

Emergency Responders Tips for Taking Care of Yourself

Important Steps to Take

There are important steps responders should take before, during, and after an event. To take care of others, responders must be feeling well and thinking clearly.

Preparing for a Response

- Try to learn as much as possible about what your role would be in a response.
- If you will be traveling or working long hours during a response, explain this to loved ones who may want to contact you. Devise ways you may be able to communicate with them. Keep their expectations realistic and take the pressure off of yourself.
- Talk to your supervisor and establish a plan for who will fill any urgent ongoing work duties unrelated to the disaster while you are engaged in the response.
- Make plans for your household, childcare, and pet care needs if you will be away from home.

A resource available to you, right now. Counselors are available 24/7 for in the moment support. We can also offer you a referral to a local counselor for in-person and virtual sessions.

Get Support From Team Members, Develop a Buddy System

In a buddy system, two responders partner together to support each other, and monitor each other's stress, workload, and safety.

- Get to know each other. Talk about background, interests, hobbies, and family. Identify each other's strengths and challenges.
- Keep an eye on each other. Try to work in the same location if you can.
- Set up times to check-in with each other. Listen carefully and share experiences and feelings. Acknowledge tough situations and recognize accomplishments, even small ones.
- Offer to help with basic needs such as sharing supplies and transportation.
- Monitor each other's workloads. Encourage each other to take breaks. Share opportunities for stress relief (rest, routine sleep, exercise, and deep breathing).
- Communicate your buddy's basic needs and limits to leadership – make your buddy feel “safe” to speak up.