CONCERN:EAP
Real help, real experts, real fast.

LifeAdviser Special Edition

December 2017

Southern California Wildfires



Local Resources & Emergency Links

Ready Ventura County : http://www.readyventuracounty.org/. For information on the fires, evacuations, road/school closures and shelter information for Ventura County.

LA County Emergency Operations: http://emergency.lacity.org/skirball-fire

Shelter Information: American Red Cross
Current information for Red Cross shelters by address, city, state, zip code. Updated every 30 minutes. http://www.redcross.org/get-help/disaster-relief-and-recovery-services/find-an-open-shelter

Resident Check-in: American Red Cross Safe & Well Website - http://www.redcross.org/get-help/disaster-relief-and-recovery-services/contact-and-locate-loved-ones or call 1-**800-733-2767** to let your family and friends know that you are safe.

Wildfires and high winds in Ventura and Los Angeles Counties are putting homes and businesses at risk, causing residents to evacuate and seek safety far from the blazes. In times of disaster, a plan of action can save lives. We have prepared this special edition of the *LifeAdviser* to give you vital information on how to create and execute a disaster plan and steps to take afterward.

Before You Go

Emergency Essentials Checklist

One of the most important elements that need to be added to your emergency essentials is often the most overlooked—family documents. Records, contracts, deeds, and other important documents need to be protected during an emergency situation. While it's best to collect your documents in advance of an emergency, do not let the gathering of these items impede you from making a timely evacuation:

- Will
- Insurance policies
- Contracts
- Deeds
- Stocks & bonds
- Passports, social security cards, immunization records
- Bank account numbers
- Credit card account numbers and companies
- Inventory of valuable household goods
- Important telephone numbers
- Family records: birth, marriage, death certificates

Professional Help is Available

Tips in this newsletter may help you plan for a disaster or cope in the aftermath. However, if you are feeling anxious or having difficulty managing intense feelings, we encourage you to call CONCERN at 800.344.4222 or go to our website at https://employees. concern-eap.com to request counseling with a licensed professional.

Evacuating to a Public Shelter

What to Expect

Evacuating an area where a disaster has occurred is the smart thing to do. It not only gives you the opportunity to move your family to a safer, more secure location, but it also reduces the amount of interference that occurs when emergency management professionals move into your area. Leave when you're asked to leave and you'll be doing your part to help with disaster recovery.

Here are some things you should know about going to an evacuation shelter.

Evacuation shelters are provided during emergency situations for those citizens who have no other place to go. It is recommended that you make other arrangements with a friend or relative who lives outside of the evacuation area. You will probably be more comfortable in a less crowded environment and among friends. Remember, alcohol, weapons, and pets are not permitted in public shelters.

Many churches will provide shelter for members, and businesses should consider sheltering employees and families if possible.

Buildings used for evacuation shelters are usually public schools, event centers, or other large sites that are staffed by Red Cross volunteers, National Guard personnel, or other organizations. Shelters are often crowded, can be uncomfortable during power outages, have long lines for food and restrooms, and maintain a constant level of noise making it difficult to rest or sleep.

Keep in mind it is possible that you might have to stay in the shelter for several days. If you go to a public shelter, you will need to take the following items:

- A change of clothing and sturdy shoes
- Toiletries and personal items
- Blankets or sleeping bags and pillows
- Identification and any important papers
- Games or toys for children
- Books for adults
- Special items for infants or elderly family members
- Any special dietary needs and nonperishable foods for snacks
- Battery operated radio, flashlights and plenty of spare batteries
- Prescription medications or any over-the-counter

After a Traumatic Event

What You May Experience

The following list describes a variety of normal reactions to a traumatic event. You or others may experience some of these in the weeks following the event. These reactions are generally temporary and not of great concern.

