

December 17, 2004



TO: Officials-In-Charge of Headquarters Offices
FROM: Chief Health and Medical Officer
SUBJECT: Holiday Stress

This December marks another eventful year in the Agency. As we reflect upon the year completed and the New Year to come, we can be proud of the accomplishments both in space and on earth. Two successful missions to Mars and the Cassini Mission to Saturn, maintaining a manned presence on the International Space Station, and progress toward Return to Flight of the Space Shuttle have all been challenging and intensive efforts.

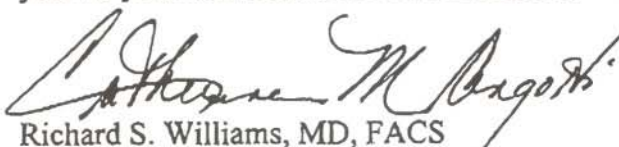
The NASA family has shown great resiliency during the Columbia tragedy and in its aftermath. The NASA workforce has given its best dedicated effort. While this is good for the Agency as a whole, there is evidence of employees putting in long work hours over extended periods of time. Intense efforts like these are sustainable for a limited period before the harmful effects of stress begin to have a negative impact.

With the Holidays rapidly approaching, other events require our attention, and additional stress may accumulate due to their competition for our time. Balancing work, holiday, and family responsibilities is critical to maintaining a healthy workforce. Many employees are intensely involved in our Return to Flight efforts. For those employees, and all the NASA family, we urge everyone to be cognizant of working beyond reasonable capabilities. Mistakes caused by overwork and stress compromise a safe Return to Flight.

We ask that you encourage your managers and their employees to remember the importance of balancing work and family during the Holiday Season. Maximum work hour procedures are listed in NPR 1800.1, NASA Occupational Health Program Procedure, Chapter 4.8, "Balancing Work Rest Cycles."

The holiday season is a wonderful time for most, but it can be a stressful and sad time as well. Common sense ideas for coping with holiday stress include eating right, getting exercise, and avoiding overindulgence. Recognizing that everyone needs some time out to refocus will allow for a better mental and physical attitude as we proceed into 2005.

A number of sources with recommendations for dealing with holiday stress are enclosed. Thank you for your consideration of these matters.


Richard S. Williams, MD, FACS

for
Enclosure

Officials-In-Charge of Headquarters Offices

Deputy Administrator/Mr. Gregory

- Assistant Deputy Administrator, Internal Operations/Ms. Hilding
- Executive Officer for Integrated Financial Management Program/Mr. Ciganer

Associate Deputy Administrator for Systems Integration/Ms. Kicza

- Advanced Planning and Integration Office/Mr. Seery

Chief of Staff/Mr. Schumacher

- White House Liaison/Mr. Jezierski

Chief Scientist/Dr. Garvin

Director of Advanced Planning/Dr. Elachi

Chief of Safety and Mission Assurance Officer/Mr. O'Connor

Chief Education Officer/Dr. Loston

Inspector General/Mr. Cobb

Associate Administrator for Exploration Systems Mission Directorate/Adm. Steidle

Associate Administrator for Space Operations Mission Directorate/Mr. Readdy

Associate Administrator for Science Mission Directorate/Mr. Diaz

Associate Administrator for Aeronautics Research Mission Directorate/Dr. Lebacqz

Chief Financial Officer/Ms. Sykes

- Office of Procurement/Mr. Luedtke
- Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization/Mr. Thomas

Chief Information Officer/Ms. Dunnington

Chief Engineer/Mr. Geveden

- Deputy Chief Engineer/Mr. Cantrell

Associate Administrator for Institutions and Management/Mr. Jennings

- Office of Human Capital Management/Ms. Novak
- Office of Infrastructure, Management, and Headquarters Operations/Mr. Sutton
- Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity/Dr. Hayden-Watkins
- Office of Security and Program Protection/Mr. Saleeba

General Counsel/Mr. Wholley

Chief of Strategic Communications/Vacant

- Office of Public Affairs/Mr. Mahone
- Office of Legislative Affairs/Mr. Forsgren
- Office of External Relations/Mr. O'Brien

cc:

Office of the Administrator/Ms. Gaines

Executive Secretariat/Mr. Box

Head of NSSC/Mr. Arbuthnot

Office of the Chief Health and Medical Officer/Staff

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

Effective Stress Management:

<http://www.ohp.nasa.gov/cope/welcome.htm>

NASA EAP Programs:

<http://www.ohp.nasa.gov/cope2/index.shtml>

General health information, including the name and number of your Center's Employee Assistance Program Officer at:

<http://www.ohp.nasa.gov>

Mayo Clinic on Holiday Stress - "Coping with the holidays: 12 tips to manage stress and the blues":

<http://www.mayoclinic.com>

National Mental Health Foundation – "Holiday Depression and Stress":

<http://www.stressdoc.com/holiday.htm>

American Psychological Association – "Stress for Children in the Holiday Season":

http://www.psych.org/news_room/press_releases/04-64Kidsandholidaystress.pdf

National Institute of Health – "Helping Children Cope with Holiday Stress":

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/stress.html>

An article from the Detroit News – "Holidays: Hazardous to Your Health?":

<http://www.detnews.com/2002/health/0212/03/h06-21874.htm>

Holiday Stress by Mark Gorkin ("The Stress Doc"):

<http://stressdoc.com/holiday.htm>

MSNBC & Prevention Magazine Poll on Holiday Stress:

<http://www.msnbc.com/onair/nbc/dateline/holiday.asp>

WebMD Health – "Beating Holiday Stress":

<http://my.webmd.com/content/article/78/95689?src=Inktomi&condition=Healthy%20Women>