural integrity, is mold growth resulting from moisture intrusion.

B. Mold will begin to grow on virtually any wet surface (behind walls, clothing, furnishings, etc.) under favorable temperature conditions within 24 to 48 hours. Growth will continue if surfaces remain damp. Remove any standing water and all wet, porous building materials (i.e. drywall) that cannot be thoroughly dried within 24 hours to prevent mold growth indoors. Porous building materials wet from presumably uncontaminated water can be left in place if thoroughly dried within 24 hours. However, porous building materials wet from sewage overflow or chemical spills (contaminated water) should be removed and discarded using appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and safe work practices.

C. You should not enter a building or facility containing large amounts of mold or if you detect strong moldy odors even though you do not see mold. Proper PPE, including respiratory protection, should be worn prior to entry.

D. For additional guidance, review the Habitability/Mold and Moisture SEH Portal page and Mold & Moisture Safe Work Practice at Safety and Environmental Health Division here:

[Safety and Environmental Health Division - Mold and Moisture - Habitability \(sharepoint-mil.us\)](#)

#### 7. Carbon Monoxide (CO):

A. Often referred to as "the silent killer," CO is a deadly,

tasteless, odorless, and colorless gas generated during incomplete combustion. Sources include portable generators, gas and charcoal grills, internal combustion engines in vehicles and those used to power equipment, stoves, lanterns, etc. Exposure to CO may cause loss of consciousness and death. The most common acute symptoms of CO poisoning are headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, chest pain, and confusion. Personnel who are sleeping can die from CO poisoning before ever experiencing these symptoms. If you think you may be suffering from CO poisoning, get to open air or a well-ventilated area and seek immediate medical attention.

B. Always keep exhaust (emergency generator, etc.) a safe distance from windows and doors. Never operate combustion engines, food grills, or other CO sources indoors or in partially enclosed spaces like a garage. Position all generators outdoors and away from living areas.

#### 8. Asbestos and Lead Contamination:

A. During debris cleanup, prevent exposures to hazardous building materials such as asbestos-containing materials (ACM) and/or lead-containing paint (LCP).

B. Review the unit asbestos and/or lead hazard management plans to determine the possible presence of ACM and/or LCP prior to disturbing or repairing damaged building materials.

C. Coast Guard personnel are not authorized to engage in abatement, cleanup or other activities that disturb ACM or LCP. If damaged material is presumed ACM or LCP, restrict access to the site and contract a state-licensed and certified professional for abatement.

#### 9. Safe Driving:

A. Due to extraordinary response circumstances, Coast Guard personnel may drive various types of special purpose motorized equipment (SPME), large recreational vehicles, tractor trailers, passenger vans, all-terrain vehicles, and other vehicles transporting personnel and equipment. Personnel must receive appropriate training, be experienced with the vehicles' operation, and have a valid state motor vehicle operator's license prior to being assigned as operators of SPME.

B. Vehicle fording is a high-risk evolution that involves operating a motor vehicle near, in, or around both standing and moving water. Protection of our people and our vehicles is critical to an effective emergency response. Personnel must be properly trained, prepared, and equipped to conduct these evolutions safely. The Coast Guard Vehicle Fording Safe Work Practice (SWP) is available here:

[Vehicle Fording Safe Work Practice.pdf \(sharepoint-mil.us\)](#)

The SWP covers mission planning, pre-fording, fording, and post-fording guidance and includes a quick reference sheet for use in the field.

#### 10. General Safety Precautions:

A. During hurricane cleanup, avoid injury by wearing proper clothing, including long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and safety shoes or boots.

Remember to conduct a thorough scan throughout the area to detect debris with sharp, pointed, or jagged protrusions that can pierce the skin. Be aware of broken glass, metal fragments, and other debris present in water.

B. When returning, determine if authorities have declared the area safe. Ensure the main electrical power is off before entering a structure. If possible, listen to the radio or contact authorities to find out if sewage lines are intact before flushing toilets. All electrical appliances must be completely dry before attempting to use them.

B. When operating a chainsaw, look out for downed power lines and wear eye protection, gloves, and chaps.

C. During response operations, all deployment-related mishaps involving Coast Guard personnel or property must be investigated and reported by the host unit on the ICS-237, Incident Mishap Reporting Record and entered by the host unit in the CG eMisReps system at <https://hswl.uscg.mil/default.asp>

D. Per reference (B), all Coast Guard personnel acute exposures must be immediately reported to the servicing clinic in the area of operations and be recorded on an Acute Exposure Information Form, CG-6000-1.

11. More information on hurricane preparedness can be obtained at <https://www.ready.gov/hurricanes>.

12. POCs: CG-1131, CDR Kevan Hanson, at: (202) 475-5199 or kevan.p.hanson@uscg.mil and HSWL SC (se), Mr. Ed Bock at, (757) 628-4412 or edward.l.bock@uscg.mil.

13. Mr. Glenn Gebele, Chief, Safety and Environmental Health, sends.

14. Internet release is authorized.

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