

**Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)  
Cleanup: Bringing Children Back to Flood-Stricken Areas Safely Conference Call  
Moderator: Barbara Coccodrilli Carlson**

**December 18, 2012—3:00-4:00 p.m. (Eastern Time)**

*Operator:* Good afternoon. I'll be your conference operator today. At this time, I would like to welcome everyone to the ACF/EPA Disaster Relief Conference Call. All lines have been placed on mute to prevent any background noise. During the conference call, there will be question-and-answer sessions. If you would like to ask a question during these times, simply press star and then 1 on your telephone keypad. If you would like to withdraw your question, press the pound key.

It is now my pleasure to introduce Barbara Coccodrilli Carlson, Regional Program Manager. Please go ahead Barbara.

*Barbara Carlson:* Thank you, (Holly). I'd like to welcome all of you to the ACF/EPA Region II Conference Call. I'm going to introduce Dr. Jaime Torres, who is our Regional Director here in Region II for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), for a few words of welcome. Dr. Torres?

*Jaime Torres:* Thank you, Barbara. On behalf of Secretary (Kathleen Sebelius), I want to thank you for joining this important call. A few months ago, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and EPA developed a memorandum of understanding designed to implement and promote environmental health initiatives for health care in family child care and center-based child care settings. Our Administration for Children and Families (ACF) within HHS has been working to implement it.

Because of superstorm Sandy, we have a great opportunity to see that our work can make sure that children and providers are safe in our Region. Sandy devastated many communities in our Region in New York and New Jersey; child care and Head Start programs were deeply affected by this storm.

Tens of thousands of children were affected by this storm, including parents and providers. Providers and parents are working very hard to ensure that programs are up and running, and we want to make sure that we can provide the best information for both children and providers and that parent can get information so that the programs are safe and the places where they go are safe. I'm sure this information that we provided will be essential for other family members.

So, thank you again for being on the call. I'll pass it back to you, Barbara.

*Barbara Carlson:* Thank you, Dr. Torres. Now, I'd like to introduce Shannon Rudisill, the Director of the Office of Child Care (OCC) within the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Shannon?

*Shannon Rudisill:* Hi, everyone. This is Shannon. I'm so grateful to be able to be with you today for this call, and I just wanted to say a few words about how we at ACF see our efforts to respond in a disaster because we have ramped up those efforts over the past 2 years, obviously under the lead of and in full partnership with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

I want to echo the words I actually heard from our Region I Regional Administrator, who is in a different region than you all, but Mary Ann Higgins today was talking about the response (given) to Connecticut, and she described the role that she thought was good for the Administration for Children and Families in disaster response. What she said was, "You know, our role is to be sure that the needs of children and families are always at the top of the priority list and to partner with all other experts across the Federal Government to be sure that has happened"; I feel like those efforts are certainly paying off and that we're learning more about how to do that.

When we talk about children and families at ACF, especially in our Early Childhood Unit—which comprises our Deputy Assistant Secretary for Early Childhood, Linda Smith; Yvette Sanchez Fuentes, my colleague and the Director of the Office of Head Start (OHS); and myself—we put all caregivers, everyone who regularly has contact with children, at the top of our priority list in terms of how we could support you in helping guide children and families through these kinds of situations.

Our involvement has been deeper than ever before with this Sandy initiative, and we're seeing our relationships that we've built up over time for a payoff. We've been working with FEMA for more than 5 years on the OCC response to disaster, but this is the first time that FEMA actually requested subject-matter experts from OCC and OHS to come work in the FEMA offices in New York and New Jersey.

In fact, FEMA knows us so well that they requested specific staff people, which was a management challenge for us that we've been able to send great people up there also to back-up our terrific Region II team—Barbara Carlson and Audrey Neuhaus; their colleagues in OHS; and our Regional Administrator, Joyce Thomas.

This EPA relationship is another one that had developed over time, dealing with asthma prevention and other things in early childhood settings, and our EPA partners reached out and wanted to work on this as well. So, I just want to say thanks to them.

Before I turn it back to Barbara—I haven't had as many chances as I would like to address child care providers in OHS and other early childhood providers that were affected by Hurricane Sandy—I just want to say thank you so much because every day we know that you're there for your staff, as administrator, and for our children and for families. I know that you all have also had stressful circumstances and that you've dealt with personal impacts from the storm. I'm constantly humbled and grateful for the fact that even as people at the State offices, at the local offices, and in child care programs struggled with the impacts in their own personal lives, they were dropping everything to try to help the children and families that were also in their care.

