

To all the students of Tulane University, Welcome Back! Student Affairs, along with other departments within the university, will be hosting a weekly hullabaloo series on Health and Wellness. This week our focus will be on Environmental Health. Enjoy and we will see you next week.

NEW ORLEANS, HURRICANE KATRINA, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The World Health Organization broadly defines environmental health as *those aspects of human health, disease, and injury that are determined by physical, chemical, biological, social, and psychosocial factors*. Environmental concerns do not only entail chemical contamination from abandoned hazardous waste sites or operating point sources. The challenges posed by Katrina encompassed all five aspects of environmental health.

Before the hurricane, Tulane University proactively deployed a remediation company, ready to assess the campuses and take action. Since then, extensive efforts have been taken by Tulane University to dry out and remove mold from affected buildings on both the Uptown and Downtown campuses. Prior to re-entry in January, the safety of each building on campus was certified to ensure that no one would live or work in an unsafe environment. The U.S EPA and the CDC also conducted extensive sampling of air, soil, sediment and floodwaters throughout New Orleans to assess if any health threats existed. Except for some isolated areas, the environmental results show that there are no long-term health risks expected. If you would like to see these test results, visit <http://www.epa.gov./katrina/testresults/index.html>.

Tulane SPHTM faculty are providing our frontline expertise in environmental health issues as New Orleans recovers and rebuilds. To keep the Tulane community informed, environmental health bulletins are posted at http://www.tulane.edu/newwave/environmental_update.html. You can access archives of those bulletins for in-depth information on environmental health issues.

Some issues that we are currently monitoring are respiratory conditions, including coughing and allergies, that are likely due to dust and debris in the air; and injuries from demolition and reconstruction activities, like falling off ladders and stepping on nails.

Steps that you can take to prevent these health issues from affecting you include:

- If you volunteer to clean out homes around the city, take the necessary precautions to prevent respiratory issues and injuries. Wear the provided protective equipment and exercise caution to prevent accidents.
- If you have medical conditions (allergies, asthma, etc) that affect your daily life, you may be eligible for academic and environmental accommodations through the Office of Disability Services (ODS). www.erc.tulane.edu/disability.
- If you feel overwhelmed or just need someone to talk to, contact a counselor at the ERC (x5113) or the Student Health Center (x5255).

Stay healthy,

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To view all articles from the Health and Wellness Series, please visit http://www.tulane.edu/~health/SHC_Brochure.htm