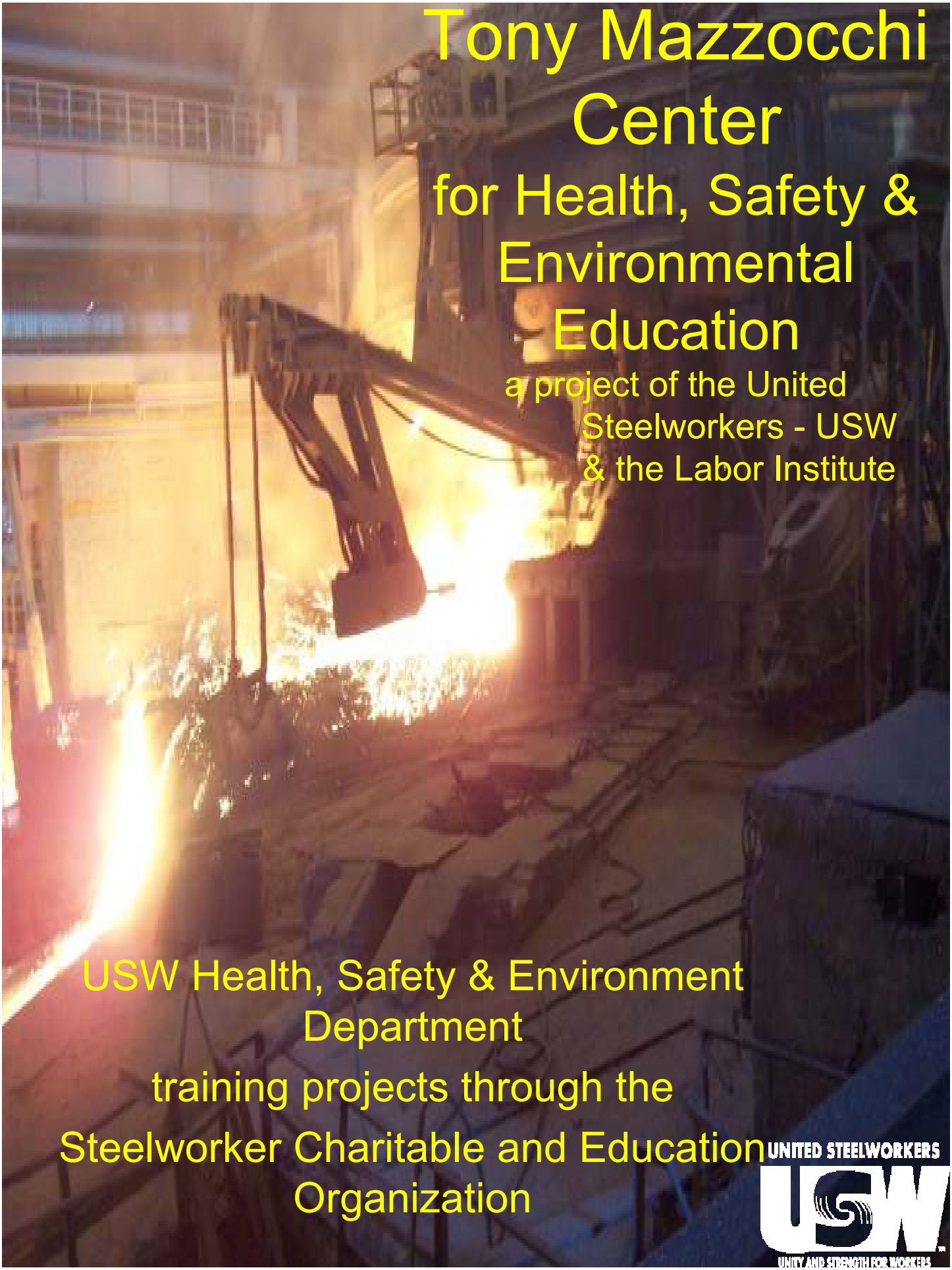

Tony Mazzocchi Center

for Health, Safety & Environmental Education

a project of the United Steelworkers - USW & the Labor Institute

USW Health, Safety & Environment Department

training projects through the

Steelworker Charitable and Education Organization

UNITED STEELWORKERS

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Project Accomplishments

Removal of more than 300 square yards of contaminated sediment from 27 homes on a city block of Aberdeen Street in New Orleans East and replaced it with 300 yards of top soil and 30,000 square feet of new sod.