I just want to say that we recognize it, and we appreciate it. We hope that you're taking care of yourselves as well, and we want to support you however we can. I hope that you'll accept our gratitude, and the fact that you asked for this on the call today shows that you're taking advantage of every resource possible to get your kids back in your program safely.

So, we're grateful, and I will turn it back over to Barbara.

*Barbara Carlson:* Thank you so much, Shannon. Operator, how about you ask the first few polling questions?

*Operator:* Thank you. We'll now begin with our first few polling questions. Our first question: What State are you calling from? Press 1 for New Jersey, press 2 for New York, and press 3 for other.

Please hold while we compile the votes.

We will now move on to our second question. If you are a center provider, press 1. If you are a director of a child care center, press 2. If you are a family child care provider, press 3.

Please hold while we compile the votes.

That concludes our first two polling questions. I'll turn the conference call back over to Barbara.

*Barbara Carlson:* Thank you. Now, it's my pleasure to introduce Maureen O'Neill—one of our wonderful partners at EPA in Region II. Maureen is the senior policy advisor at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), specializing in environmental health issues. Over to you, Maureen.

*Maureen O'Neill:* OK, thanks, Barb. So, I have the pleasure of starting the technical part of this, and the first speaker that we have is Dr. Maida Galvez. Dr. Galvez is a pediatrician who practices here at Mount Sinai in New York. She covers New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands with regard to pediatric environmental health, especially the unit at Mount Sinai. She's also an Associate Professor at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine.

She will be talking about how to safely return children to day care facilities that are affected by flooding, storms, or hurricanes. So, Dr. Galvez?

*Maida Galvez:* Good afternoon and thanks to everybody for joining the call today. I just want to talk a little bit about things that you need to keep in mind in order to ensure the safety of children after a flood, storm, or hurricane, such as superstorm Sandy.

A major concern after natural disasters is the safety of children, and that's what we're here to talk about today. Children may be more vulnerable to exposures because of some fundamental reasons; those include the fact that children breathe and eat more per pound of body weight than adults. So, for example, if there are air quality issues, children may actually have higher exposures than adults in the same locations.

They also have age-appropriate, hand-to-mouth behaviors, and this places them in contact with materials that adults are otherwise not exposed to. The last basic principle is that children are rapidly growing, and these unique windows of development can make them more vulnerable to exposures.

There are a number of health concerns after a storm. Exposure to the water in a flooded environment puts children at risk for both acute and chronic health effects. In the acute aftermath of superstorm Sandy, there is a potential for drowning, injuries from the debris. So just basic cuts and bruises that might require suturing for example.

Exposure to chemical spills and cold temperatures was a major concern post-Sandy. What we see as one of the major concerns from a health perspective is stress, especially stress on families. In the chronic period, you may see a slight increase in infectious diseases, including some of the common things like viral illnesses, because families may need to gather in large groups in warming centers, which could make them more prone to viral illnesses like influenza.

You may see mental health issues due to the stress and then poor access to care—so it's just basic health care and access to medications as well as poor nutrition. So, I'm going to talk a little bit about some of the things that we saw directly. Some of the major concerns after superstorm Sandy—we certainly did see a number of injuries and requirements for tetanus shots, for example, due to a number of injuries in young children who were exposed to debris related to the destruction of buildings.

There could be potential electrical hazards from the presence of water close to electrical lines. We saw exposure to extreme temperatures. So, the weather was cold in the immediate aftermath after Sandy, and there were power outages—widespread power outages. Just access to heat and hot water was an issue for families, and cold temperatures can be a respiratory trigger for asthma exacerbations. So, that was a major problem and was especially problematic for infants and the elderly.

Another potential issue that could lead to breathing problems includes the dust and debris and outdoor exhaust [fan]—from things like construction vehicles or power generators. Because of the need to use generators, we've unfortunately seen some deaths related to carbon monoxide poisoning due to the improper use of generators—either indoors or too close to buildings.

Lastly, mental health problems are all too common after disasters, and stress, as I mentioned, is a major concern. Since disruption of child care after storms is a major stressor for families, day care programs are really an area that should be prioritized. I also wanted to acknowledge the important role that day

care programs provide in helping families deal with the many hardships that they face and that they did face post-superstorm Sandy.

So, I think that you all play an instrumental role in helping families deal with this stress, and I think we really need to—you deserve the full amount of resources that we can get to you to ensure the safe and quick return of children to child care programs.

That leads to some of those important safety measures—some of the fundamental things that should be in place before a day care [program] opens include a safe drinking water supply, functioning wastewater treatment sites, electrical power, a working communications system, access to medical care, and safe travel routes.

