



# Hurricane Preparedness & Recovery Resource Guide

# CONTENTS

**INTRODUCTION..... 3**

**PREPARE ..... 4**

    Eight Tips to Be Ready for an Approaching Hurricane .....4

    Build a Disaster Supplies Kit .....5

    Evacuating Yourself and Your Family .....7

**PRACTICAL STEPS TOWARD RECOVERY ..... 9**

    After a Flood .....9

    Hand Hygiene After a Hurricane ..... 10

    Clean Up Safely After a Disaster..... 11

    Filing a Flood Insurance Claim..... 15

**EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE AFTER DISASTER ..... 16**

    Coping Tips for Traumatic Events and Disasters ..... 16

    Recovering from Disaster ..... 18

    Coping with the Stress of Relocation After a Disaster ..... 20

    Coping with Trauma: How Can Families Be Supportive? ..... 27

    Addressing Employees' Needs in a Crisis ..... 28

**HOW YOU CAN HELP ..... 30**

**HURRICANE RESOURCES ..... 32**

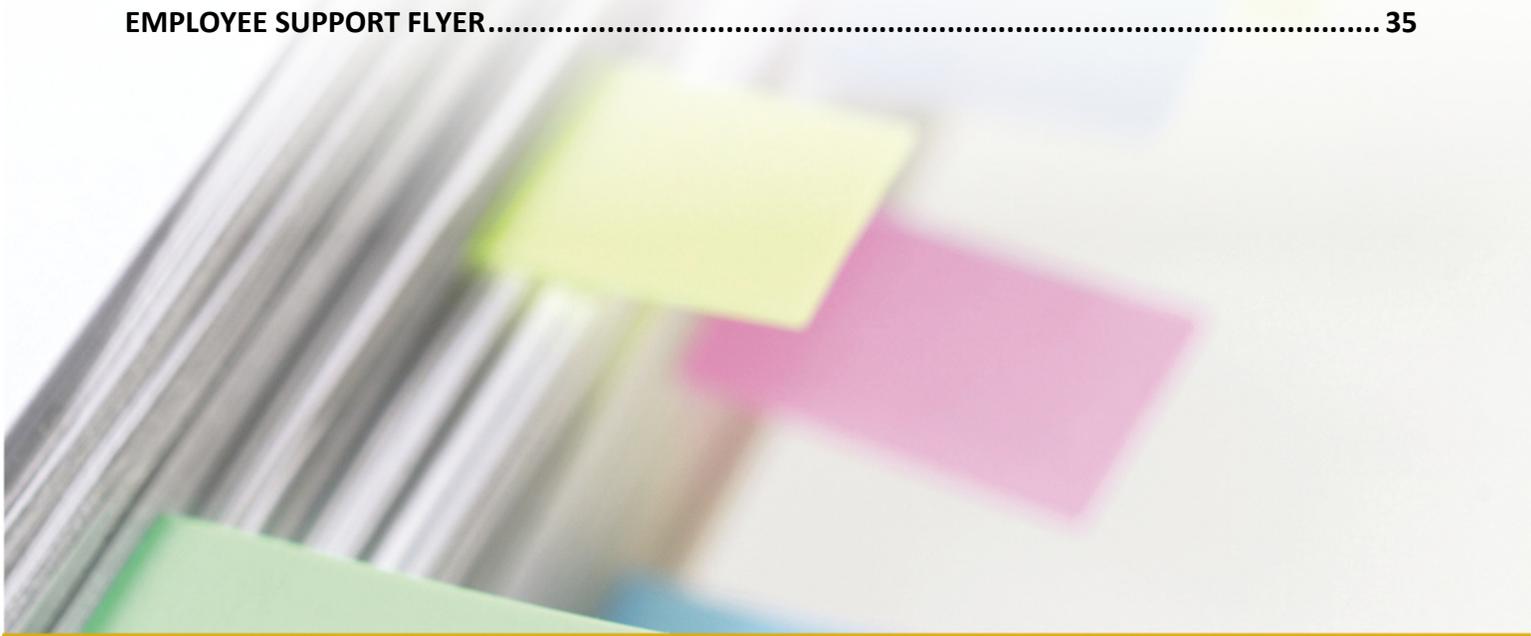
    General..... 32

    North & South Carolina, Georgia ..... 33

    Alabama & Florida..... 34

    Where to Donate ..... 34

**EMPLOYEE SUPPORT FLYER..... 35**



# INTRODUCTION

### **Natural disasters like hurricanes and floods not only affect you physically, but emotionally as well.**

As you face the damage a natural disaster leaves in its wake, you may experience a discomfiting loss of control. Your coping mechanisms are stretched thin at a time when others may be depending on you for care and protection, all while you yourself may be feeling distressed and even frightened about nature's fury.

It is easy to become overwhelmed with one's feelings and information at this time. This guide is designed to be a quick reference on how to do the following:

- Take practical steps to prepare for hurricanes and floods.
- Manage your stress and regain your inborn resiliency, as you help yourself, your family, and your coworkers to recover emotionally from such an event.
- Understand that both emotional, practical, and financial recovery from a large-scale disaster will take time and effort.
- Safely return to your home, and begin the cleanup process.

In addition to the information in this guide, your employee support service provides short-term, solution-focused counseling as well as referrals to local resources such as shelters, financial assistance, contractors, handymen, and more. This program is provided as an employee benefit at no cost to you. If you are uncertain how to contact your employee support service, consult your human resources representative.



# EIGHT TIPS TO BE READY FOR AN APPROACHING HURRICANE

1. **Monitor local radio and TV for updates.** The path of the storm could change quickly and unexpectedly. Follow the instructions of state, local, and national leaders.
2. **Hunker down and take shelter.** Everyone should stay alert as a hurricane moves toward the United States.
3. **Communicate with friends and family.** Tell them where you are riding out the storm and how you will let them know you're safe. You can call, text, email, or use social media.
4. **Keep away from windows.** Close storm shutters; flying glass from broken windows could injure you.
5. **Prepare for power outages.** Turn your refrigerator or freezer to the coldest setting, and open only when necessary. If you lose power, food will last longer. Keep a thermometer in the refrigerator to check food temperature when the power is restored.
6. **Be aware of potential storm surges expected with hurricanes.** Storm surges pose a great threat to safety and can cut off potential evacuation routes. If you're told to evacuate, don't wait.
7. **Avoid driving through flooded areas.** Almost half of flash-flooding deaths occur in vehicles, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). When you're driving, look out for flooding in low-lying areas, at bridges, and at highway dips.
8. **Download the FEMA app for disaster resources, weather alerts, and safety updates.** The app (available in English and Spanish) provides a customizable checklist of emergency supplies, maps of open shelters and recovery centers, disaster survival tips, and weather alerts from the National Weather Service (<https://www.fema.gov/mobile-app>).

Workplace Options (Adapted from USA.gov Blog). (Reviewed 2020 [Ed.]). *Eight tips to be ready for a hurricane* (B. Schuette, Ed.). Raleigh, NC: Author



# BUILD A DISASTER SUPPLIES KIT

After an emergency, you may need to survive on your own for several days. Being prepared means having your own food, water, and other supplies to last for at least 72 hours. A *disaster supplies kit* is a collection of basic items your household may need in the event of an emergency.

Make sure your emergency kit is stocked with the items on the checklist below. Most of the items are inexpensive and easy to find, and any one of them could save your life. If you're headed to the store, print out a version to take with you. Once you take a look at the basic items, consider what unique needs your family might have, such as supplies for pets or seniors.

## Basic Disaster Supplies Kit

To assemble your kit, store items in airtight plastic bags, and put your entire disaster supplies kit in one or two easy-to-carry containers, such as plastic bins or a duffel bag. A basic emergency supply kit could include the following recommended items:

- Water—one gallon of water per person per day for at least three days, for drinking and sanitation
- Food—at least a three-day supply of nonperishable food
- Battery-powered or hand-crank radio and a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio with tone alert
- Flashlight
- First aid kit
- Extra batteries
- Whistle to signal for help
- Dust mask to help filter contaminated air, and plastic sheeting and duct tape to shelter in place
- Moist towelettes, garbage bags, and plastic ties for personal sanitation
- Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities
- Manual can opener for food
- Local maps
- Cell phone with chargers and a backup battery

## Additional Emergency Supplies

\*Since Spring of 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has recommended people include additional items in their kits to help prevent the spread of coronavirus or other viruses and the flu.

