


Supporting Employees After Disasters and Emergencies

Role of Human Resources and Managers in
Workplace Emergency Management

Natural disasters, pandemics, and other devastating events create a host of problems for company human resources.

Everything from structural damage to loss of productivity to employee assistance must be addressed simultaneously.

Even if the emergency is an event that occurs outside of the workplace, it will likely have an impact both on people in the workplace and on the business itself in general.

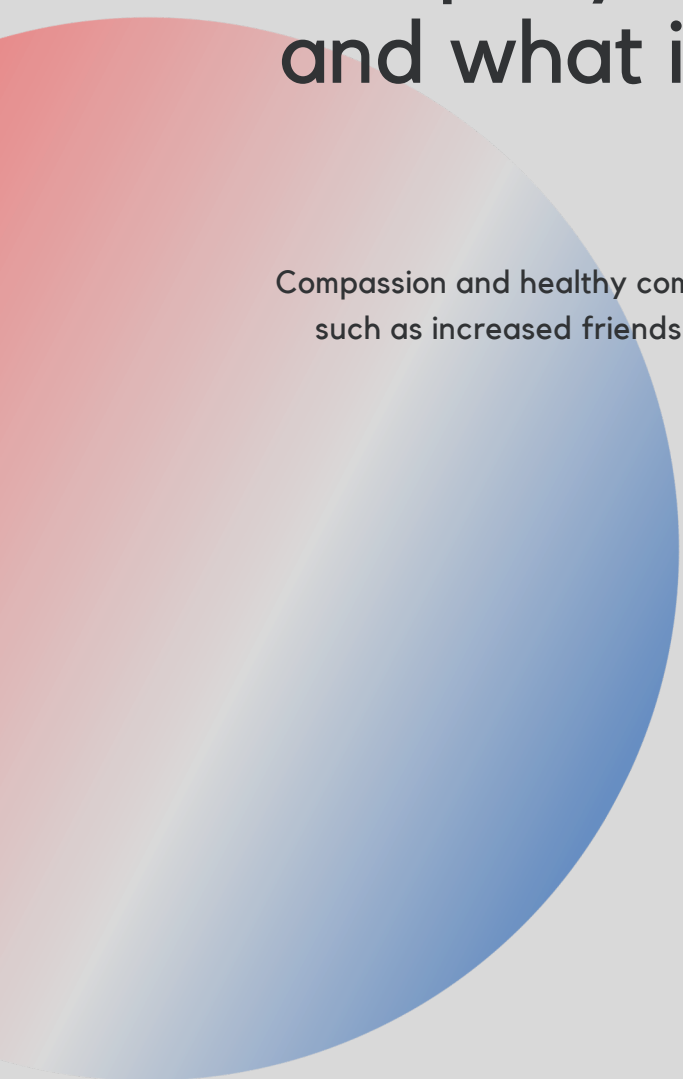


Remember the H in "HR"

At the end of the day, every organization is about people;

Those who work with us and the people we serve.

- HR is responsible for employee well-being, including crisis communications.
- Therefore, when disasters or crises of any kind occur, the human element should take precedence over business and industry.
- Compassion and healthy communication can provide long-lasting results such as increased friendship among employees and loyalty to your organization.



It's the right balance
between what the
company needs to recover
and what individuals need.

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1. Communicate frequently through multiple channels

During and after a disaster, employees need to know what is going on and what is expected of them.

It is important to restore some sense of normalcy while helping employees cope with change.



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1. Communicate frequently through multiple channels

- In this critical time, be the right router and the source of comfort your employees need by using clear communication that expresses trust and security.
- You don't want to make promises you won't keep, but your messages should be supportive and hopeful rather than discouraging.



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1. Communicate frequently through multiple channels

- Use every available channel, including company-wide and department-level emails, messages posted on your company's intranet and websites, communications apps, texts, social media accounts, and even on-site signage.
- **Using multiple channels at the same time helps you reach people wherever they are.**
- Check your employees regularly and encourage them to do the same. *If you are in a disaster area, remember that power outages are common, so keep your messages as short as possible.*



2. Be clear about next steps

After the initial impact and shock of a devastating event wears off, everyone's attention will begin to turn to support and rebuilding efforts.

- As this phase begins, it's especially important to inform your workforce of what's next.



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2. Be clear about next steps

Don't assume that employees know what you think about unprecedented events like disasters.

Your communication with them should mean everything, such as:

- Hours of operation for the coming days/weeks (including modified or regular schedules)
- Flexibility to work remotely or part-time (if that's an option)
- How does the permit registration work during the disaster process?
- Whether it's okay to bring your kids to the office if the school is closed
- Which parts of the building are unsafe or non-functional (if any)
- Road conditions and traffic study areas

Depending on the disaster and how your company is progressing, your employees may need to update once or twice a day.

To create a sense of normalcy, try to send your messages on a regular schedule, for example at 7 o'clock in the morning and at 5 o'clock in the evening.



3. Facilitate Healing Support

There's no way to sugarcoat this:

Employees directly or indirectly affected by a natural disaster or other crisis will need support.

- Your company can allocate resources to psychologically support employees.
- Even if such a resource is not available, you can make this difficult time a little easier by putting employees in touch with organizations that can help them.
- Include contact information (website links, phone numbers and addresses) for government and local agencies, support centers.



4. Coordinate volunteer efforts

Employees who are not directly affected by the disaster will naturally want to help their colleagues and other people.

- Providing employees with opportunities to support their colleagues and communities helps reduce the stress felt by all who are directly or indirectly affected.
- It is also a source of pride and purpose that employees can work with their companies to support other employees and the community.



