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

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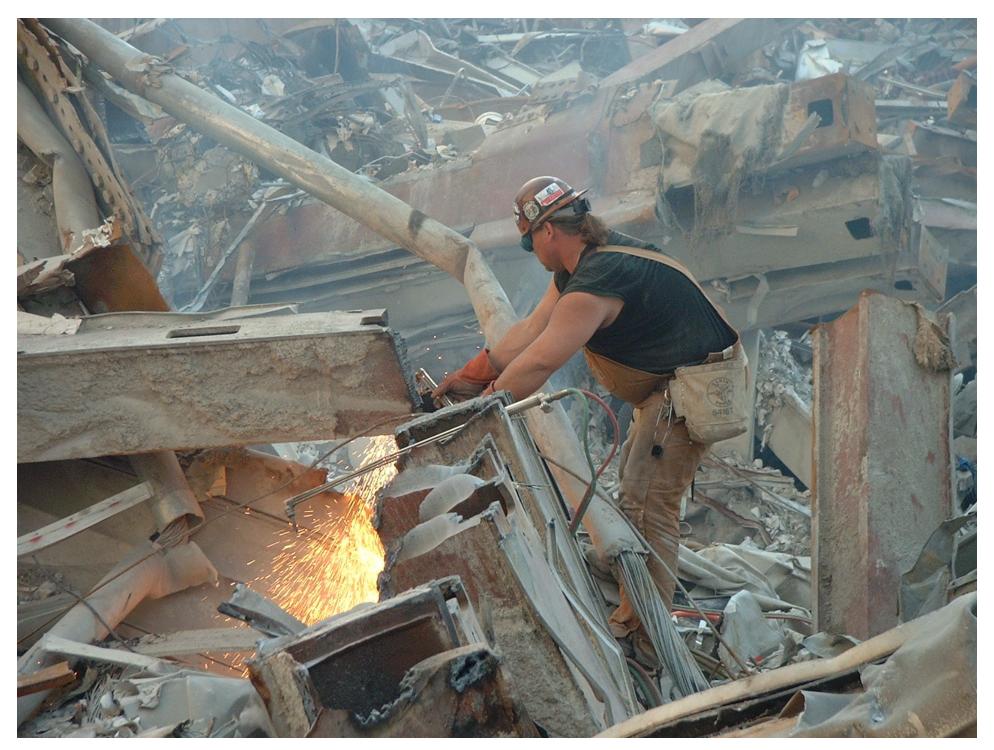
# What is the balance between saving lives and risking the lives of responders?



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### Learning Objectives

- 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?



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#### World Trade Center

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





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#### 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?

- 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?

- Interim Guidance for Pre-Exposure medical Screening of Workers Deployed for Hurricane Disaster Work
  - http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/flood/preexposure.h tml
- NIOSH Interim Guidance on Personal Protective
   Equipment and Clothing for Flood Response Workers
  - http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/flood/ppeflood.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

- 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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