



Disaster readiness · response · recovery

Helping Disaster Survivors

Helping disaster survivors, family members, and emergency rescue or disaster relief personnel requires preparation, sensitivity, assertiveness, flexibility, and common sense.

First priority is being a team player. Respect and work within the site chain of command. Pitch in to provide basic care and comfort to survivors and workers.

A close **second priority** is to make personal contact on a down-to-earth basis with survivors and rescue workers. Listen; don't give advice. Ask how they (or their children) are doing and what you can do to help. Make them comfortable with food, beverages, practical supplies (like clothes, blankets, sun screen, magazines, writing implements, telephone), and a comfortable place to sit.

A **third priority** is helping them to defuse by telling their story. Ask, "Have you ever been through anything like this before?" "How's it going? Are you getting a place to stay and the assistance you need?" "Is there anyone I can help you get in touch with?" "What do you find yourself remembering most since this all happened?" "Where were you when this started?" "What are your top three immediate priorities, for the next few hours or days?"

A **fourth priority** is a careful assessment of the risk factors and symptomatic problems in order to identify and set up referrals for the persons or families most likely to be in need of further care.



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