Coastal Restoration Competency Model:
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services Sector
In 2009, Louisiana and Mississippi partnered to research economic development opportunities and workforce needs associated with the region’s green economy. Through a $2.3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Labor, a consortium of the Louisiana Workforce Commission, Louisiana State University, Mississippi Department of Employment Security, and Mississippi State University conducted an extensive study of economic activity that is beneficial to the environment. This and other research products were developed as part of that effort.
Introduction.................................................................................. 1
Tier 1 - Personal Effectiveness Competencies............................ 2
Tier 2 - Academic Competencies.................................................. 4
Tier 3 - Workplace Competencies............................................... 6
Tier 4 - Industry-Related Competencies...................................... 9
Notes.............................................................................................. 10
Introduction

Louisiana’s wetland loss accounts for more than 90 percent of all wetland loss in the continental United States and the highest rate of land loss in the world.¹ A variety of factors contribute to this incredible loss of wetlands, from natural processes like hurricanes and sea level rise to direct human efforts such as dredging, levee and dam building, and the construction of transportation channels for ships and oil and gas pipelines.² The land loss created by this confluence of factors has led to a significant response by federal, state and local governments to conserve this natural resource, which in turn has provided a significant and unique contribution to Louisiana’s green economy.

Occupational requirements related to coastal restoration efforts were researched as part of a comprehensive study of Louisiana’s green economy. Information was gathered through a series of in-person interviews, telephone interviews and focus groups with employers involved in coastal restoration projects. In addition, a comprehensive review of online job advertisements was completed to identify education and skill requirements for recent job openings. Research findings were used to develop competency models for the three North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) sectors that are most involved in one or more phases of a restoration project.

What is a Competency Model?

A competency is the capability to apply or use a set of related knowledge, skills and abilities required for success in a defined work environment. Competency models are a collection of the competencies necessary to perform critical work functions in a particular industry, occupation or job. They are used by a variety of stakeholders to inform discussions and clearly communicate an industry’s occupational requirements. Job seekers will find them useful as a resource for career exploration and guidance while educators will be able to develop competency-based curricula and training models. Furthermore, these models may serve as a basis for the future development of industry-defined performance indicators, skill standards and certifications.³

The following model was created using a framework developed by the U.S. Department of Labor’s Employment and Training Administration. This model consists of four tiers of related competencies arranged in a hierarchy. Tiers 1 through 3 represent the competencies that provide a foundation for success in school or at work. These tiers, referred to as foundational tiers, include personal effectiveness, academic and workplace competencies that are crucial to successful job performance in many industries and occupations. These foundational competencies are considered prerequisites to learning the industry-specific competencies. Tier 4 includes competencies related to coastal restoration work in a specific NAICS sector.⁴
Coastal Restoration Competency Model: Professional, Scientific and Technical Services Sector

Tier 1 — Personal Effectiveness Competencies
- Interpersonal Skills
- Integrity
- Professionalism
- Initiative
- Dependability and Reliability
- Willingness to Learn

Tier 2 — Academic Competencies
- Science
- Reading
- Writing
- Mathematics
- Communication
- Critical and Analytical Thinking
- Basic Computer Skills
- Active Learning

Tier 3 — Workplace Competencies
- Teamwork and Leadership
- Planning and Coordinating
- Innovative Thinking
- Problem Solving and Decision Making
- Tools and Technology
- Checking, Examining, and Recording
- Business Fundamentals
- Adaptability and Flexibility
- Customer Focus

Tier 4 — Industry-Related Competencies
- Industry Principles and Concepts
- Industry Operations
- Industry Laws and Regulations
- Quality Control and Assurance
- Health, Safety and Security
- Innovative Thinking
- Planning and Coordinating
- Teamwork and Leadership
- Critical and Analytical Thinking
- Business Fundamentals
- Customer Focus
- Active Learning
- Basic Computer Skills
- Problem Solving and Decision Making
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- Planning and Coordinating
- Innovative Thinking
## Tier 1: Personal Effectiveness Competencies

