



# TEXAS ASSOCIATION *of* COUNTIES RISK MANAGEMENT POOL

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## 11 Tips for Safe Storm Cleanup

Source: BLR

Storm cleanup work can involve hazards related to restoring electricity, communications, water and other services. Demolition activities, debris cleanup, roadway and bridge repair, hazardous waste operations and tree trimming present additional hazards. Share these tips to keep the workers performing these operations safe:

- Assume all power lines are live unless you know otherwise and keep a safe distance (at least 10 feet) away from them.
- Wear proper clothing, including boots and gloves, when walking on or near debris.
- Be careful of sharp objects, such as nails and broken glass.
- Take proper safety precautions when operating generators, chainsaws or other power tools.
- Monitor local radio or television stations for emergency information and be aware of possible structural, electrical or gas leak hazards.
- Exercise caution when entering any damaged structure.

Flood cleanup also poses unique challenges, including dam and levee repair, removal of floodwater from structures and repairing downed electrical wires in standing water. Those engaged in cleanup activities should be aware of the hazards associated with floodwaters, including rapidly rising water, strong currents and more.

Share these important safety tips with flood cleanup workers:

- Exercise caution when driving during flood conditions. Do not try to cross flooded roadways if you do not know the water's depth. Six inches of standing water is enough to stall some cars, a foot of water can float a vehicle, and two feet of moving water is enough to sweep a car away.
- Stay away from flooded areas that may be in contact with downed energized power lines or other sources of electricity.
- Standing or working in water colder than 75 degrees Fahrenheit can result in hypothermia, so make sure to wear proper clothing for cold, wet and windy conditions. Be aware of the symptoms of hypothermia: uncontrollable shivering, slow speech, memory lapses, frequent stumbling, drowsiness and exhaustion.
- Wear gloves, boots and other appropriate protective clothing, and exercise good hygiene practices to protect yourself from potential chemical or biological hazards that may be present in floodwater.
- Workers near floodwater should not work alone and should wear Coast Guard-approved personal flotation devices (PFDs) to protect against drowning hazards. Even strong swimmers can be easily overcome by swiftly moving floodwater.

Storm recovery efforts expose workers to a wide range of hazards that can be mitigated by safe work practices and personal protective equipment. It is important to remind employers that only workers provided with the proper training, equipment and experience should conduct cleanup activities. In addition to the safety tips above, protective measures should involve evaluating the work area for hazards, employing engineering or work practice controls to mitigate hazards, using personal protective equipment, using all equipment properly and paying attention to safety precautions for traffic work zones.