



Hurricane Harvey Rebuilding: Know the Hazards and Be Safe!

We have all been affected by the scenes that continue to unfold of the devastation caused by Hurricane Harvey, one of the worst natural disasters ever to hit our country. When the flood waters recede, ABC contractor members and their employees will be asked to help rebuild Houston and other communities along the Texas Gulf Coast.

For those planning to work in areas affected by Hurricane Harvey, ABC National has collected helpful information from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) about the common hazards associated with recovery and rebuilding.

Electrical Hazards

Expect to find standing water throughout a flood zone. If water has been present anywhere near electrical circuits or electrical equipment, turn off the power at the main breaker or fuse on the service panel. Never enter flooded areas and touch electrical equipment if the ground is wet.

Carbon Monoxide

Gasoline and diesel-powered generators, pumps and pressure washers all release carbon monoxide, a deadly, colorless, odorless gas. These devices must be operated out-of-doors and never inside confined spaces. When placed outside, position the device downwind of the work area.

Rodents, Snakes and Insects

Both live and dead animals can spread diseases such as rat bite fever and rabies. Dispose of dead animals as soon as possible. If bitten or scratched, seek medical attention immediately.

Watch where you place your hands and feet when removing debris. If possible, do not place your fingers under debris you are moving. Wear heavy gloves. If you see a snake, step back and allow it to proceed. A snake's striking distance is about half the total length of the snake.

Watch out for fire ants; their bites are painful and can cause blisters. Severe reactions to fire ant bites (such as chest pain, nausea, sweating, loss of breath, serious swelling or slurred speech) require immediate medical treatment.

Chemical and Biological Hazards

Floodwaters may contain chemicals and biohazards due to direct contamination by untreated raw sewage, dead animals, rotting food, etc.

Detailed flood preparedness guidance from [OSHA](#) and the [CDC](#), including a comprehensive list of related [OSHA resources](#) in English and Spanish, provide excellent content for a tool box talk or a pre-task plan discussion, and they can be used to augment a site-specific or new hire safety orientation. All six of core leading indicators from the [2017 Safety Performance Report](#) can—and should—play a role in the safe delivery of reconstruction projects by our ABC contractor members and their employees.

Please don't hesitate to contact [Steve Wiltshire](#), Director of Safety at ABC National, if you need any further information, and remember to be careful.