

How a Company Can Respond To a Disaster

During times of emergency, it is important for employers to provide compassionate responses to employees' concerns. As a company, your main goals are to:

- Facilitate a sense of security
- Normalize stress reactions
- Provide a way for employees to vent thoughts and emotions
- Provide education on common reactions to traumatic events
- Provide information on additional resources

Best practices to reach these goals are outlined below:

Facilitate Informational Meetings

These meetings need to be facilitated by company representatives who can remain objective and can allow for employees' strong reactions. Taking an objective stance will allow employees a sense of safety. These meetings will provide a sense of structure, which also facilitates a sense of well-being.

A Suggested Agenda for Meeting with Employees:

Step 1. Designate a meeting place and set up group meetings with your employees.

- Limit groups to 15 employees
- Groups can be by department
- Limit meeting to 30 minutes

Step 2. Plan the objectives of the meeting.

- Review current facts of the situation
- Review information as it pertains to the company (if applicable)
- Prepare for employees reactions
- Prepare materials to educate about stress reactions
- Prepare company's resources and plan of action

Step 3. Meet with your employees.

- Review events and facts
- Allow employees to vent emotions and thoughts. Employees will have reactions that range from anger to shock. Expect and support this wide range of responses
- Listen
- Encourage employees to speak one at a time
- Distribute EAP handouts on stress reactions and self-care
- Remind employees of company safety protocols, resources, and plan of action

Point to Resources

At this crucial moment, the role of the workplace is to point employees to the resources that are available to them. Group and community support can go a long way in providing a sense of hope and safety. Remind employees about the Employee Assistance Program. Employees can also be reminded of other resources, such as places of worship, loved ones, friends, and neighbors. You can also brainstorm with employees about any resources they identify.



Communication

Communication is essential. Information can allow people to gain a sense of security. Allow employees access to information via radio and television. Designate a point person(s) in the organization that employees can go to for information. Provide formal communication to employees as needed. Facilitate phone access for employees in order to call family members.

Interruption of Productivity and Interventions

It is important to anticipate that it may not be business as usual for your company. Employees may be distracted, and may feel a sense of danger and a lack of overall safety. Expect that productivity will be lower. Some employees will find comfort in the structure of work. Other employees may need to go home to be with loved ones. There may be some employees who are more overwhelmed. These individuals may need professional attention and can be directed to call the EAP on their own. Any employee can meet with an EAP provider in the area. Employers should allow for this range of employee needs. Identify your business priorities and communicate these to your employees.

Company Response to the Greater Community

The employer can create a sense of hope by developing avenues of action. What can your organization do to help mobilize the community? How can you be of help? Companies can call local community organizations to offer assistance as dictated by the needs of the organization. Donations and financial assistance can be made available to organizations, families, or individuals.

Contact the American Red Cross at 800-448-3543 for additional information.

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