### Interpersonal Skills:
- **Demonstrating concern for others:** Shows sincere interest in others and their concerns, and demonstrates sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others; helps others resolve sensitive interpersonal problems as appropriate; looks for ways to help people, and pitches in to help others.
- **Demonstrating insight into behavior:** Recognizes and accurately interprets the verbal and nonverbal behavior of others; shows insight into the actions and motives of others, and recognizes when relationships with others are strained.
- **Learning about other cultures:** Takes action to learn about and understand the climate, orientation, needs and values of other groups, organizations or cultures.
- **Maintaining open communication:** Maintains open lines of communication with others; encourages others to approach him/her with problems and successes; establishes a high degree of trust and credibility with others.
- **Respecting diversity:** Demonstrates sensitivity and respect for the opinions, perspectives, customs and individual differences of others; values diversity of people and ideas.
- **Working with diverse people:** Is flexible and open-minded when dealing with a wide range of people; listens to and considers others’ viewpoints; works well and develops effective relationships with diverse personalities.

### Integrity:
- **Acting fairly:** Treats others with honesty, fairness and respect; makes decisions that are objective and reflect the just treatment of others.
- **Behaving ethically:** Abides by a strict code of ethics and behavior; chooses an ethical course of action and does the right thing, even in the face of opposition; encourages others to behave accordingly.
- **Taking responsibility:** Takes responsibility for accomplishing work goals within accepted timeframes; accepts responsibility for one’s decisions and actions and for those of one’s group, team or department; attempts to learn from mistakes.

### Professionalism:
- **Demonstrating self-control:** Demonstrates self-control by maintaining composure and keeping emotions in check even in very difficult situations; deals calmly and effectively with stressful situations.
- **Maintains a positive attitude:** Projects a professional image of oneself and the organization; demonstrates a positive attitude toward work; takes pride in one’s work and the work of the organization.
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services Sector

Professional appearance: Maintains a professional demeanor; dresses appropriately for occupation and its requirements; maintains appropriate personal hygiene.

Substance abuse: Is free from substance abuse.

Initiative:

- **Achievement motivation:** Intrinsically driven to succeed and excel; strives to exceed standards and expectations; exhibits confidence in capabilities and an expectation to succeed in future activities.

- **Persisting:** Pursues work with energy, drive and a strong accomplishment orientation; persists and expends extra effort to accomplish tasks even when conditions are difficult or deadlines are tight; persists at a task or problem despite interruptions, obstacles or setbacks.

- **Setting challenging goals:** Establishes and maintains personally challenging but realistic work goals; exerts effort toward task mastery; brings issues to closure by pushing forward until a resolution is achieved.

- **Taking initiative:** Goes beyond the routine demands of the job; takes initiative in seeking out new work challenges and increasing the variety and scope of one’s job; seeks opportunities to influence events and originate action; assists others who have less experience or have heavy workloads.

- **Working independently:** Develops own ways of doing things; is able to perform effectively even with minimal direction, support or approval and without direct supervision.

Dependability and Reliability:

- **Attending to details:** Diligently checks work to ensure that all essential details have been considered; notices errors or inconsistencies that others have missed, and takes prompt, thorough action to correct errors.

- **Complying with policies:** Follows written and verbal directions; complies with organizational rules, policies and procedures.

- **Fulfilling obligations:** Behaves consistently and predictably; is reliable, responsible and dependable in fulfilling obligations; diligently follows through on commitments and consistently meets deadlines.

- **Showing up on time:** Demonstrates regular and punctual attendance; rarely is late for meetings or appointments.

Willingness to Learn:

- **Anticipating changes in work:** Anticipates changes in work demands and searches for and participates in assignments or trainings that address these changing demands; treats unexpected circumstances as opportunities to learn.
Tier 2
Academic Competencies

→ **Demonstrating an interest in learning:** Demonstrates an interest in personal learning and development; seeks feedback from multiple sources about how to improve and develop, and modifies behavior based on feedback or self-analysis of past mistakes.

→ **Identifying career interests:** Takes charge of personal career development by identifying occupational interests, strengths, options and opportunities; makes insightful career planning decisions based on integration and consideration of others’ feedback, and seeks out additional training to pursue career goals.

→ **Participating in training:** Takes steps to develop and maintain knowledge, skills and expertise necessary to achieve positive results; participates fully in relevant training programs and actively pursues other opportunities to develop knowledge and skills.

