

September 22, 2005

### **Insurance Information Notice 2006-3**

#### **State Workers Returning to Damaged Workplaces**

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita have damaged hundreds of buildings in parishes across the State. The flooding due to the levee breaches in New Orleans that followed the initial impact of both storms worsened the catastrophe. Many buildings were flooded or sustained wind damage. **Please be advised that State employees are not to return to these damaged buildings until they have been determined to be “a safe workplace”.** This includes state owned buildings and leased buildings. Even if your agency’s properties were not damaged by flood or windstorm (buildings may appear to have no damage whatsoever), there can be other hazards in the buildings that need to be addressed before employees should enter the buildings. It is critical that state employees do not enter these buildings before they have been declared a “safe workplace” as required by Federal Law. If for some reason an agency needs to retrieve documents, then hire a professional who is trained to use Personal Protection Equipment (PPE’s) to retrieve these documents or equipment. They are trained to enter buildings that have been compromised by a catastrophic event.

Per the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, many natural gas and other fuel lines were broken during the hurricanes and highly explosive gas vapors may still be present in many buildings. In addition, methane and other explosive gases may accumulate from decaying material. Floodwaters in certain areas can be highly contaminated and infectious disease is of concern. Employees should receive the shots recommended by the Office of Public Health (OPH). The inoculations are for tetanus and Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B. Contact your local Parish Health Unit for further information.

**It is imperative that State workers protect themselves. Please do not enter the buildings until you have been instructed that they are a “safe workplace” by upper management.**

In addition to the above, state agencies and state employees should refrain from signing hold harmless agreement to temporarily enter leased buildings.