

Tailgate Safety Briefing for Volunteers – Flood Cleanup

Duration: ~10 minutes

1. Opening (1 minute)

“Thank you for volunteering today. Our goal is to clean up the County Fairgrounds safely. The floodwater has receded, but flood-damaged areas can still present hazards that are not immediately obvious. No cleanup task is worth an injury. If you see something unsafe, stop work and notify a supervisor. If you have not signed in, please do so now.”

2. Main Hazards We Face Today (2 minutes)

Mud and Slip Hazards

- Wet mud can be extremely slippery.
- Uneven ground may be hidden under mud or debris.
- Walk, don't run.
- Watch every step.

Debris Hazards

- Sharp objects may be hidden in mud, including:
 - Broken glass
 - Nails and screws
 - Metal fragments
 - Wire and fencing materials
- Use tools when possible instead of your hands.

Flood-Damaged Buildings

- Some buildings were flooded.
- Do not enter any building unless it has been cleared for entry.
- Watch for:
 - Structural damage
 - Soft floors
 - Loose ceiling materials
 - Damaged electrical systems

Biological Hazards

- Floodwater may contain:
 - Animal waste
 - Sewage contamination
 - Mold
 - Dead animals
- Avoid touching your face while working.
- Wash hands before eating, drinking, or smoking.
- Youth volunteers must NOT enter buildings with mold damage.ⁱⁱ
- Volunteers with asthma or other breathing conditions must NOT enter buildings with mold damage.
- Volunteers with weakened immune systems must NOT enter buildings with mold damage.

3. Personal Protective Equipment (1 minute)

Everyone should have:

- Sturdy boots with slip-resistant soles (at least closed-toed shoes)
- Work gloves
- Long pants
- Eye protection when handling debris or using tools

Additional PPE as needed:

- Dust mask or respirator when disturbing dried mud, dust, or mold
- High-visibility vest if working near vehicle traffic

Replace damaged PPE immediately.

4. Safe Work Practices (2 minutes)

Lifting

- Test the weight before lifting.
- Lift with your legs, not your back.
- Team lift heavy or awkward items.
- Use carts, wheelbarrows, and equipment whenever possible.

Debris Removal

- Assume all debris contains hidden hazards.
- Never reach blindly into piles.
- Use rakes, shovels, or other tools first.

Heat and Fatigue

- Drink water regularly (use only pre-approved water; a boil water advisory may be in effect in the area)ⁱⁱⁱ.
- Take breaks as needed.
- Report signs of heat stress:
 - Dizziness
 - Nausea
 - Excessive fatigue
 - Confusion

5. Electrical Safety (1 minute)

Flooded electrical equipment can remain dangerous.

- Do not touch damaged electrical equipment.
- Stay away from downed power lines.
- Report exposed wiring immediately.
- Only qualified personnel should evaluate or restore electrical systems.

6. Equipment and Vehicle Safety (1 minute)

- Make eye contact with equipment operators before approaching.
- Stay clear of loaders, tractors, skid steers, and dump trucks.
- Never stand behind backing vehicles.
- Maintain a safe distance from moving equipment.

7. Injury and Emergency Reporting (1 minute)

Report immediately:

- Any injury, even minor cuts or punctures
- Near misses
- Unsafe conditions +
- Signs of illness or exhaustion

For cuts or puncture wounds:

- Stop work.
- Wash the wound.
- Notify a team/group leader.
- Seek medical evaluation . Tetanus is a risk from puncture wounds in flood debris, even if the wound seems minor^{iv}.

Know:

- Who your team leader is
- Where first aid supplies are located
- Emergency meeting location

8. Closing Safety Message (1 minute)

“Today's cleanup is important, but our first priority is making sure everyone goes home safely. Watch your footing, wear your PPE, stay hydrated, use proper lifting techniques, and speak up if you see a hazard. If you're unsure about a task, stop and ask. Safety comes first.”

Quick Safety Check Before We Start

- PPE on?
- Water available?
- Work assignment understood?
- Emergency contact person identified?
- Questions?

“Let's work safely and look out for one another.”

i Flooded with Volunteers: A Guide to Managing 4-H Youth and Adult Volunteers During Disaster Recovery, UNL Extension EC3048, p. 11 (Appendix: Disaster Volunteer Registration Form; Volunteer Sign-in/Registration Sheet). <https://extensiondisaster.net/resource-dashboard/flooded-with-volunteers-a-guide-to-managing-4-h-youth-and-adult-volunteers-during-disaster-recovery/>

ii Flooded with Volunteers, EC3048, p. 9 (Take Caution with Mold; Cleaning Safely). <https://extensiondisaster.net/resource-dashboard/flooded-with-volunteers-a-guide-to-managing-4-h-youth-and-adult-volunteers-during-disaster-recovery/>

iii Flooded with Volunteers, EC3048, p. 9 (Keeping Hands Clean; What to Do During Cleaning). <https://extensiondisaster.net/resource-dashboard/flooded-with-volunteers-a-guide-to-managing-4-h-youth-and-adult-volunteers-during-disaster-recovery/>

iv Flooded with Volunteers, EC3048, p. 8 (Health/Vaccinations: Tetanus). <https://extensiondisaster.net/resource-dashboard/flooded-with-volunteers-a-guide-to-managing-4-h-youth-and-adult-volunteers-during-disaster-recovery/>