Project Finances

We raised approximately $50,000 through the Public Health Institute and outside sources for this project.

unique combination of

- NIEHS grant funded training
- Volunteer labor from the community and the union
- Union sponsorship
- Partner groups sponsorship
- Donations from USW employers

NIEHS Training Programs

- Three 40-Hour 1910.120 classes for 45 community members;
- One mold remediation class for 56 community members;
- 1,600 hours of Hazard Awareness training and 4,000 hours of *Health and Safety for Devastated Communities* training for more than 180 community volunteers.

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Public Pressure for Structural Change/Media Outreach

- We have generated considerable publicity.
- For the most part, news reports echo a call for allocation of increased government resources to replicate the demonstration project on a much larger scale.

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Capacity Building

- We have involved local business and other community associations.
  - A locally-owned (minority) landscaper has donated considerable time and effort to the project in the form of instruction, equipment and labor.
  - A local equipment rental company has donated the use of four Bob Cats for four days without cost.
  - A local oil refinery donated the use of a back hoe, a dump truck and a fire truck to wash down the street plus has donated the labor time of the operators.

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Coalition Building

- By working with local and national environmental groups we have generated numerous NIEHS project training opportunities and additional prospects for joint work.
  - Common Ground, which provides many of the student volunteers for the project, has provided trainees for two 40 hours Haz Mat classes.
  - We are also participating in a Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) to help develop a strategy for addressing many of the environmental issues in New Orleans.

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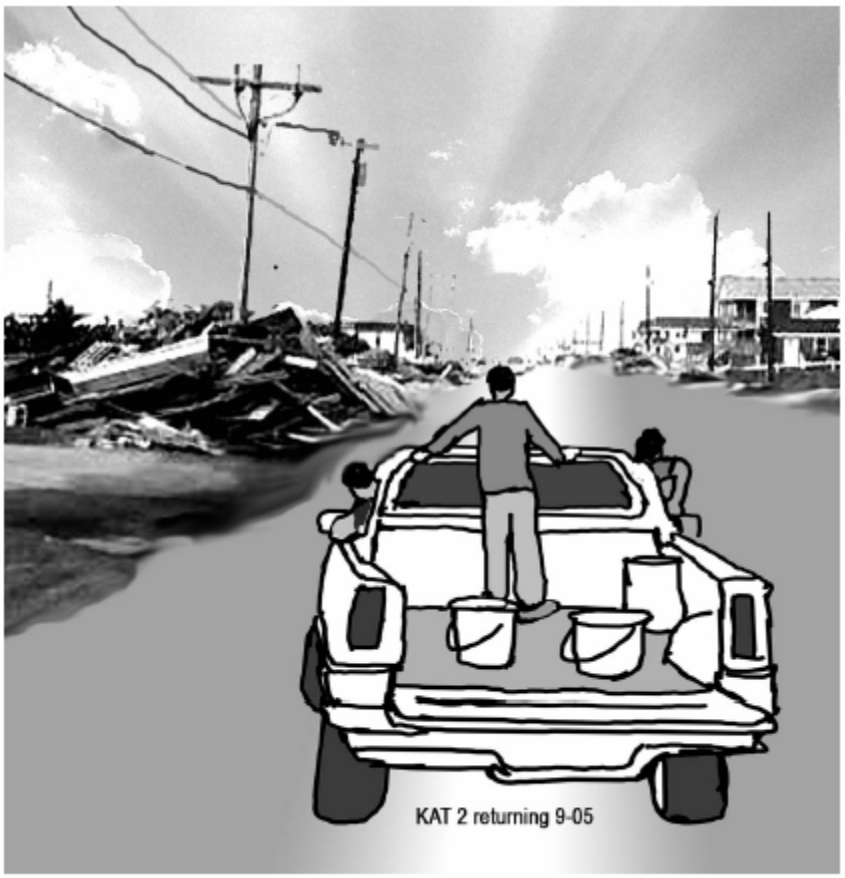
Activity 2: Back in My Home

Purpose

To recognize the dangers faced when returning home after a hurricane.