**Science:**

→ **Comprehension:** Understands basic scientific principles and how to use commonly available technology; understands the scientific method (i.e., identifies problems, collects information, forms hypotheses and draws conclusions); understands overall intent and proper procedures for setup and operation of equipment.

→ **Application:** Applies basic scientific principles to complete tasks.

**Reading:**

→ **Comprehension:** Locates, understands and interprets written information in prose and in documents such as manuals, reports, memos, letters, forms, graphs, charts, tables, calendars, schedules, signs, notices, applications and directions; understands the purpose of written materials; attains meaning and comprehends core ideas.

→ **Integration:** Critically evaluates and analyzes information in written materials; integrates and synthesizes information from multiple written materials.

→ **Attention to detail:** Identifies main ideas; notes details and facts; detects inconsistencies; identifies implied meaning and details; identifies missing information; identifies trends.

→ **Application:** Integrates what is learned from written materials with prior knowledge; applies what is learned from written material to follow instructions and complete specific tasks; applies what is learned from written material to future situations.

**Writing:**

→ **Organization and development:** Creates documents such as letters, directions, manuals, reports, graphs and flow charts; communicates thoughts, ideas, information, messages and other written information, which may contain technical material, in a logical, organized and coherent manner; ideas are well developed with supporting information and examples.
→ **Mechanics:** Uses standard syntax and sentence structure; uses correct spelling, punctuation and capitalization; uses appropriate grammar (e.g., correct tense, subject-verb agreement, no missing words).

→ **Tone:** Writes in a manner appropriate for business; uses language appropriate for the target audience; uses appropriate tone and word choice (e.g., writing that is professional and courteous).

**Mathematics:**

→ **Application:** Performs basic math computations accurately; translates practical problems into useful mathematical expressions and uses appropriate mathematical formulas and techniques.

→ **Computation:** Adds subtracts, multiplies and divides with whole numbers, fractions, decimals and percent; calculates averages, ratios, proportions and rates; converts decimals to fractions; converts fractions to percent.

→ **Measurement and estimation:** Takes measurements of time, temperature, distances, length, width, height, perimeter, area, volume, weight, velocity and speed; uses and reports measurements correctly; converts from one measurement unit to another (e.g., standard to metric).

→ **Mathematical reasoning and problem solving:** Uses inductive and deductive reasoning, conjectures, arguments, strategies, and interpretation of results.

**Communication:**

→ **Listening:** Receives, attends to, interprets, understands and responds to verbal messages and other cues; picks out important information in verbal messages; understands complex instructions; appreciates feelings and concerns of verbal messages.

→ **Speaking:** Expresses information to individuals or groups taking into account the audience and the nature of the information (e.g., technical or controversial); speaks clearly and confidently; information is organized in a logical manner; speaks using common English conventions including proper grammar, tone and pace; tracks audience responses and reacts appropriately to those responses; effectively uses eye contact and nonverbal expression.

→ **Two-way communication:** Practices meaningful two-way communication (i.e., speaks clearly, pays close attention and seeks to understand others, listens attentively and clarifies information); attends to nonverbal cues and responds appropriately.

→ **Persuasion and influence:** Influences others; persuasively presents thoughts and ideas; gains commitment and ensures support for proposed ideas.
Critical and Analytical Thinking:

- **Mental agility**: Identifies connections between issues; quickly understands, orients to and learns new assignments; shifts gears and changes direction when working on multiple projects or issues.

- **Reasoning**: Possesses sufficient inductive and deductive reasoning ability to perform job successfully; critically reviews, analyzes, synthesizes, compares and interprets information; draws conclusions from relevant and/or missing information; understands the principles underlying the relationship among facts and applies this understanding when solving problems.

Basic Computer Skills:

- **Comprehending the basics**: Possesses knowledge of basic computer hardware (e.g., PCs, printers) and software (e.g., word processing software, spreadsheet software) to perform tasks; understands fundamental capabilities of computers and common computer terminology (e.g., program, operating system); understands how to organize, store and retrieve files; understands how to use the Internet and email to search for information and communicate.

- **Preparing documents**: Uses word processing programs to create, edit and retrieve document files; types materials quickly and accurately; checks work carefully and identifies/corrects typographical errors; uses basic reference materials and tools (e.g., spell check) to ensure accuracy.

