

John Meola's  
**Safety First!**  
Safety Meeting Topics  
for WSA Members



# September Safety Info

- It's HURRICANE SEASON (as if you hadn't heard...)
- Post storm recovery advice for those in 'hurricane zone'
- Take steps to prevent electrocution when working around water
- CDC's best practices to avoid harm from wildfire smoke

# SEVERE WEATHER SAFETY PRACTICES

We usually have a pretty good LEAD TIME to **plan** for storm arrival

Most people have brains enough to shelter safely during the event.

Post Storm recovery is when the most fatalities occur. Among the top ten causes:

- Trying to cross flooded areas in a vehicle or on foot – results in drowning
  - Flowing water up to your knees can knock you off your feet
- Electrocution – downed wires in fallen trees; other electrical contact
- Chain Saw injuries – very common; very few persons follow safety rules with chain saws
- Falls from weakened structures;
- Collapse or struck by – trees, structures, infrastructure, other
- Vehicle accident – no power to traffic signals; no lighting; vehicle roll over & ejection; no seat belt
- Remember: hospitals may not be functioning in hard hit areas; EMS may not be available; you are on your own.
- Secondary risks: sanitation & health conditions, contamination, dehydration; fatigue, etc.

# POST STORM RECOVERY

- Plan for power interruption. Back up generator is handy. Plan for re-fueling safety, ventilation for exhaust; fire extinguisher; electrical safety; use HD grade extension cords; check the routing – avoid pinch or chafe cords; avoid overload on generator; overheating of motors
- In extreme cases: Pre-stock food and water with long shelf life; coordinate storage and fridge or freezer for perishable foods; consider MRE's from sporting goods stores; camping supplies for cooking, sleeping, sanitation and hygiene, washing, laundry, etc.
- Load up on batteries, alternate power sources such as hand crank radios and lights; tarps, duct tape, rope and twine, tools for clearing debris, safety gear, sanitizer, work clothing, rugged footwear
- If in low lying areas, figure out how to protect your stuff from flooding – raise it up higher, build sand bag berms; relocate; waterproof, etc.

# DEFENSIVE DRIVING – STORM OR NOT

- Practice the “5 Keys” – Aim High! Leave 4 second following distance -
- In areas where power is out, use EXTREME CAUTION in and around signalized intersections. There are no rules governing who goes where, when. We had a fatality last year in Richmond during blizzard, signals not working.
- Avoid high water. The bottom of vehicle is sealed and will ‘float’ the vehicle like a tea cup. Including 4 wheel drive and SUV’s etc. Pick ups, add weight for stability. Hub cap height water is the limit.
- Check wiper blade condition; check fluids under the hood; check tire pressures, check spare tire
- Top off fuel tank; use caution if transporting portable gas cans, cylinders, etc. Secure against spillage; check fire extinguisher; fire blanket
- Be aware of static electricity discharge - do not fill container on truck bed or vehicle – place on ground
- Keep speed moderate in storm conditions; animals and critters may be displaced and get onto the road
- Be alert for OVERHEAD hazards such as leaning trees, hanging limbs, etc.
- You will encounter debris on the road. Fallen trees may have power lines tangled in them, do a survey before jumping in to cut your way out.

# AND NOW THIS... ELECTROCUTION BY WATER



- Electrocution deaths involving water are especially possible when cleaning up after hurricane or other storm damage.
- Faulty or improperly installed electrical gear around water are identified as potential hazards. Boat docks, fountains, agricultural pumps and machinery, above and in ground swimming pools, downed wires, etc. are listed.
- **Metal structures** in or near water can become energized. Metal ladders, boat lifts, boat dock receptacles, buried or submerged wiring, bad GFI's, defective cords, misc. hardware, lighting, etc. are potential conductors.
- Check the premises carefully; watch for unusual indicators; know where the circuit breakers are located; keep close eye on children and pets; remember, the lifesaving pole is METAL; watch for overhead wires and lights. Stay out of the water and away from the pool in a lightning storm.
- **NO** electric tools or appliances near water. This includes kiddie pools, puddles, wet surfaces. Periodically check your GFCI for proper activation.

# ***WILDFIRE SMOKE IS HARMFUL IN MANY WAYS!***

- Wildfire smoke is a mix of gases and fine particles from burning vegetation, building materials, and other materials. Wildfire smoke can make anyone sick. Even someone who is healthy can get sick if there is enough smoke in the air. Breathing in smoke can have immediate health effects.
- If you have wildfire smoke in your area, to protect yourself and your workers go to [the CDC website](#) to review the Agency's best practices information, including the CDC's "Eight Tips for Protecting Yourself from Breathing Wildfire Smoke."

