Environmental Health Role in Emergencies

Veronica Bryant, Emergency Preparedness and Outbreak Coordinator
Possible roles of EHS during disaster

• Food Safety
• Potable Water
• Wastewater
• Shelters
• Vector Control
• Responder Safety
• Disaster Management
• Solid Waste and Hazardous Materials
• Building Assessments
• Population Monitoring

Source: DisasterAssistance.gov
Assessing facilities after storm

- Handout for EHS provided in preparedness manual
- EHS safety is key during a disaster
- Rely on partners: fire inspector, building inspector, etc.
Assessing facilities after storm

• Check for signs of defrosting and refreezing in freezers (excess ice build-up, moisture on boxes)

• Ensure adequate hot and cold water is available for cleaning and handwashing

• Discuss cleaning/sanitizing procedures and make sure all food contact surfaces and utensils are sanitized if there is flooding or damage

• Make sure all ice machines and automatic beverage dispensers are emptied and sanitized if water interruption or contamination occurred

• Assess storage rooms for damaged packaged foods or single service
Storm Assessment of Restaurants
Reopening Establishments

• Must be able to meet water, power, refrigeration requirements
• Voluntarily closed vs. permit suspension
• Emergency water plans
• Prioritize use of resources
• Product disposition or embargo?
Shelter Assessments

- EHS provide assessments of shelters
- Pre-opening, initial, and routine
- Modeled after CDC shelter assessment program
Water Emergencies

• Loss of Water/Low Water Pressure: no water or insufficient water for handwashing or cleaning
• System Pressure Advisory: loss of pressure, awaiting testing
• Boil Water Advisory: positive fecal coliform or e. coli test results in water
• Do Not Use Advisory: chemical or other contaminants
Water Emergencies

- Facility cannot operate without water, or if water pressure cannot support handwashing, utensil washing
- System Pressure: can give recommendations, no requirement to close
- Boil Water Advisory: do not allow facilities to operate
- Do Not Use: do not allow facilities to operate
Emergency Take-Away Messages

• Every situation will be unique
• Be flexible and personally prepared
• Understand emotions of the situation
• Safety of EHS is priority, do not enter a situation that feels unsafe
• Follow incident command and protocols for each incident
Questions?

Veronica Bryant
Emergency Preparedness and Outbreak Coordinator
919-218-6943 mobile
veronica.bryant@dhhs.nc.gov