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Volunteers: Safety Tips for Disaster Recovery

Indianapolis (March 13, 2012) Just because the tornados are gone, doesn't mean all of the danger is over. Tornados in Southern Indiana have left twisted aluminum siding, rusty nails, broken glass, tree limbs and other debris littering the streets of many communities. This means volunteers and professionals alike risk injury during the cleanup – many times because they simply aren't wearing appropriate clothes for the environment.

Protective Clothing

If you're going to help with the cleanup, you must remember to wear protective clothing, despite the nice spring weather, to stay safe when surrounded by the debris left by these powerful storms.

1. Work boots – Gym shoes are *not* going to keep you safe. You need boots that have a non-slip, puncture-resistant sole. Steel-toed boots are best.
2. Gloves – You'll be picking up broken glass and loose nails and moving tree limbs and torn house siding. You'll *need* heavy gloves.
3. Head protection – Hard hats aren't fashionable, but they'll keep you from getting a concussion. If you're near people moving tree limbs and 2x4s, you're going to need to have one.
4. Long pants – This is not work for shorts. Heavy jeans or canvas pants will help keep you safe.
5. Long sleeves – These will help keep your arms protected from minor scrapes and cuts.

Special Equipment Precautions

If you're going to be near chainsaws, wood chippers or other machinery, you're going to need to add a few more pieces of personal protective equipment. Include everything above, plus:

1. Ear protection – The noise from chainsaws and wood chippers can easily cause permanent hearing damage. Simple ear plugs can cost less than \$1. There is no reason not to use them.
2. Eye protection – Safety glasses need to be worn. You don't need sawdust or splinters in your eyes.

Operating Special Equipment

Only operate equipment you are qualified to use. If you have never used a piece of equipment before (chainsaw, wood chipper, heavy equipment, etc.), then find someone who is already trained to use the equipment or get trained yourself. You can be seriously injured, or injure someone else, if you don't know what you're doing.

If we all pull together and take the proper precautions, we can rebuild our communities as quickly and safely as possible. Find more information about disaster recovery, including debris removal and temporary housing, at in.gov/gov/3653.htm.

About the Indiana Department of Labor:

The mission of the Indiana Department of Labor is to advance the safety, health and prosperity of Hoosiers in the workplace. In order to make significant strides, we emphasize both enforcement and compliance assistance by employers.

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