What you need to do is to ensure that day care programs are fully cleaned before the children return; that is, we must ensure the safety of day care programs before children begin to return to those facilities. That includes the replacement or (remediation) of flood-damaged building materials and the proper cleaning and maintenance of buildings and supplies. The (<http://www.nyc.gov/>) Web site has excellent guidance specifically on this issue—the safe return to day care facilities. That's on the FAQ sheet posted on the (<http://www.nyc.gov/>) site; the title is Sandy Reopening Guidelines.

Some general precautions to be aware of include the potential for air quality issues that can lead to breathing problems. This can be due to some of the dust and debris that's all too common, but it can also be related to the temporary measures that are found in areas impacted by flooding/storms and the issues that we've mentioned already—generators and construction vehicles.

That's why it's important to remember that we should ensure that carbon monoxide detectors and smoke alarms are functional by both checking the batteries and replacing them as needed and checking that they're electrically wired in as well if possible.

You also have to use caution in selecting materials for cleaning. In addressing some of the hazards that are present after storms, you do not want to introduce any new hazards by fogging and bombing or bringing in additional chemicals that may present potential harms if the children are exposed.

You want to carefully consider the products that you're using in cleaning, and I'm glad that Todd Crawford will be joining us today; he'll speak in more detail about those specific measures that you can take. Those measures are outlined on the (<http://www.nyc.gov/>) FAQ sheet that I mentioned and also on the New York state green cleaning products Web site.

Something that's not often considered is play spaces. As I mentioned, concerning stress on a child, it's important for them to have safe places to play in the immediate aftermath of the storm. This is a good way to address some of the stress that families are feeling, but we have to ensure that those play spaces have been adequately assessed for safety.

Some of the things that we saw in the aftermath of Sandy included uprooted safety matting; that is a potential for injuries from falls in playgrounds. That safety matting needs to be replaced. Any porous materials that are damaged also need to be replaced. We saw the need to replace sand in sandboxes that had been flooded. You also have to ensure that the routes to and from the building to the play areas have actually been cleaned and are free of safety and environmental hazards.

If there are any concerns that an area has not been cleaned or has ongoing environmental issues, such as air quality issues from construction vehicles or generators, you may have to consider closing certain areas off to children.

The key take-home message for us as pediatricians is that children, and whenever possible teens, should not be involved in cleanup efforts directly and should only return to an area after it has been cleaned

thoroughly. In short, children should be the last group to return to areas impacted by flooding and/or hurricanes.

I again want to point you to those wonderful resources that have been created by a number of groups—from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to FEMA to EPA to the National Institutes of Health, and the (<http://www.nyc.gov/>) Web site has wonderful resources posted there.

I direct the Region II—which covers New York, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands—Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit (PEHSU). If there's a need for anyone to speak with an environmental pediatrician, we can be contacted through our toll-free number 1-866-265-6201, and there's a National PEHSU Network FAQ sheet that was developed by the National PEHSU Network in conjunction with the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). It outlines many of the things that we have discussed today and was developed post-Katrina, but much of that information is applicable to our Region today.

Our PEHSU here at Mount Sinai developed—we basically compiled—all the available resources specifically with an eye toward resources that was helpful for families or folks concerned about children's safety. It was posted on the Mount Sinai PEHSU Web page, so you can access that easily by searching for Mount Sinai PEHSU.

In closing, I just wanted to acknowledge the post-Sandy work of the National PEHSU Network in this area in conjunction with AAP (specifically Chapters 2 and 3); New York State Department of Health; EPA; and Office of Child Care, HHS, for all their efforts to get these good messages out to you as day care providers. So, thank you for listening. I look forward to your questions.

*Maureen O'Neill:* Thank you, Dr. Galvez. Operator, I think it's time to ask the next polling questions.

*Operator:* Next polling question: Was your day care center affected by Sandy? Press 1 for yes or 2 for no.

Thank you and I will turn the conference call back over to Maureen. That concludes our polling question.

*Maureen O'Neill:* Thank you. I wanted to say that we are going to enter the second part of this call now with a discussion of mold cleanup. Todd Crawford—we're lucky to have him with us today—is a scientist at the New York State Department of Health, and he specializes in training on indoor air quality and mold, the mitigations that you can do, and how to do safe cleanup.

So, Todd, I'm going to turn it over to you now.

*Todd Crawford:* Thank you very much, Maureen. Thank you to EPA and HHS for coordinating this call. There are a lot of people who are taking interest in this topic. It's going to be a major issue going forward. Just because we've dealt with a lot of the cleanup from the flood, mold still is not going to be mitigated immediately. It's going to be a long-term issue that continues to plague us through this process of cleaning up and recovering from the storm.

