



## Norris Gearhart, CR

EVP Regulatory Business Practices -First Onsite Property Restoration

### Infection Control Risk Assessment (ICRA), Disinfection & Diversification Opportunities for Restoration Contractors

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Good Day and Welcome to the IAQ Radio+ episode 700 blog. This week we welcomed Norris Gearhart EVP of Regulatory and Business Practices at First Onsite Property Restoration for a discussion about Infection Control Risk Assessment, Disinfection and Diversification Opportunities for Restoration Contractors.

Norris Gearhart is the Executive Vice President of Regulatory Business Practices for First Onsite Property Restoration. Norris has a long career as a solutions-focused leader, coach, and educator. He began his career in the restoration industry in 1985. He has had responsibilities in both the restoration and insurance realm over the span of nearly four decades. During this time, Norris owned or has been part owner of two successful full-service restoration companies building multi-million-dollar books of business.

**Nuggets mined from today's episode:**

***What are your responsibilities at First Onsite?*** Responsible and accountable for keeping the Healthcare, Asbestos/Lead, IAQ/HVAC and Bio/Enviro Hazard Cleanup divisions of First Onsite out of regulatory trouble.

***What is the difference between sanitization and disinfection?*** During the Covid Crisis, Norris was tasked with answering Covid questions and solving Covid problems. He encountered widespread ignorance and misunderstanding of available tools and supplies. The terms sanitization and disinfection have different meanings to different government agencies. The terms are commonly misused and

inappropriately interchanged. Our language needs to be accurate, and terms need to be used in appropriate context.

Cleaning- removal of visible soil

Sanitizing- The EPA regulates use of antimicrobials on inanimate surfaces. The FDA regulates use of antimicrobials in foods, drugs, and inanimate surfaces. The two agencies have different requirements for reduction of target pathogens and use differing target pathogens. For product sanitizing claims, the EPA requires a 3-log reduction (99.9%) of named pathogens. For product sanitizing claims, the FDA requires a 5-log (99.999%) reduction of pathogens.

Disinfection- For disinfection product claims the EPA requires 5 log reduction of pathogens (99.999% while the FDA requires a 6-log reduction of pathogens (99.9999%). It's improper terminology to state you have disinfected a surface without specific proof or validation. You can more accurately state that you applied an EPA registered disinfectant to surfaces according to manufacturer's instructions.

Sterilization- EPA sterilizing claims removal or inactivation of 99.9999% of all contaminants (e.g. viruses, spores, etc.)

***Visible risks versus invisible risks?*** On fire and water losses risks are often visible (fire related particulate, raw sewage). Engineering controls and PPE protects workers from most risks. Deep cleaning removes and detoxifies many hazardous substances. Restorers and their workers are sloppy regarding hazards and often get away with it, when working with hazards too small to be seen with the naked eye (pathogens) you cannot afford to be sloppy.

***Your Environmental Risk Specialist Course?***- In regard to environmental risks, the current state of the disaster restoration industry is unknowing; combined with the confident feeling that *we'll wing-it* and work it out when we get there. Many contractors just see the dollar signs and chase the money. If you wish to enter the field, invest time to learn what you are doing and how to minimize risks.

The course provides the tools for the restorer to know when to say NO, when to step back and when to hire a specialized expert. The course relies upon some ABRA resources (<https://www.americanbiorecovery.org/>) and provides instruction and guidance for: Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosive (CBRNE) mitigation and cleanup.

***Blood in the water, feeding frenzy due to the combination of scientific misinformation driven by “pandemic panic”, millions of dollars was spent by building owners and managers who paid big bucks to have their buildings periodically sprayed with virucidal products as an attempt to prevent covid spread.*** When people want the service, are willing to pay for it, and if you don’t do the job they’ll hire someone else who will; then he advises take the money and do the work. Use accurate terminology, tell the truth and don’t over promise. Provide maximum value for the customers’ investment.

***What opportunities do you see for restoration firms to diversify to obtain consistent cash flow year-round?*** These opportunities are most likely commercial, industrial and institutional. You can advise and pre-market potential clients that you understand the risks and are trained, equipped, and experienced in mitigating them.

***Have you had any close calls in exposure to infectious agents you can share will our audience?*** Once while working on a Pharma cleanroom cleanup project; a worker suffered a stroke and needed to be extracted. Challenges: How to decontaminate the worker and get the worker out of containment and anteroom? How to get EMT’s into the containment? This contingency is now on Norris’ “what-if” list.

***What is ICRA?*** Infection Control Risk Assessment (ICRA) is mandatory.

- Hospital infection outbreak can result in loss of patient lives and embarrassing publicity for the hospital.
- Hospital infection rates can adversely affect Medicare, Medicaid, and insurance payments.
- ICRA’s are currently only required by hospitals and medical buildings affiliated with a hospital.
- ICRA’s are prepared by the hospitals, Infection Prevention practitioners (e.g. infection control nurse).
- Health practitioners may not have adequate knowledge of building science.
- Contractors usually receive an ICRA and often do not have the opportunity to have input in preparing it.
- An infection control risk assessment (ICRA) is a systematic process that determines the level of risk to patients and defines controls to reduce risk.

ICRAs are focused on: where will the construction occur? How will the work be done? Potential effects on surrounding areas?

- What if the author of the ICRA isn't on site or isn't available? It's important to be familiar with the ICRA process
- Meetings- ICRA stakeholders may include: facilities manager, environmental services manager, department heads and other stakeholders.
- New ASHE ICRA 2.0 adds a 5<sup>th</sup> level. [ASHE Publishes Updated Infection Control Risk Assessment](#). The American Society for Health Care Engineering (ASHE) of the American Hospital Association published an updated infection control risk assessment called ICRA 2.0, which promotes and directs interdisciplinary infection prevention in health care facilities during construction, renovation and maintenance. <https://www.ashe.org/ashe-publishes-updated-infection-control-risk-assessment>

## ROUNDUP

### Z-Man

- Dusts are a problem, a wide variety of contaminants are found in dust.
- Risk minimizers and risk maximizers.

### Global Restoration Watchdog Pete Consigli

- The Environmentalist Risk Specialist course is one of the 4 pillars for the new Certified Restorer Designation
- Example of respectful discussion between Norris and Z-Man.
- We must know and understand the words we use.
- When Pete entered the carpet and upholstery cleaning field he learned the trade from raspy voiced men in their 50s who looked and sounded like they were in their 70s due to exposure to chlorinated solvents, hydrofluoric acid, adhesives, etc.
- Lee Pemberton told stories of drycleaner's exposures to perchloroethylene 111 trichloroethylene and other hazardous solvents.
- Pete decided then that if he would be responsible for the safety of others he would explain why PPE needed to be worn and safety precautions taken.

- Plumbers also had exposures to sewage.
- In the mid 1990s Hurricane Bonnie struck Virginia Beach. Hotel owners wanted to avoid tourists seeing remediation workers dressed like “Pillsbury Doughboys” while overlooking the exposures their staff encountered and could spread to them.
- After Hurricane Bonnie work was completed a small aircraft dragged a sky banner honoring the workers.
- Congratulations to Norris on winning the RIA Volunteer of the year award!

### Norris Gearhart

- Advocates use of the Updates infection control assessment <https://www.ashe.org>
- Advocates use of the OSHA silica standard. <https://www.osha.gov/silica-crystalline>

### *Z-Man signing off*

#### TRIVIA-

*Question: Which US President created the agency within the department of Defense responsible for developing emerging technologies for use by the military?*

Answer: Dwight Eisenhower

Answered by: Doug Kohnen, ERAtech Environmental