Keep Safe Louisiana

What you can't see could hurt you and your family!

After a flood event many hidden dangers can still be present in your home and yard:

Mold - Some people are sensitive to molds. For these people, exposure to molds can cause symptoms such as nasal stuffiness, eye irritation, wheezing, or skin irritation. Some people, such as those with serious allergies to molds, may have more severe reactions. Severe reactions may occur among workers exposed to large amounts of molds in occupational settings. Severe reactions may include fever and shortness of breath. Some people with chronic lung illnesses, such as obstructive lung disease, may develop mold infections in their lungs. 1

Toxins - A number of toxic materials have been found in significant quantities in the sediment that was deposited by the flood waters from hurricanes Katrina and Rita. These chemicals include arsenic, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, petroleum hydrocarbons, dieldrin and lead. Some of these chemicals have been strongly associated with lung and skin cancers and may cause other cancers in organs such as the bladder, kidneys, and liver and cause increased frequency of miscarriage and birth defects. Others may reasonably be expected to be cancer causing. Some of these chemicals can cause nervous system effects and damage the kidneys and the reproductive system. These materials have been detected in all hurricane flooded areas in Louisiana.1,2,3,4

You CAN reduce your exposure to these materials by taking a few simple steps!

If you are reentering, cleaning out, or rebuilding a structure that has been affected by flood water you should take precautions to protect yourself from potentially harmful materials. Wear respiratory protection to protect yourself from mold spores and potentially contaminated sediment dust (as the sediment dries it can turn into a fine dust and be stirred up by everyday activities including walking through the structure). Protective clothing is recommended to prevent potentially harmful material from touching the skin or getting into regular clothing. The protective clothing can then be disposed of without causing further contamination. Gloves help prevent skin contact when handling material that has come into contact with sediment and mold spores. Gloves and safety glasses are essential in any cleaning or construction project. Always remember to wash your hands and any exposed skin thoroughly and regularly. "Waterless" hand sanitizer is another great way to protect yourself from germs.

sources:
1 - CDC - U.S. Center for Disease Control - 1-800-232-4636
2 - ATSDR - U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry - 1-888-422-8737
3 - SUBRA CO. - c/o LEAN 1-800-457-5326
4 - EPA - U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - 1-800-887-6063

Protective Gear Details:

Respiratory Protection: The U.S. EPA recommends a mask with a NIOSH rating of at least N-95. You will find this number on the packaging AND the mask itself. If the mask has no numbering on it then it is probably a common household dust mask and is not adequate protection.

What's with all the different masks?

Disposable particulate masks are an economical way to protect yourself. Do note, however that their life span is limited and they should be changed regularly. It is also imperative that they be worn correctly, please follow directions on the box or given by the person supplying the masks. These are all shown "right side (metal strip) up."

N-95
Minimum recommended protection

P-95

P-100
best disposable

Half face and full face respirators provide much longer lasting protection and can also block other harmful things like organic vapors. HOWEVER, the correct filter cartridges must be used and must be changed periodically. These must also be worn correctly.

N-95 particulate filters
organic vapor cartridges

cartridges rated at
P-100 for particulates
and for organic vapors

P-100 for particulates
organic vapors
built in eye protection

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH):

N-95 - Filters at least 95% of airborne particles. Not resistant to oil.

N-100 - Filters at least 99.97% of airborne particles. Not resistant to oil.

P-95 - Filters at least 95% of airborne particles. Strongly resistant to oil.

P-100 - Filters at least 99.97% of airborne particles. Strongly resistant to oil.

For more information about safety equipment or any other questions regarding hurricane recovery Please contact:

Louisiana Environmental Action Network - 1-888-457-5326
The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - 1-800-887-6063
Center for Disease Control - 1-800-232-4636
Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality - 1-888-763-5424
Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals - 225-342-1532
FEMA - 1-800-621-3362

Through the generosity of the following organizations we have been able to make these flyers available for distribution.

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