

# Health Hazard Evaluation of Deepwater Horizon Response Workers

On May 28, 2010, BP requested a health hazard evaluation of Deepwater Horizon Response workers. The seventh in a series of interim reports from this health hazard evaluation was issued October 15, 2010. In this seventh interim report, NIOSH presents the findings of the evaluations of shore cleaning work sites.

Teams of two NIOSH investigators (one completing observational exposure assessments and one assessing health symptoms by questionnaire) evaluated 1,899 workers at 67 work sites in Louisiana, Alabama, Florida, and Mississippi. NIOSH found the following:

- Although several potential occupational hazards were identified among shore cleaning workers the work sites generally had effective programs to manage these hazards.
- Personal protective equipment to prevent dermal exposure to weathered crude oil was used widely at the work sites.
- Heat stress was the primary occupational health hazard for most shore cleaning workers. Work site supervisory personnel were vigilant about monitoring the heat and humidity and utilizing appropriate workplace controls.
- Shore cleaning workers faced ergonomic hazards from the unique work required to clean oil residue from sandy beaches. In general, NIOSH found that workers used tools that were never designed for this task. In some areas workers had designed “homemade” tools that were more effective than standard tools for the shore cleaning tasks.



NIOSH made recommendations related to

- work practices and personal protective equipment use to minimize potential for skin contact with oil residue,
- heat stress management, including consideration of the role personal protective equipment may have in adding to workers' heat stress risk,
- work practices and use of tools for beach cleaning,
- adapting to unusual local circumstances that may affect implementation of occupational health management plans,
- routine reporting of illnesses and injuries, and
- the need for pre-placement medical evaluations.

For these and other NIOSH health hazard evaluations, results may not reflect conditions on a continual basis.



To read Interim Report #7 and view updates on this health hazard evaluation visit  
<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/oilspillresponse/gulfspillhhe.html>.

