

## Managing Employees After a Disaster

Natural or man-made disasters can cause a continued disruption to everyday life long after the event itself has passed. In the aftermath of such an event, you and your employees may be feeling the emotional and physical effects of loss and the stress that results from ongoing recovery efforts. During this time, it is important to remember that employees may have more pressing concerns that affect their everyday work routines and can impede them from functioning at their regular levels.

While resuming operations can be a tough time for your business, it is important that you consider the individual situations of your employees to ensure they are able to successfully manage the rebuilding of both their home and work lives. It is important that your employees are taken care of first so they are safely and adequately able to assist your customers.

### Modify Office Policies

Depending on the scope of the disaster, your employees may have suffered severe losses. Relaxing dress codes and office phone use policies, along with allowing for flexible work schedules can make it easier for your employees to handle affairs in their personal lives.

### Expand Telecommuting

If transportation is disrupted and work can be done from home, consider allowing employees to telecommute. This can make the work day easier on employees, allowing them to be closer to their families. Depending on the extent of damages suffered by local roadways or your business's physical location, it can also prevent unnecessary exposure to potential safety hazards.

### Account for New Hazards

Post-disaster environments are often less safe and sanitary than normal. Throughout the recovery process special care should be taken to make employees aware of hazards caused by the disaster that are not normally present. If employees do have to work in an area that presents a potential hazard, make sure you provide them with the proper safety equipment.

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In the aftermath of a disaster, employees may have their own personal concerns to attend to. They will need time and support from their employer as they rebuild their lives both at work and at home.

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### Preventing Overwork and Exhaustion

It is also important to consider the strenuous nature of recovery efforts. Employees may be stressed from an increased effort at work only to go home at night and have to address their own personal issues resulting from the disaster. Exhaustion and lack of sleep can decrease alertness and impair judgment, putting them at an increased risk for accidents.

To prevent overwork, it is important to ensure that employees are not working too many hours and receive adequate breaks. Try to maintain an appropriate number of staff members for any responsibilities created as a direct result of the disaster. Take into account that normal job functions may have to be reassigned while employees focus on recovery efforts. Set clear priorities for what needs to be accomplished now, while also postponing work that is not a necessity in the short term.

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