Consider adding the following items to your emergency supply kit based on your individual needs:

- Cloth face coverings (for everyone ages two and above), soap, hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes to disinfect surfaces\*
- Prescription medications
- Nonprescription medications such as pain relievers, anti-diarrhea medication, antacids, or laxatives
- Glasses and contact lens solution
- Infant formula, bottles, diapers, wipes, diaper rash cream

*(List continues on next page.)*



## PREPARE

- Pet food and extra water for your pet
- Cash or traveler's checks
- Important family documents, such as copies of insurance policies, identification, and bank account records, saved electronically or in a waterproof, portable container
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person
- Sturdy shoes and complete change of clothing appropriate for your climate
- Household chlorine bleach and medicine dropper to disinfect water
- Fire extinguisher
- Matches in a waterproof container
- Feminine supplies and personal hygiene items
- Mess kits, paper cups, plates, paper towels, and plastic utensils
- Paper and pencil
- Books, games, puzzles, or other activities for children

## Maintaining Your Kit

After assembling your kit, remember to maintain it so it's ready when needed:

- Keep canned food in a cool, dry place.
- Store boxed food in tightly closed plastic or metal containers.

- Replace expired items as needed.
- Rethink your needs every year, and update your kit as your family's needs change.

## Kit Storage Locations

Since you do not know where you will be when an emergency occurs, prepare supplies for home, work, and vehicles:

- **Home**—Keep this kit in a designated place, and have it ready in case you have to leave your home quickly. Make sure all family members know where the kit is kept.
- **Work**—Be prepared to shelter at work for at least 24 hours. Your work kit should include food, water, and other necessities like medicines, as well as comfortable walking shoes, stored in a "grab and go" case.
- **Vehicle**—In case you are stranded, keep a kit of emergency supplies in your car.

U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Ready.gov. (Revised 2020, March 16). *Build a kit*. Retrieved June 17, 2020, from <https://www.ready.gov>



# EVACUATING YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY

## Plan to evacuate.

Many kinds of emergencies can cause you to have to evacuate. In some cases, you may have a day or two to prepare, while other situations might call for an immediate evacuation. Planning is vital to making sure that you can evacuate quickly and safely, no matter what the circumstances.

## Before an Evacuation

- **Learn** the types of disasters that are likely in your community and the local emergency, evacuation, and shelter plans for each specific disaster.
- **Plan** how you will leave and where you will go if you are advised to evacuate:
  - Check with local officials about what shelter spaces are available for this year. Coronavirus may have altered your community's plans.
  - If you evacuate to a community shelter, follow the latest [guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) for protecting yourself and your family from possible coronavirus](#):
    - People over two years old should use a cloth facial covering while at these facilities.
    - Be prepared to take cleaning items with you like cloth face coverings, soap, hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes or general household cleaning supplies to disinfect surfaces.
    - Maintain at least six feet of space between you and people who aren't in your immediate family.
  - Identify several places you could go in an emergency, such as a friend's home in another town or a motel. Choose destinations in different directions so that you have options during an emergency.
  - If needed, identify a place to stay that will accept pets. Most public shelters allow only service animals.
  - Be familiar with alternate routes and other means of transportation out of your area.
  - Always follow the instructions of local officials, and remember that your evacuation route may be on foot depending on the type of disaster.
- **Come up with a family/household plan** to stay in touch in case you become separated; have a meeting place, and update it depending on the circumstance.



## PREPARE & RESPOND

- **Assemble supplies** that are ready for evacuation. Prepare a "go-bag" you can carry when you evacuate on foot or public transportation, and supplies for traveling by longer distances if you have a car.
- Here are tips if you have a car:
  - Keep a full tank of gas in it if an evacuation seems likely. Keep a half tank of gas in it at all times in case of an unexpected need to evacuate. Gas stations may be closed during emergencies and unable to pump gas during power outages. Plan to take one car per family to reduce congestion and delay.
  - Make sure you have a portable emergency kit in the car.
- If you do not have a car, plan how you will leave if needed. Decide with family, friends, or your local emergency management office to see what resources may be available.

### During an Evacuation

- Download the [Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\) app](#) for a list of open shelters during an active disaster in your local area.
- Listen to a battery-powered radio, and follow local evacuation instructions.
- Take your emergency supply kit.
- Leave early enough to avoid being trapped by severe weather.
- Take your pets with you, but understand that only service animals may be allowed in public shelters. Plan how you will care for your pets in an emergency now.
- **Do this if time allows:**
  - Call or email the out-of-state contact in your family communications plan. Tell them where you are going.
  - Secure your home by closing and locking doors and windows.
  - Unplug electrical equipment such as radios, televisions, and small appliances. Leave freezers and refrigerators plugged in unless there is a risk of flooding. If there is damage to

your home and you are instructed to do so, shut off water, gas, and electricity before leaving.

- Leave a note telling others when you left and where you are going.
- Wear sturdy shoes and clothing that provides some protection, such as long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and a hat.
- Check with neighbors who may need a ride.
- Follow recommended evacuation routes. Do not take shortcuts; they may be blocked.
- Be alert for road hazards such as washed-out roads or bridges and downed power lines. Do not drive into flooded areas.

### After an Evacuation

If you evacuated for the storm, check with local officials both where you're staying and back home before you travel:

- Residents returning to disaster-affected areas after significant events should expect and prepare for disruptions to daily activities, and remember that returning home before storm debris is cleared is dangerous.
- Let friends and family know before you leave and when you arrive.
- Charge devices, and consider getting back-up batteries in case power outages continue.
- Fill up your gas tank, and consider downloading a fuel app to check for outages along your route.
- Bring supplies such as water and nonperishable food for the car ride.
- Avoid downed power or utility lines; they may be live with deadly voltage. Stay away, and report them immediately to your power or utility company.
- Only use generators away from your home, and NEVER run a generator inside a home or garage, or connect it to your home's electrical system.

U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Ready. (Updated 2020, April 27). *Evacuation*. Retrieved June 17, 2020, from <https://www.ready.gov>

## PRACTICAL STEPS TOWARD RECOVERY

# AFTER A FLOOD

When floodwaters recede, the damage left behind can be devastating and present many dangers. Images of flood destruction depict destroyed homes and buildings, damaged possessions, and decimated roadways. However, what you can't see can be just as dangerous. Floodwaters often become contaminated with sewage or chemicals. Gas leaks and live power lines can be deadly but are not obvious at first glance.

### **Stay informed.**

Stay tuned to your local news for updated information on road conditions. Ensure water is safe to drink, cook, or clean with after a flood. Authorities may ask you to boil water for a while after a flood. Utility companies often have apps to update you on getting service back. Carbon monoxide poisoning is one of the leading causes of death after storms when areas are dealing with power outages. Never use a portable generator inside your home or garage. Review generator safety tips first.

### **Avoid floodwaters.**

Standing water hides many dangers including toxins and chemicals. There may be sharp objects under the water, or the road could have collapsed. If it is likely your home will flood, don't wait for the evacuation order; get out! Talk to friends and family about emergency visits. If you have pets, take them with you, or get them somewhere safe.

### **Avoid disaster areas.**

Do not visit disaster areas! Your presence may hamper rescue and other emergency operations.

### **Heed road-closed and cautionary signs.**

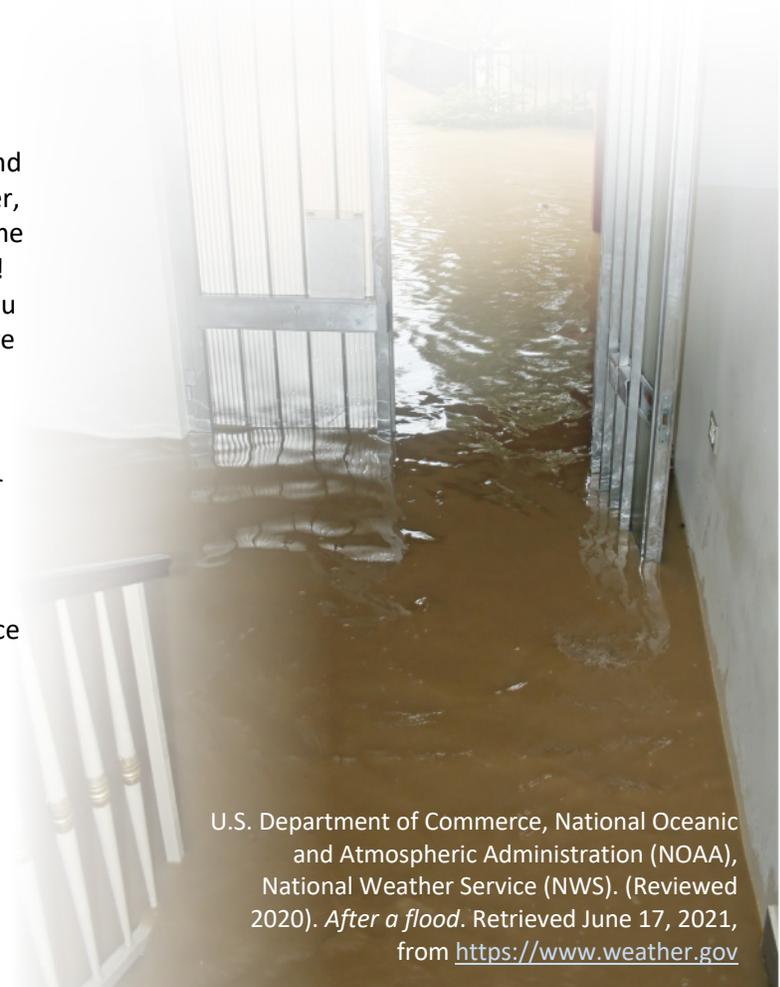
Road closure and other cautionary signs are put in place for your safety. Pay attention to them!

