



MEMA



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FEMA

Disaster News

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DISASTERS TOUCH EVERYONE – LOOK OUT FOR SIGNS OF STRESS

CLINTON, Miss. – The initial trauma from Mississippi’s two spring disasters—April’s storms and tornadoes and May’s flooding—has passed, but the psychological after-effects can linger.

"Disasters touch everyone," said Ed LeGrand, Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Mental Health. "Grief, sadness, shock and anger are normal reactions to these abnormal events.

Stress caused by loss or a traumatic experience can sneak up on people and influence behavior and emotions. The elderly and children are particularly vulnerable to stress after a disaster and may require special considerations.

"It's important for individuals and families to take steps to promote their own physical and emotional healing," said LeGrand. "One of the best ways to relieve stress is to talk about what you are feeling with family and friends."

The state of Mississippi and the Federal Emergency Management Agency have developed a list of things to look for and tips for helping yourself and others get through this difficult time.

Some common signs of stress are:

- Trouble concentrating or remembering things.
- Difficulty making decisions.
- Replaying the events and circumstances of the disaster over and over in your mind.
- Anxiety or fear, especially when things remind you of the traumatic experience.
- Feeling depressed, sad or down much of the time.
- Trouble sleeping.
- Nightmares.
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco or illegal drugs.
- Feeling overwhelmed.

Stress isn't just emotional. It can manifest in physical sensations like fatigue, stomachaches or diarrhea, headaches, sweating or chills, chest pain, or a rapid heartbeat.

(MORE)

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Changes in behavior also can signal that you are under stress. Do you withdraw or isolate yourself, even from family and friends? Are you restless or prone to emotional outbursts? Do you startle easily?

Some common-sense measures can help you overcome stress and get you back to yourself again.

Remember:

- Friends and family are good medicine. Talk with them about your feelings. Sharing common experiences helps you deal with and overcome anxiety and feelings of helplessness.
- Get back into your daily routines as soon as you can.
- Maintain a healthy diet and get plenty of sleep.
- Find ways to relax. Do a fun thing after a difficult or stressful task.
- Get some physical exercise every day. Walking is a great stress reliever and you can do it with a friend or relative.

Know that feeling stressed, depressed, guilty or angry is common after a traumatic event. Watch out for problems that are more than you can handle. If signs of stress are serious or if they persist, you should see a counselor or other mental health professional.

For more information about behavioral health services available in your area, please contact the Mississippi Department of Mental Health's Helpline at 877-210-8513 or visit www.dmh.ms.gov. If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide, please contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255).

Additional information about this disaster is available at www.fema.gov, www.msema.org, and www.msdisasterinfo.com.

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FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, call FEMA toll-free at 800-621-FEMA (3362). For TTY call 800-462-7585.

FEMA's temporary housing assistance and grants for public transportation expenses, medical and dental expenses, and funeral and burial expenses do not require individuals to apply for an SBA loan. However, applicants who receive SBA loan applications must submit them to SBA loan officers to be eligible for assistance that covers personal property, vehicle repair or replacement, and moving and storage expenses.

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