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4. Coordinate volunteer efforts

- Facilitate company-wide volunteering by coordinating an internal communication center where managers and employees can communicate directly with each other about immediate and ongoing needs.
- This can be as simple as creating a private group on social media or creating a page on your company's intranet. A digital contact center can be particularly useful when trying to manage remote teams scattered across the country.
- If you're a smaller company or don't want to create specific pages on social media or the intranet, consider sending out daily emails with updated needs and information on how to help.



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4. Coordinate volunteer efforts

Keep things simple *"Keep things simple"*

- **Do not overlook the obvious.** Make it easy for employees and customers to contribute to local charity efforts by adding a donation button to your website. You can also provide links to donation sites in your email messages or signature.
- Never underestimate the power of even the simplest act of kindness. After a natural disaster such as an earthquake, there is often a great demand and need for the demolition and reconstruction of buildings and structures.
- **However, you don't need to mobilize all the way for a big help.** Emergency responders, NGO workers and volunteers will work long hours to rebuild communities.



5. Take care of customers

Assisting customers and suppliers directly affected by the disaster or crisis

- This means providing human needs and survival materials that people may need.
- If your volunteering and improvement efforts do not specifically involve your customers and suppliers, consider creating a separate initiative that addresses their needs, if possible.
- You might even consider partnering with them as part of your volunteer efforts to help a larger population.



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5. Take care of customers

- As a result of displaced or confused employees, you may be working to serve them only with a core team.
- Communicating with customers is essential so they understand what's going on and how you're dealing with it. They will likely be reasonable and understand that you cannot provide a normal level of service.
- **But at least let them know what you're doing to meet their most critical need, and then make sure you keep that promise.**




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5. Take care of customers

Yes, this can mean overtime for talented and willing employees.

Most employees will want to help. Do your best to make employees feel appreciated for giving their best during this difficult time.

If they're working late at night, give them dinner, once everything is back to normal, offer them a flexible day or other incentive that you think is appropriate.




6. Encourage taking responsibility in your "decision"

Disasters and crises can be against those who take too much responsibility.

are often much more difficult for " **innate-responsibility buyers**" as a character trait . People who are used to helping others may suddenly find themselves in need of help.

- these employees who need extra support **that being a responsible decision-maker** will not only help them overcome their own trauma, but will also give volunteers and donors a sense of purpose and fulfillment.
- When you encourage both decision making and being responsive supporters, you help build long-lasting teams that work well together.



7. Consider "survival guilt" (Survivor Guilt)

People who have not been directly affected by a disaster or crisis experience what is known as **survival guilt** .

- When we see others suffering on such a large scale, we often feel guilty. *Why did we survive when colleagues, friends and family went through something so tragic?*
- **Remind your team that guilt doesn't help anyone. To shake it off, put your energy and emotions into helping others.**
- Look at your actions in helping an important cause as a way to show gratitude for being alive.



8. Cope with the distraction of trauma

When employees return to work

"I feel so useless. I should be out there helping people instead of sitting here doing it."

He might say things like that.



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"I feel so useless. I should be out there helping people instead of sitting here doing it."

Your answers can take the following forms:

- **Whether making a donation or providing physical support; Remind them how helpful they are already.**
- **Explain to them that getting back to work boosts the local economy and helps the whole country get back on its feet. It also enables them to serve customers and help keep the company (and therefore their livelihoods) strong.**

Remember, recovery is a marathon, not a sprint.

Recovery takes weeks, months, and sometimes even years, which can become overwhelming trying to get things right.

That's why it's important to advance in an attitude that's appropriate for yourself, your employees, and your company.

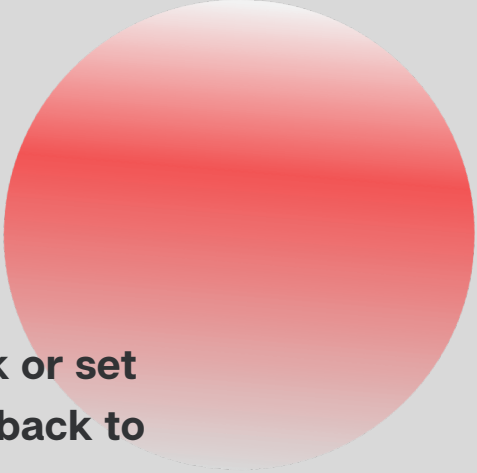
Remember that everyone changes as a result of this event.

People may experience trauma by dealing with their own loss and the loss of those around them for days or weeks.

They may have witnessed firsthand the pile of debris in their front yard or seen deceased loved ones suffering from illness.



No one can be very experienced with destruction of this magnitude and change the results quickly. **It will take time for everyone to get over this.**



There is no rulebook or set timeline for getting back to normal.

Everyone processes change differently.

- Check the health of your team during the weeks following a disaster or catastrophic event.
- You will probably be able to notice that something is "not quite right" about them. Don't take this lightly.
- Remind them as often as needed about your employee support program (WSP), if applicable, and other resources available to them.



Prepare for Future Disasters

- Once everything is back to normal, be sure to review and update the company's disaster recovery plan while the event is still in your mind.
- **What worked and what didn't during the last disaster or crisis? Ask for feedback from your lead team and key employees, and then deliver the updated plan to everyone in your organization.**
- Up-to-date plans will help ensure that you are prepared for the next devastating event that we hope will happen long after.
- Be sure to consider the psychology of your employees and people directly affected by disasters in your plans.

Work and human.

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Adalet Mah. Manas Bulvarı No:39 Folkart Towers B
Tower Floor:31 Bayraklı/İzmir

+90 535 624 90 35


www.nhumandanismanlik.com

www.worknhuman.com

info@nhumandanismanlik.com

 worknhuman.com

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