- **Entering data**: Enters data into computer files, such as spreadsheets, databases and presentation software, quickly and with an acceptable degree of accuracy.

Active Learning:

- **Learning strategies**: Applies a range of learning techniques to acquire new knowledge and skills; processes and retains information; identifies when it is necessary to acquire new knowledge and skills.

- **Application**: Integrates newly learned knowledge and skills with existing knowledge and skills; uses newly learned knowledge and skills to complete specific tasks; uses newly learned knowledge and skills in new or unfamiliar situations.

Teamwork and Leadership:

- **Acknowledging team membership and role**: Accepts membership in the team; shows loyalty to the team; determines when to be a leader and when to be a follower depending on what is needed to achieve the team’s goals and objectives; encourages others to express their ideas and opinions; identifies and draws upon team members’ strengths and weaknesses to achieve results; learns from other team members.

- **Establishing productive relationships**: Develops constructive and cooperative working relationships with others; exhibits tact and diplomacy and strives to build consensus;
shows sensitivity to the thoughts and opinions of other team members; delivers constructive criticism and voices objections to others’ ideas and opinions in a supportive, non-accusatory manner; responds appropriately to positive and negative feedback.

- **Identifying with the team and its goals:** Identifies the goals, norms, values and customs of the team; is a team player and contributes to the group’s effort; uses a group approach to identify problems and develop solutions based on group consensus; effectively communicates with all members of the group or team to achieve team goals and objectives.

- **Resolving conflicts:** Brings others together to reconcile differences; handles conflicts maturely by exercising “give and take” to achieve positive results for all parties; reaches formal or informal agreements that promote mutual goals and interests, and obtains commitment to those agreements from individuals or groups.

### Planning and Coordinating:

- **Planning:** Approaches work in a methodical manner; plans and schedules tasks so that work is completed on time; keeps track of details to ensure work is performed accurately and completely.

- **Anticipating obstacles:** Anticipates obstacles to project completion and develops contingency plans to address them; takes necessary corrective action when projects go off track.

- **Allocating resources:** Estimates resources needed for project completion; allocates time and resources effectively and coordinates efforts with all affected parties; keeps all parties informed of progress and all relevant changes to project timelines.

- **Prioritizing:** Prioritizes various competing tasks and performs them quickly and efficiently according to their urgency; finds new ways of organizing work area or planning work to accomplish work more efficiently.

- **Coordinating in distributed environments:** Coordinates schedules of colleagues, co-workers and clients in regional locations (i.e., across time zones) to ensure that inconvenience is minimized and productivity is enhanced; leverages technology (e.g., Internet, teleconference) to facilitate information sharing in distributed work environments; takes advantage of team member availability throughout business hours in multiple time zones to enhance productivity.

- **Informing:** Responds to the schedules of others affected by arrangements; informs others of arrangements, giving them complete, accurate and timely information; insures that others receive needed materials in time.

### Innovative Thinking:

- **Generating innovative solutions:** Uses information, knowledge and beliefs to generate original, innovative solutions to problems; reframes problems in a different light to find fresh approaches; entertains wide-ranging possibilities others may miss; takes
advantage of difficult or unusual situations to develop unique approaches and useful solutions.

- **Seeing the big picture:** Has broad knowledge and perspective; pieces together seemingly unrelated data to identify patterns and trends; understands the pieces of a system as a whole and appreciates the consequences of actions on other parts of the system; possesses a big-picture view of the situation.

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### Problem Solving and Decision Making:

- **Identifying the problem:** Anticipates or recognizes the existence of a problem; identifies the true nature of the problem by analyzing its component parts; uses all available reference systems to locate and obtain information relevant to the problem; recalls previously learned information that is relevant to the problem.

- **Locating, gathering and organizing relevant information:** Effectively uses both internal resources (e.g., internal computer networks, company filing systems) and external resources (e.g., Internet search engines) to locate and gather information; examines information obtained for relevance and completeness; recognizes important gaps in existing information and takes steps to eliminate those gaps; organizes/reorganizes information as appropriate to gain a better understanding of the problem.

- **Generating alternatives:** Integrates previously learned and externally obtained information to generate a variety of high-quality alternative approaches to the problem; skillfully uses logic and analysis to identify the strengths and weaknesses, the costs and benefits, and the short- and long-term consequences of different approaches.

