

# Sandbagging Safety Tips for Leaders & Volunteer Workers

## Hazards associated with sandbagging:

- Repetitive and heavy work
- Overexertion
- Dehydration
- Heavy equipment
- Floodwater
  - contamination
  - strong currents
  - floating debris
  - hidden hazards (submerged objects, flooded holes)
- Overexposure to the sun (ultra-violet radiation)

## Steps that you can take to minimize the hazards of sandbagging:

- Do not volunteer if you have a medical condition that would make it dangerous for you to participate
- Arrive at the site wearing appropriate clothing such as:
  - work boots/appropriate water-resistant footwear
  - gloves
  - full-length pants (no shorts)
  - long sleeved shirt
  - sunglasses and hat
- Do not use any personal electronics requiring headphones, eg. iPods or MP3 players - they can stop you from hearing warnings or instructions
- Follow directions of the site leader
- Use good bag handling technique - injuries to you or other volunteers may not be immediately noticeable
  - never throw bags - always pass them
  - keep your back in a neutral posture (never bend more than 20° in any direction)
  - avoid twisting the spine - pivot by moving your feet
  - keep sandbags as close to your body as possible
  - keep sandbags between your knees and shoulders as much as possible



- Take rest breaks to avoid overexertion
- Drink plenty of fluids to remain hydrated
- Use sunscreen, sunglasses, etc. to avoid overexposure to the sun
- Flood waters may be contaminated - always wash after working in these areas - always wash hands before eating, using restroom facilities, smoking, etc
- Be aware of large equipment moving in the area

**Working in moving water or in a manner which can present a danger of falling in should be avoided. The following safety precautions are recommended for situations where this is not practical:**

- Be aware of varying water depth, flow and strong undercurrents
- Wear a Personal Floatation Device (PFD)
- Always work in pairs
- A 50' lifeline attached to a life preserver/buoy is also recommended