Support for evacuated employees and families

You have been able to ensure an evacuation of you, your family and co-workers from a very frightening, stressful and distressing situation.

Witnessing events that were beyond your personal control can result in feeling helpless and perhaps powerless. Concern for your security and your family's future may leave you anxious and uncertain about what will happen next and what measures to take. You may also be anxious and concerned for people who stayed in the evacuated area.

Over the next weeks and months, you may be living in unfamiliar temporary accommodations. You, your family and your co-workers may be affected by immense personal and material losses or considering how to rebuild your lives post-evacuation. You, or others around you, may also experience reactions that seem to come out of nowhere as a result of the situation. These types of reactions and behaviours are normal and are a way of helping to process the anxiety and uncertainty of the present situation. Each of you may be demonstrating how recent events and the evacuation are having a personal emotional impact on you.

The following tips and guidelines are to assist you, your family and your colleagues in coping through the period of uncertainty following an evacuation.

How do I help my family?

It is important to remember that there is no right or wrong way to cope with the present circumstances. Personal and family routines will assist you and your families in preparing your next steps until you establish housing that is more permanent. Here are some tips to consider:

- Re-establish regular meal and sleeping routines
- Assign chores and household tasks appropriate to the children in your care.
- Don't overlook children's feelings. Some children may be clingy, act out or display regressive behaviour. They need to feel they can count on you for extra attention, love and support. Reassure them, making sure they understand they are not responsible for the problems you face
- In an unfamiliar city establish a meeting point in case you are separated from your family or colleagues
- Be aware/ more alert to changes
- Talk to each other/ check-in with each other/ acknowledge each others' concerns
- Encourage lots of talk and be open to conversation and reflection about what is going on
- Keep family and friends aware of your whereabouts and plans. Whenever possible, let them know when next you expect to contact them.

The emotional strain of going through a period of uncertainty can bring out a number of physical and emotional reactions. These reactions can be uncomfortable, impacting concentration, productivity and focus even disrupting sleep patterns.

Some emotional and physical responses might be:

- Less talkative, distracted
- Increased anxiety
- Increase irritability
- Questioning priorities
- Changes in appetite
- Verbal outbursts
- Heightened sensitivity
- Reluctance to travel
- Nightmares
- Fearful of sudden changes

For each person there is a trigger that reminds us of feelings linked to an emotionally difficult event. It is important to be alert to these triggers and to be aware of what you can do if they happen to you, a co-worker or to a family member. It's important for you, your family member or co-workers to understand that the reactions displayed are automatic, individual and not predictable in anyway.

As a co-worker what can you do?

- Be extra patient
- Realize that the emotions will roller-coaster and moods can change unexpectedly
- Be present to your colleagues. In an unfamiliar town or setting, familiar faces will be a source of support and comfort
- Communicate. Focus your discussions on information confirmed by reliable sources.

For yourself and other caregivers:

- Make sure that you are talking too/ don't keep feelings inside
- Eat healthy well balanced meals
- Review your priorities, keeping in mind that your partner's viewpoint on what should be considered top priority may differ from yours
- Don't expect things to instantly restore themselves. Accept that restoration, physical and emotional, takes time
- Limit alcohol and caffeine consumption
- If you find yourself being upset or disturbed by the news, limit your exposure by turning off the radio and TV

How do I deal with these reactions?

- Get rest.
- Talk so that you can you share your feelings and reactions to the situation
- Accept support from loved ones, friends and neighbours
- Eat well balance, regular meals and get rest
- Drink lots of water/ **avoid** alcohol
- Keep a normal (as possible) schedule

How Your EAP can help

Remember that wherever you are, the confidential Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services are accessible to you. Emotional support services are available and accessible 24 hours a day seven days a week.

Call your Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) 24 hours a day, seven days a week at 1.844.880.9142 or visit workhealthlife.com.