The main reason for talking about mold is because it happens to be a very easy thing for people to recognize and diagnose. Unlike chemical contaminants, mold is easy to see and smell. People recognize when mold is present. They know that there's a problem when they walk into a building and can smell mold or when they can see mold growing on a surface.

The other thing is that the health effects of mold are quite visible and quite easy for most people to recognize. You get coughing, sneezing, watery eyes, and a runny nose. So when people walk into a place and they start getting these types of respiratory problems, their immediate thought is, "What am I breathing in that could be causing this problem?" The first thought across most people's mind is mold.

Now we are in a winter season; we're in the cold period. So coughs and sneezes may not always be associated with mold, but certainly it's going to be a problem inside of areas that have been flooded. Mold is not regulated like a chemical. We're exposed to mold every day. It's a normal part of our environment. So, we can't regulate mold in the same way that we regulate chemicals. What we try to focus on is stopping mold growth in buildings.

Mold grows in our regular, normal indoor environment. It grows well at room temperature; it does need air, food, and water to grow. There's usually enough air for mold growth, but mold needs to grow on things that used to be alive, so it grows well on wood, paper, ceiling tiles, and carpets; anything that's been processed and turned into building materials generally provides adequate food for mold to grow on.

However, mold doesn't grow on those things all the time. The issue is when they get wet. Mold grows as soon as things get moist. Not all molds are the same. I tell people that molds are just like little children; they're fussy. Some molds will prefer slightly damp surfaces; some molds will prefer wet places. So, different types of mold will be found in different areas of your building.

The underlying reason for mold to grow is because building materials are wet; wetting is a process. Standing water—the visible water that you can see and puddles and (grips)—is easy to clean up. That stuff can be drained or mopped off a surface, but once the surface has been mopped and all that liquid water has been taken off, there's still some soak water—moisture or dampness that you can feel on the surface when you put your hand on it.

That water is more difficult to remove, and probably the easiest way to do that is with fans. Ideally, if you have two fans in a wet room or a wet area, you want to blow fresh air into the room—fresh, clean air from outside onto that wet surface or moist surface. Then, on the other side of the room—ideally going out of the room through a window—another fan or an exhaust fan is blowing the damp air out of the room.

You're taking clean, dry air and blowing it across the wet surface and then that wet air is blowing out of the room. If possible, the area should be maintained warm or at room temperature, but drying will take time. You need to allow adequate time for the surfaces to dry. Drying with fans can take several days depending on the temperature and on the amount of moisture.

One of the problems we see in buildings is that people say that things are dry before they are, and once they start rebuilding, they start finding that moisture is still present and that mold will start growing.

If mold starts growing in a place, it can be cleaned up. Solid surfaces can be cleaned easily with soap and water. Just keep the surface damp while you're cleaning so that you're not scraping and getting dust and mold in the air, and if there is dust and mold, you want to protect yourself while you're working. You want to cover your skin and wear gloves, long sleeves, and long pants. Your shoes should not have open toes. You also want to protect your eyes. You want to wear goggles or glasses. You want to make certain that stuff is not falling into your eyes while you're working.

Of course, most importantly, you want to protect your lungs. You want to wear a face mask, a respirator, or something that will remove particles. The most highly recommended one that's readily available is the N95 respirator, which fits comfortably around your face; they're readily available from home improvement stores. In fact, we're trying to make them available through some of the disaster centers.

Not everything can be cleaned, but clean solid surfaces; clean surfaces that are not rotten. So, surfaces like plastic, metal, concrete, wood, floors, counters, and cabinets generally can be cleaned of visible mold growths. You can just clean the surface with soap and water, rinse it with clean water, and allow it to dry.

The critical issue is whether that surface is rotten. If it's become soft and rotted, then cleaning will probably make that material fall apart. It's no longer going to work as a wall or a floor. At that point, you're going to have to dispose of that; you're going to have to remove that material.

However, if it's not rotten, if you just have some visible mold growth, soap and water is an entirely adequate way to clean that surface. Now you may want to consider using a professional. If you look at a surface and think to yourself—"Should I be cleaning this?"—chances are, maybe you shouldn't. If you're looking at it and thinking about how to do this or handle this, you may be getting overwhelmed.

In that case, take a step back and ask yourself, "What would grandma do?" Would grandma take this and stick it in the washroom and clean it, or would she throw it out? If you need to use a professional cleaning service, things to consider would include carpets, upholstery, couches, and chairs—the sorts of things that most of us don't have the equipment to clean.

Carpet cleaning services have the equipment to get that done. They're experienced in that area, so they're a very good professional service to use. Some fabrics can't be cleaned with soap and water, such as curtains and fabrics that may require dry cleaning. Again, your local dry cleaner can advise you on whether some of those materials can be saved.

