Park Valley Church Disaster Relief Team

Personal Property Salvage & Debris Removal for Wind-Driven Disasters

Scope of Task:
Personal property salvage involves the safe recovery and preservation of belongings from damaged homes following tornadoes or hurricanes. Volunteers will carefully remove personal items from homes that have experienced structural damage, exposure to the elements, and water infiltration. The goal is to rescue valuables, essentials, and sentimental items while avoiding further damage or loss.

Possible Hazards:
- Structural Instability: Damaged buildings may collapse or have weakened floors, walls, or ceilings.
- Sharp Debris: Broken glass, nails, and other sharp objects can cause cuts or puncture wounds.
- Mold & Contaminants: Water-damaged property may harbor mold, bacteria, and other hazardous substances.
- Electrical Hazards: Exposed or downed power lines, damaged electrical systems.
- Heavy Lifting: Risk of back injuries from lifting heavy or awkward items.

Risk Mitigation Steps
1. Assess Building Stability: Do not enter structures that appear unstable. Wait for clearance from professionals if the home's integrity is questionable.
2. Clear Debris First: Ensure walkways and access points are free of hazardous debris before beginning salvage operations. Use long handled tools to increase your reach to access debris.
3. Use Proper Lifting Techniques: Lift with your legs, not your back, and seek help for heavy or large items.
4. Avoid Electrical Hazards: Stay clear of downed power lines or wet areas near electrical appliances. Always assume wires are live.
5. Limit Exposure to Mold: Salvage items quickly and limit time in mold-affected areas. Use appropriate respirators when necessary.
6. Work in Teams: Always work with a buddy to provide mutual assistance and communicate potential dangers.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Heavy-Duty Work Gloves: For protection against sharp edges and contaminated surfaces.
- Steel-Toed Boots: To prevent foot injuries from debris or heavy objects.
- Hard Hat: To guard against falling debris in unstable structures.
- Safety Glasses or Goggles: Protect eyes from dust, debris, and sharp objects.
- N95 Respirator Mask or Better: To avoid inhaling mold spores, dust, or other harmful particles.
- Long-Sleeved Shirt and Long Pants: To protect against cuts, scrapes, and contact with contaminants.
- High-Visibility Vest: Especially in areas with limited visibility or active equipment operation.

Safety First!
- Always prioritize your safety and the safety of others.
- If you encounter unsafe conditions, notify your team leader immediately.
- Follow all safety instructions and PPE requirements for the task at hand.

Remember: You are there to help, but safety comes first. Salvage what is possible, but never put yourself or others at unnecessary risk.