

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

How Do I Find My Family?

FEMA has established the National Emergency Family Registry and Locator System (NEFRLS), which has been developed to help reunite families who are separated during a disaster.

The NEFRLS system will enable displaced individuals the ability to enter personal information into a website database so that they can be located by others during a disaster.

The American Red Cross also maintains a database to help you find family. Contact the local American Red Cross chapter where you are staying for information. Do not contact the chapter in the disaster area.

How Do I Get Food and Water?

The American Red Cross and other volunteer agencies will provide you with food, water and clothing. Listen to your radio or watch local media for the location of the nearest volunteer agency facility.

If you have access to a computer find your local television stations website for links to information on assistance. Most libraries have computers that can be used by the general public in order to access the internet.

How Do I Find a Place to Stay?

National Disaster Housing Strategy Resource Center

For immediate housing needs, the American Red Cross and other volunteer agencies set up shelters for people who cannot return to their homes. Listen to your radio or watch local media for the location of the nearest volunteer agency facility.

For health and space reasons, pets are not permitted in public emergency shelters. Contact the emergency management office or your local animal shelter or humane society to see if there is a shelter set-up to take pets in an emergency.

For those who have longer-term housing needs, FEMA offers several types of assistance, including services and grants to help people repair their homes and find replacement housing.

Apply for Assistance

A Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) is a readily accessible facility or mobile office where applicants may go for information about FEMA or other disaster assistance programs, or for questions related to your case.

NOTE: You can register for assistance at a DRC or you can register online or by calling 1 (800) 621-FEMA (3362). The TTY number is 1 (800) 462-7585 for those who are speech- or hearing-impaired.

Coping with Disaster

The emotional toll that disaster brings can sometimes be even more devastating than the financial strains of damage and loss of home, business, or personal property.

Understand Disaster Events

- Everyone who sees or experiences a disaster is affected by it in some way.

- It is normal to feel anxious about your own safety and that of your family and close friends.
- Profound sadness, grief, and anger are normal reactions to an abnormal event.
- Acknowledging your feelings helps you recover.
- Focusing on your strengths and abilities helps you heal.
- Accepting help from community programs and resources is healthy.
- Everyone has different needs and different ways of coping.
- It is common to want to strike back at people who have caused great pain.

Children and older adults are of special concern in the aftermath of disasters. Even individuals who experience a disaster “second hand” through exposure to extensive media coverage can be affected.

Contact local faith-based organizations, voluntary agencies, or professional counselors for counseling. Additionally, FEMA and state and local governments of the affected area may provide crisis counseling assistance.

Recognize Signs of Disaster Related Stress

When adults/children have the following signs, they might need crisis counseling or stress management assistance:

- Difficulty communicating thoughts.
- Difficulty sleeping.
- Difficulty maintaining balance in their lives.
- Low threshold of frustration.
- Increased use of drugs/alcohol.
- Limited attention span.
- Poor work/school performance.
- Headaches/stomach problems.
- Tunnel vision/muffled hearing.
- Colds or flu-like symptoms.
- Disorientation or confusion.
- Reluctance to leave home.
- Depression, sadness.
- Feelings of hopelessness.
- Mood-swings and easy bouts of crying.
- Overwhelming guilt and self-doubt.
- Fear of crowds, strangers, or being alone.

Easing Disaster-Related Stress

The following are ways to ease disaster-related stress:

- Talk with someone about your feelings - anger, sorrow, and other emotions - even though it may be difficult.
- Seek help from professional counselors who deal with post-disaster stress.
- Do not hold yourself responsible for the disastrous event or be frustrated because you feel you cannot help directly in the rescue work.
- Take steps to promote your own physical and emotional healing by healthy eating, rest, exercise, relaxation, and meditation.
- Maintain a normal family and daily routine, limiting demanding responsibilities on yourself and your family.
- Spend time with family and friends.
- Participate in memorials.
- Use existing support groups of family, friends, and religious institutions.
- Ensure you are ready for future events by restocking your disaster supplies kits and updating your family disaster plan. Doing these positive actions can be comforting.