

# ***FEAP NEWSLETTER***

*A Series of Educational Articles from your Faculty and Employee Assistance Program*

## **Preparing for National Security Emergencies**

The bitter and brutal effects of terrorism on our soil may have diminished but they haven't disappeared for any of us. It has been a year and one-half since the horrific day, known as "9-11". The Department of Homeland Security is now a permanent part of our government structure. Are we under "Code Yellow, Orange or Red?" and, terrorists still are lurking in the shadows. Americans face threats posed by hostile governments or extremist groups. Not surprisingly, then, we find ourselves more guarded and tense, as we attempt to go about our daily activities.

Despite the emotional strain we find ourselves under, there are things that we can do to prepare for the unexpected and reduce our personal stress. Taking preparatory action can reassure us, that we can exert some measure of control in the face of potentially devastating events. There are no easy answers; however there are some general guidelines to help.

One of the most important steps we can take is preparing for emergencies is to develop a household disaster plan. It is important to discuss them with your family as well as your work group. Develop action plans together.

Let's begin with our own family. Choose an out-of-town contact your family will call or e-mail to check on each other should a disaster occur. This contact should be far enough away that they would be unlikely to be directly affected by the same event. Please advise them that they are the chosen contact. Make sure every member of the household has the contacts, and each other's, e-mail addresses and telephone numbers (home, work, pager and cell). Leave these contacts at your children's schools and at your workplace. Remember, e-mail can sometimes get through when calls don't.

If you need to evacuate or even stay confined in your own home, have some necessary supplies on hand will make you and your family more comfortable. We should have such disaster supply kits at home, at work and in your car(s). For very complete instructions, go to FEMA.com and find "Are You Ready" for a comprehensive template of Emergency Planning and Disaster Supplies. Another very good website is Red Cross.com and look up: *Your Family Disaster Supplies Kit*. Both of these sites offer excellent tips - from sufficient water to recommended tools - many things that any of us might easily overlook. Another site that Marge Sidebottom, Uva's Emergency Management Chair, has just announced is: [www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/internet/emergency-management/](http://www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/internet/emergency-management/)

# ***EAP NEWSLETTER***

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How do we help ourselves in the workplace? The following guidelines, while intended for managers, can broadly apply to most work environments.

- **Share information with your employees as soon as you have it available.** Don't be afraid to say "I don't know." Particularly in the first few hours after a tragedy, information will be scarce and much in demand. If you can be an advocate in obtaining it, you will show your employees you care and help lessen anxiety.
- **Don't "keep a stiff upper lip" or advise anybody else to do so.** Let people know, in whatever way is natural for you, that you are feeling fear, grief, shock, anger, or whatever your natural reaction to the situation may be. This shows your employees you care about them. Since you also can function rationally in spite of your strong feelings, they know that they can do likewise.
- **Build on your work group's prior planning.** If you have talked together about how you, as a group, would handle a hypothetical crisis, it will help prepare all employees, mentally and practically, to deal with a real one. Knowing employees' strengths and experience, having established plan for communication in emergencies, and being familiar with EAP procedures can help you "hit the ground running" when a crisis actually strikes.
- **Be aware of the healing value of work.** Getting back to the daily routine can be a comforting experience, and most people can work productively while still dealing with grief and trauma. However, the process of getting a staff back to work is one which must be approached with great care and sensitivity.
- **Ask for the support of your Faculty & Employee Assistance Program (FEAP).** The FEAP is available to offer professional counseling to those who wish it, and to provide debriefings to groups affected by trauma. Encourage your employees to take advantage of the FEAP as a way of preserving health, not as a sign of weakness. *Please call 434-243-2643 to set up a free, confidential appointment with an FEAP counselor or for further information.*