There's also a big debate about whether duct cleaning is necessary. In general, we found that duct cleaning is not necessary but there's a lot of good information on the EPA Web page on duct cleaning. So, if you go to the EPA Web page and search for air ducts or duct cleaning, you'll get some good information that will help you decide whether your air ducts need to be cleaned.

When you're cleaning, you're going to want to use something that works, but you also want to use something that's safe. You don't want to leave a residue that's hazardous, and you don't want to use a chemical that's more potent than the stuff that you're cleaning with or that you're cleaning up.

So, if you're looking for green cleaning products, the New York State Office of General Services has a very good Web site that gives information about green cleaning products. You can also search for products that are specific for cleaning, floor finishes, or hand soaks or even different types of vacuum cleaners. The Web site is <https://greencleaning.ny.gov/>, and it will give you a lot of information and an easily searchable list for products that you can use to clean your business and your home and the types of materials that can be cleaned with those products.

One thing that I do want to mention is disinfection. We normally disinfect surfaces that are going to be getting wet on a regular basis, such as bathrooms and toilets. Disinfectants should be used according to the instructions on the label. If you're using bleach, which is probably our most common disinfectant, we normally recommend that you dilute it with water. Bleach is irritating and can cause skin rashes and respiratory problems. So, we normally recommend diluting bleach.

The actual measure of the dilution is not as important as the fact that it seems to be equally effective at full strength as well as if you dilute it. Note that bleach is not a cleaning solution. I still recommend that if you're going to clean a surface, use soap and water. Bleach is to be used for disinfecting the surface that will remain wet.

The final question you're going to be faced with in dealing with clients and in reoccupying the space is, "Is it safe?" Again, what would grandma say? Would she look around and see spots, stains, moisture, dampness, and rot? If she saw that, I know she'd say, "It's not a good place for people to be." If she came into that room and she could smell mold, she would tell me that we couldn't work in that place.

So, the ultimate determinations of whether a place is safe are do you feel it's safe; do you know that everything has been cleaned; is it dry; and is there an area where mold can regrow or cause problems in the future? If there is an area where there could be problems in the future, do you have a plan for dealing with that area going forward?

Bathrooms are constant mold problems, but we have figured out easy ways to clean them. We've got good cleaning products for them and disinfectants that we can use. One of the things that I don't think you

need to do is to perform testing and analysis. It's expensive to get a professional to take samples and to perform testing and analysis, and the data are not usually very useful, as it's difficult to interpret.

If you think about the air in your home, the air changes every time somebody opens the door, opens a window, or turns on a fan. If you take an air sample in the morning, chances are it will be different from an air sample taken in the evening. So, the idea of collecting an air sample and saying that it tells us something about the air quality in your home is actually not easy to prove. We have seen that air quality changes significantly between the day and night.

So, what we're concerned about is as follows: Is it clean; is it dry; and have you taken care of the areas of contamination? If you're not too sure about the status of your building or your business and you need or you want an inspection, you should get in touch with your regional licensing or registration office or with your local building officials.

Both of those offices or agencies are qualified to inspect your building. The inspection will primarily focus on general conditions. The inspectors will check for your compliance with regulations, but in this particular case, they will also have been briefed on safety and health hazards inside buildings. So, they are prepared to support you in characterizing whether the building has a problem. They can figure out whether your electrical system has been damaged by water.

They can make recommendations as to who can work on that stuff, who is qualified to perform repairs if they're necessary, and/or if repairs are necessary. They should be your first line of defense if you're looking for an inspection. Now, I have covered a lot of information in a brief period of time. There's a lot more information available on line.

One of the most extensive resources is EPA. If you go to the EPA Web site (<http://www.epa.gov>), you will find an icon for Sandy in the center, and if you click on that icon, you will find a lot of good information about how to respond to storms.

New York City's Web site is extensive. Dr. Galvez mentioned that it is full of good information about Hurricane Sandy and that it is one of the leading authorities, setting the standard on how to deal with mold problems in buildings.

Of course, our Web site (<http://www.nyhealth.gov> [New York State Health Department]) provides good information, and it provides a lot of information on Hurricane Sandy, flood recovery, and mold remediation. One of the documents that I want to direct you to is the Red Cross document called Repairing Your Flooded Home. It's a thorough approach to responding to flood damage in a building, and it tells you step by step what to do not only for your own protection but also for the protection of other occupants in the building while you're performing cleanup.

