



How to help your employees when disaster strikes



Disasters can happen anywhere, at any time.

You may have days to prepare — or merely minutes. Disasters not only endanger the well-being of your employees, but they can also have a lasting effect on your business. It's best to be prepared— and let your staff know you're there to support them.



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Before it strikes

The most important thing is to keep you and your employees safe. If a disaster happens during work hours, you might be confined in your workplace for a period of time. It's a good idea to have a disaster supply kit ready to go, including:

Flashlight with extra batteries

Use the flashlight to find your way if the power is out. Do not use candles or other open flame for emergency lighting.

Battery-powered radio

News about the emergency can change fast. You may be concerned about family and friends in the area. Radio reports will give information about the areas most affected.

Food

Store enough food for at least one day. That's three meals for each person. Choose foods that don't need to be refrigerated, prepared or cooked. Also choose foods that don't need added water.

For example:

- Ready-to-eat canned meals, meats, fruits and vegetables
- Canned juices
- High-energy foods (granola bars, energy bars, etc.)

Water

Keep at least one gallon of water per person on hand. You may need more if you are on medications that require water or that increase thirst. Plastic bottles are good if they have a screw-on lid. Glass bottles can break.

First aid supplies

If your employer doesn't provide first aid supplies, have the following essentials:

- Adhesive bandages, various sizes
- Gauze pads
- Germicidal hand wipes or alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Large medical grade non-latex gloves

- Adhesive tape
- Antibacterial ointment
- Cold pack
- Scissors
- Tweezers
- CPR breathing barrier (face shield)

Medications

Keep a store of pain relievers, stomach remedies and other over-the-counter drugs your employees may use often. Ask your employer about storage concerns.

Tools and supplies

- Emergency "space" blanket (Mylar)
- Paper plates and cups, plastic utensils
- Non-electric can opener
- Personal hygiene items, including toothbrushes, toothpaste, hairbrushes, combs, soap, contact lens supplies and feminine supplies

If a disaster occurs outside of working hours, you'll have little control over the safety of your employees. If you have time before the disaster occurs, encourage your employees to pay close attention to emergency management officials. They should obey all warnings and evacuation orders.



After a disaster

A disaster can often bring with it a sense of chaos. The day-to-day “normal” can feel like it’s been turned upside-down. Things can be unpredictable. It can help to focus on what you can control.

Create a prioritized list of what you will need to do and the resources you’ll need. Then, focus on the needs of your employees. If they were directly impacted by the disaster, they may not know where to turn for help. On the next page, you’ll find a helpful list of resources to share with your staff. Consider printing, copying and distributing the list before the event, if possible, in case you lose electricity.





Disaster resource list

- FEMA Emergency Management offices/agencies by state
<https://www.fema.gov/about/organization/regions>
- Emergency services by state
<http://www.ready.gov/community-state-info>
- Public safety by state
<http://www.statelocalgov.net/50states-public-safety.cfm>
- Find hospitals by state
<http://www.hospitallink.com/>
- US disaster assistance website
<http://www.disasterassistance.gov>
- Veteran's Affairs offices by state
<http://www.va.gov/statedva.htm>
- Free next of kin emergency contact registry
<http://nokr.org>
- US Department of Transportation by state
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/webstate.htm>
- American Red Cross
<http://www.redcross.org>
- Animal shelters listed by state
<http://www.animalshelter.org/shelters/states.asp>
- Listing of food banks by state
<http://feedingamerica.org>
- The Salvation Army
<http://www.salvationarmy.org>
- Public health resources: Health departments by state
<https://www.cdc.gov/public-health-gateway/php/communications-resources/health-department-directories.html>
- Poison control 24/7
<https://poisoncenters.org>
- Animal poison control 24/7
<https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control>
- Where to go and how to obtain vital records
https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/w2w/index.htm?CDC_AA_refVal=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Fnchs%2Fw2w.htm
- Address Change
<https://www.usa.gov/change-address>
- Bank Records
<https://home.treasury.gov/about/offices/management/privacy-transparency-and-records>
- Damaged money
<https://www.bep.gov/services/mutilated-currency-redemption/submit-a-request>
- Document preservation
<http://www.archives.gov/preservation/disaster-response/guidelines.html>
- Drivers' licenses and vehicle registration
<https://usa.gov/state-motor-vehicle-services>
- Federal civilian personnel records
<https://www.archives.gov/personnel-records-center/civilian-personnel/federal-agencies>
- Green card replacement
<https://www.uscis.gov/green-card/after-we-grant-your-green-card/replace-your-green-card>
- Medicare card replacement
<https://www.medicare.gov/basics/get-started-with-medicare/using-medicare/your-medicare-card>
- Military service records
<http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/>
- Passport
http://travel.state.gov/passport/lost/lost_848.html
- Savings bonds recovery
<https://www.treasurydirect.gov/savings-bonds/manage-bonds/lost-stolen-destroyed-ee-or-i-bonds/>
- School records
<https://www.ed.gov/about/contact-us/faqs/Student%20Records%20and%20Privacy>
- Social Security card replacement
<https://www.ssa.gov/number-card/replace-card>
- Tax returns
<http://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc156.html>



Helping employees help each other

Some of your employees may be less fortunate than others when it comes to being the victim of a disaster situation. Many people are unsure of how to help their coworkers during this difficult time. As a manager, the best thing you can do is make the giving process easier.

Every company has their own policies regarding giving networks. Be sure to check with your management team before implementing any new program.

The following are ways you and your employees can help coworkers and their loved ones through the rebuilding process:

- **Find out what the family needs and take up a collection.** Sometimes helping someone out can be as simple as asking what was lost and what is needed. Many disaster victims lose clothing items, bedding, toiletries and even food – especially during power outages. Create a list of goods that may be helpful and make it available for your employees to view. That way they can contribute items if they wish to but won't feel pressured into giving.
- **Allow employees to donate vacation/personal time.** Under certain circumstances, employees may donate paid time off (PTO) to a coworker who is experiencing a situation that requires time off work. Be sure to check with your Human Resources department before suggesting PTO donations to your employees.
- **Collect monetary donations for disaster-related non-profit organizations.** After a disaster, many companies support relief efforts by making financial commitments to non-profit organizations. In some cases, your company might even match employee donations. Be sure to review your company's policy on monetary giving and let employees know how to donate.

- **Help employees join volunteer groups.** During difficult financial times, many people may not have the means to give goods or money. One of the best ways to help is to donate time. Research volunteer groups in the area to determine which ones need extra people to help with disaster relief. Distribute available volunteer group information to your staff and encourage them to take a few hours of their free time to help those in need.

- **Encourage blood donations.** Groups such as the American Red Cross and America's Blood Centers are always looking for blood donations. This is especially important after a disaster where lives may have been lost or people are injured. Locate the nearest blood donation centers to your office and notify your staff of their locations and giving requirements.

The most important thing you can do is offer support and understanding to employees who may have been in the path of a disaster. Let them know you appreciate them. All the while, be sure to take care of yourself. Take some time each day to breathe deeply and relax.





There are times when, despite our best efforts, we find ourselves confused, struggling and in need of help. Don't be afraid to reach out to someone for extra support — and encourage your employees to do the same.

Confidential services are available to you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



Get started today

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