- **Choosing a solution:** Decisively chooses the best solution after contemplating available approaches to the problem; makes difficult decisions even in highly ambiguous or ill-defined situations; quickly chooses an effective solution without assistance when appropriate.

- **Implementing the solution:** Commits to a solution in a timely manner and develops a realistic approach for implementing the chosen solution; observes and evaluates the outcomes of implementing the solution to assess the need for alternative approaches and to identify lessons learned.

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### Tools and Technology:

- **Selecting tools:** Selects and applies appropriate tools or technological solutions to frequently encountered problems; carefully considers which tools or technological solutions are appropriate for a given job and consistently chooses the best tool or technological solution for the problem at hand.

- **Maintenance/Troubleshooting:** Performs routine maintenance on tools, technology and equipment; determines causes of operating errors and chooses the appropriate response; troubleshoots maintenance problems in accordance with established procedures.
Keeping current: Demonstrates an interest in learning about new and emerging tools and technologies; seeks out opportunities to improve knowledge of tools and technologies that may assist in streamlining work and improving productivity.

Checking, Examining and Recording:

- **Maintaining logs**: Keeps logs, records and files that are up-to-date and readily accessible; updates logs, files and records, noting important changes in status.
- **Detecting errors**: Detects and corrects errors, even under time pressure; notices errors or inconsistencies; forwards or processes forms in a timely and accurate manner.
- **Obtaining information**: Obtains appropriate information, signatures and approvals promptly; verifies that all information is present and accurate before forwarding materials.

Business Fundamentals:

- **Business ethics**: Acts in the best interest of the company, the community and the environment; complies with applicable laws and rules governing work and reports loss, waste or theft of company property to appropriate personnel; ensures equipment and systems are designed to be environmentally friendly; practices sustainability by using processes that are nonpolluting, conserving of energy and natural resources, economically efficient, and safe for workers, communities and consumers.
- **Market knowledge**: Understands market trends in the industry and the company’s position in the market; knows who the company’s primary competitors are and stays current on organizational strategies to maintain competitiveness.
- **Situational awareness**: Understands the organization’s mission and functions; recognizes one’s role in the functioning of the company and understands the potential impact one’s own performance can have on the success of the organization; grasps the potential impact of the company’s well-being on employees.

Adaptability and Flexibility:

- **Dealing with ambiguity**: Takes effective action when necessary without having to have all the necessary facts in hand; easily changes gears in response to unpredictable or unexpected events, pressures, situations and job demands; effectively changes plans, goals, actions or priorities to deal with changing situations.
- **Employing unique analyses**: Employs unique analyses and generates new, innovative ideas in complex areas; integrates seemingly unrelated information to develop creative solutions; develops innovative methods of obtaining or using resources when insufficient resources are available.
- **Entertaining new ideas**: Is open to considering new ways of doing things; actively seeks out and carefully considers the merits of new approaches to work; willingly
embraces new approaches when appropriate and discards approaches that are no longer working.

**Customer Focus:**

- **Understanding customer needs:** Demonstrates a desire to understand customer needs; listens to what customers are saying and asks questions as appropriate; demonstrates awareness of client goals.

- **Providing personalized service:** Provides prompt, efficient and personalized assistance to meet the requirements, requests and concerns of customers; provides thorough, accurate information to answer customers’ questions and inform them of commitment times or performance guarantees; actively looks for ways to help customers by identifying and proposing appropriate solutions and/or services; establishes boundaries as appropriate for unreasonable customer demands.

- **Keeping customers informed:** Follows up with customers during projects and following project completion; keeps clients up-to-date about decisions that affect them; seeks the comments, criticisms and involvement of customers; adjusts services based on customer feedback.

- **Acting professionally:** Is pleasant, courteous and professional when dealing with internal or external customers; develops constructive and cooperative working relationships with customers and displays a good-natured, cooperative attitude; is calm and empathetic when dealing with hostile customers.

**Industry Principles and Concepts:**

Knowledge of industry principles and concepts as they relate to coastal restoration projects.

- **Industry characteristics:** Exhibits knowledge of industry features and characteristics; demonstrates awareness of industry-related factors that could contribute or hinder project completion.