This Activity has two tasks.



Task 1

On the next several pages you will find eight fact sheets (1 A and B through 4 A and B) which contain information that will help us to develop a response to the questions that follow. Again, each table will appoint one person as “lead reader.” The “lead reader” will guide your table through the fact sheets by reading them out loud one at a time. The rest of the group will follow along as the lead reader reads out loud. Someone else at your table may take on the task of “lead reader” at this point, or it is okay for the previous reader to continue.

It is important that the materials be read out loud at each table to insure that we all start discussing the issues at the same time and that we all have the opportunity to consider the same information. Once we are finished, reading our facilitator will direct us to the next task.

1A. The Dangers of Flood Water

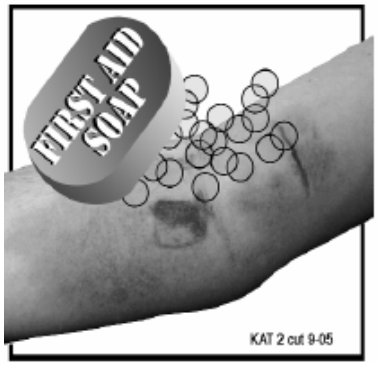
Every effort should be made to limit contact with the floodwaters.

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reports a hurricane caused floodwaters in New Orleans contained levels of sewage related bacteria 10 times higher than acceptable safety limits endangering rescue workers and the residents who even walk in it.

1B. How to Protect Yourself from the Dangers of Flood Water

•Precautions should be taken to avoid skin contact with the water especially into cuts or other open wounds, much less in your mouths.

•Keep sores and cuts as cleans as possible by washing them with soap and applying antibiotic ointment to discourage infection.



2A. The Dangers of Drinking Water

Following a hurricane in New Orleans, testing on the water was done for more than 100 chemicals and other pollutants.

They have turned up:
•Elevated levels of E.coli and other colicorm bacteria, markers for sewage contamination and lead.

•Lead levels exceed drinking water levels and could cause brain damage–particularly dangerous to children.

•Oil is in the water and it is likely that chemicals such as asbestos will be in the debris from older buildings.

2B. How to Protect Yourself From the Dangers of Drinking Water

Do *NOT* drink water that has not been tested and certified as clean!

Boil Water Advisory
If there is a boil-water advisory in effect or you are not sure about the safety of the water:

Use water that has been boiled for one minute (allow water to cool before washing) Or;

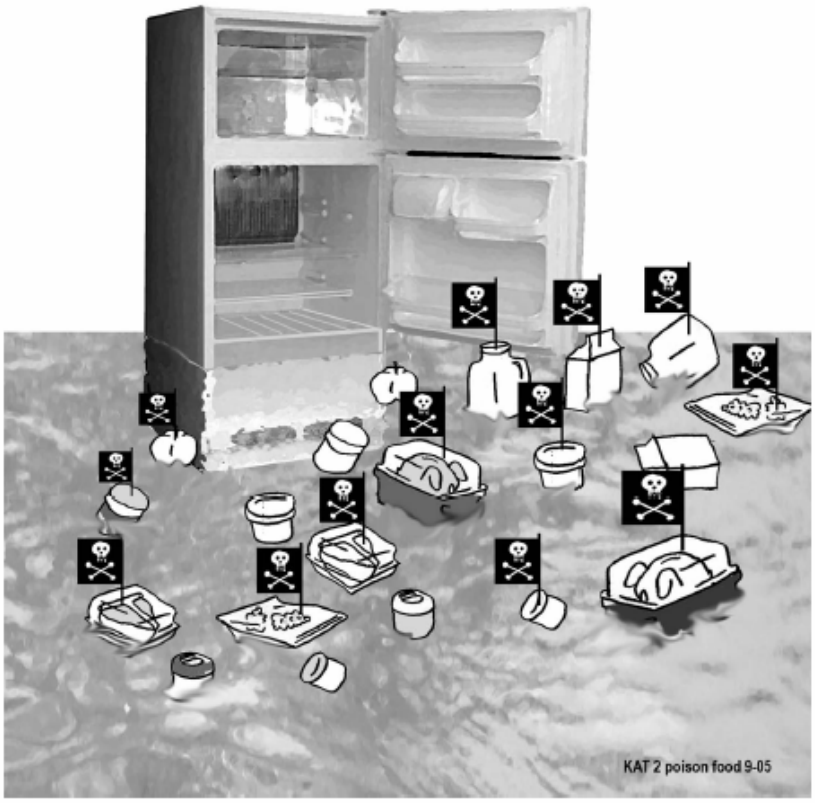
You may use water that has been disinfected for personal hygiene use (solution of 1/8 teaspoon of household bleach per gallon). Let stand for 30 minutes.

