



H S E

HEALTH SAFETY ENVIRONMENTAL



Alert #: SA 18-21

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Fatigue & Heat Stress During Cleanup Activities

Cleaning up after a hurricane is dangerous work. Compared to the physical injuries from unsafe activities sending recent hurricane survivors to area hospitals, hot weather may seem like a minor concern to healthy adults. But heat is a serious health threat to people engaged in strenuous activities like clearing trees and hauling mounds of rotting drywall to the curb.

Heat Stress

- When possible, acclimatize response and recovery workers to hot and humid environments by gradually increasing their work period or workload over the course of several days.
- Reduce physical exertion levels by providing extra individuals.
- Schedule heavy work for cooler periods of the work shift (e.g., early mornings, cool/overcast days).
- When possible, provide temperature-controlled cabs for equipment operators.
- When possible, and where appropriate, use fans/ventilation to provide air movement for cooling.
- Take frequent rest/water breaks in areas that are shaded or air conditioned.
- Drink 4 to 8 ounces of water or sports drink every 20 minutes while working in hot, humid conditions.
- Limit fluids to no more than 1 ½ quarts per hour when working in hot, humid conditions. Do not drink more than a total of 12 quarts of fluid in 24 hours.
- Limit the intake of caffeinated and alcoholic beverages.
- Wear light-colored clothing.
- Know the signs and symptoms of heat stress; use the buddy system to monitor one another for these signs/symptoms.
- If someone shows signs of heat stress (exhaustion or stroke), request immediate medical attention, move the individual to a cooler area in the shade, loosen or remove restrictive or heavy clothing, provide cool drinking water, and fan and mist the person with water.

Fatigue and Stress

- Try to get adequate sleep, meal, and rest breaks to minimize accidents due to fatigue and stress.
- Conduct higher-hazard or new activities during daylight hours using well-rested personnel.
- Consider that certain individuals may experience signs or symptoms of critical incident stress and make sure they know we can provide appropriate services such as pre- and post-deployment briefings and access to behavioral health professionals.



Report all incidents immediately to the GIS Hotline 1-855-543-5163.

SAFETY ALERT