- **Coastal ecosystems:** Understands ecosystem dynamics across diverse habitats such as freshwater marshes and swamps and saltwater tidal flats; ability to identify wetland plants and animals.

- **Deltaic processes:** Understands challenges faced by Louisiana’s coastal region; possesses an in-depth understanding of subsidence, geotechnical limitations and sediment issues.

- **Restoration techniques:** Has a thorough understanding of ecosystem restoration techniques such as marsh creation and restoration, shoreline protection, beneficial use of dredged material, terracing, sediment trapping, vegetative planting, barrier island restoration, bank stabilization, and hydrologic restoration.

- **Hydrology:** Possesses knowledge of surface water hydrology and hydraulic modeling of rivers, lakes, wetlands, estuaries, flood and drainage canals, and spillway discharge systems to measure flow, variability of floods and droughts, and the fluid mechanics of surface waters.
→ **Coastal geography**: Exhibits knowledge of coastal geography including coastal communities; ability to read various types of maps.

→ **Project design and evaluation**: Possesses a familiarity with the design of various types of coastal restoration projects; has the ability to evaluate project design within the context of agency and organizational missions, strategic plans, and established program niches; applies appropriate design theory and practices to project development.

→ **Developments**: Demonstrates awareness of emerging restoration concepts and principles; adapts current practices to incorporate advances in the restoration techniques.

### Industry Operations:

Knowledge of operating procedures, production processes and key functions of various entities involved in restoration projects.

→ **Operating procedures**: Coordinates project operations to ensure the satisfactory execution of each project in accordance with standards of governing bodies.

→ **Production processes**: Uses appropriate techniques and processes that include the latest methods, materials, tools and technologies; possesses knowledge of activities taking place in the planning, design and construction phases of restoration projects; reads manuals and/or other forms of information to stay current on coastal restoration issues.

→ **Lab skills**: Conducts data collection and analysis including the collection of field samples; maintains laboratory notebooks and documentation using standard labeling techniques; prepares documents including experimental protocols, technical reports and numerical analyses based on data collected; manages research projects and investigations.

### Industry Laws and Regulations:

Knowledge of federal, state and local laws and regulations governing coastal restoration projects.

→ **Legal responsibilities**: Understands the legal responsibilities of firms conducting work on coastal restoration projects; performs duties in accordance with contractor responsibilities outlined in legal agreements with government entities.

→ **Procedural and regulatory compliance**: Follows standards and procedures established by federal, state and local agencies overseeing restoration projects; demonstrates knowledge of agency jurisdiction; complies with all regulations issued by federal, state and local government entities such as:

   - U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Fisheries & Wildlife Services (USFWS), Louisiana Office of Coastal Protection and Restoration (OCPR), Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR), and local Public Works offices.
Legal framework: Basic knowledge of relevant legislation such as the Clean Water Act, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection, and Restoration Act (CWPPRA), and USACE Permitting.

Quality Control and Assurance:
Ensures materials, processes, services and products meet quality specifications during and after production or performance.

- Quality assurance: Monitors quality of data collected throughout a research project.
- Quality control: Identifies quality standards for a coastal restoration design project; ensures project design conforms to an established set of quality standards within the industry; determines if a project meets industry codes and conforms to requirements of industry regulations or reveals defects or negative impacts to wetlands or other sensitive areas; reports quality failures to appropriate individuals for corrective action.

Health, Safety and Security:
Abides by the procedures necessary to ensure a safe and healthy work environment.

- Safety procedures: Demonstrates knowledge of relevant occupational safety and health laws and regulations including the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards; complies with safety codes, standards and guidelines; adheres to work-site safety programs; understands emergency response plans; demonstrates knowledge of first aid procedures; demonstrates knowledge of safe handling and disposal of materials with hazardous properties.

- Safe behaviors: Is cognizant of surroundings; practices boater safety; uses caution while in the field and remains aware of unique hazards associated with restoration work.

- Corrects unsafe situations: Identifies unsafe working conditions and takes prompt, corrective action; stays alert to, and takes preventive action against, hazards and threats; recommends measures to protect employees or workers from hazardous working conditions including appropriate use of personal protective equipment; follows protocol for reporting safety violations; investigates accidents to determine how to prevent future occurrences.


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