

News Release



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US Department of Labor's OSHA distributes oil spill cleanup safety guides, fact sheets *Materials to be published in several languages*

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration is distributing thousands of safety guides and fact sheets to employees involved with the oil spill cleanup along the Gulf Coast.

The materials supplement OSHA-required training workers must receive before they can be hired to engage in the cleanup. In addition to English, the safety guides and fact sheets initially will be printed in Spanish and Vietnamese in recognition of the diverse population inhabiting the Gulf Coast region. They will be made available by BP's education contractor, PEC, and OSHA officials at cleanup staging areas.

Secretary of Labor Hilda L. Solis is urging BP to hire local workers displaced by the oil spill, including fishermen and workers from the hospitality industry, many of whom have limited English proficiency.

"I've directed OSHA to work closely with BP to ensure training of cleanup employees is prompt, thorough and sufficient, and conducted in languages that the workers understand," said Secretary Solis. "I also have directed OSHA to prepare and distribute supplementary materials in several languages so that cleanup workers can easily access the information they need to protect themselves and stay safe on the job. We want those looking for work to get jobs, but no job is good unless it is safe."

Development of the safety guides and fact sheets has grown out of a partnership between OSHA and the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences to promote protective measures for Gulf Coast oil spill responders.

"We are pleased to join with our federal partners to assure that the health of emergency responders is not forgotten in the rush to protect the fragile Gulf Coast environment," said Dr. Linda Birnbaum, director of NIEHS and the National Toxicology Program.

Training of cleanup employees is ongoing throughout the Gulf Coast region. OSHA has officials monitoring the training and observing the cleanup efforts that are already underway.

A one- to two-hour training course is required for employees who will only engage in general beach cleanup, such as removing trash and clean debris. For those employees coming into contact with "weathered oil" and "tar balls" on the shoreline or in marine operations, a four-hour training class is required. This training is provided for free. After completing a class employees will receive a card as proof of their training.

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A more rigorous 40-hour course is required for those employees who will supervise cleanup or be engaged in efforts involving a greater exposure to oil. In order to meet the certifications of the 40-hour training, a combination of classroom instruction and hands-on, applicable experience is required. This preparation includes instruction on the makeup and risks associated with the hazardous material(s) involved, and experience with the equipment needed for the work, safety gear and local environment.

“We have received reports that some are offering this training in significantly fewer than 40 hours, showing video presentations and offering only limited instruction,” said Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA Dr. David Michaels. “This training cannot be shortened to anything less than 40 hours.”

Oil spill cleanup safety guides and fact sheets are available on OSHA’s website:
<http://www.osha.gov/oilspills/index.html>.

Also, information is available and continuously updated at the government’s official Deepwater Horizon Response website: <http://www.deepwaterhorizonresponse.com>.

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, employers are responsible for providing safe and healthful workplaces for their employees. OSHA’s role is to assure these conditions for America’s working men and women by setting and enforcing standards, and providing training, education and assistance. For more information, visit <http://www.osha.gov>.

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