



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

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THE ADMINISTRATOR

Melanie A. Marty, Ph.D.
Chair
Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee
Cal/EPA, Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment
1515 Clay Street, 16th Floor
Oakland, California 94612

Dear Dr. Marty:

Thank you for writing to convey the Children's Health Advisory Committee's concerns about the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's efforts to protect children as part of the ongoing response to the Gulf Coast hurricanes.

Beginning immediately after the landfall of Hurricane Katrina, EPA and other federal agencies have worked closely with state and local authorities to test and assess environmental quality in the impacted areas. EPA's Hurricane Response 2005 webpage contains the results of our extensive sampling of floodwater, air, and sediment, as well as area surface-water bodies. A summary of results through November 2005 is provided in the *Environmental Assessment Summary for Areas of Jefferson, Orleans, St Bernard, and Plaquemines Parishes Flooded as a Result of Hurricane Katrina*. This document and additional results can be found at <http://www.epa.gov/katrina/testresults/index.html>.

Currently, EPA is conducting sediment testing in the impacted areas and has begun soil testing at potential temporary housing sites identified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The results of these tests are being compared to applicable long-term health criteria. In areas where sediment samples in Orleans, St. Bernard, and Plaquemines parishes contained contaminant levels exceeding Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality and EPA criteria, further investigation is underway to characterize the nature and extent of the contamination. Should an area be found to pose an unacceptable risk, EPA will work with LDEQ and FEMA to ensure proper removal and disposal in accordance with LDEQ remediation guidelines.

EPA and other federal agencies are working closely with state and local authorities to address the many issues raised by the need for prompt, safe removal of the massive amount of hurricane-related debris. We have helped develop a debris management plan for each affected state that contains strategies for dealing with the many kinds of debris left in the hurricanes' wake. All of the plans emphasize the importance of recycling and reuse for reducing the volume of debris and reclaiming salvageable material to the extent possible. Open burning has been

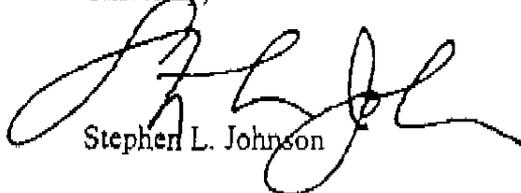
limited to vegetative debris, and air quality throughout the Gulf Coast region is being closely monitored.

The Agency and state drinking water programs have focused on assisting facilities to return to normal operations. We joined state, federal, and non-governmental partners after the storms to quickly provide support in assessing the status of facilities and identifying their immediate needs. By December 2005, close to 95 percent of the utilities in Louisiana and Mississippi affected by the storm were operating normally. EPA continues to support state drinking water programs and is cooperating with FEMA and other federal agencies to ensure that local communities and utilities are assessing their long-term recovery needs and making applications for financial assistance to repair damage.

EPA is focusing specifically on children in the Gulf Coast region by highlighting the serious environmental hazards they may be exposed to when they return home. Together with our federal and state partners which have additional areas of expertise, we have provided online guidance to caregivers about safe water and food; carbon monoxide; mold and asthma; cleanup; toys, debris, demolition and rebuilding; chemicals; pests and pest control; and air pollution. Please visit <http://www.epa.gov/katrina/faqs.htm#13> for more information.

Please know that as the recovery efforts continue, EPA will remain committed to working with our federal, state, local and community partners to address environmental risks that affect children.

Sincerely,



Stephen L. Johnson