If water is cloudy, use a solution of ¼ teaspoon of household bleach per gallon of water.

3A. The Dangers of Food

Eating ***any*** food that has been through the floods and hurricane is dangerous.

It can make you very sick.



3B. How to Protect Yourself From Bad Foods

Food may not be safe to eat during and after an emergency.

Throw away:

•Food that may have come in contact with flood or storm water;
•Food that has a unusual odor, color or texture; and
•Perishable foods (meat, poultry, fish, eggs and leftovers) that have been above 40 degrees for two hours or more.

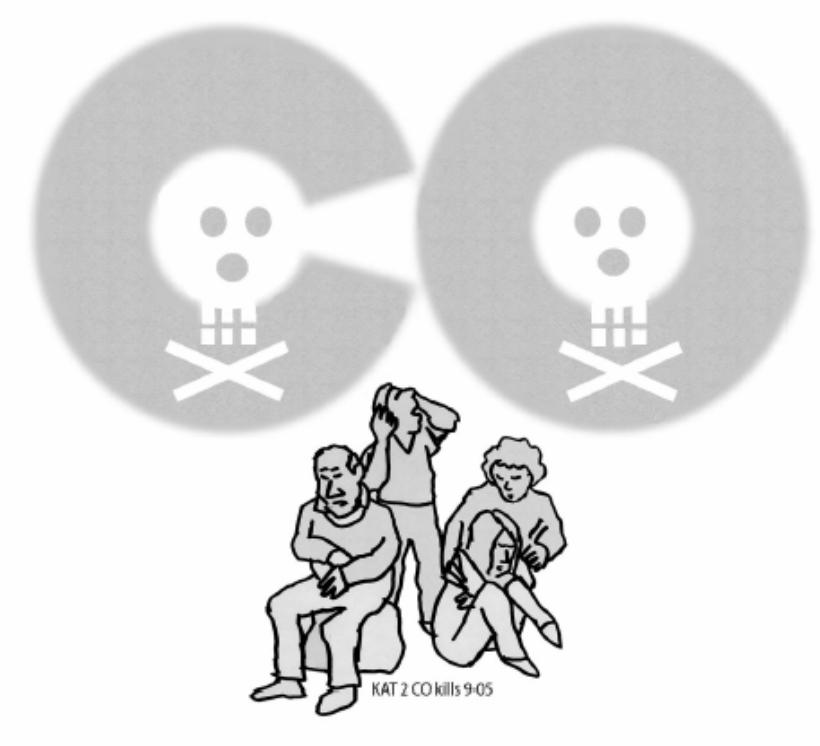
But What About This Food?

Many times food that looks safe is not safe.

Throw away:
•Canned foods that are bulging or damaged; and
•Food containers with screw-caps, snap lids, crimped caps (soda pop bottles), twist caps, flip tops, snap-open, and home canned foods if contacted by flood waters cannot be disinfected.

