



## **PROTECTING WORKER & COMMUNITY HEALTH**

### **Core Principles of Disaster Preparedness & Response**

- 1. Protecting worker, volunteer, and resident safety and health must be essential components of disaster preparedness and response.** Much of the health harm that occurs during disaster response (as distinct from during the disaster event itself) is preventable. Unnecessary risk-taking during the rescue phase should be discouraged. Disaster response and recovery efforts should *do no additional harm* to rescue and recovery workers and volunteers or to impacted residents and workers.
- 2. The federal government must protect environmental and occupational health during catastrophic disasters.** Current federal policy gives local authorities primary responsibility for disaster response efforts because they are most familiar with local needs. While local agencies and volunteer organizations are essential to disaster response efforts and help ensure that those who are directly impacted are at the forefront of their own recovery, local resources and capacity are limited. Federal agencies such as the EPA and OSHA must assume primary responsibility for protecting environmental and occupational health and safety utilizing federal resources and experience to coordinate the response of local government agencies.
- 3. Uniform re-occupancy standards that are protective of public health should be established for impacted workplaces and residences.** These should be based on event- and site-specific criteria, with input from experts and from representatives from impacted business, labor, and residential communities. Residents, workers, property owners, employers, and contractors should not be left on their own to figure out how to safely and effectively deal with environmental contamination.
- 4. An expanded population of traditional and non-traditional responders and recovery workers should be trained for safe disaster response, so they are prepared before the next disaster.** These can include construction workers, day laborers, community activists, volunteers, and others. Training can be provided by government agencies, employers, unions, workers' centers, and voluntary organizations.

- 5. Protection of the health and safety of disadvantaged residential communities should be prioritized in disaster response.** Low-income communities that lack adequate resources before disasters are most likely to be unprepared and lack adequate resources during disasters. Public policy must be based on mutual respect and justice for all, free from any form of discrimination or bias.
  
- 6. Government agencies involved in response efforts should implement a transparent, representative, public process for the involvement of disaster-impacted populations and communities, including responders, workers, and residents.** Each group has its own unique needs. Each group must play an active role in determining restoration goals and methods, including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement, and evaluation. Groups participating in the public process may require support, including training and funding, to be able to participate fully and effectively.