



## **WHAT STUDENTS AND OTHER YOUNG VOLUNTEERS CAN DO TO HELP WITHOUT RISKING THEIR HEALTH 9/06**

**Ellie Goldberg, M.Ed. [ellie.goldberg@healthy-kids.info](mailto:ellie.goldberg@healthy-kids.info)**



**1. Send donations** to groups such as LEAN that provide health and safety information, training and protective supplies to residents and workers. Louisiana Environmental Action Network <http://www.leanweb.org/>, (225) 928-1315 <http://www.leanweb.org/>

### **2. Join efforts to urge government agencies to immediately take the following steps:**


- Evaluate and monitor hazards
- Enforce environmental and occupational health standards.
- Train and protect all cleanup and recovery workers (public and private sector, paid and unpaid). They should receive the appropriate personal protective gear and equipment, and training in Respiratory Protection, Hazard Communication, and Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response.
- Provide appropriate decontamination: Train workers and the public how to decontaminate protective gear, tools, equipment, and vehicles.
- Train workers and volunteers in meticulous personal hygiene in the presence of toxics and provide appropriate decontamination and sanitary facilities.
- All public and private sector rescue, response, and cleanup workers, including volunteers, should be entered into a centralized database to facilitate medical surveillance.
- Adopt occupancy and re-occupancy standards that protect vulnerable populations for homes, schools and communities.

**From The E-Newsbrief of the National Clearinghouse, a free weekly newsletter focusing on new developments in the world of worker health and safety. April 4, 2014**

## **Untrained Volunteers May Do Harm as Well as Good during Disasters, Johns Hopkins Study Finds**

*The results of a study by a Johns Hopkins expert suggest these unsolicited or “spontaneous” volunteers may be putting themselves and others at risk for injury and, in rare cases, death as a result of their lack of training in safe and proper disaster response. [Johns Hopkins Medicine](#)  [Study Abstract](#) *

## **Washington Residents Fear Toxic Waste after Mudslide**

*Recovery teams already laboring through thick mud and heavy downpours at the site of last week’s landslide in Washington State are facing yet another challenge – an unseen and potentially more dangerous stew of toxic contaminants. [First to Know](#)  [Author: Steve Cohen]*

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

Mark Goldman, a senior scientist with EFI Global, Andover MA, 978-688-3736  
Marylee Orr, Executive Director, Louisiana Environmental Action Network (LEAN), Baton Rouge La. (225) 928-1315 [www.leanweb.org](http://www.leanweb.org)

Monona Rossol, President/founder of Arts, Crafts and Theater Safety, Inc., a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to providing health and safety services to the arts. She also is the Health and Safety Director for Local 829 of the United Scenic Artists, International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE). 181 Thompson Street, #23, New York, NY 10012-2586, (212) 777-0062 ACTSNYC@cs.com

Joel Shufro, Executive Director of the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health (NYCOSH), New York, 212-627-3900.

Dr. Bernard Weiss, Professor, Department of Environmental Medicine, University of Rochester, School of Medicine and Dentistry, 585-275-1736  
[bernard\\_weiss@urmc.rochester.edu](mailto:bernard_weiss@urmc.rochester.edu)

## **REFERENCES**

[Louisiana Environmental Action Network](http://www.leanweb.org/) <http://www.leanweb.org/>, (225)928-1315  
<http://www.leanweb.org/katrina/katrinadata.html>

NRDC Report, "Contaminants in New Orleans Sediment, An Analysis of EPA Data"  
<http://www.nrdc.org/health/effects/katrinadata/contents.asp>

NRDC Sediment Contamination Report  
<http://www.nrdc.org/health/effects/katrinadata/sediment.asp?src=>

## NRDC Health Advisory for New Orleans Area Residents

Due to high levels of mold, other air quality issues and contaminants in sediment, NRDC advises that children, the elderly, and people with serious allergies, asthma, heart conditions or compromised immune systems avoid previously flooded areas of the city at this time. We recommend the following short-term precautionary steps for people returning to New Orleans and surrounding areas.

<http://www.nrdc.org/health/effects/katrinadata/advisory.asp>

## NYCOSH Fact Sheets for Katrina and Rita Cleanup Workers:

- "Protecting yourself from mold hazards during hurricane clean-up"

[http://www.coshnetwork.org/Katrina\\_mold\\_120506.pdf](http://www.coshnetwork.org/Katrina_mold_120506.pdf)

- "How to Use a Respirator" [http://www.coshnetwork.org/Katrina\\_respirator\\_FS.pdf](http://www.coshnetwork.org/Katrina_respirator_FS.pdf)

## Comments

From [Monona Rossol](#), "An N95 respirator used for toxic substance protection is considered a "continuous filter respirator" under the OSHA regulations. Those who wear respirators should at the very least be fit-tested and trained. Many people cannot get a good fit with those masks. Children with small faces are even less likely to have a good fit. People wearing ill-fitting masks may think they are protected when they are not. That may encourage them to take even more risks. Children just plain should not be doing this work--masks or no. That should be said clear and strong. Only adults should be working there and only after they have had fit testing and training for use of respiratory protection and the other protective gear. They also should be trained about the hazards of the mold and the other toxic substances they may encounter and the actions they should take if they are injured or made ill on the job."

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From Curtis Redington, RS, Environmental Quality Specialist, City of Wichita Dept. of Environmental Health, Wichita, KS [credington@wichita.gov](mailto:credington@wichita.gov)

I just recently returned from a five-day trip to the New Orleans area with a group of volunteers - mostly high school students. We spent the first and last days driving, the middle three gutting out homes, carrying all the contents to the curb, shoveling out the mud that was still wet after 7 months. Then we removed cabinets and walls/ceilings to the framing.

Even with our best efforts to maintain respiratory protection (mostly N-95, a few half face respirators with HEPA cartridges) quite a few students experienced allergy-type symptoms (headache, stuffy and/or runny nose). Note: invariably, half masks purchased on their own by group members were equipped only with VOC cartridges. Sad to see many other volunteers in the area wearing only dust masks or no respiratory protection at

all.

Almost none of the residents I saw wore any type of PPE (personal protective equipment) other than maybe leather gloves on their hands. Stepping on nails and/or glass buried in the mud was another hazard we encountered.

The people of the gulf coast areas desperately need help in the form of labor. Hard to turn away willing hands, but unprepared and unprotected volunteers simply add to the totals of adversely affected people.

The main problems I observed were the very obvious mold (and one could presume plenty of gram negative bacteria), physical hazards from puncture (nails, glass, splintered wood, etc.) and heat. Personal protective equipment is hot - especially with the high ambient humidity. Of course there was lots of fiberglass (insulation), too, but I generally consider it to be primarily a skin irritant.

Volunteers need to be trained on respiratory protection, including how to fit check when putting on and periodically during use! Charcoal canisters (like those common on "hardware store" half face respirators) do NOT provide the necessary particle protection. I really liked the half face equipped with stacked HEPA and VOC cartridges. Better particle protection than an N-95 filtering face piece and the charcoal helps reduce the odors. Microbial VOCs can be irritants - potentially the cause of headache, etc. The full face mask is better, but much more expensive and harder to find.

Out of all the different types and combinations of gloves (leather, nitrile, latex coated) tried for home gutting, the clear winner was a North brand "Black Task Plus" 14 inch PVC glove (textured grip with jersey liner).

Tips: Volunteers need frequent breaks (every 20 to 60 minutes). They should avoid caffeinated drinks (diuretic). They may need to supplement water with sports type drinks when really sweating.

Hope these tips will help.