4A. The Dangers of Carbon Monoxide Poisoning

Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless colorless gas that can cause sudden illness and death if you breathe it. It can kill you in your sleep. When the power goes out you may try different sources of fuel for electricity, cooling or cooking. CO from these sources can build-up in your home, garage, camper, or shelter and poison and kill the people inside.



4B. How to Protect Yourself From Carbon Monoxide (CO) Poisoning

•Never use a gas range or oven to heat a home.

•Never use a charcoal grill, hibachi, lantern or portable camping stove inside a home, tent or camper, or even outside an open window

Task 1

“I do not understand the hoopla,” exclaimed Marcus, a hurricane affected resident. “This is my home. I have lived here all my life and will stay here. I’ve waded in water waist deep several other times. The pumps take it out. People who live in low-lying areas have to put down new carpet every few years but we are used to it. What can happen to me? ”

Based on your own knowledge, experience and the information contained in the fact sheets, in your group please answer the following question. Pick one person in your group to record your answers and to serve as the spokesperson for your group during the report-back.

In what ways can you protect yourself after the flooding?

_____

_____

_____

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Task 2

On the next several pages you will find 14 fact sheets (5 A and B through 11 A and B) which contain information that will help us to develop a response to the questions that follow. Again, each table will appoint one person as “lead reader.” The “lead reader” will guide your table through the fact sheets by reading them out loud one at a time. The rest of the group will follow along as the lead reader reads out loud. Someone else at your table may take on the task of “lead reader” at this point, or it is okay for the previous reader to continue.

It is important that the materials be read out loud at each table to insure that we all start discussing the issues at the same time and that we all have the opportunity to consider the same information. Once we are finished reading our facilitator will direct us to the next task.

5A. The Dangers of Mixing Water and Electricity

Even if the water has been pumped out of your area, the rain and flooding could have made your electricity dangerous! It can be deadly!

5B. How to Protect Yourself From the Dangers of Mixing Water With Electricity

In dealing with electricity:

•If the flood waters have risen past your electrical outlets do not turn on the electricity until you have contacted an electrician; and

•If the electricity has not yet been returned to your area, make sure the power is turned off at the main box.

6A. The Dangers of Going Home

Do not return to your home until you are told it is safe to do so.

6B. How to Protect Yourself When Going Home

When returning to your home after a hurricane, flood, or other natural disaster protect yourself and your family

•If you smell gas, notify emergency authorities and do not turn on the lights, light matches, smoke or do anything that could cause a spark.

7A. The Dangers of Cleanup Work

It is important to be thoughtful and careful when doing cleanup. It would be terrible to ruin your return home if you, your family or pets get sick or injured.

7B. How to Protect Yourself From the Dangers of Clean-up Work

A couple of things to remember as you begin cleanup in and around your home:

•Keep children and pets out of the affected area until cleanup has been completed.

•If there has been a backflow of sewage into your house, wear rubber boots, rubber gloves, and goggles during cleanup of the affected area.

8A. The Dangers of Mold – Who's at Risk?

When returning to a home that has been flooded, be aware that mold may be present and may be a health risk for your family.

People at Greatest Risk from Mold

•People with asthma;
•Allergies; or
•Other breathing conditions may be more sensitive to mold.
•People with immune suppression (such as people with HIV infection, cancer patients taking chemotherapy, and people who have received an organ transplant) are more susceptible to mold infections.

Recognizing Mold
You may recognize mold by:
•Sight
(Are the walls and ceiling discolored, or do they show signs of mold growth or water damage?)

•Smell
(Do you smell a bad odor, such as a musty, earthy smell or a foul stench?)

8B. How to Protect Yourself From the Dangers of Mold

When in doubt, take it out!

Carpeting and carpet padding, upholstery, wallpaper, drywall, floor and ceiling tiles, insulation material, clothing, leather, paper, wood and food can be a source for mold growth.

•Removal and cleaning are important because even dead mold may cause allergic reactions in some people.

