# Supporting Employees Impacted by a Natural Disaster

When natural disasters occur, people are primarily concerned about their residence and loved ones. However, Federal agencies may be directly impacted as well. Agencies may have damage to their physical property or employees may be located in affected areas. This may impact the productivity of employees while rebuilding their personal lives.

Below are ways you can support your employees during these difficult times.

* **Address the organization immediately.** Senior management should meet with all levels of the agency and discuss ways to promote counseling services.
* **Designate a contact for assistance**. Designate a contact person in human resources or leadership as a contact person for employees to turn to for help and resources.
* **Promote communication among employees**. Allowing employees to discuss their feelings and experiences with co-workers can help during difficult times. Consider providing additional break times and have conference rooms available where employees can meet.
* **Help the community**. Organize a blood drive, clothing drive or fundraiser to help those impacted in your community. Many people feel helpless and not sure how to help. Often people who are able to make a difference in their community, feel better about themselves.

**Communication tips for managers:**

***Do's*** - Be aware that employees will be having mixed emotions. These are normal reactions to a critical incident.

* Allow all employees to express any reactions they may have about the disaster.
* Answer any questions employees may have to the best of your ability.
* Or, be willing to say nothing. Just being there is often the most supportive thing you do to help.

***Don'ts*** - Avoid statements like, "I know how you feel" or "Everything will be all right". These statements make some people think their feelings are not understood.

Resources Are Available

Additional information, self-help tools and other resources are available online at [www.FOH4You.com.](http://www.FOHEAP4You) Or call us for more information, help and support. Counselors are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide confidential assistance at no cost to you.

