



October 3, 2017

Hurricane Recovery: Resources, Assistance, and Recommendations for Protecting Residents and Recovery Worker Health and Safety

Dear Governors Abbott, Scott, Edwards, and Rosselló:

Allow me to extend my heartfelt sympathies for the loss that has occurred due to the recent historic barrage of hurricanes. Next, let me offer to you the American Industrial Hygiene Association's® (AIHA) assistance.

AIHA and our members have a reach that extends to millions of people, and we have solid credibility that is built from 78 years of service to the industrial hygiene and occupational and environmental health and safety (OEHS) communities. Specifically, AIHA has 8,500 members throughout the United States and its territories who represent a cross-section of industry, private business, labor, government, and academia. We have 68 Local Sections and more than 50 volunteer groups. We also have formal and informal partnership agreements with governmental and nongovernmental organizations that represent the full spectrum of worker health and safety vocations.

Industrial hygienists apply scientific principles to anticipate, recognize, evaluate, and control chemical and other health and safety hazards that may arise in or from the workplace. They unite management, workers, and the community in the common goal of protecting worker health and safety¹.

It is often the case that the greatest number of injuries, illnesses, and even deaths occur not when a disaster strikes, but during cleanup and recovery. The greatest threats are the unknown hazards² facing residents and recovery workers. Industrial hygienists have the technical knowledge and professional experience to save lives and help people stay safe and healthy during these perilous times.

¹ For additional information on the field of industrial hygiene and the work of AIHA, please visit <https://www.aiha.org/about-aiha/Pages/default.aspx>.

² Types of unknown hazards include, but are not limited to carbon monoxide, electrical shock, heat/cold stress, biological hazards and infectious agents, mold, asbestos, and lead.

Recommendations

Ensuring that the proper personnel are in place both on the ground and in planning arenas is crucial to safe recovery efforts, and this extends into the procurement of goods and services. As such, AIHA recommends the following³:

- Explicitly include industrial hygienists in the pre-planning, emergency response, and management phases associated with disasters. Encourage the use of Certified Industrial Hygienists (CIH®), as the CIH is known around the world as the “gold standard” for certification in industrial hygiene, and those who have earned the CIH professional designation adhere to a high standard of ethical conduct, and have demonstrated skills and knowledge in a number of different areas that are directly applicable to disaster planning, response, and recovery⁴.
- Consider the following as positive factors when evaluating prospective contractors:
 - Existence of an adequate written health and safety program
 - An Experience Modification Ratio (EMR) less than 1.0
 - Injury and illness statistics less than industry average
 - Participation in voluntary health and safety programs (such as the OSHA Voluntary Protection Programs)
 - A well-defined and adequately resourced management system
 - Client assessments of safety and health performance on previous contracts
- Conversely, those contractors with a poor health and safety performance track record should be given negative consideration. Several criteria can be considered in this regard:
 - A record of OSHA citations
 - A record of civil/criminal penalties
 - Unfavorable EMR or assessments of health and safety performance on previous contracts
 - The absence of a formalized health and safety program

Free Resources

AIHA has a large number of free resources and services that are immediately deployable. During your time of great need, we stand ready to help. Our free resources include:

³ American Industrial Hygiene Association: “AIHA's View of the Use of OHS Performance Criteria in Contracting and Procurement Position Statement”. August 31, 2001. https://www.aiha.org/government-affairs/PositionStatements/position01_OHS-PerformanceCriteria.pdf

⁴ For additional information on the Certified Industrial Hygienist professional designation please visit <http://www.abih.org/about-abih/cih-caih>.

- ***Health and Safety Issues in Natural Disasters*** ([PDF](#)), an AIHA guidance document published in 2017, provides a list of resources for addressing potential hazards during and after floods, tornadoes, and wildfires.
- AIHA's [Flood Response Resources](#) page collects general guidance on flood-related hazards for home and business owners from government agencies and other sources.
- AIHA's [Mold Resource Center](#), an online hub of information for professionals, home owners, and business owners affected by mold growth and contamination caused by flooding, storms, and water intrusion into buildings.
- AIHA's [Consultants Listing](#), the leading directory of industrial hygiene (IH) and other occupational and environmental health and safety (OEHS) consultants. Government agencies such as EPA, FEMA, and OSHA regularly refer consumer inquiries to our consultants for assistance. AIHA's *Consultants Listing* is also frequently referenced as a source by the media for consumers when searching for an IH or OEHS consultant.
- ***Industrial Hygienists' Roles and Responsibilities in Emergency Preparedness and Response White Paper*** ([PDF](#)).

Next Steps

AIHA and its members are ready now, and we will remain ready to assist you in recovery efforts throughout the days to come. For additional information, please contact Mark Ames, AIHA's Director of Government Relations, at mames@aiha.org or 703-846-0730.

Sincerely,



Deborah Imel Nelson, PhD, CIH®
President
AIHA