### **Wait for the "all-clear."**

Do not enter a flood-damaged home or building until you're given the all-clear by authorities. If you enter a flood-damaged building, be extremely careful. Water can cause floors to collapse and ceilings to fall. Make sure the electrical system has been turned off; have the power company or a qualified electrician fix wires. Contact your insurance agent to discuss property damage. If you have a generator, follow proper safety procedures.

### **Contact your family and loved ones.**

Let your family and close friends know that you're OK so they can help spread the word. Register with or search the American Red Cross's *Safe and Well* listings: <https://safeandwell.communityos.org/cms/index.php>



U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Weather Service (NWS). (Reviewed 2020). *After a flood*. Retrieved June 17, 2021, from <https://www.weather.gov>

# HAND HYGIENE AFTER A HURRICANE

Floodwater can be contaminated with microorganisms, sewage, industrial waste, chemicals, and other substances that can cause illness or death. Proper hand hygiene can help residents and rescue workers avoid these illnesses.

### Wear protective gloves.

- Wear protective gloves when working in contaminated floodwaters, handling contaminated objects, or handling human or animal remains.
- Gloves should be heavy, cut-resistant, and made of waterproof material (nitrile or similar washable material).

### Wash hands.

Use soap and clean or disinfected water

- After clean-up or decontamination work
- Before preparing or eating food
- After toilet use

### Wound Care

- Wash wounds with soap and clean or disinfected water, or a hand sanitizer immediately.
- Seek immediate medical attention if wound becomes red, is swollen, or oozes pus.

### Disinfecting Water for Hand Washing

- Contaminated water can be bleach disinfected by mixing 1/4 teaspoon of household bleach per 1 gallon of water.
- Let bleach and water mixture stand for 30 minutes.
- Label containers (e.g. "bleach-disinfected water—DO NOT DRINK").

### Disinfecting Water for Tool and Surface Decontamination

- Use soap and clean water when available.
- If only contaminated water is available, prepare solution of 1/4 cup household bleach per 1 gallon of water.
- Prepare fresh solutions daily, preferably just before use.
- Immerse objects in the solution for 10 minutes.
- Label containers (e.g. "bleach-disinfected water—DO NOT DRINK").
- **Warning:** Bleach can damage firefighters' turnout gear; consult manufacturer before using in this way.



Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). (n.d.). *OSHA quick card: Hand hygiene in hurricane-affected areas*. Retrieved June 17, 2020, from <https://www.osha.gov>

# CLEAN UP SAFELY AFTER A DISASTER

Follow these tips to protect yourself and your loved ones during your clean-up after a hurricane, flood, or other natural disaster.

### Get the right safety gear.

If sewage is involved, **make sure** to wear rubber boots, rubber gloves, and goggles during your clean-up.

Otherwise, general gear to use includes

- Hard hats
- N95 masks (or a respirator with a higher protection level)
- Heavy work gloves
- Long-sleeved shirt and long pants
- Waterproof boots with steel toe and insole (not just steel shank)
- Earplugs or protective headphones (if you're working with noisy equipment)
- At least two fire extinguishers (each with a UL rating of at least 10A)

### Use teams to move heavy/bulky objects.

- Have teams of at least two people work together to move heavy or bulky objects.
- Avoid lifting any material that weighs more than 50 pounds (per person).

### Pace yourself.

Cleaning up your home can be a big job. Be sure to take care of yourself:

- Rest when you need to.
- Decide which clean-up tasks are most important, and focus on those first. That way, you're less likely to be overwhelmed.
- Try to work with other people, so you aren't alone.
- Get support from family members, friends, counselors, or therapists.

### Take precaution when using a chain saw.

- When using a chain saw, always follow manufacturer's instructions. Make sure to wear appropriate protective gear, and be sure that bystanders are a safe distance away.
- Avoid contact with power lines, and take extra care in cutting trees or branches that are bent or caught under something else.
- Use extreme caution to avoid electrical shock when using an electric chain saw.

### Stay safe in hot weather.

In hot weather, try to stay cool by staying in air-conditioned buildings, taking breaks in shaded areas or in cool rooms, drinking water and non-alcoholic fluids often, and wearing light and loose-fitting clothing. Do outdoor activities during cooler hours.



## PRACTICAL STEPS TOWARD RECOVERY

### Prevent mold growth.

- Clean up and dry your home quickly after the storm or flood ends—within 24 to 48 hours if possible.
- Air out your house by opening doors and windows. Use fans to dry wet areas. Position fans to blow air out doors or windows.
- Throw away anything that you can't clean or dry quickly (such as mattresses, carpeting, carpet padding, rugs, upholstered furniture, cosmetics, stuffed animals, baby toys, pillows, foam-rubber items, books, wall coverings, and paper products).
- Remove and discard drywall and insulation that has been contaminated with sewage or floodwaters.
- Thoroughly clean all wet items and surfaces with hot water and laundry or dish detergent (e.g., flooring, concrete, molding, wood and metal furniture, countertops, appliances, and plumbing fixtures).
- Fix any leaks in roofs, walls, or plumbing as soon as you can.

### Clean up mold with a mix of bleach and water.

- Never use bleach in a closed space. Open windows and doors first.
- Put on personal protective equipment to protect your eyes, nose, mouth, and skin. Wear goggles, an N-95 respirator, and protective gloves.
- To make your cleaner, mix 1 cup of household bleach with 1 gallon of water.
- Clean everything with mold on it.

### **CAUTION!**

- If you have a breathing problem like asthma, do not enter a building with mold damage. Mold can make asthma symptoms worse.
- If you have a weakened immune system (such as from cancer treatment or medicines that suppress the immune system), do not enter a building with mold damage. People with a weakened immune system are more likely to get a serious illness from mold.
- Children should also not enter buildings with mold damage.

### Kids' Safety

- Keep children and pets away from debris.
- Children should not help with clean-up. Do not use N95 masks on children.
- Do not allow children to play in moving or standing water.
- Children should cover their arms, legs, and feet when outside.
- Use insect repellent with DEET or picaridin on children when outside.
- Keep children away from dead or stray animals.
- Wash hands with soap and clean water. Clean and cover open wounds.

### Disinfect toys.

Remember that anything that's had contact with floodwater could carry germs. To keep your kids safe, make sure their toys are clean:

- Make a cleaning fluid by mixing 1 cup of bleach in 5 gallons of water.
- Wash off toys carefully with your cleaner.
- Let the toys air dry.
- You may not be able to kill germs on some toys—like stuffed animals and baby toys. Throw out toys you can't clean.

## PRACTICAL STEPS TOWARD RECOVERY

### Hygiene and Infectious Disease Issues

- Wash up with soap and water once you're done cleaning.
- If there is a boil-water advisory in effect, use water that has been boiled for 1 minute (allow the water to cool before washing), or use water that's been disinfected for personal hygiene. Here are the steps to disinfect:
  - When using 5–6 percent unscented liquid household chlorine bleach, add a little less than 1/8 teaspoon (8 drops or about 0.5 ml) per 1 gallon of clear water.
  - Stir well, and let it stand for 30 minutes before using.
  - If the water is cloudy, add a little less than 1/4 teaspoon (16 drops or about 1 ml) per 1 gallon of water.
- If you have any open cuts or sores that were exposed to floodwater, wash them with soap and water, and apply an antibiotic ointment to prevent an infection.
- Seek immediate medical attention if you become injured or sick.
- Wash all clothes worn during the clean-up in hot water and detergent. These clothes should be washed separately from uncontaminated clothes and linens.

### Be careful with floodwater; it can contain dangerous bacteria.

- Floodwater can contain dangerous bacteria from overflowing sewage and agricultural and industrial waste. While skin contact with floodwater doesn't pose a serious health risk by itself, eating or drinking anything contaminated with floodwater can cause diseases.
- If you have any open cuts or sores that will be exposed to floodwater, keep them as clean as possible by washing them with soap and applying an antibiotic ointment to discourage infection.
- To reduce cold-related risks when standing or working in water that is cooler than 75 degrees F (24 degrees C), wear insulated clothes and insulated rubber boots, take frequent breaks out of the water, and change into dry clothing when possible.



## PRACTICAL STEPS TOWARD RECOVERY

### **Be careful when entering damaged buildings.**

- Stay away from any damaged buildings or structures until a building inspector or other government authority has had a chance to examine it and certify that it's safe.
- Wait until daylight to return to buildings so it's easier to see and avoid any hazards, especially if the power is out.
- Leave your home or other building if you hear any shifting or strange noises—this could mean it's about to fall.
- If you smell gas or suspect a leak, leave your house/building, and contact emergency authorities right away! Don't turn on the lights, light matches, smoke, or do anything that can cause a spark. Don't return to the building until you're told it's safe to do so.
- Keep children and pets away from the affected area until clean-up has been completed.

