



Evaluating the Needs, Knowledge and Health Impacts of Three Worker Populations During and After Super-Storm Sandy

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As a direct result of the effects of Hurricane Sandy in New Jersey, seven work-related fatalities occurred and occupational injuries increased during storm clean-up and recovery efforts. This project is evaluating and analyzing existing data systems, and conducting focus groups and surveys among three worker populations to reduce or eliminate adverse health impacts, identify gaps in existing data sources and provide recommendations for educational and outreach materials.

We collected data from all NJ hospital and emergency department visits among 18-65 year olds who had experienced an accidental injury. The data were grouped by county and categorized as having high, medium, or low impact from Sandy and the visit was considered work-related if it was identified as Workers Compensation. The rate of work-related injuries in Sandy's high impact area increased after the hurricane. Based on timing and type of injury, the most consistent increases were associated with rebuilding and recovery rather than the initial response.

Focus groups and surveys were used to characterize response worker issues associated with Sandy's impact in NJ. To date, six focus groups were held with 59 participants from the Emergency Medical Services and Tree Care Industry. Preliminary results suggest that although these worker groups need to be ready to "face the un-



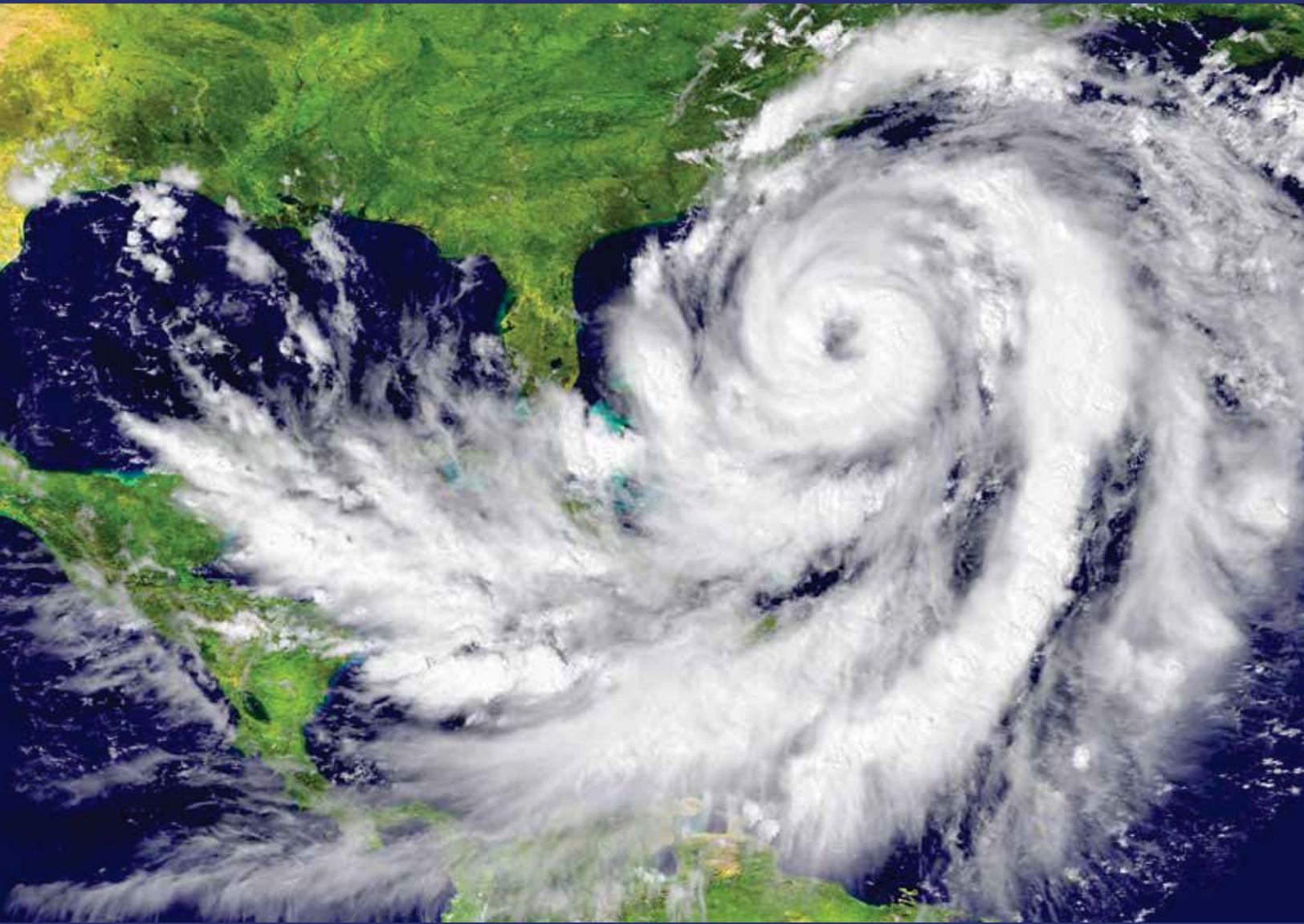
Downed power lines in New Jersey after Hurricane Sandy (Photo Credit: FEMA/Liz Roll)

expected" in their day-to-day jobs, during the storm they faced additional hazards, such as contaminated floodwaters, downed power lines, storm damaged trees, and extra-long shifts. Training, communication, personal protection equipment, and team work are of the utmost importance to keep workers safe during storm response and recovery.

"...power lines that still had current. Since there was a lot of water, I was afraid."

– Spanish-speaking tree care worker focus group participant

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