

**North Carolina Department of Labor
Division of Occupational Safety and Health**

Raleigh, North Carolina

Field Information System

Operational Procedure Notice 100

Subject: OSHNC's Role in Response to Natural Disasters

- A. Purpose. The purpose of this OPN is to define the role of OSHNC in response to natural disaster such as hurricanes, floods, or tornadoes.
- B. Scope. This notice applies statewide.
- C. Reference.
 - 1. OPN 77 - OSH Response to Significant Events of Potentially Catastrophic Consequences.
 - 2. 1903.14 - Policy Regarding Employee Rescue Activities
 - 3. North Carolina Operations Manual
- D. Discussion. Natural disasters such as hurricanes or tornadoes not only destroy personal property and result in the injury and loss of life to the victims of these events, but the mobilization of personnel in response to a disaster can also place additional persons in unsafe situations. This might include volunteers, as well as employees conducting activity as a part of their required job responsibilities. This group of responders could include public safety officers, clean up crews, rescue workers, and lineman to name a few. OSHNC's decision to respond after these natural disasters relates to our specific statutory requirement to assist in the prevention of injuries to the working population of our State, and our general calling as public servants and citizens to assist our fellow human beings in a time of need. The role of our agency is also twofold. Generally, we are both available to provide advice and assistance in matters relating to occupational safety and health, and to enforce safety and health standards. In responding to natural disasters however, our consultative and advisory role will take precedence over our enforcement role.
- E. Action.
 - 1. OSHNC will be an active participant in protecting the safety and health of persons, including property owners, other volunteers, or employees, involved in cleanup and restoration during the aftermath of any natural disaster which should affect the State. Division personnel will be mobilized if the Governor or the Emergency Management Commission requests our assistance.

2. Participants in natural disaster activity will be determined through a review of a list of volunteers from division staff. If no volunteers are forthcoming, the Bureau Chief will select personnel.
3. If more than one employee is dispatched to the disaster site, a team leader shall be designated. The team leader shall be the spokesperson for the OSHNC team. The team leader shall make initial contact with the on-scene incident commander and conduct briefings with division staff.
4. If personal protective equipment is necessary, it must be obtained prior to exposure to potential hazards. OSHNC will be setting an example for other workers at the worksites.
5. Under no circumstances should a division employee place their life or health in danger.
6. The OSHNC team leader shall make contact with the incident commander and offer the services of the Division. This might include assisting the site safety officer, review of the site safety plans and work practices, assistance with exposure monitoring, and help with hazard assessment.
7. OSHNC will assume its advisory role when assistance is requested in the aftermath of any natural disaster. However, any "imminent danger" situations shall be addressed immediately by division personnel. Employers will be asked to immediately remove employees from imminent dangers. If employee exposure to imminent danger continues after a warning from OSHNC personnel, the Director shall be contacted for approval to complete and post the OSHA-8 Form, "Notice of Alleged Imminent Danger." The employer shall be informed that a recommendation has been made to the Director that relief is sought through the superior courts of the State.
8. It shall be OSHNC policy not to engage in activities that would have the effect of impeding the emergency response.
9. OSHA personnel have not received specific training in emergency response procedures or rescue techniques. For this reason, OSHA personnel should not direct on-site activity.

(Signed on Original)

Charles N. Jeffress
Director

October 24, 1995
Date