

## Environmental Hazards Activity

Directions: Team Competition, call and response (true or false)

Time required: 10 minutes

Divide the class into two teams. Instruct participants that this is a fast-paced, “true or false” activity to review potential environmental hazards. Ensure each team has an audible object to identify when their team is prepared to give their answer (suggestion: a bell, squeaky toy, or any object that makes noise). Each team will identify a team captain who is in charge of “ringing/squeaking” for the team when they have reached a decision.

You will be calling out some scenarios, and it each team’s job to determine whether or not the situation describes a potential environmental hazard. The answers will be: true or false! Inform students that they may reference NMAC for the definition during this activity if there is uncertainty that the scenario meets the definition. *Suggestion: have each team identify a “librarian”, who will be the designee in charge of NMAC 7.1.14 and will read the “environmental hazards” definition aloud to the team when necessary.*

Advise students that their captain may “ring/squeak” at any time, but it may be in their best interest to listen to the whole scenario, as it could potentially contain more information. Once the team captain “rings/squeaks”, the team has 10 seconds to discuss their answer and provide it to the trainer. If the team has not reached a decision within ten seconds, the other team has the opportunity to answer.

If the class size is under ten students, select seven (7) scenarios from those listed. If the class size is larger than ten, select five (5) scenarios to ask students. Teams who answer correctly, throw a piece of candy (or a reward/prize you choose). Alternatively, you may keep score on the flipchart, and the team who answers the most scenarios correctly wins the prize.

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*When answers conflict or spark discussion, address why students responded the way they did, then move on after giving their reasons. Acknowledge that teams may view scenarios differently when they ask different questions, evaluate circumstances, etc.*

You witness bed bugs in an individual's bed during a visit to her home. Direct support staff state that they were not aware of this, and call the manager to get pest control over. (Optional: revise this scenario to include some kind of hazardous **infestation** which would create an immediate threat to someone's health/safety.)

You've been on vacation for the last week, and upon returning to your usual shift at a supported living residence, you notice a bunch of jumbled extension cords in one of the individual's rooms. Some are plugged in, some aren't. You peek inside the room and see that it's because someone put some duct tape over the other outlet.

You arrive to your shift (supported living residence) on a hot afternoon in July; all week temperatures have been in the high 90s. You quickly realize that the air conditioning is not working. Some individuals have fans in their bedrooms, and they tell you that maintenance was supposed to be out some time last week to fix the air. Your supervisor tells you to "make sure everyone stays hydrated." You closely monitor everyone, especially the individuals diagnosed with seizure disorders. (Optional: Read this scenario and then ADD, "Your supervisor then tells you to help consumers pack their suitcases, as they will be staying at a hotel until maintenance fixes the air. She then arranges for several nights at a nearby hotel.")

You are working your usual evening shift and helping prepare dinner while your co-worker assists with administering medications. You accidentally start to burn the food on the stove but notice that the smoke alarm in the kitchen does not go off. You check the device and notice that the battery is dead. You get

some spare batteries, and it works fine now that they've been replaced. (Optional: ADD, when you replace the batteries and test the smoke detector, but it still doesn't work.)

One of the residents you support complains that the shower water is too hot. You check the water heater and then adjust the temperature so that it's cooler. You test the water again afterwards, and see that it's still extremely hot. You call maintenance to have this corrected. When you return for your shift two days later, you learn that one of the residents was burned by the hot water just the next day.

You are a speech therapist visiting an individual's home to train the Family Living Provider (the individual's mom) on your new plan. Before you begin, you make a trip to the restroom and notice that there is what appears to be black mold near the sink. You take a closer look and notice there is a large amount behind the toilet, as well. You mention this to the FLP who replies, "My husband was supposed to get that fixed a while ago!" (Optional: Read the scenario and ADD that she mentions she mixed some bleach and ammonia to clean it up a few nights ago herself.) *Trainer's note: mixing bleach with ammonia or other cleaning products will produce dangerous, toxic fumes. This makes it even more of a dangerous scenario.*

You are filling in as a "substitute" direct support staff at a supported living home where you normally don't work. You're doing laundry and notice that right next to the water heater, there are large bottles of cleaning supplies being stored.

You arrive to your shift at a supported living residence, and begin to get the house cleaned up for when the residents arrive home from their employment and day programs. You notice that all of the cleaning supplies are unsecured in the laundry room -not in their usual locked cabinet in the kitchen. You put

them away and call your supervisor. She responds that she had been cleaning that morning after the residents left for the day, and she must have forgotten to put them away; no one has been home since she left. She asks you to lock them up.

Your supervisor calls you to help out one evening and work the night shift, because the supported living house is short staffed (they need more supervision). You arrive as instructed and notice that things are extremely busy that evening. A couple of individuals are arguing with each other, dinner hadn't been cleaned up, and your co-workers were rushing to get everyone ready for a trip to the local gym. You go to the back office area and see that the medication cabinet is open. You don't see the lock anywhere.

The supported living home you supervise has a broken ramp, which is an issue that you have called in a couple times to maintenance over the last two weeks. All staff are aware that no one should use the back entrance of the home for this reason; the front entrance/ramp is safe to use, so all are aware that this is the only way they should enter/exit the home. You have a family emergency and take off two weeks of work. When you return, the ramp is still broken.

You are a service coordinator conducting your routine visit with a participant in the Mi Via Self-Directed Waiver, and notice that the toilet appears to have been broken for some time. There is standing water on the floor and a foul odor. The individual tells you he's been using his neighbor's toilet and that he did call maintenance last week.

**Other scenarios for consideration:**

- Spoiled food (expired food) in the pantry or refrigerator (Reminder: it will only be an environmental hazard if ingesting it creates an immediate risk to health or safety!)

- An individual who has a Positive Behavioral Supports Crisis Plan that identifies elopement risk resides in this home that is located on an extremely busy road.
- Poor lighting in the office area where medications are assisted with
- Poor lighting in an individual's room (you may introduce limited vision/fall risk as a component of this scenario)
- There is a standard smoke detector/fire alarm system in a home where blind and/or deaf individuals live (or limited vision/hard of hearing); suggest that they cannot adequately hear the fire alarm or see the flashing lights.
- Inaccessible areas of home (steps in a home where individuals using wheelchairs live)
- Bedrooms with "hidden food" (hoarding tendencies)
- Electric wiring is outside (Christmas lights are plugged in outside and it is raining that evening)
- Craft or kitchen supplies (like scissors, knives) not put away or not safely stored; an individual with a history of self-injurious behavior using sharp objects lives there.
- An individual with asthma/respiratory health care plan lives with his family living provider who is a chain smoker, or with cats (urine induces respiratory issues).

**Debriefing: as students explain their answers/reasoning for scenarios in question (different answers), initiate a brief discussion. Questions to help facilitate:**

- Does this specific scenario create an IMMEDIATE risk to someone's health or safety?
- What do we (do we not) have control over?
- What would (or would not) make this a safety risk?
- What would (or would not) make this neglectful?
- What is our responsibility in this scenario?
- How is "environmental hazard" defined in NMAC?