



# Hurricane Preparedness Personal Protection Information Guide

In the wake of a hurricane or natural disaster, many professionals are being deployed and volunteering to assist those in need in. However, anyone who will be contributing to the recovery effort should also take some precautions. This document lists some basic information that should be followed:

## 1) Immunizations/Infectious diseases:

- Most individuals should be up-to-date on their immunizations, but the most crucial at this point are Tetanus, Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B.
- A repeat tetanus should be obtained if the last injection was greater than 10 years ago.
- If a person is unsure of their Hepatitis B status, then they should talk to their primary care physician about starting the three shot series and possibly receiving Hepatitis B immunoglobulin treatment
- Since sanitation is of great concern, Hepatitis A prophylaxis is important. Hepatitis A immunoglobulin provides immediate protection and lasts up to 3 to 5 months. A Hepatitis A immunization may be given at the same time as the immunoglobulin, but immunity can take 2 weeks to adequately develop.
- If housing includes living in small, cramped quarters with numerous other individuals, then one should consider a meningococcal vaccination. However, this decision should be discussed with your primary care physician.
- Floodwater can carry diseases such as typhoid and/or cholera. However, these infectious diseases are not endemic to the United States, so an outbreak is not likely.

## 2) Climate:

- Working in a hot & humid working environment can lead to an increased risk of dehydration, heat exhaustion, or even heat stroke, which can result in seizure or death.
- Wear loose fitting, but breathable clothing, drink plenty of fluids (water or sports drinks), and try not to over-exert your activities. Use sun screen and wear a hat if available.
- Avoid alcohol or too much caffeine products and energy drinks (coffee, five hour energy, tea, or sodas)
- Signs of heat exhaustion include: weakness, headache, dizziness, muscle weakness/cramps, nausea and vomiting, dehydration, fast heartbeat, or worried feeling. If you have these symptoms, seek a cool, shady place to rest and drink fluids.
- Seek medical help if the above symptoms do not resolve within 15 to 30 minutes, or if skin feels hot and dry (but not sweaty), confusion or loss of consciousness, frequent vomiting, or shortness of breath or trouble breathing.

## 3) Animals/Reptiles/Insects

- One should be aware of the different types of animals and reptiles that may be seen while working. Although rabies is rare in the United States, one should seek care and wound evaluation by medical personnel if they have been bitten by a stray or wild animal.
- Animals/reptiles include: raccoons, squirrels, opossums, armadillos, rats, mice, moles, skunks, groundhogs, beavers, feral animals, bats, alligators and snakes (both poisonous and non-poisonous).
- Poisonous snakes include: rattlesnakes, water moccasins, copperheads, cottonmouth, and/or coral snakes
- There are many different insects and spiders that one may encounter, so protective clothing should be worn when clearing debris.
- Another insect to be concerned with is the mosquito. There are documented cases of West Nile Virus and Zika in the United States. One can protect themselves from mosquito bites by trying to avoid areas with stagnant water, long sleeve shirt or long pants, and using mosquito nets at night.

- DEET repellent sprays of strength no greater than 30% can be used on exposed skin and clothing to help prevent bites. More frequent reapplication of the DEET spray may be necessary if sweating profusely or frequently getting wet.

#### 4) Food/Water-borne Illnesses

- Again, sanitation is of great concern, so every means necessary should be taken to avoid any illnesses such as diarrhea
- Loperamide (also known as Imodium) can be found over-the-counter and should be used in case of frequent bowel movements
- Talk to your primary care physician and try to obtain Cipro or doxycycline. These antibiotics can be taken in case one should develop frequent bouts of diarrhea.
- Avoid consuming the following: tap water, chipped ice, unpasteurized milk, salads, sauces or salsas, uncooked or undercooked meats or seafood, unpeeled fruits, or street vendors
- The following items are safe for consumption: carbonated soft drinks or water, boiled water, purified water, hot/thoroughly grilled/boiled foods, processed/package foods, cooked vegetables and peeled fruits, bottled water, or dry goods (nuts/dried fruits).

#### 5) Universal Precautions

- Despite the chaotic conditions, universal precautions should be used at all times.
- Gloves should be used in case of contact with blood, saliva, semen, or other bodily fluids. Goggles and face masks should be used if the potential exists for contact of fluids via the respiratory route. Finally, gowns should be considered if the potential exists for exposure to large amounts of bodily fluid

#### 6) Trauma/Chemical

- Since there is a large amount of debris in the work area, there exists a great potential to sustain cuts, puncture wound, or exposure of one's body to chemicals or gasoline.
- While off-duty, regularly inspect your body for any unknown injuries or rashes to your body. If any injuries are identified, promptly clean the area with soap and clean water or seek care if the wound is large.

#### 7) Medical Kits

Constructing a basic medical kit is a simple and easy process and can be useful since limited resources are available in Texas. A kit should include the following:

- Usual prescription medications (including additional doses)
- Aspirin, Tylenol, or other anti-inflammatory medications
- Throat lozenges
- Decongestants (use with caution in hot & humid environments)
- Antihistamines (use with caution in hot & humid environments)
- Cough suppressants
- Loperamide (Imodium or generic equivalent)
- Antibacterial wipes/towlettes
- Antibiotics for diarrhea
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent
- Bandages, bandaids, and adhesives
- Tweezers and scissors
- Antacids
- Digital thermometer

Most of these items are available over-the-counter and do not require a prescription, except for the antibiotics.