

Disaster Cleanup Guidelines—Church Volunteers

For more information about this topic, call the Risk Management Division or Welfare Services-Emergency Response Division:

- 1-801-240-4049 or 1-801-240-9726
- 1-800-453-3860, ext. 2-4049 (toll free in the United States and Canada)

This fact sheet addresses the general conditions and the health and safety guidelines that volunteers should understand before they participate in voluntary cleanup efforts. Before cleanup begins, leaders should discuss these items with volunteers and, if possible, give a copy of this page to each volunteer.

General Conditions

- Volunteers serve at their own risk. Children under age 12 should not participate in cleanup work. Youth under age 18 should participate only when accompanying a parent or when parental permission has been given in writing (use the Parental or Guardian Permission and Medical Release form [33810]).
- Church volunteers are to assist in cleanup, not reconstruction. Church volunteers should not work in, on, or around condemned buildings.
- Volunteer work is to be conducted with the consent and oversight of the property owner.
- Chain saws are to be used only by adults with experience using them. They are not to be used for tree trunks or large trees. Chain saws should be operated in teams of two, with one person acting as an observer and safety watch at all times. Chain saw operators should be equipped with safety glasses, hearing protection, gloves, sturdy shoes, and chain saw safety chaps. Volunteers not assisting in chain saw operations should maintain a safe distance from the immediate work area.).
- Accidents should be reported promptly to ecclesiastical leaders. Primary coverage is the volunteer's own health insurance.

Health and Safety Guidelines

- Wear appropriate clothing. As work tasks require, use hard hats; hard-soled, high-topped shoes or rubber boots (if working in wet conditions); work gloves; safety glasses; and hearing protection. Use insect repellent in mosquito-infested areas. Use sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30.
- Wear properly fitting N-95 respirators with exhalation valves when conducting cleanup/rip-out jobs or when working in high dust areas, in ash, near mold, or in smoky conditions.
 - Do not wear a respirator or work in areas where you may inhale particulates if you have asthma, respiratory allergies, other breathing conditions, or heart problems.
- Avoid becoming overheated or dehydrated. Drink plenty of water, and rest when needed. Be aware of contaminated water. Seek medical attention immediately if you have signs of heat exhaustion.
- During wet or cold conditions, be sure to dress appropriately. When working in wet conditions, wear waterproof boots. Have extra clothing and shoes available in case your clothing gets wet. Wet clothing and cool temperatures can lead to cold stress, which includes hypothermia, trench foot, frostbite, and chilblains. Seek medical attention immediately if you have symptoms of cold stress.
- Avoid contact with hazardous chemicals, downed power lines, energized electrical circuits, and stray or wild animals.

- Beware of unstable structures, uneven surfaces, broken glass, nails, and other protruding, sharp objects. Tetanus and other needed immunizations should be current.
- Beware of working at heights or on steep roofs greater than a 4/12 pitch. Tie off to a secure structural object if you can.
- Always lift with the knees bent. Work with a partner, and know your limits. Volunteers with pre-existing health conditions, in particular, should perform tasks that are within their limitations.
- Use caution when working in areas where mold may be present. Wear properly fitting N-95 respirators with exhalation valves, goggles, and work gloves. Do not conduct large cleanup/rip-out jobs (for example: removing more than three sheets of sheetrock) where the visible concentration of mold is heavy (that is, blanket coverage versus patchy coverage). After working with mold, wash hands and face using soap and water. Wash hands and face frequently, and change into clean clothes after working with mold or participating in any disaster cleanup duties.
- Homes built prior to 1980 may contain asbestos. Materials that may contain asbestos include sprayed-on materials like sound proofing or decorative material, pipe or other insulation, popcorn ceilings, patching and joint compounds, textured paints, floor tiles, backing on vinyl sheet flooring, cementitious siding and wallboard (transite), and adhesives used for installing floor tile. Prior to conducting cleanup/rip-out jobs, ask the homeowner if they are aware of any asbestos-containing materials. Do not disturb suspected asbestos-containing materials. If you think you may have encountered asbestos, leave the home and notify the homeowner.
- Treat wounds with soap, clean water, and, if available, an antibiotic ointment. Puncture wounds and animal and snake bites require rapid, specialized medical attention.
- Be aware of motorized traffic in the area at all times. When walking or working in areas where motor vehicles are passing or where heavy equipment is being used, walk facing oncoming traffic. Wear bright or reflective clothing if possible.
- Go to <http://www.osha.gov/dts/weather/tornado/response.html> or <http://www.osha.gov/dts/weather/flood/response.html> for further information on health and safety precautions.