

Natural Disasters & First Responders' Mental Health



The stress of natural and other man-made disasters has a unique impact on the mental health of first responders. As a first responder, it is important to care for your own mental well-being before and after you care for others. Local, professional and peer resources are available in North Carolina to help.



Ways to support mental and emotional health while responding to natural disasters

- Get to know your team and check in with one another; create a support system
- Stay connected to friends and family
- Learn mental health first aid
- Learn the signs of burnout and PTSD and when to find support
- Continue recommended medications and treatments
- Eat well, make time to rest and limit substances that impact stress levels like caffeine and alcohol
- Know that breaks are important to do the work well

RESOURCES

- First Responders and Disaster Responders Resource Portal: [Bit.ly/SAMHSAresponders](https://bit.ly/SAMHSAresponders)
- Responder Assistance Initiative: [NCDPS.gov/RAI](https://ncdps.gov/RAI)
- Self-Care Tips: [Bit.ly/CDCResponders](https://bit.ly/CDCResponders)
- Compassion Fatigue: [Bit.ly/FRCompassionFatigue](https://bit.ly/FRCompassionFatigue)
- Psychological First Aid: [Bit.ly/VAFirstAid](https://bit.ly/VAFirstAid)
- Free, 24/7 Disaster Distress Helpline: **800-985-5990** (Use videophone for ASL)
- Disability Guidance: [Bit.ly/FRTrainingDisability](https://bit.ly/FRTrainingDisability)

Print or screenshot this information to have on hand.

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Man-Made Disasters & First Responders' Mental Health



Ways to support mental and emotional health while responding to man-made disasters

- Learn mental health first aid
- Connect with colleagues and peer groups to talk about your experiences
- Plan regular calls and visits with loved ones
- Take regular breaks from news coverage
- Learn signs of traumatic stress and how to get support
- Continue recommended medications and treatment
- Eat well, make time to rest and limit substances that impact stress levels like caffeine and alcohol
- Reach out to a mental health professional

RESOURCES

- General Information: [Bit.ly/SAMHSAMassViolence](https://bit.ly/SAMHSAMassViolence)
- Self-Care Tips: [Bit.ly/CDCResponders](https://bit.ly/CDCResponders)
- 988 Lifeline: [Bit.ly/988DisasterSurvivors](https://bit.ly/988DisasterSurvivors)
- PTSD Information: [Bit.ly/PTSDMassViolence](https://bit.ly/PTSDMassViolence)
- NC Peer Support Team: [NCFRPS.org](https://www.ncfrps.org)
- Safe Call Now: 206-459-3020, [SafeCallNowUSA.org](https://www.safecallnowusa.org)
- 24/7 Disaster Distress Helpline: 800-985-5990 (Use videophone for ASL)



Recognize the Signs of PTSD

Symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) usually begin within three months of a traumatic event, but they can show up later as well. Symptoms can include, among others:

- Reliving the traumatic event with flashbacks
- Avoiding places or thoughts that remind you of the event
- Feeling tense, on guard or on edge
- Having difficulty concentrating
- Having difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Feeling irritable and having aggressive outbursts
- Engaging in risky or destructive behavior
- Experiencing ongoing fear, anger, guilt or shame
- Losing interest in activities you used to enjoy
- Feeling socially isolated

It's never too late or too early to reach out for help – you can't pour from an empty cup. ❤️

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