

Safety Bulletin

Rising Waters

September 2011

With the on-set of severe weather, employees need to be aware of hazards dealing with swift or rising waters. Rising river levels can cause significant problems at our facilities and for workers while commuting to work.

Employees need to take precautions and be aware of new hazards caused by rising waters, such as:

- Never drive through water of unknown depth, and do not guess the depth. Water of unknown depth on the roadway or with a swift current can be deadly when attempting to drive through them. (According to FEMA: Six inches of water will reach the bottom of most passenger cars causing loss of control and possible stalling. A foot of water will float many vehicles. Two feet of rushing water can carry away most vehicles including SUV's and pick-ups.)
- Flooding that hides ground level hazards, such as open pits, curbs in roads, washed out walkways, pipes and conduits.
- Increased interactions with wildlife is to be expected such as with snakes, alligators, spiders, stray dogs and other vermin as they seek dry ground
- Items that were wetted with flood waters must be considered as contaminated until properly cleaned and decontaminated. If employee's clothes become contaminated with flood waters, wash separately from non contaminated clothes.
- Flooded buildings have the added hazards such as electrical contact, mold growth, and slippery floor surfaces.
- Risk of tetanus or other disease when open wounds come in contact with flood waters. Make sure that your shots are up to date.
- Delays in the arrival of emergency services such as police, ambulance, confined space rescue and fire department due to water on roads or increased in emergency service demand.

To help mitigate these additional risks, a well established plan of action for before and after flood time periods should be available and we need to practice the following:

- Good pre-job briefs throughout the day to assist in keeping employees attention on safely performing these non-routine tasks.
- All injuries, no matter how small, need to be reported immediately so effective medical treatment can begin.
- Employees should be encouraged to perform frequent hand washing
- Employees should be provided adequate rest breaks where they can re-hydrate with water and sports drinks.