

POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Take care of yourself
- Talk about your experiences with family, friends and co-workers
- Be careful with how much information you share with children
- Understand that others may not care about your experience
- Be considerate of others who may not want to listen to you
- Find support
- Catch up on your rest
- Expect a change of pace
- Expect possible disappointment, frustration, conflict and depression
- Expect mood swings; they will decrease with time
- Share this information with your support system of family and friends



US Army Corps
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SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Most people adjust to returning home after disaster work, though the time required can vary greatly from person to person. If stress reactions persist or interfere with your personal or work life, it is important to seek professional help.

- Contact your district's CPAC for the Employee Assistance Program contact information
- For CISM Peer Support call 918-682-4314 and ask for Beth Cruzen
- Personal family health care professionals
- Meet with your spiritual leader
- Chat with another district team member that served in the same disaster

Think about the great contribution you have made to people who needed help. You have given a gift of time and caring to those who experienced a catastrophe.

After a much deserved rest you may decide to volunteer for more disaster work. You may also decide to move on to completely different tasks. Either way, by taking good care of yourself and getting help when you need it, you will be able to continue making valuable and much needed contributions to others.



PEER SUPPORT

US Army Corps of Engineers

Louisiana

Recovery Field Office

RETURNING HOME

GOING HOME

Disaster work can be an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and a very rewarding experience. It may also cause stress, which may not end when you complete your assignment. You can reduce the stress by taking care of yourself after your return home.

No one is untouched by a disaster, including family, friends and co-workers. You have experienced things that most people could not begin to understand or appreciate. It is important to acknowledge these reactions, recognize problems, identify coping strategies, and to reach out for help if you need it.

EMOTIONAL REACTIONS

Keep the following things in mind and realize they are normal:

- *Sadness:* You may feel sadness, grief, and anger about what happened and what you saw.
- *Anxiety:* You may feel anxious about you and your family's safety.
- *Disappointment:* You may feel disappointed if others appear not interested in hearing about your experiences.
- *Anger:* Co-workers, family and friends problems may seem trivial compared to what you've seen.

- *Frustration:* Your needs may not match those of family and friends. For example they may want to dine out and all you want is a home cooked meal.
- *Emotions:* You may experience emotions that surprise and confuse not only you but others. They are normal. Consider discussing them.
- *Daydreaming:* You may find you daydreaming and thinking of all these experiences and want to return to the disaster. Remember you are important to people at home too.
- *Mood Swings:* Mood swings are normal after returning home. When you have time to put your disaster work into perspective, they should pass.
- *Impatience:* Things at work and home seem to move at a slower pace.
- *Fitting In:* Remember normal work and home dynamics of life have changed.
- *Children:* When you talk with children about the disaster, try to limit telling them about everything you've seen and done. Be sure to involve them in your family emergency plans. That will help to

reduce their fears about a disaster at home.

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

Remember you may experienced long hours, overcrowding, poor sanitation, different diet and foods, lack of exercise, and different sleeping patterns. New work assignments, different personalities and coping with the unexpected. This has a cumulative effect on you that may continue upon your return home.

Watch for unexplained physical symptoms and have them checked immediately by your family physician. Unchecked they may result in a more serious illness.

- Unexplained aches and pains
- Lingering cold or flu-like symptoms
- Changing sleep patterns
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco or over the counter medications.
- Crying more easily
- Overwhelming guilt or self-doubt

Be sure to get enough sleep and eat balanced meals. Get regular exercise and take vitamins and prescribed medications. Build personal "down" time into your schedule. Spend time with supportive family and friends. Look for easy ways to ease tension such as: hobbies, reading, listening to music, writing or walking.