



## NEWS RELEASE

### ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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## Use safety precautions after Hurricane Ivan to avoid injury

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Department of Public Health is urging residents to take caution after Hurricane Ivan. Serious injuries can occur while cleaning up and inspecting the home.

"The threat of injury does not end once the hurricane has left," said State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson. "Residents can still be injured by hazards such as downed power lines, gas leaks, contaminated materials and stray animals."

To avoid injury when cleaning up and inspecting the home, the following safety precautions should be followed:

#### Downed Power Lines

If power lines are lying on the ground or dangling near the ground, do not touch the lines. Notify your utility company as soon as possible that lines have been damaged, or that the power lines are down, but do not attempt to move or repair the power lines.

Avoid driving through standing water if downed power lines are in the water. If a power line falls across your car while you are driving, continue to drive away from the line. If the engine stalls, do not turn off the ignition. Stay in your car and wait for emergency personnel. Do not allow anyone other than emergency personnel to approach your vehicle.

#### Inspecting the damage

Upon returning to dwellings evacuated before the hurricane's arrival, be aware of possible structural, electrical or gas-leak hazards. Electrical power and natural gas or propane tanks should be shut off to avoid fire, electrocution or explosions. Try to return to your home during the daytime so that you do not have to use any lights. Use battery-powered flashlights and lanterns, rather than candles, gas lanterns or torches.

#### Gas Leaks

If you smell gas or suspect a leak, turn off the main gas valve, open all windows, and leave the house immediately. Notify the gas company, the local law enforcement, and fire departments and do not turn on the lights, light matches, smoke, or do anything that could cause a spark. Do not return to the house until you are told it is safe to do so.

#### Electrical Damage

Your electrical system may have been damaged. If you see frayed wiring or sparks when you restore power, or if there is an odor of something burning but no visible fire, you should immediately shut off the electrical system at the main circuit breaker.

You should consult your utility company about using electrical equipment, including power generators.

Be aware that it is against the law and a violation of electrical codes to connect generators to your home's electrical circuits without the approved, automatic-interrupt devices. If a generator is on line when electrical service is restored, it can become a major fire hazard. In addition, the improper connection of a generator to your home's electrical circuits may endanger line workers helping to restore power in your area. All electrical equipment and appliances must be completely dry before returning them to service. It is advisable to have a certified electrician check these items if there is any question.

Several deaths following past hurricanes have occurred due to fires. In many cases, fires were caused by the careless use of candles to light homes without electrical power. Use battery-powered lanterns, if possible, rather than candles. If you use candles, make sure they are in safe holders away from curtains, paper, wood, or other flammable items. Never leave a candle burning when you are out of the room.

#### Animals

Stray animals can pose a danger during or after a hurricane. Most animals are disoriented and displaced, so do not corner an animal. If an animal must be removed contact your local animal control authorities.

Certain animals may carry rabies; therefore care should be taken to avoid contact with stray animals and rodents. If you are bitten by an animal seek immediate medical attention as soon as possible.

#### Cleanup

Once you have established that no structural, electrical or gas-related hazards exist in your home, dry and disinfect all materials inside the house to prevent the growth of mold and mildew. Walls, hard-surfaced floors, and many other household surfaces should be cleaned with soap and water and disinfected with a solution of one cup of bleach to five gallons of water. Be particularly careful to thoroughly disinfect surfaces that may meet food, such as counter tops, pantry shelves, and refrigerators. Areas where small children play should also be carefully cleaned.

Wash all linens and clothing in hot water, or dry-clean them. For items that cannot be washed or dry-cleaned, such as mattresses and upholstered furniture, air dry them in the sun and then spray them thoroughly with a disinfectant. Steam clean all carpeting. If there has been a backflow of sewage into the house, wear rubber boots and waterproof gloves during cleanup. Remove and discard contaminated household materials that cannot be disinfected such as wall coverings, cloth, rugs and drywall.

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