- Recurring thoughts or images of the event
- Heightened response to loud noises, shouting or crying – easily startled
- Discomfort being alone
- Difficulty concentrating and/or deciding what to do next
- Strong desire to contact people who are important to you
- Feeling sad, scared, angry, irritable, or confused
- Difficulty sleeping
- Increase or decrease in appetite
- Physical problems—headaches, stomach aches, sore muscles, etc.
- Discomfort being in places that seem unsafe to you
- Feeling vulnerable, a loss of control
- Feeling exhausted
- Difficulty making decisions and thinking creatively
- Feeling guilty that others have suffered more than you have
- Recall of past traumas or losses
- Fear of leaving loved ones or your home
- Feeling excited and alive, or empty and depressed, or both intermittently
- Re-evaluation of your life – what's important; what's not

Self-Help Coping Tools

Sometimes frightening and overwhelming events invade our world. We must first recognize that dealing with tragedy is a process. Ask yourself and others what they think, know, feel or fear before offering guidance.

Here are some self-care tips to try.

- Talk to other people about your experiences, reactions and feelings
- Take it easy – don't push yourself!
- Plan extra time to do usual tasks – you may be distracted and not able to function as efficiently as usual
- Re-establish your normal routine as soon as you can do so comfortably – this helps you regain a

- Check to see if your decision-making ability has been impaired (ask for feedback on how you're doing).
- Discuss your current emergency plan with significant others and prepare for future crises
- Don't forget to eat and eat "smart" – avoid junk food, excessive sugar, alcohol, and caffeine
- Rest and get some exercise
- Recognize that information about the event can be upsetting as well as helpful. Turn off your radio and television when you start to feel overwhelmed by the news
- If you are having trouble sleeping, listen to soothing music or drink a glass of milk at least a half hour before going to bed
- Reach out to help others – either through volunteer activities, donations of money or supplies, or provide personal support to friends and neighbors

If you have been busy performing necessary tasks after the event, you may have a delay in your reactions until after you stop being busy. Recognize we may all be on different timetables, so don't expect others to handle things or be feeling the same way you do or vice versa. Be tolerant of your own, and others' reactions. If you are feeling overwhelmed, consulting with or seeing a counselor may be helpful.

What To Do For Your Children

Parents try their best to protect their children from tragic events. However, events do happen and can be frightening for adults and even more traumatic for children.

The following information is meant to be a guide in talking with your children, but if intense fears persist, please seek professional assistance.

Recognize that you have experienced the same event, so take care of your emotional needs first. This is critical in conveying to your child that everything will be okay. In order for them to feel safe, they need to sense that you can cope with this event as well.

Children can benefit by expressing their feelings to a parent who is genuinely listening. Listen carefully as your child recounts their version of the story including their fears and feelings. This brings them a sense that you understand their thoughts so that they can feel safe to talk more.

It is very important to let children know their feelings of fear or anger are a natural reaction to a traumatic event. Rebuild self-confidence by finding ways to praise your child for their actions, for talking with you, for sharing their feelings, for wanting to help and/or for expressing concern for others.

It is important to remember that you do not have to "fix" how your child feels. Instead, focus on helping your child understand and deal with his or her experiences. Healing is an evolving state for most children, but some may need professional help.

If signs of stress do not subside after a few weeks, or if they get worse, consider consulting a mental health professional who has special training in working with children. In time, and with help, your children will a return to health.

If talking is not working, find alternate ways to help your child express his/her feelings. Drawing pictures, writing or role-playing a positive happy ending can be reassuring to a child.

Include your child in future safety precautions to assist him/her in feeling safe and secure. This could include making sure the house is locked or where to meet in case there is a frightening event and you are separated. Taking action can assist in regaining a sense of security.

If your child chooses to watch the tragic news on TV, set limits. Sit with your child and convey the stories of heroism and unity. Again, reassure your child that preventative measures are currently in force.

Re-establishing regular routines as soon as possible is helpful. Children are comforted in knowing their daily schedule is predictable.

Plan a future event (vacation, time together, family outing) and express your excitement about following through with this plan.

Recovering from tragedy is a process and through time, and with support, children will eventually heal. Talk to your children daily and affirm to them that you are there to listen and provide ongoing support.

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