

Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee

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November 15, 2005

Stephen L. Johnson, Administrator
 United States Environmental Protection Agency
 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
 Washington, D.C. 20460

RE: Response to Gulf Coast Hurricanes

Dear Administrator Johnson:

The Children's Health Protection Advisory Committee (CHPAC) had a briefing at our October meeting regarding EPA's activities following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. CHPAC commends the EPA's response to Gulf State environmental devastation following the hurricanes including sampling and technical assistance to decision makers. As the EPA responds to the crisis with rule or standards waivers, advisories, data collection, technical assistance and any other policies or programs, we urge you to make pregnant women and children a high priority and to ensure that any actions take into account the disproportionate risks to children from environmental health and safety risks. We wanted to bring concerns about the children's environmental health impacts of the hurricanes expressed by members of the CHPAC to your attention. Briefly, they are as follows:

- The Committee noted that any exemptions to environmental protections need to be carefully assessed for their long-term impact on children given the unique environmental risks due to life stage vulnerabilities. Exemptions must be clearly thought out, temporary, and only applied when necessary.
- The release of heavy metals and many other chemical contaminants into the floodwaters in Louisiana and Mississippi from flooded industries and homes will result in children's exposures to chemicals in the sludge and dirt left indoors and out. Moisture left as the floodwaters receded has created conditions for high levels of mold contamination. State and local officials, community leaders and families need information on the appropriate protections that need to be taken in reentering and remediating buildings contaminated with biological and chemical hazards.