I'd like to thank everybody for allowing me to speak. We'll look forward to answering your questions. If you don't get the information that you need during this conference call and you'd like to follow up with our office directly, you may call the New York State Health Department at 1-800-458-1158. I'll pass it back to you, Maureen.

*Maureen O'Neill:* OK. So, Barbara, I think we're ready for the next questions.

*Barbara Carlson:* Yes, thank you, Todd, and thanks, Maureen. I think it's time to open the line for questions.

*Operator:* All right. As a reminder, ladies and gentlemen, if you would like to ask a question over the phone line, press star 1 on your telephone keypad.

*Barbara Carlson:* I think I'm going to start the questions here while people are phoning in with their questions. We have some questions that were presubmitted to us, and one of them was about mold growing in salt water. Does the fact that the flooded areas have salt water impact the amount of mold?

*Todd Crawford:* No, it doesn't. As I mentioned, molds are finicky. They all have their individual preferences, and some molds prefer to be around brackish water. So, the presence of salt water doesn't necessarily mean that there will be no mold or less mold. It's a question of whether the surface is damp. If it is damp, then there's still potential for mold growth. So, the salt water doesn't factor in very strongly as far as we've seen and doesn't stop mold growth or inhibit it very much.

*Barbara Carlson:* Thank you.

*Operator:* We have a question that is coming over the phone lines from the line of Jacqueline Broaddus.

*Jacqueline Broaddus:* Yes, I'd like to know when you have a lot of water that has settled and you have a well, I don't know how to get it out of there. What is that thing that sucks water out?

*Todd Crawford:* A sump pump.

*Jacqueline Broaddus:* Yes. The water is still running in there because the gutter is loose. The wind and the water is still coming down there, but it costs a lot of money to repair those things. What should I do about that?

*Todd Crawford:* Well, you've got a number of different issues that you're dealing with. First thing is to talk to your licensing or registration office, whoever your liaison is that you're working with on the day care program. Find out what resources are available to help you as far as doing repairs on the building.

Because there is a certain amount of money available from FEMA, the Small Business Administration (SBA) will help with some of the repairs. However, once those have been taken care of, can you drain the water away from the building and keep the water out of the building?

*Jacqueline Broaddus:* I will have to buy an extra sump pump to go down in there.

*Todd Crawford:* Well, I think it sounds like it may be more of a problem than something that one person can deal with or that you may be able to deal with. I would probably suggest that you check around for somebody who can help figure out a way to keep water out of that building.

Also, two sump pumps may not be necessary for a long period of time; they may only be necessary initially to get things under control. After things are under control, you may be able to cut back to one pump.

It sounds like you may need to get help from someone you know, your local building department, and/or your local licensing office and see what steps they would recommend to get that area under control.

*Operator:* Thank you. Your next question comes from the line of Barbara Andrews.

*Barbara Andrews:* Hi. I heard what you had said about the use of one fan on intake and one on outtake. How about using a dehumidifier in addition to that? Is that advisable? Thank you.

*Todd Crawford:* Yes, certainly. Dehumidifiers are very useful. One of the problems that we see now is that dehumidifiers can only capture as much air it happens to be immediately around them. So, if you think about a wet surface or wall as being a wet surface, water continually comes off that surface. We're trying to encourage more water to come off that surface.

A dehumidifier sitting in front of that wall only captures what comes off it passively. If you move some air across that wall, now you're encouraging moisture to come off that wall. So, a dehumidifier is useful but it's not as fast as using fans. That's the reason why we generally recommend trying to get some air movement through the space as well.

*Operator:* Thank you. Again, if you'd like to ask a question, press star 1 on your telephone keypad.

*Barbara Carlson:* I'd like to just skip over right now to one of the other questions that we got earlier until the other questions come in. One of the things that we were asked was if someone can smell the cleaner, does that mean it's clean?

*Todd Crawford:* I would say that if you can smell the cleaner, that smell generally indicates that there is some residual effect from the cleaner. So, for instance, one of the things with using a bleach solution is that if you can smell the bleach, then it's still working. If you can't smell bleach anymore, then it's no longer working as bleach and is no longer a disinfectant.

Same thing with the cleaning solution—most cleaning solutions have some odor to them. If you can still smell them, then maybe they haven't been rinsed off completely. However, they may be providing some residual benefit that you want to have there. It depends on the type of cleaning solution that you're using. The persistence of odors and the fact that odors linger inside of a place is mostly a function of how much ventilation you're getting and how much fresh air you've got coming in to a building.

Some odors are desirable and indicate a lingering impact as far as the cleaning and the disinfection are continuing. Hospitals were famous for the smell of Lysol that indicated that there was still some Lysol—some ethanol—in the surfaces so that things couldn't grow and surfaces wouldn't promote any mold growth or bacterial growth. They're effectively sterilized.

