Rain, Rain Go Away: Lessons Learned in My Personal Experience with Flooding Disaster

Melissa Fry, MSW
Social Worker
Mile Bluff Medical Center
I have nothing to disclose.
Objectives

• Assess resources available to people during a flooding emergency.
• Understand Disaster Caused Stress.
• Assist dialysis patients with being prepared for the potential of flooding.
Floods

Flooding is a temporary overflow of water onto land that is normally dry. Floods are the most common natural disaster in the United States. Floods may:

• Result from rain, snow, storm surges, and overflows of dams and other water systems.
• Develop slowly or quickly – Flash floods can come with no warning.
• Cause outages, disrupt transportation, damage buildings, and create landslides.

https://www.ready.gov/floods
What To Do Before a Flood

• Review your evacuation plans.
• Make sure you have enough gas in your vehicle if you plan to evacuate.
• Get flood insurance.
• Secure your home.
• Bring in anything from outside that can float away.
What To Do During a Flood

• Move away from low spots and get up to higher ground.
• Do not walk in flooded areas.
• Do not try to drive through flooded roads.
• Six inches of water will reach the bottom of most passenger cars.
What To Do After a Flood

• Do not walk or drive through moving water,
• Mold can develop in 24 to 48 hours.
• Clean and bleach whatever you don’t throw away.
• Take pictures of damages and water in your home.
Agencies that Assist with Disaster Relief
Disaster assistance may be provided as financial or direct assistance to individuals and families whose property has been damaged or destroyed as a result of a federally-declared disaster, and whose losses are not covered by insurance. It is meant to help you with critical expenses that cannot be covered in other ways. This assistance is not intended to restore your damaged property to its condition before the disaster.

While some housing assistance funds are available through our Individuals and Households Program, most disaster assistance from the Federal government is provided in the form of loans administered by the Small Business Administration. Businesses that apply to FEMA are immediately referred to the Small Business Administration for disaster assistance.

https://www.fema.gov/what-disaster-assistance
American Red Cross

- Provide safe, dry shelter until families can return home.
- Serve water and hot meals.
- Play with kids staying in shelters.
- Ensure people with disabilities get the help they need.
- Provide first aid.
- Give comfort and emotional support.
- Distribute clean up supplies like mops, gloves, and tarps.
- Assess damages in impacted neighborhoods.
- Meet with families to prepare recovery plans.
Salvation Army

Disaster Relief Services

While each disaster creates its own unique circumstances and special needs, Salvation Army disaster relief efforts focus on seven core services. These services may be modified based on the magnitude of the disaster and adapted to meet the specific needs of individual survivors.

1) Training
2) Food Service
3) Emotional and Spiritual Care
4) Emergency Communications
5) Disaster Social Services
6) Donations Management
7) Recovery
Long Term Recovery

- Recovery is that time following a disaster in which agencies and organizations help affected persons and communities to develop and implement plans and structures for an extended recovery over a period of time.

Project Recovery

Project Recovery is a community-based program providing outreach, crisis counseling, and support to communities impacted by severe storms, flooding, landslides, straight-line winds, and tornadoes.
Shelters

- A safe place to sleep
- Meals, snacks and water
- Health services (for disaster-related conditions), such as first aid, refilling lost prescriptions or replacing lost eyeglasses
- Emotional support and mental health services
- Spiritual care
- Help reconnecting with loved ones
- Information about disaster-related resources in the community
Flood Insurance

- **National Flood Insurance:** The National Flood Insurance Program aims to reduce the impact of flooding on private and public structures. It does so by providing affordable insurance to property owners, renters and businesses and by encouraging communities to adopt and enforce floodplain management regulations. These efforts help mitigate the effects of flooding on new and improved structures. Overall, the program reduces the socio-economic impact of disasters by promoting the purchase and retention of general risk insurance, but also of flood insurance, specifically.

- **Private Flood Insurance:** Private Flood Insurance is sold by individual insurance companies.

https://www.fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program
Disaster Caused Stress
Disaster Caused Stress Signs

- 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 performance.
- Headaches/stomach problems.
- Tunnel vision/muffled hearing.
- Colds or flu-like symptoms.
- Disorientation or confusion.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- 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 Caused Stress

• Talk with someone about your feelings.
• 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.

https://www.fema.gov/coping-disaster
Resources for Emergency Preparedness

Resources for Emergency Preparedness Continued

Recovering After a Disaster

To reach out for free 24/7 counseling or support, contact the Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990 or text “TalkWithUs” to 66746.

Disasters are upsetting experiences for everyone involved. Children, senior citizens, people with disabilities and people for whom English is not their first language are especially at risk and are likely to need extra care and help. But everyone, even the people that others look up to for guidance and assistance, is entitled to their feelings and deserves support throughout the recovery process.

**Emotional Responses**

When we experience a disaster or other stressful life event, we can have a variety of reactions, all of which can be common responses to difficult situations.

These reactions can include:

- Feeling physically and mentally drained
- Having difficulty making decisions or staying focused on topics
- Becoming easily frustrated on a more frequent basis
- Arguing more with family and friends
- Feeling tired, sad, numb, lonely or worried
- Experiencing changes in appetite or sleep patterns

Most of these reactions are temporary and will go away over time. Try to accept whatever reactions you may have. Look for ways to take one step at a time and focus on taking care of your disaster-related needs and those of your family.

Keep a particularly close eye on the children in your family. When disaster strikes, a child's view of the world as a safe and predictable place is temporarily lost. Children of different ages react in different ways to trauma, but how parents and other adults react following any traumatic event can help children recover more quickly and more completely. Your local Red Cross can give you information about helping children cope with disaster and trauma.

Disaster Relief Information from Red Cross

Thousands of staff and volunteers are here for you with emergency aid, advice and assistance to help you recover from a disaster or become better prepared to face one in the future.

Please call us at American Red Cross of Wisconsin 1-800-236-8680

**Types of services include:**

- Temporary Sheltering/Housing
- Emergency Communication to reach your loved one in an emergency
- Mental Health Assistance
- Financial Assistance
- Health Services

Military Assistance to get in touch with your military family or to submit a request for emergency financial assistance for a military family at (877) 272-7337

**Let Your Family Know You’re Safe**

If your community experiences a flood, or any disaster, register on the American Red Cross Safe and Well Web site available through RedCross.org to let your family and friends know about your welfare. If you don’t have Internet access, call 1-866-GETINFO to register yourself and your family.

Since standard homeowners insurance doesn’t cover flooding, it’s important to have protection from the floods associated with heavy rains and other conditions that impact you. For more information on flood insurance, please visit the National Flood Insurance Program website at www.FloodSmart.gov.
Any Questions??
Thank You

Melissa Fry
mfry@milebluff.com
608-847-1837