### **Prevent carbon monoxide poisoning.**

Never use generators, pressure washers, or other gasoline, propane, natural gas, or charcoal-burning devices inside your home, basement, garage, or camper—or even outside near an open window, door, or vent. Carbon monoxide—an odorless, colorless gas from these sources—can build up indoors and poison the people and animals inside.

### **Be aware of any electrical hazards.**

- If electrical circuits and electrical equipment have gotten wet or are in or near water, turn off the power at the main breaker or fuse on the service panel. If you must enter standing water to access the main power switch, then call an electrician to turn it off.
- Never turn power on or off or use an electric tool or appliance while standing in water.
- Do not connect generators to your home's electrical circuits without the approved, automatic-interrupt devices. If a generator is on line when electrical service is restored, it can become a major fire hazard, and it may endanger line workers helping to restore power in your area.

### **Be careful with dangerous materials.**

- Call the fire department to inspect or remove chemicals, propane tanks, and other dangerous materials.
- Wear protective clothing and gear (e.g. a respirator if needed) when handling hazardous materials.
- Wash skin that may have come in contact with hazardous materials.
- Wear insulated gloves, and use caution if you have to remove a car battery. Avoid any acid that may have leaked from a car battery.

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Environmental Health (NCEH). (Revised 2020, March 4). *Clean up safely after a disaster*. Retrieved June 17, 2020, from <https://www.cdc.gov>

# FILING A FLOOD INSURANCE CLAIM

If you have experienced a flood, you can file your flood insurance claim by following these three steps.

### Step 1: Notify your insurer to start the claims process.

After experiencing a flood, contact your agent or insurance company to file a claim. Make sure you have the following information handy:

- The name of your insurance company
- Your policy number
- A telephone number and/or email address where you can be reached at all times

An adjuster should contact you within a few days of filing your claim. If you do not hear from an adjuster, you can contact your insurance agent or company again.

### Step 2: Document the damage.

- Separate damaged from undamaged property. Your adjuster will need evidence of the damage to your home and possessions to prepare your repair estimate.
- Take photographs of all the damaged property, including discarded objects, structural damage and standing floodwater levels.
- Make a list of damaged or lost items, and include their date of purchase, value and receipts, if possible.
- Officials may require disposal of damaged items. If possible, placed flood-damaged items outside of the home.

### Step 3: Complete a "Proof of Loss" to support your claim.

Your adjuster will assist you in preparing a *Proof of Loss* (which is your sworn statement of the amount you are claiming including necessary supporting documentation) for your official claim for damages. A Proof of Loss can be many things, but must contain the specific details set forth in the Standard Flood Insurance Policy. You'll need to file your Proof of Loss with your insurance company within 60 days of the flood. This document substantiates the insurance claim and is required before the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) or insurance company can make payment.

You'll receive your claim payment after you and the insurer agree on the amount of damages and the insurer has your complete, accurate and signed Proof of Loss. If major catastrophic flooding occurs, it may take longer to process claims and make payments because of the sheer number of claims submitted.

U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency. (Updated 2017, July 8). *Filing a flood insurance claim* Retrieved June 17, 2020, from <https://www.fema.gov>



# COPING TIPS FOR TRAUMATIC EVENTS AND DISASTERS

Emotional distress can happen before and after a disaster. Coping strategies include preparation, self-care and identifying support systems. People can experience a wide range of emotions before and after a disaster or traumatic event. There's no right or wrong way to feel. However, it's important to find healthy ways to cope when these events happen.

### Take care of yourself and your loved ones.

Eating a healthy diet, avoiding the use of drugs and alcohol, and getting regular exercise can reduce stress and anxiety. Activities as simple as taking a walk, stretching and deep breathing can help relieve stress:

- **Limit your consumption of news.** In today's society, news is available 24 hours a day via television, radio and the internet. The constant replay of news stories about a disaster or traumatic event can increase stress and anxiety and make some people relive the event over and over. Reduce the amount of news you watch or listen to, and engage in relaxing activities to help you heal and move on.
- **Get enough "good" sleep.** Some people have difficulty falling asleep after a disaster, or wake up throughout the night. If you have trouble sleeping, go to bed only when you are ready to sleep, avoid using cell phones or laptops in bed, and avoid drinking caffeine or alcohol at least one hour before going to bed. If you wake up and can't fall back to sleep, try writing what's on your mind in a journal or on a sheet of paper.
- **Establish and maintain a routine.** Try to eat meals at regular times, and put yourself on a sleep schedule to ensure an adequate amount of rest. Include a positive or fun activity in your schedule that you can look forward to each day or week. Schedule exercise into your daily routine as well, if possible.
- **Avoid making major life decisions.** Doing things like switching jobs or careers can already be stressful and is even harder to adjust directly after a disaster.
- **Understand there will be changes.** Disasters can destroy homes, schools, and places of business and worship, and can disrupt the lives of people living in affected areas for a long time. Sometimes, people lose loved ones or experience injuries, both physical and mental, that may last a lifetime. Some people may also experience a temporary or permanent loss of employment. For children, attending a new or temporary school may result in being separated from peers, or after-school activities may be disrupted.



## EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE AFTER DISASTER

### Ask for help.

Warning signs of stress are normal, short-term reactions to life's unexpected challenges. However, it is important to recognize when you or others experience emotional distress that is persistent and becomes difficult to manage:

- **Find a local support group.** In a group setting led by trained and experienced professionals, people who have shared a similar experience can exchange thoughts, feelings and ideas on how to get through difficult times. Support groups provide a safe place for people to find comfort in knowing they are not alone.
- **Reach out to family and friends.** Talking to someone you trust about your feelings without fear of judgment may offer some relief. Family and friends can be a great resource for support. Your family and friends may have also survived the disaster and understand the emotions you are experiencing. It's also a good idea to speak with friends who were not involved, because they can be objective and provide additional support.

- **Speak with a financial adviser.** The loss of a home or job or being unable to work after a disaster can be an overwhelming financial burden people feel they have to struggle with alone. Financial advisers don't immediately come to mind as a resource after a disaster, but they should be among the first people you call when developing a strategy to rebuild your life. Seeking help from a financial adviser can ease the stress and point you in the direction of other helpful resources or programs tailored to your situation.

If you or your loved ones continue to have feelings of anxiety, fear and anger for two weeks or more, with no improvement, it's best to seek professional help. Call your employee support program for short-term, solution-focused counseling, as well as assistance finding local resources. If you are uncertain how to contact the program, speak with your local human resources or benefits representative.



Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (Updated 2019, May 14). *Coping tips for traumatic events and disasters*. Retrieved June 17, 2020, from <https://www.samhsa.gov>

# RECOVERING FROM DISASTER

## Health and Safety Guidelines

Recovering from a disaster is usually a gradual process. Safety is a primary issue, as are mental and physical well-being. If assistance is available, knowing how to access it makes the process faster and less stressful. This article offers some general advice on steps to take after disaster strikes in order to begin getting your home, your community and your life back to normal.

Your first concern after a disaster is your family's health and safety. You need to consider possible safety issues, and monitor family health and well-being.

### Aiding the Injured

Check for injuries. Do not attempt to move seriously injured persons unless they are in immediate danger of death or further injury. If you must move an unconscious person, first stabilize the neck and back, then call for help immediately.

- If the victim is not breathing, carefully position the victim for artificial respiration, clear the airway and commence mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.
- Maintain body temperature with blankets. Be sure the victim does not become overheated.
- Never try to feed liquids to an unconscious person.

### Health

- Be aware of exhaustion. Don't try to do too much at once. Set priorities and pace yourself. Get enough rest.
- Drink plenty of clean water.
- Eat well.
- Wear sturdy work boots and gloves.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and clean water often when working in debris.

### Safety Issues

- Be aware of new safety issues created by the disaster. Watch for washed-out roads, contaminated buildings, contaminated water, gas leaks, broken glass, damaged electrical wiring and slippery floors.
- Inform local authorities about health and safety issues, including chemical spills, downed power lines, washed-out roads, smoldering insulation and dead animals.

## Seeking Disaster Assistance

Throughout the recovery period, it is important to monitor local radio or television reports and other media sources for information about where to get emergency housing, food, first aid, clothing and financial assistance. The following provides general information about the kinds of assistance that may be available.

### Direct Assistance

Direct assistance to individuals and families may come from any number of organizations, including the American Red Cross, Salvation Army or other volunteer organizations. These organizations provide food, shelter and supplies, and assist in cleanup efforts.

### The Federal Role

In the most severe disasters, the federal government is also called in to help individuals and families with temporary housing, counseling (for post-disaster trauma), low-interest loans and grants, and other assistance. The federal government also has programs that help small businesses and farmers.

