

Post Katrina and Rita Effects.....

Were you there?

Feel like you should have done more? Feel disconnected now you're home?

Your assignment may have caused an unusually strong reaction that you are just now noticing. You are not the only one! It is very normal and quite common for people to notice stress reactions when getting back into home and work life. We are great at responding to emergencies. We “get the job done no matter what.” We count on the stress of an incident to help us perform at our peak. But that stress may take a toll. In addition, Katrina provided stressors that we are not used to.

Sometimes the stress reactions appear immediately and sometimes they appear days, weeks, or months later. You may never have them. The signs and symptoms vary in intensity and duration. If you want it, there is help to work through your reactions. It's pragmatic and practical – not touchy-feely.

Critical incident stress management (CISM) services can help you understand, and manage, your stress reactions. Peer support is a crucial component of the CISM system. State and local teams that may include emergency service, medical, fire, law enforcement and mental health personnel are available to you. The International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF) developed the standard protocol for CISM services and provides training to assure a high level of assistance. You can ask for CISM services individually or as a crew or team. Curious? Check out www.icisf.org

You can find CISM services in several ways:

Employee Assistance Program (EAP) – contact your agency EAP provider

International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF) – Hotline: 410-750-9600
The hotline will provide contacts in your local area. Additional information is available at www.icisf.org

National Organization for Victim's Assistance (NOVA) – Hotline: 800-879-6681
NOVA provides ICISF trained CISM services to first responders as well as victims and survivors. Additional information is available at www.trynova.org

American Red Cross – contact your local or state chapter. The Red Cross has CISM trained personnel who are experienced in disaster response. Additional information is available at www.redcross.org

State or local emergency services network. Your local emergency services partners may be involved in a program. Ask them!