

**People with Chemical Sensitivities:** The following information comes from Ann McCampbell, University of New Mexico Center for Development and Disability. It comes to us from the Massachusetts Association for the Chemically Injured.

### **TIPS FOR FIRST RESPONDERS**

- Be aware that chemically sensitive people can become ill from exposures to a wide variety of chemicals at levels that you may not be able to detect. If a person says he or she is being made sick by an exposure, accept what the person is saying and ask the person what he or she needs. Assure such persons you understand they are chemically sensitive and will work with them in providing care or direction.
- Do not idle ambulance or other emergency vehicle engines.
- Provide non-smoking personnel who are not wearing perfume, cologne, aftershave, or other scented products, including clothing washed in fabric softener or scented detergent and many brands of deodorants, skin lotions, and hair products. If this condition cannot be met and/or a person requests it, have personnel stand away from and downwind of the chemically sensitive person when possible.
- Turn off cell phones if asked. Some chemically sensitive people are also made sick by exposures to electromagnetic fields such as those from cell phones, computers, fluorescent lights, and high-tension electrical wires.
- Be aware that when some chemically sensitive people are in a chemical reaction they may temporarily lose their ability to think, speak, or follow directions. This may or may not be the result of having a seizure. Ask the person if he or she is chemically sensitive. If so, assist the person in moving to an area with the cleanest air possible. This can help the person focus and communicate better. Moving outdoors is frequently helpful.
- A chemically sensitive person may be wearing a mask to filter the air he or she breathes. If you are having trouble hearing a person who is speaking through a mask, reduce the noise in the immediate area or go to a quieter location. Do not ask the person to remove the mask.
- Before using latex gloves, disinfectants, cleaners, or other sprays or products near a chemically sensitive person, ask the person if this is acceptable.
- Be aware that many chemically sensitive people do not tolerate standard emergency shelters and will need alternative sheltering in an emergency. Allow chemically sensitive people to shelter in their own homes whenever possible.
- Allow chemically sensitive people to use or bring their own masks, air filters, oxygen tubing, supplements, medications, food, water, clothing, and other medical supplies to the maximum.