Most federal assistance becomes available when the president of the United States declares a major disaster for the affected area at the request of a state governor. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will provide information through the media and community outreach about federal assistance and how to apply.

## EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE AFTER DISASTER

### Coping with Disaster

The emotional toll that disaster brings can sometimes be even more devastating than the financial strains of damage and loss of home, business or personal property. Children and older adults are of special concern in the aftermath of disasters. Even individuals who experience a disaster "secondhand" through exposure to extensive media coverage can be affected. Contact local faith-based organizations, voluntary agencies or professional counselors for counseling. Additionally, FEMA and state and local governments of the affected area may provide crisis-counseling assistance.

#### Recognize Signs of Disaster Related to Stress

When adults have the following signs, they might need crisis counseling or stress-management assistance:

- Difficulty communicating thoughts
- Difficulty sleeping
- Difficulty maintaining balance in their lives
- Low threshold of frustration
- Increased use of drugs or alcohol
- Limited attention span
- Poor work performance
- Headaches or stomach problems
- Tunnel vision or muffled hearing
- Colds or flu-like symptoms
- Disorientation or confusion
- Difficulty concentrating
- Reluctance to leave home

- Depression, sadness
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Mood swings and easy bouts of crying
- Overwhelming guilt and self-doubt
- Fear of crowds, strangers or being alone

#### Easing Disaster-Related Stress

The following are ways to ease disaster-related stress:

- Talk with someone about your feelings—anger, sorrow and other emotions—even though it may be difficult.
- Seek help from professional counselors who deal with post-disaster stress.
- Do not hold yourself responsible for the disastrous event or be frustrated because you feel you cannot help directly in the rescue work.
- Take steps to promote your own physical and emotional healing by healthy eating, rest, exercise, relaxation and meditation.
- Maintain a normal family and daily routine, limiting demanding responsibilities on yourself and your family.
- Spend time with family and friends.
- Participate in memorials.
- Use existing support groups of family, friends and religious institutions.
- Ensure you are ready for future events by restocking your disaster-supplies kits and updating your family disaster plan. Doing these positive actions can be comforting.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). (n.d.). Recovering from disaster (Chapter 5) [Excerpt]. In *Are you ready?* Retrieved June 17, 2020, from <https://www.fema.gov>

# COPING WITH THE STRESS OF RELOCATION AFTER A DISASTER

Unplanned evacuations during a disaster can cause great stress on a community and on the individuals in that community. Some of the stressful factors related to sudden evacuations are the following:

- Disruptions of daily life routines
- Separation from family, friends and coworkers
- Worries about the condition of homes and the community.
- Concerns about pets
- Loss of family pictures and special items
- Difficulties getting around in a new location

The stress of evacuation can lead to feelings of isolation in the new location and of being neglected by society and government. Evacuees also may feel there was not adequate time to prepare for the evacuation.

## First Steps of Recovery

Recovering from a disaster occurs in phases over days, weeks and months. Soon after being uprooted by a disaster, you can start the recovery process. During this time, there are three general steps you can take to improve the mental and emotional strength of your family. The following steps will help you to begin to retake control over your life.

### **Step 1: Rebuild physical strength and health.**

Once you and your loved ones are in a safe and secure place (e.g. a shelter, a new apartment, or a place with relatives or friends), make sure to tend to everyone's immediate medical needs if there are any. Be sure everyone has enough to eat and drink to regain their physical strength. Make sure everyone gets some restful sleep in as private a space as possible. Rebuilding physical strength is a good first step to calm shattered emotions.

### **Step 2: Restore daily activities.**

Restoring daily routines helps build a sense of being home mentally and emotionally, even in the absence of a physical home. Simple routines that your family normally does together, such as taking family walks, watching television and reading bedtime stories, help pull the pieces of daily life back together, even in a new place. Restoring daily activities rebuilds the normal sense of morning, afternoon, evening and night. Even though you are away from home and in a strange place, try to resume the daily routines as much as possible.



## EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE AFTER DISASTER

### Step 3: Provide comfort.

Family members are better able to deal with the stress of relocation when they are comfortable and informed. Comfort can be increased by doing the following:

- Provide your family with information about other family members, friends and news of home.
- Express affection for family members in the ways your family normally shows affection.
- Discuss, when ready, the emotions associated with the disaster and relocation—such as feelings of loss; missing home; and worries about family members, friends and pets.

## Emotional Healing

After the initial emergency has passed, and the shock and confusion from disaster relocation have subsided, the physical rebuilding and long-term emotional-recovery phase begins. This longer recovery phase has two steps:

1. Assess all physical and emotional losses the family has experienced. This inventory can help you identify practical actions to take in rebuilding the physical losses the family has experienced.
2. Develop an emotional understanding of the disaster experience and your relocation situation to help rebuild family life. Working through emotions takes time. There is no set time frame or stages for it. Resolving emotions is a natural healing process that relies on talking to friends about your feelings; mentally sorting your emotions; and receiving practical and emotional help from family, friends, your place of worship or other organized support groups in the community.

Your personal support groups can help you process your emotions and understand your experiences. Emotional processing involves experiencing the emotions associated with the disaster and figuring out what the disaster means to your life. One way that many people work through their emotions is by telling the story of what happened.

Many people who have lived through a traumatic incident have an overwhelming urge to tell the story over and over again. By sharing stories, you and those around you can sort out the sequence of events associated with the disaster, which at first may be a confused jumble. By telling the story, you can get input from others about what they saw and begin to put meaning into the experience.

Generally, as you heal emotionally over time, the story will pull together into an organized account that will have vivid details, emotions and reflections about lessons learned during the experience. With emotional healing, thoughts and dreams about the disaster will be less painful. You will have gained some emotional distance from the events of the disaster. How long this process takes depends on what happened during the disaster and your own unique mental and emotional makeup. You will always associate some pain with the disaster, but it will not be so overwhelming after the passage of time allows for emotional healing.

### Signs That Professional Help Is Needed

Here are signs that the person is overwhelmed by their emotions and may need help:

- The story is too painful to tell.
- The person creates a wall of silence around the event for a long time.
- The person cannot express or experience his or her feelings.
- Dreams and thoughts of the experience continue to evoke very painful emotions that do not go away.
- The person's behavior dramatically changes.
- The person has thoughts of hurting themselves or others.

If these signs are present, an appointment with a mental health professional should be arranged to help with the healing process.

## EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE AFTER DISASTER

### How Disaster-Related Stress Affects Young People

Disaster-related stress affects young people in several ways:

- Damage, injuries and deaths that result from an unexpected or uncontrollable event are difficult for most young people to understand.
- Following a disaster, a young person's view of the world as safe and predictable is temporarily lost. (This is true of adults as well.)
- Young people express their feelings and reactions in various ways, especially in different age groups. Many are confused about what has happened and about their feelings. Not every child has immediate reactions; some can have delayed reactions that show up days, weeks or even months later; and some may never have a reaction. Children's reactions are strongly affected by the emotional reactions of their parents and the adults around them.
- Young people can easily become afraid that a similar event will happen again, and that they or their family will be injured or killed.

### How Young People Show Stress

It is normal for young people to show signs of stress after a disaster. Young people show signs of stress differently at different ages or school levels. This article looks at three age groupings:

- Preschool years
- Elementary and middle school years
- High school and teenage years

#### Signs of Stress: Preschoolers

Signs that preschool-age children may be experiencing normal, but high, levels of stress may include

- Waking up confused and frightened from bad dreams
- Being reluctant to go to bed or refusing to sleep alone.
- Acting and showing behaviors younger than their actual age, such as whining, thumb-sucking, bed-wetting, baby talk or fear of darkness
- Clinging to adults more than normal
- Complaining often about illnesses such as stomach aches
- Not having fun doing things they normally enjoyed
- Being irritable

#### Signs of Stress: Elementary- or Middle-School Age

Signs that elementary- or middle school-age children are experiencing normal, but high, levels of stress may include:

- Ongoing concern over their own safety and the safety of others in their school or family
- Irrational fears
- Becoming extremely upset for little or no reason
- Having nightmares and sleep problems
- Experiencing problems in school, such as truancy or misbehavior (e.g. loss of interest, withdrawal or excessive need for attention)
- Complaining of headaches or stomach aches without cause
- Not having fun doing things they normally enjoyed
- Disruptive behaviors—outbursts of anger and fighting
- Being numb to their emotions
- Experiencing guilt or shame about what they did or did not do during the disaster

## EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE AFTER DISASTER

### Signs of Stress: High-School Age

Signs that teenagers may be experiencing normal, but high, levels of stress include:

- Feeling self-conscious about their feelings concerning the disaster
- Feeling fearful, helpless, and concerned about being labeled "abnormal" or different from their friends or classmates (this may lead to social withdrawal)
- Experiencing shame or guilt about the disaster
- Expressing fantasies about retribution concerning people connected to disaster events
- Not having fun doing things they normally enjoyed
- Difficulty concentrating
- Impulsive behaviors
- Emotional numbing
- Seeing the world as an unsafe place

## Helping Young People Understand a Disaster

Disasters can hit young people hard. It is difficult for them to understand and accept that there are events in their lives that cannot be controlled or predicted. When facing an unknown and potentially dangerous situation, young people usually look to adults for answers and help.

