

DIRECT FROM CDC ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

In 2021, 20 weather or climate disasters, each causing over \$1 billion in damage, affected the U.S. and its territories. These disasters included droughts, flooding events, severe storms, wildfires, and winter storms. Overall, they impacted human quality of life and had significant economic effects on the affected areas (Smith, 2020). State, territorial, local, and tribal health departments play an important role in responding to emergencies and disasters. Both during and after these events, it can be challenging for environmental health professionals to conduct the traditional functions of environmental health, such as safeguarding drinking water supplies, controlling disease-causing vectors, conducting food safety inspections, and ensuring safe and healthy building environments.

The Water, Food, and Environmental Health Services Branch within the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) supports environmental health professionals with tools and resources to help build their capacity to respond to emergencies and disasters (CDC, 2022). The Response and Recovery Activities for Environmental Health (RRA) webpage highlights key resources for environmental health professionals that are useful in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergencies and disasters (Figure 1). The RRA webpage provides tools for conducting assessments, guidance on how to communicate with the public during and after a disaster, and links to partner resources that support recovery.

CDC assessment tools assist environmental health professionals by providing guidance after wildfires and flooding (CDC, 2021a). After a wildfire, environmental health professionals might be tasked with conducting assessments and evaluating drinking water wells. The rapid assessment form from CDC (2021a) can help environmental health professionals quickly conduct assessments to identify well damage and the risk associated with using damaged well infrastructure. In turn, environmental health professionals can provide guidance to well owners on well water testing and taking action to repair damaged wells.

With flooding events, it is important to understand when outdoor areas can be safe to use after floodwaters subside. Wastewater treatment plants, sewer lift stations and collection systems, and individual or community septic systems can contaminate public spaces like ball fields, playgrounds, and residential yards (U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2001). Floodwater and standing water can be dangerous, making humans and animals more vulnerable to infectious diseases, chemical hazards, and injuries (CDC, 2020). CDC (2021b) [guidoAd3sh9hl41te4knub--](#)

