

Flood Safety Alert

by Public Relations Office — last modified Sep 17, 2013 02:17 PM

To: All CDOT Employees Working In or Around Floodwaters

Working in and around floodwaters may not be a new experience for some CDOT employees, however, the recent catastrophic flooding that has occurred across parts of Colorado has created some unique and challenging situations. Like any other operation at CDOT, work can be performed safely if we take the time to perform a pre-job hazard assessment and properly identify hazards, assess our capabilities, and mitigate hazards when they are identified.

Remember, during large-scale incidents several organizations may be working alongside CDOT employees simultaneously and some organizations may have different approaches regarding employee safety. It is important for CDOT employees to remain diligent and set the standard on safe work practices for which they have been trained and equipped.

Note: At a minimum, CDOT employees shall wear a hard hat, safety eyewear, and safety boots. When working above or adjacent to floodwaters (i.e. bridge work) a Personal Flotation Device (PFD) may also be required.

Unique hazards to consider when working in and around floodwaters and flooded areas

Physical Hazards

- Moving debris and objects that may not be visible in flowing or stagnate water.
- Sharp, jagged debris in and under water.
- Overhead hazards (tree limbs, rocks, unstable structures).
- Charged electrical lines and transformers.
- Loose soil and embankments-- Do not stand on the edge of washed out areas.
- Snakes and displaced wildlife—they may be scared and defensive.
- Excessive noise from heavy equipment, chain saws, helicopters, generators, boat engines, etc.

Hazardous Materials

- Flammable and combustible liquids (remember, these will float on water).
 - Assess area before using open flames or spark-producing equipment.
- Broken gas lines.

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- Biological hazards: raw sewage, medical waste, dead animals, rotting debris.

Personal Hygiene

- Wash hands frequently.
- Wash and change out PPE frequently (especially if you come into contact with contaminated water).
- Employees may want to consider leaving jewelry, leather wallets, baseball caps, and other personal belongings at home—these items typically cannot be decontaminated.
- Avoid cross-contamination, keep exposed clothing and gear away from rehab and medical tents—**Do not take contaminated PPE, clothing or gear home.**

First Aid

Working in flood waters poses special considerations to workers regarding exposure to disease, infection, and illness. According to The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) and Centers of Disease Control (CDC) the following safe practices should be adhered to:

- Verification of tetanus vaccination is recommended; but, it should not be a pre-requisite for work.
 - A current tetanus vaccine (within the last ten years) can greatly simplify the treatment for any wound that might occur during flood cleanup.
 - CDOT is working with CDPHE to identify and provide tetanus vaccine boosters for employees who may need them.
 - Direct exposure to sewage and other biological hazards is typically a concern only if the substance is ingested, splashed into the eyes, or enters the body through an open wound.
 - Proper use of PPE will limit direct exposure to these hazards.
 - If you do have direct exposure to sewage, notify your supervisor and seek medical attention for further direction.
 - Immediately clean all wounds and cuts with soap and clean water.
 - Cover any open wounds with waterproof bandages.
 - Clean wounds after each flood water exposure.
 - Apply clean dressings to wounds frequently.
 - Seek medical attention as soon as possible if:
 - There is a foreign object (soil, wood, metal, or other objects) embedded in the wound;
 - The wound is at special risk of infection (such as a dog bite or a puncture by a dirty, rusty object);
 - An old wound shows signs of becoming infected (increased pain and soreness, swelling, redness, draining, or you develop a fever).
 - If you experience stomach pain, fever, nausea, or diarrhea notify your supervisor and seek medical attention immediately.

Note: Remember to immediately report any accident or injury using normal CDOT Risk Management protocols.

Keep hydrated and watch for fatigue!