

Newly described contaminant sources in Katrina-flooded homes pose health risks

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New Rochelle, NY, February 2, 2009—Post-Katrina flooded homes may contain harmful levels of contaminants in addition to sediment deposits. Indoor gases, mold films, and aerosols may also have exposed residents, first responders, and demolition crews to dangerous contaminant levels without the need for direct skin contact, according to a modeling study published in the April 2009 issue (Volume 26, Number 3) of *Environmental Engineering Science*, a peer-reviewed journal published by Mary Ann Liebert, Inc.

The model published by Nicholas Ashley, Kalliat Valsaraj, and Louis Thibodeaux, from Louisiana State University, in Baton Rouge, details the possible types and levels of volatile and semi-volatile organic pollutants that might be present in the multiple indoor phases, or MIPs, inside Katrina-flooded homes. These include hazardous chemicals present in the inhalable vapor phase, in mold films, or in aerosolized spores.

The study, entitled, "Multiphase Contaminant Distributions Inside Flooded Homes in New Orleans, Louisiana, after Hurricane Katrina: A Modeling Study," concludes that these newly identified inhalation exposure routes could present a significant health risk to persons who simply walk inside and breathe the air in contaminated homes, even if there is no dermal contact with the sediment covering the floors or the mold growing on the walls and other surfaces.

"This is an excellent and important study by one of the top research

teams in the nation. It will help us better prepare first responders for the additional risks that may be posed by such events," according to Domenico Grasso, PhD, Editor-in-Chief and Dean and Professor in the College of Engineering and Mathematical Sciences at the University of Vermont (Burlington).

The study has been published online ahead of print and is available free online at www.liebertpub.com/ees

Source: Mary Ann Liebert

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