

NEW free guides for restoring disaster damaged homes

The spreading floods, recent tornadoes, wildfires and winter storms have prompted me to alert all EDEN delegates to a set of new, free educational resources from HUD for dealing with damaged homes. These are different from many other materials I've seen in that the underlying thread and goal throughout is "healthy" homes, including worksite safety and hazard mitigation, but taking it further in a people-focused approach.

We know first-hand that when a flood, or any disaster, damages homes, survivors face the daunting and dangerous task of clean-up and repairs – often without professional help. Everyone is understandably eager to restore their homes and lives quickly, yet we've seen that far too many are not aware of all the potential hazards that can be worsened by the process.

To address this need, a collection of educational resources in varied forms for consumers, workers and stakeholders were developed through the U.S. Dept. of HUD's Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes working with the Cooperative Extension Service and other agencies and consultants. They are now available from www.hud.gov/healthyhomes web site's *Post Disaster Recovery and Resources* link under Popular Topics.

The flagship "how-to" guide is [*Rebuild Healthy Homes: Guide to Post-disaster Restoration for a Safe and Healthy Home*](#). It's a detailed, highly-illustrated reference to help homeowners, volunteers and other workers safely restore homes damaged by any type of natural disaster – from floods and storms, to wildfire and earthquakes. A major goal is to help disaster victims end up with more than just a livable home, but to protect the future wellbeing of their families and even create a silver lining -- rewarding their recovery efforts with a safer, more resilient, durable, comfortable and *healthy* home.

Content includes the Top 10 Tips; personal protective gear; assessing hazards; work preparation; best practices for clean-out, tear-out, gutting, decontamination and repair; ways to "restore for more than before" with hazard-resistant, energy-saving and healthy home improvements; and, links to many other resources. It also conforms to new federal interagency recommendations for dealing with mold, lead, asbestos and radon after disasters.

I served as primary author, and the 72-page guidebook was extensively reviewed and refined by disaster survivors and stakeholders from across the nation, including other Extension housing specialists. It's available as a **free online pdf** file that can be printed in whole or part, as well as a **free mobile app** for both iPhone and Android devices (search *Rebuild Healthy Homes* in the app stores).

Other new educational disaster resources include:

- [*Healthy Homes Disaster Recovery and Response Videos*](#), three short YouTube videos narrated by Dr. Reichel: *Restoring Your Home After a Natural Disaster*, *Returning to Your Flood Damaged Home*, and *Addressing Mold after a Disaster*.
- [*Indoor Environmental Pollutants Brochures*](#) for families and for contractors developed by a federal interagency working group to create consistent guidance on post-disaster clean-up and hazard reduction from **asbestos, lead, mold and radon** in homes.
- [*Consumer Tips for Post-Disaster Home Restoration*](#), a 12-page online pdf that provides a brief overview of home health hazards and restoration safety steps.
- [*Guide for Team Leaders to Help Disaster Victims Get Back to a Healthy Home*](#), a 14-page online pdf.
- [*Important Information for Volunteers in Helping Disaster Victims Get Back to a Healthy Home*](#), a 2-page online pdf fact sheet to create awareness of restoration hazards.

- The HUD [OLHCHH Disaster Recovery Toolkit](#), a 15 page directory of HUD's collection of resources with brief descriptions and regional contacts. It includes a 2-page flyer that for easy duplication and distribution.

Article by
Claudette Hanks Reichel, Ed.D.