Once that smell was gone, it generally indicated that that material could support some mold growth. So, if you can still smell the cleaning solution or product inside your house or business, then it may indicate that it's still providing a benefit.

On the other hand, from my point of view, as a health department person, I would tell you that it generally indicates that you don't get enough ventilation, and I would recommend a little bit more fresh air and perhaps a little bit less potent cleaning materials.

*Barbara Carlson:* Thank you. We have one additional question for Dr. Galvez. We've been asked if we can clean a flooded room while children are in another untouched room because we know that you emphasized that children should not be around cleaning. Can children be in another room in the house while the cleaning is going on?

*Maida Galvez:* That's a really good question, and it depends. You have to discuss it on a case-by-case basis. In an instance like that, I would recommend that you to call our center directly so that we can discuss the situation and can identify any potential concerns.

The issue is that it depends on the extent of the damage. For example, if there are concerns that you're in an older building that has extensive damage, may have lead or asbestos hazards and had a spill of some chemicals. The question there is how well are those concerns contained within that specific area versus the other areas; that's an instance where I would want to speak with an environmental pediatrician or someone like Todd Crawford—an expert on your particular scenario to give you tailored advice.

I think that was a really good question.

*Barbara Carlson:* Could you give out the phone number again, please?

*Maida Galvez:* Sure. To speak with an environmental pediatrician from the PEHSU here at Mount Sinai, you can call us toll-free at 1-866-265-6201. I don't know if Todd might have additional thoughts on that.

*Todd Crawford:* In general, for two rooms, the question is whether air can move from one room to the other. In cleaning, you're mostly concerned with trying to control the surface damage. So, you don't want people walking through while you're cleaning and being exposed to the debris you're generating. However, the air quality may be affected in other rooms. So, if people can smell your cleaning product or the mold in the other room, that smell generally indicates the stuff is moving from one room to the other.

The best solution would be to provide additional fresh air in the room that's being occupied by the children, but if that can't be done and they still notice a smell or are complaining of the smells and odors, then they should be relocated to another space.

*Barbara Carlson:* Thank you.

*Operator:* We have another question over the phone line from the line of Mark Zarkh.

*Mark Zarkh:* Yes, hi. I'd like to find out if a facility that was exposed to water in the Zone A is about to be opened—the extensive repair has been done, everything is new, and everything is repaired and dried up—is there a requirement to have an authoritative inspection to get some kind of permission or a permit that would suggest that everything was done correctly by the department? Thank you.

*Todd Crawford:* If you were evacuated from that location, then the municipality has to state whether you're allowed to reoccupy that building. If you were not evacuated and the repairs have been done based upon the water damage, there is no requirement on the municipality to certify the building for occupancy.

On the other hand, if it's a building that's being used for a business, like a day care program, then you have to get permission to reopen that business. You should always check with your regional licensing office on the requirements and whether you performed the work that's necessary to reopen the business.

*Operator:* Thank you. Our next question is a followup question from the line of Barbara Andrews.

*Barbara Andrews:* I just wanted to know if the dehumidifier in conjunction with the two fans—the intake and outtake fans—is the best way to go.

*Todd Crawford:* I think it's a very effective way to go. The best way would depend on a case-by-case basis. I won't say it's the absolute best. There are all sorts of different ways of improving this and tweaking it, but if you're trying to dry something, you want to get as much moisture off the building materials as possible—as quickly as possible. The combination of fans and dehumidifiers is a very effective combination and usually works very well.

*Operator:* Thank you. At this time, there are no further questions over the phone lines.

*Barbara Carlson:* We have another question here. How do you know who to hire to actually get help if you have mold in your building?

*Todd Crawford:* That depends on the kind of help you're looking for in the areas that were impacted by the hurricanes; it's very important to note that those areas of New York City and Long Island have a requirement for home improvement contractors. The contractors must be licensed by the county or city, unlike the rest of New York State.

So, one of the first things you're interested in is if somebody can perform work on your building to mitigate the damage, take care of the structural problems, and take care of mold; they should have a license from the local

county or city to perform the work.

The other thing that you should be aware of is that they should provide you with a written contract. You should check with the attorney general's Web site regarding the information in their contract and follow that Web site's information as far as negotiating with a contractor. Make certain that everything's in writing and that the contractor is addressing the water damage, not just the mold.

You don't need a contractor that is just going to take care of the mold. You need one to take care of the water that is causing the mold growth. When you negotiate that contract, make certain that you are not paying everything up front. The contractor should only have a certain amount of money to start the work, and then you pay the balance after the work has been completed to everyone's satisfaction. If you have questions about this, please check on the New York State Attorney General's Web site for contractors.