Talk with your young person at a level in line with their age. Children handle information differently at different ages. Preschool-age children cannot handle as much information as teenagers.

Before you as an adult can help young people cope with a disaster, it is important for you to recognize your own natural feelings of helplessness, fear and anger, if these exist. Until this occurs, you will not be able to give the young person the full emotional help they need. Nothing is wrong with letting young people know that you do not have all the answers. Things that can be done immediately include the following:

- Let young people know how you see the family situation improving—for example, your plans for their school, your work and family housing.

- Communicate a positive "I'm not helpless" attitude, stressing that "we can get through this together."
- Ask for parenting or other help if the situation gets beyond your abilities and control.

These actions will start the healing process and help the young person to feel relief in knowing the family will regain control and restore their lives.

## Tips for Helping Young People Manage Stress

You can use these practical parenting tips to help deal with managing high levels of stress in young people.

### For Preschool-Age Children

- Reassure young children that the disaster was not their fault in any way.
- Talk with children about how they are feeling, and listen without judgment.
- Let children know they can have their own feelings, which may be different from the feelings of others.
- Let children take their own time to figure things out.
- Do not expect children to be brave or ask them to pretend that they do not think or feel as they do.
- Give them small bits of information in relation to their questions. Too much information can confuse them.

### For Preschool and School-Age Children

- Return to former routines of bedtime, eating and so forth, as soon as possible. If this is not possible, develop new routines. The structure of a routine provides security and assurance.
- Do not expect children to be brave or tough or not to cry.
- Do not minimize the event.
- Hug your children. Hugging lets your children know that someone is there for them.

- Allow special privileges, such as leaving the light on when they sleep.
- Spend extra time with your children at bedtime. Read stories, listen to music and talk quietly.
- Children, just like adults, cope better when healthy. Make sure children are getting balanced meals, proper exercise and enough rest.
- Find ways to emphasize to your children that you love them.
- Encourage children and adolescents to feel in control by letting them choose which clothes to wear, food to eat at meals and so forth.

## Activities to Help Children Manage Stress

Consider the following activities and tips that can help young people manage stress.

### For Preschool and School-Age Children

- Encourage children to draw or paint pictures of how they feel about their experiences. Hang the pictures at a level where children can see them easily. Talking about their drawings can help lessen feelings of stress.
- Playing with Play-Doh or clay is good way for children to release tension.
- Playing music is fun and valuable for children.
- Creating music with instruments or rhythm toys helps relieve stress and tension.
- Making puppets with the children, and putting on a puppet show for family and friends or helping children put on a skit, helps them tell about what happened.
- Don't let children watch too much disaster-related television. Hearing about the events and seeing the tragic images over and over again will certainly raise their anxiety.
- Be aware of your own emotional reactions around your children. It is all right to share your feelings, but you must also show your children that you are in control of your emotions. Do not look to children for your emotional support.

## EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE AFTER DISASTER

### For Teenagers

- Encourage your teenager to talk one-on-one with a trusted adult or in a small group of peers about the event. Generally, this is most successful when you begin with general events, move to more event-specific experiences, and then follow with each person's experiences with the disaster.
- Teenagers may wish to talk about values, moral issues and the meaning of the disaster.

### When Young People May Need Additional Help

Situations may develop when young people need additional help dealing with emotional aftereffects of the disaster. Young people may benefit from help from a health care professional if the emotional stress associated with the disaster does not get better in a few weeks, or when they do any of the following:

- Display continual and aggressive emotional outbursts.
- Show serious problems at school (e.g., fighting, skipping school, arguments with teachers or food fights).
- Withdraw completely from family and friends.
- They cannot cope with routine problems or daily activities.
- Engage in vandalism or juvenile, law-breaking activities.
- Express suicidal ideas.

Reaching out for help is not a sign of weakness. People have limits and sometimes need help when stretched beyond their limits. Seeking help from others can offer solutions that may not be known to you.

## Issues and Tips: Stress Effects in Older People

Several issues need to be taken into account when helping elderly friends and family who may be under stress after a disaster and who are suffering from the effects of a sudden relocation.

## EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE AFTER DISASTER

### Communication Problems

Some older persons in shelters or in new surroundings may have difficulty understanding family and friends, talking to people or answering questions. These communication problems may be caused by normal, age-related problems with memory, seeing and hearing, and the reduced ability to physically move because of illnesses or the effects of medications. Make sure that the older person has the eyeglasses he or she needs and that hearing aids are on before talking to him or her. Be patient and calm. Speak loudly enough to be heard, but do not shout. Keep your messages simple and clear. Repeat information and make sure that the person in your care hears and understands what is said.

### Danger from Falls

Be aware that in unfamiliar settings, clutter and poor lighting could cause an elderly person to fall. Balance problems, muscle weakness and medications can add to the risk of falling. Check new living quarters for anything that could lead to a fall. Make sure stairs and rooms are well lit. Provide walking assistance, if needed.

### Chronic Illness and Dietary Considerations

Arthritis may prevent an elderly family member from standing in a line. Some medications can cause mental confusion or a greater susceptibility to problems such as dehydration. Memory problems can cause communication problems. Neglect of special meal needs in certain illnesses can lead to medical crises. As soon as possible, make sure the elderly family member:

- Has all of his or her medicines
- Eats the foods required to manage illnesses
- Has written diet and medication information along in case he or she is separated from you
- Establishes contact with his or her medical care provider, or finds a new one and provides his or her medical history to the care provider

### Disoriented Behavior

At night, when nearby surroundings are not seen as well as in the day, some elderly people with mild or moderate dementia or problems thinking clearly can become confused about where they are. You may need to orient them to time and place.

Make sure the elderly person has a clock and a calendar in his or her room. If you have any of his or her familiar things, place those in the room. Be sure that there is some soft, non-glaring light in the room and that it is as quiet and calm as possible. If you cannot reorient the elderly person to where he or she is, and your efforts are upsetting, just reassure him or her, and distract the person with other activities.

### Multiple-Loss Effect

The elderly family member who may have lost his or her spouse, income, home or physical capabilities may have difficulty "bouncing back" from the loss. Show empathy for the person's situation by listening. Give comfort by your presence and let him or her know you are there and care. Do not minimize what he or she has lost.

### Worries About Loss of Independence

Loss of the ability to live independently because of a disaster-related injury or loss of a home can be the biggest blow that a disaster deals older people. Within the constraints of the situation, allow them to do what they can for themselves and keep as much dignity and independence as is possible.

### Welfare Stigma and Unfamiliarity with Bureaucracy

Many older family members are unwilling to accept government welfare assistance because they have always "paid their way." In a disaster, however, government help may be needed. Their unwillingness to accept help may be made worse by unfamiliarity with government services for which they are eligible, particularly during disasters. If the person is reluctant to accept assistance, relate the assistance to a time when he or she helped someone in need, or explain that this help comes from taxes he or she has paid.

### Getting Too Hot or Too Cold

Older people may not handle extremes of heat or cold well. Either too much heat or cold can have marked effects upon them. Be aware of the need to keep elderly family members out of extremes of heat and cold.

## EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE AFTER DISASTER

### Dehydration

Elderly people are more susceptible to dehydration. They do not feel thirsty as quickly as young people and do not drink water and other liquids as often. Some of the medicine they take can also lead to water loss. Check to make sure that your elderly relatives have access to safe, clean drinking water and that they are drinking it. Watch for signs of dehydration such as sunken eyes, no tears and dry mouth.

### Language and Cultural Barriers

Lower reading skill levels among some elders and inadequate command of the English language among speakers of other languages can cause confusion and frustration at relief centers or in new housing locations. Try to match the elderly person with someone fluent in his or her native language.

### Dealing with Change

Remember that elderly people have strengths gained from a lifetime of coping with adversity. Know also that elderly people tend to underreport problems, both to family and physicians, as they may want to cope on their own. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to how they feel and act in times of change and relocation.

## Signs of Stress in Older People

Elders can suffer various symptoms, from worsening of preexisting medical problems, problems with medications, new illnesses or psychological stress. Therefore, it is important to make sure that they are medically stable before deciding that these symptoms are due to emotional stress. Under stress, whether from physical or emotional sources, people who are elderly can:

- Become mentally confused
- Tire easily
- Withdraw from friends and family
- Undergo personality changes in severe cases

You should also know that older people might tend to complain of bodily symptoms rather than emotional problems when under stress. Again, remember not to dismiss any bodily symptoms as "just due to stress."