•To remove mold growth from hard surfaces use commercial products, soap and water, or a bleach solution of one cup of bleach in one gallon of water. Use a stiff brush on rough surface materials such as concrete.

9A. The Dangers of Snake Bites

After a storm, snakes will take shelter in your house and in the high grass surrounding your home.

Snake bites can make you very sick!

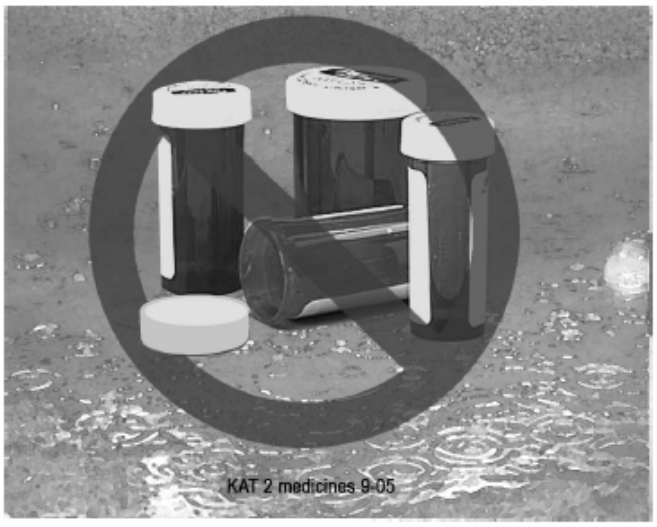
9B. How to Protect Yourself from the Dangers of Snake Bites

• If you see a snake in your home, immediately (if possible) call the animal control agency in your county.

• If you feel a sting, it may not be a bee. Seek medical attention in a near-by shelter immediately.

10A. The Dangers of Your Medicine Left Behind

Your drugs and medicine that were left behind in the storm and flooding could make you sick if they have been contaminated.



10B. How to Protect Yourself From the Dangers of Medicine Left Behind

The Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER) is providing the following information:

•We recommend drug products—even those in original containers—should be discarded if they were exposed to flood waters.

•If they are life saving drugs, and not replaced easily, that appear unaffected—pills are dry—they may be used until replacement drugs are obtained.

•If drugs requiring refrigeration have become warm, they should be discarded unless needed to sustain life.

•If you are concerned about the safety of a particular product, you should contact your pharmacist, health care provider or manufacturer's customer service department.

11A. The Dangers of Hazardous Materials

You may face hazardous materials upon return to your home.

11B. How to Protect Yourself From the Dangers of Hazardous Materials

•Call the fire department (if available) to inspect or remove chemicals, propane tanks and other dangerous materials.

•Wear protective clothing and gear (for example, a respirator if needed) when handling hazardous materials.

•Wash skin that may have come in contact with hazardous materials.

•Wear insulated gloves and use caution if you have to remove a car battery. Avoid any acid that may have leaked from a car battery.

Task 2

"I know I can go back into my house once the water recedes," exclaimed Jean. "The house is safe. I turned off my air conditioner and left the front room light on so people would think that I rode out the storm. So what if I have to pull out my carpet it won't be the first time for that."

Based on your own knowledge, experience and information contained in the fact sheets, in your groups please answer the following questions. Pick one person to record your answers and to serve as the spokesperson for your group during the report-back.

1. **What underlying dangers may be waiting at your home?**

2. **What should you do to be safe in the face of these dangers?**

Underlying Dangers That May Be Waiting for Your at Home	**What Should You Do to Be Safe**
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10	

Summary: Back in My Home

1. However desperate one might be to return home after a storm or flood, the fact must be faced that there is danger waiting.

2. An advance plan to address food and water issues is vital.

3. Hazards in the flood waters and left by the flood waters are real and dangerous.

4. Electrical situations are extremely dangerous and must be approached with all care and caution.

5. Returning home is an enormous challenge and shouldn't be attempted alone. Seek the advice and help of experts when in any doubt as to what you're doing is safe.

6. There is more safety and strength in numbers. Band together with family, friends and neighbors when attempting to make your home safe again.