

Guidelines for Sewage Cleanup Work

Cleaning up after a sewage release is a necessary task that employees must engage in during efforts to restore areas and buildings. Although the release may have ceased, personnel may continue to face a number of hazards during the cleanup process. As a result of these risks, personnel must understand what hazards they may face and how to properly deal with them



Potential Hazards of Sewage Cleanup

Numerous hazards can be present during sewage cleanup. Hazards present may include:

- hazardous chemicals
- bacteria and viruses
- musculoskeletal hazards
- thermal stresses
- electrical hazards

In addition, personnel can experience various injuries to toes, legs, fingers and other parts of the extremities.

Health-Related Preventative Measures

There are a few health-related preventative measures that personnel can take to protect themselves from the potential dangers of sewage cleanup. Personnel who will be working in and around sewage contaminated areas should have received the tetanus vaccine within the last ten years prior to cleanup. If you have not received the tetanus vaccine within the last ten years or you are unaware of your immune status, contact Student Health Services at 8-2158 to receive the tetanus vaccine. In addition any part of the body with open wounds, burns, abrasions or other conditions where the integrity of the skin is compromised must be completely covered with waterproof bandages prior to entering sewage contaminated areas. Finally, personnel who have a weakened immune system are advised not work in and around sewage contaminated areas .

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

For work in sewage release areas, personnel must wear the following personal protective equipment:

- durable “rubber” gloves,
- safety goggles or glasses
- watertight boots with steel toe and insole
- waterproof pants such as waders
- hard hats (in some cases)

Respiratory protection should only be worn when deemed appropriate by the Department of Environmental Health and Safety. Personnel wearing respiratory protection must be enrolled in the University’s Respiratory Protection Program. Please contact Mark Banister at 8-1493 for more information.

Cleaning and Disinfection

Materials that have been contaminated with sewage should be cleaned and disinfected before reuse. Water and soap such as dishwashing liquid or other detergent should be used to clean and remove dirt and other debris followed by wiping with a freshly prepared 1:50 dilution of bleach with water. Materials that cannot be cleaned and disinfected should be placed in closed garbage bags or other closeable containers and disposed of via the sanitary trash.

First Aid

First aid, even for minor cuts and burns, is extremely important when a person is exposed to flood waters. Immediately cleanse *all* open wounds and cuts with soap and clean water. Most cuts, except minor scratches, sustained during sewage cleanup activities will warrant treatment to prevent tetanus. If you are injured, contact Student Health Services at 8-2158 to determine the necessary type of treatment.

Questions?

If you have any questions regarding sewage cleanup, please call the Department of Environmental Health and Safety at 8-8182 or Student Health Services at 8-2158.