### Special Issues for Frail Elders

Many elderly are very healthy, well-functioning, capable adults. For example, according to the U.S. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, at age 60 years, only 15 percent of elderly people suffer from dementia; at age 85 years, 50 percent of the elderly are affected by dementia. The older, frailer elders are the ones who may be more vulnerable in a disaster due to medical illnesses.

### How to Help Older People Deal with Stress

In general terms, these principles will help guide you when helping an elderly person deal with the stress of evacuation and relocation:

- Provide strong and persistent verbal reassurance.
- Assist with recovery of physical possessions as is safe.
- Visit them often.
- Help reestablish contact with family and friends.
- Assist in obtaining medical and financial assistance.
- Help reestablish medication and any dietary regimens.
- Provide transportation to the doctor, grocery store and so forth.

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). (n.d.). *Relocation stress: Helping families deal with the stress of relocation after a disaster*. Retrieved June 17, 2020, from <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov>

# COPING WITH TRAUMA: HOW CAN FAMILIES BE SUPPORTIVE?

Your loved one has been through a traumatic incident. What can you do to help support them? Below are several suggestions for offering support and comfort during a trying time.

### **Listen.**

One of the most important needs after a trauma is to talk about the event—and to do so often. Talk about it over and over. It may be difficult for you to hear, or you may get tired of hearing the same old story, but talking is a crucial part of your loved one's recovery.

Be supportive and sympathetic, but try to avoid overreacting. Your loved one needs to tell his or her story and not be upset by your reactions. If your loved one tries to shield you from the event by refusing to talk about it, you obviously cannot force him or her to talk. However, you can encourage openness, and listen to whatever else the person wants to say.

### **Include the whole family in the healing process.**

You and your spouse or partner may feel you should protect your children from the upsetting event. Regardless, they'll undoubtedly know something is wrong. This can be stressful for them too, and they may need some help to get through it.

### **Take care of yourself.**

While it is important to be supportive, you also need to take care of yourself. Ask friends and family for help, and don't be afraid to seek counseling for yourself if needed.

### **Enjoy the little things.**

Take time out for your family, have a special meal together or take small outings. Appreciating the little things won't make the pain go away, but will help in the healing process.

Workplace Options. (Reviewed 2020). *Coping with trauma: How can families be supportive?* Raleigh, NC: Author.



# ADDRESSING EMPLOYEES' NEEDS IN A CRISIS

When a traumatic event occurs in the workplace, employees and often the entire organization are impacted. This is a special time that requires special management. Through their immediate and supportive actions, managers can significantly contribute to the recovery of individuals directly and indirectly impacted. Here are some examples of steps managers can take in a crisis.

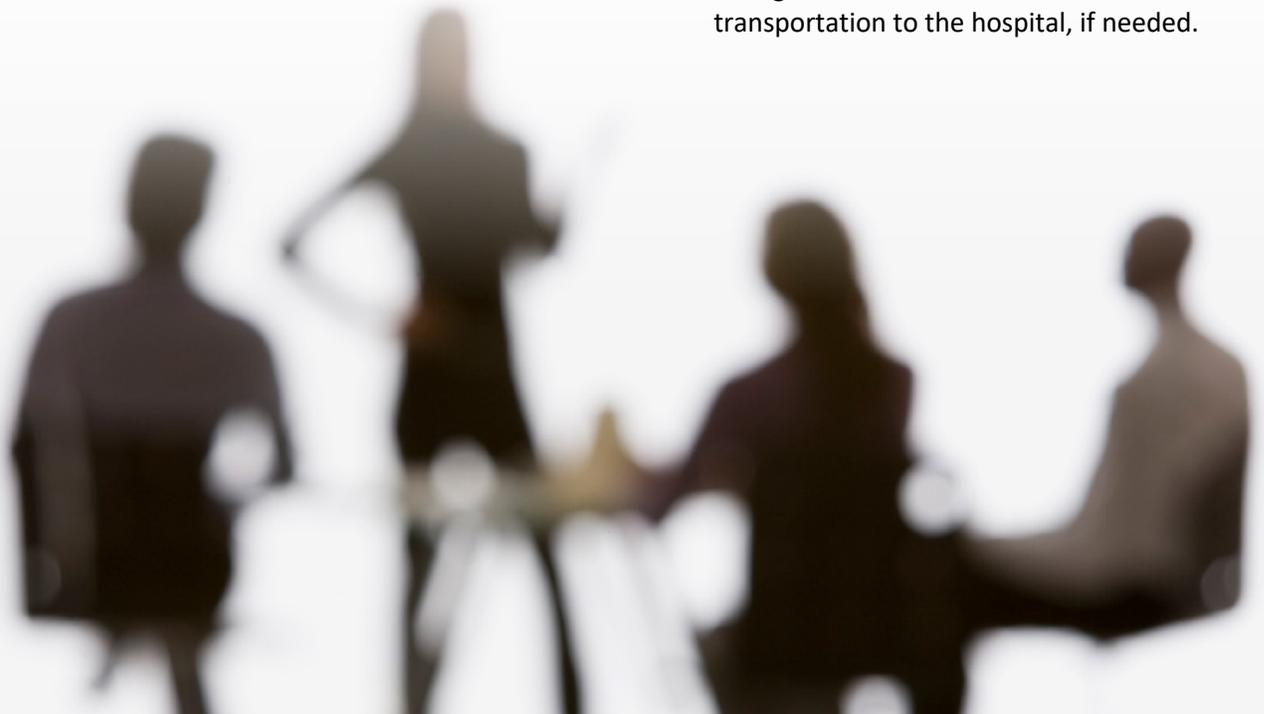
### Safety

- Follow all emergency response procedures to ensure the physical safety of employees, customers or other visitors in the workplace.
- Contact 911 for appropriate local law enforcement or fire department personnel.
- Depending upon the nature of the event, help the employees secure or evacuate the building, move to a designated shelter or follow lockdown procedures.

- Take a count of everyone assembled, and determine if anyone is missing. Inform emergency response personnel of any missing employees.
- Communicate in a calm, controlled manner. Reassure employees that they are safe.
- When available, communicate accurate and verified information to emergency response personnel, your manager, employees and others with a need-to-know position.

### Triage

- Identify those employees most at risk physically. Give necessary emergency first aid and emotional support. If possible, ask about any history of exhibited physical problems. Provide information to emergency response personnel when they arrive. Enlist other employees to stay with their coworkers at the workplace and, if feasible, at the hospital.
- Contact family members of hurt employees and, in a caring manner, inform them of the event. Offer transportation to the hospital, if needed.



## EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE AFTER DISASTER

### Assessment and Follow-Through

- Identify employees who were directly or indirectly involved, for example, any who were minimally hurt during the event, witnesses or first responders. Talk to them to judge how they were affected. You will likely observe a wide range of reactions: from none to extreme agitation. Explain that everyone's reactions are normal responses to an abnormal event. Calmly give them encouragement and support. If necessary, find a colleague to act as a buddy to someone who continues to cry or remains agitated. Consult with your manager, employee assistance program (EAP), or other professional resource if you become concerned about an employee's extreme state of mind.
- Communicate with supervisors and team leaders to assist in identifying needs and providing support. Possible acute needs include water and food, a change of clothing, phones to contact loved ones and transportation home.
- Arrange transportation for anyone needing non-acute medical care.

### Advocacy

- If needed, request additional support from senior management. You may need coverage from other areas or departments to balance out the disruption in your work team. Let senior management know that normal work productivity will be reduced for a period of time after the event.
- Be flexible in work schedules; for example, extend time to complete projects, and if a funeral or memorial service is held during the workday, encourage employees to attend.
- Consult with the EAP about available services and on-site support. Inform employees if any arrangements are made.
- Foster opportunities for coworkers to support one another.

### Communication

- Notify the next of kin in cases of fatal accidental, suicidal or homicidal death.

- Share information as soon as it becomes available. Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know." Follow up when you find the answers to those questions.
- Always communicate in a caring and understanding manner. Talking about an incident is one of the ways people recover from a traumatic event. Model that behavior by sharing your feelings and experience of the incident. However, make sure you have first talked through your experience with someone else. You will want to convey your personal side without losing your composure.
- Help employees feel supported by your presence. Be visible, ask them how they are doing and be a good listener. Don't judge their experience or give them advice about how they should be reacting. If you do, they will shut down and not be forthcoming in the future. Tell them you are extending an open-door policy to them as a result of this crisis. Make sure you can follow through with that promise.
- If you find that your time is limited and you're unable to stay on top of the communication process, appoint an information coordinator. That person can gather pertinent information from law enforcement, family members or other sources; send updates; work with you to share major announcements at meetings and so forth.

### Return to Work

- Returning to normal work schedules and routines promotes a sense of normalcy and recovery from the traumatic experience. Help employees remain at work or return to work as soon as they can. Accommodate employee needs or consider temporary adjustments.
- Provide information on the EAP or other sources of support. Explain why these resources can be helpful at times like these.
- Keep in contact with employees who are off work due to the incident. Help them with the transition back to work when they return.