*Operator:* We have a followup question over the phone lines from the line of Mark Zarkh.

*Mark Zarkh:* If possible, please repeat where I need to call to get a permit to open a facility that's been flooded. I'm in the area of Brighton Beach, a forced-evacuation zone, and the water got into the facility. It's been cleaned up and repaired, and it's ready to open. Where do I call to get a permit to reopen?

*Todd Crawford:* As before, if your area was evacuated—I believe it was evacuated by the municipality—then you need to check with your local building department about whether the area or business can be reopened. Department personnel would normally provide you with the basic information to know if the building can be reoccupied. Has the area been cleared for reoccupancy?

The second question is whether you can operate the business out of that building; for that, you'll need to check with the licensing or registration office for your business. If you're in Brooklyn, you'll need to check with the New York City Health Department as to whether the day care facility can reopen.

*Maureen O'Neill:* I'd also like to add that there are two other things you can do: (1) Call 311 if you're in New York City because that's the general number for any questions, and they can connect you with the right person. (2) Call the direct number for the child care bureau offices in Brooklyn.

For the group centers, it's 1-718-222-6323, and for home-based and afterschool programs, it's 1-718-222-6390. However, 311 generally works just fine. That's a simple and easy one to remember.

*Operator:* Again, no further questions over the phone lines.

*Barbara Carlson:* OK. then I think it's time to end the question-and-answer portion of the call. Would you please ask the last polling questions?

*Operator:* Yes, ma'am. Our next polling question: Do you work with children under age 3? Press 1 for under three; press 2 for over three, and press 4 for both.

Please hold while we compile the votes. We will move onto our next question.

Our final question: Was this conference call helpful for you? Press 1 for yes or 2 for no.

Please hold while we compile the votes.

Thank you. That concludes our polling questions. I will turn the conference call back over to Barbara.

*Barbara Carlson:* Thank you. Well, thank you to everyone who participated on the call and, in particular, our great speakers. I am going to pass the agenda over to Audrey Neuhaus, who is a Child Care Program Specialist here in Region II, OCC, for some more details and closing remarks. Audrey?

*Audrey Neuhaus:* Thank you, Barb. Thank you everyone for making this a wonderful and informative conference call. I think we've learned a lot about why it's important to think of children as a special group and why they're easily affected by things in the environment.

We've heard from Todd Crawford on how to properly clean up your centers and your homes after a flood and how to choose products that have the least impact on the health of your children.

We've also heard about a wonderful resource in New York and New Jersey—the Mount Sinai Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit—and Dr. Galvez is a doctor there. I think she's the director, and it's a wonderful resource that I recently found out about.

Those of you who are New York State licensed or regulated providers can go to the Office of Children and Family Services Web site at [www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/childcare](http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/childcare) to receive instructions on how to apply for training credits for this audiocast.

If you don't have access to the Internet, you can contact your licensor, or you can register for assistance via your local child care resource and referral agency. In New Jersey, you can contact the New Jersey Division of Family Development Office of Child Care or the child care hotline at 1-800-332-9227.

I would like to thank Dr. Jaime Torres, Shannon Rudisill, Maureen O'Neill, Dr. Maida Galvez, and Todd Crawford for their generous time and support for this conference call; Veronica Reyes and the staff from the Communications Management Center for making this call come together; and all the early care and education providers who participated on this call. You provide the safe and caring spaces that have allowed our children to grow. I hope you are all recovering well from the storm, and I wish you a happy and healthy holiday season. Thank you.

*Barbara Carlson:* Thank you, Audrey. So, in preparation for adjourning the call, there are just a couple of things I want to mention. We will be archiving the materials that were presented during this call and the call recording on the ACF Web site. The URL is [www.acf.hhs.gov](http://www.acf.hhs.gov). You can search for either Region II or the Office of Child Care once you get on the site, and you will find the proceedings archived.

We hope to post those as soon as possible. It may be right after January 1. At several times on the conference call today, we heard a reference to FEMA assistance. I just wanted to remind those providers who are on the phone and are nonprofit providers that you may apply for FEMA public assistance. The deadlines are different in each State.

There is more information about FEMA and SBA resources on almost any of the Web sites that were mentioned on the call today.

Thank you for your participation, and Operator, I guess I'll turn it over to you.

*Operator:* Yes, ma'am. Again, we'd like to thank everyone for joining today's ACF/EPA Disaster Relief Conference Call. You may now disconnect your lines. Speakers, please hold the line for your post call.

**End**