


# **Volunteers and Emergency Responders-How Safe Must It Be?**



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# What is the balance between saving lives and risking the lives of responders?



# Learning Objectives

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- ❑ What is the balance between possibly saving lives and risking the lives of responders?
- ❑ What questions need to be answered before allowing responders into potentially hazardous situations?
- ❑ Who controls/makes decisions about a site after a disaster?







# World Trade Center

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## □ The exposure conditions

- Smoke
- Dust
- Combustion gases
- Acid mists
- Metal fumes
- Inadequate respiratory protection
- Challenging physical working conditions









# Katrina

## □ The exposure conditions

- Chemical exposures
- Electrical hazards
- Infectious disease
- Venomous animals
- Blood borne pathogens
- Mold
- Challenging physical working conditions



# “Routine” disaster response

- Who are the usual responders/volunteers?
  - American Red Cross: Many volunteers are retirees
  - Salvation Army
  - FEMA
  - National Guard
  - Ordinary citizens
- Rebuilding
  - May include all ages especially college age
  - Americorps volunteers





# Who controls/makes decisions about a site after a disaster?

- ❑ Unanswerable except to say “it depends”
- ❑ The OSH/public health professionals need to be prepared to step forward to help make appropriate decisions.



# What is responsibility of OSH and/or Public Health Professionals?

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- ❑ Be part of pre-disaster team planning at federal, state, and local level
- ❑ Step forward to assess the situation
- ❑ Help rein in the non-trained personnel: encourage recovery by trained professionals
- ❑ Determine who seems to be in charge and offer services and/or advice





# Questions to be answered before allowing responders into hazardous situations?

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- ❑ Interim Guidance for Pre-Exposure medical Screening of Workers Deployed for Hurricane Disaster Work
  - <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/flood/preexposure.html>
- ❑ NIOSH Interim Guidance on Personal Protective Equipment and Clothing for Flood Response Workers
  - <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/flood/ppe-flood.html>
- ❑ Suggested Guidance for Supervisors at Disaster Rescue Site
  - <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/emhaz2.html>
- ❑ OSHA - Keeping Workers Safe During Clean Up and Recovery Operations Following Hurricanes
  - <http://www.osha.gov/OshDoc/hurricaneRecovery.html>

# OH&S for responders

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- ❑ Brief workers concerning the health and exposure risks of concern.
- ❑ Evaluate illness, injury and workplace stress through confidential questionnaires, record reviews, employee interviews, measurement of exposures, and medical testing, if needed.
- ❑ Measure heat stress, noise, and air contaminants.
- ❑ Provide guidance on controlling exposures, including engineering controls, administrative controls, and use of appropriate personal protective equipment.



# For More Information

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