Sulaski, C. & Schuette, B. (Ed.). (Reviewed 2020). *Addressing employees' needs in a crisis*. Raleigh, NC: Workplace Options.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

The compassion and generosity of the American people is never more evident than after a disaster. People want to help. Here are some general guidelines on helping others after a disaster.

### Donate cash.

Financial contributions to recognized disaster-relief organizations are the most effective donation to make. When the public supports these voluntary organizations with financial contributions, it helps ensure a steady flow of important services to the people in need after a disaster:

- This is the most needed and the most efficient way of helping those impacted by disaster.
- Financial contributions allow voluntary organizations to fund response and recovery efforts, obtain goods and services locally, and provide direct financial assistance to disaster survivors to meet their own needs.
- Make a financial contribution to the voluntary organization of your choice.

If you need help in determining whom to give to, the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD) website has a list of major nonprofits that are active in disaster work: <https://www.nvoad.org>.

### Volunteer.

The generosity and kindness of people around the country does a lot to help communities heal from the tragic consequences of disasters. Volunteer with local organizations to aid disaster victims:

- Volunteer with a nonprofit organization and be trained before the next event to find meaningful volunteer opportunities following a disaster.
- There are many organizations and faith-based groups in your community that have active disaster programs and need volunteers.

These groups offer a wide range of services following a disaster:

- <https://www.nvoad.org>
- <https://www.nationalservice.gov/serve>
- <https://www.ready.gov/citizen-corps>
- <https://www.pointsoflight.org>
- <https://www.networkforgood.com>



## Donate goods.

Learn ways that you can effectively help others after a disaster: **Confirm what is needed before taking action!**

- Donate in-kind goods that are specifically requested or needed by recognized organizations.
- Unsolicited donated goods such as used clothing, miscellaneous household items, and mixed or perishable foodstuffs require helping agencies to redirect valuable resources away from providing services to sort, package, transport, warehouse, and distribute items that may not meet the needs of disaster survivors.
- Confirm the needs by contacting the voluntary organization of your choice before starting to collect.
- If you have a quantity of a given item or class of item to donate, and you need help in determining which organizations to give to, you can post your offer on <https://www.nvoad.org>, where the VOAD members can view and connect with you if needed.

Everyone is moved when they hear the news that disaster has struck a community. By learning the best ways to donate and volunteer, everyone can make a huge difference in the lives of those affected.

## Get involved before disasters happen.

There are many ways to get involved, especially before an emergency or a disaster occurs. Here are some ideas of how you can take action in your community:

- **Join a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)** program, and get trained on basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster medical operations (<https://community.fema.gov/Register>).
- **You Are the Help Until Help Arrives**, designed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), are trainings that can be taken online or in person, where you learn through simple steps how to save a life before a professional arrives (<https://community.fema.gov/until-help-arrives>).

- **Volunteer and receive training** to support disaster and preparedness efforts in your community (<https://www.ready.gov/volunteer>).
- **Teach a preparedness curriculum** in your school. Download everything you need for grades K-12 through FEMA's Ready Kids program (<https://www.ready.gov/kids/educators-organizations>).
- **Promote preparedness online** by sharing preparedness tips on your social media account with Ready's online social media toolkit (<https://www.ready.gov/toolkits>) or public service announcements (<https://www.ready.gov/videos>).
- **Take a free online independent study course** through FEMA's Emergency Management Institute, and gain more knowledge to help your community become more prepared (<https://training.fema.gov/emi.aspx>).

U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Ready.gov. (Revised 2019, September 11). *Helping others & Get involved*. Retrieved June 17, 2020, from <https://www.ready.gov>

# GENERAL

**Accessible Emergency Information**—Surviving Disaster Videos (Sign Language, Braille, Large Print options): [www.accessibleemergencyinfo.com](http://www.accessibleemergencyinfo.com)

### Local Red Cross Locator

<https://www.redcross.org/find-your-local-chapter.html>

**Red Cross Smartphone Apps** will update people on current flooding situation and provide information on safety during a disaster:

- (Google Play)  
<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.cube.arc.hfa&hl=en>
- (iTunes)  
<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/hurricane-american-red-cross/id545689128>

### Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Call 800-621-FEMA to apply for assistance by phone, or visit <https://www.disasterassistance.gov>

### FEMA Text Message Program

(Standard message and data rates apply)

- To locate an open emergency shelter, text SHELTER and a Zip Code to 43362 (4FEMA).
- To locate an open Disaster Recovery Center, text DRC and a Zip Code to 43362 (4FEMA).

### FEMA App

<https://www.fema.gov/mobile-app>

### Financial Assistance Within Designated Natural Disaster Areas

<https://www.usa.gov/disaster-area-help>

### Current Storm Info

#### Google Crisis Map

[https://google.org/crisismap/weather\\_and\\_events](https://google.org/crisismap/weather_and_events)

## Finding Shelters

Local **Salvation Army** Locator

<https://www.salvationarmyusa.org/usn>

**AirBNB**, **Home Away**, and **VRBO** may offer reduced rates for housing in times of disaster:

- AirBNB Open Homes,  
<https://www.airbnb.com/openhomes/disaster-relief>
- Home Away, <https://www.homeaway.com>
- VRBO, <https://www.vrbo.com>

## Pets

### Pets Welcome

Locate pet-friendly housing/hotels:

<https://www.petswelcome.com>

## Prescription Assistance

### Medicine Assistance Tool

<https://medicineassistancetool.org>

### Rx Outreach

888-RXO-1234 (888-796-1234)

<https://rxoutreach.org>

### Patient Access Network Foundation

866-316-7263

<https://www.panfoundation.org>

# ALABAMA

### United Way 2-1-1

#### Alabama 2-1-1

<http://www.211connectsalabama.org>

2-1-1 connects callers to information and services in times of need. It is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, even during disasters. Please call if you are seeking resources such as clothing, food, or programs for your family.

### Alabama Emergency Management Agency

<https://ema.alabama.gov>

<https://twitter.com/AlabamaEMA>

### Road Closures and Evacuations

For information about road closures, you may dial 511 or obtain information online at

<https://algotraffic.com>

# FLORIDA

### United Way 2-1-1

<http://www.flairs.org/current-members>

2-1-1 connects callers to information and services in times of need. It is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, even during disasters. Please call if you are seeking resources such as clothing, food, or programs for your family. Florida has county- and regionally-specific 2-1-1 organizations that can be found at the URL provided above.

### Road Closures and Evacuation Routes

For information about road closures, you may dial 511 or obtain information online at

<https://fl511.com>

### Florida Division of Emergency Management

<https://www.floridadisaster.org>

<https://twitter.com/FLSERT>

### State Assistance Information Line

**1-800-342-3557**

<https://www.floridadisaster.org/planprepare/information-line/>

The State Assistance Information Line (SAIL) is a toll-free hotline activated at the time of an emergency.

### Food and Financial Resources

<https://feedingthegulfcoast.org>

# GEORGIA

### United Way 2-1-1

#### United Way Southwest Georgia,

<http://211online.unitedwayatlanta.org>

2-1-1 connects callers to information and services in times of need. It is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, even during disasters. Please call if you are seeking resources such as clothing, food, or programs for your family.

### Georgia Emergency Management & Homeland Security Agency

<http://www.gema.ga.gov>

<https://twitter.com/GeorgiaEMA>

### Road Closures and Evacuations

Dial 511 or obtain information online.

<https://www.511ga.org>

# LOUISIANA

### United Way 2-1-1

<https://www.louisiana211.org>

2-1-1 connects callers to information and services in times of need. It is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, even during disasters. Please call if you are seeking resources such as clothing, food, or programs for your family.

### Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness

<http://gohsep.la.gov>

<https://twitter.com/gohsep?lang=en>

### Road Closures and Evacuations

Dial 511 or obtain information online.

<https://www.511la.org>

# WHERE TO DONATE

### National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD) website

<https://www.nvoad.org/howtohelp>

### The Red Cross

<https://www.redcross.org/donate/donation.html>

### Volunteers of America – Car Donation Program

<https://www.carshelpingpeople.org>

# *Affected by a hurricane? Your Employee Assistance Program can help.*

If you, or anyone in your family, has been affected by a hurricane or flood, let **CCA@YourService**—your Employee Assistance Program—help with professional counseling, referrals, and assistance on these topics and more:

- Managing your feelings of stress and loss
- How to support children, elders, and friends
- Relocation and housing
- Disaster-relief organizations and agencies
- Steps to financial recovery
- Practical information about cleaning
- Contractors and restoration professionals

**CCA**   
**@YourService**  
RESOURCES & SUPPORT  
FOR EVERYDAY LIVING

**ALWAYS AVAILABLE. ALWAYS CONFIDENTIAL.**  
**TOLL-FREE: 800-833-8707**