What skills/knowledge did they bring from their normal role that was helpful? What skills/knowledge/perspective did they gain from the disaster deployment that can enhance normal job function? Did his or her experience point them in directions in which he or she would like to move professionally or did it make them cognizant of assignments he or she would like to seek or avoid?

Tips for Managers
Supervisors can be very helpful in helping returning workers gain perspective on their disaster response experience, minimize adverse consequences for both the individual and the workplace, and help workers grow both personally and professionally from the experience. Supervisors may consider discussing these issues in large or small groups or individually with workers.

Supervisors may consider the following:
- Be aware of and acknowledge your feelings about and experience with the disaster and the effect of the deployments.
- Create an organizational atmosphere where people can be open with you about their experiences, feelings, and concerns.
- Optimize liberal/ flexible leave policies for returning workers. Consider holding large and/or small group meetings to discuss the experiences and their impact on the workplace and workload.
- Encourage people to seek additional help in ways that are culturally competent and do not stigmatize those needing or seeking help.
- Be candid about the complex and potentially difficult job you have as a supervisor—meeting both individual needs and the need to maintain ongoing work.
- Have a one-on-one conversation with returning employees about what they have experienced and how that may influence their return to work.

Getting Help
If you feel you need additional information, you may find this list of resources to be helpful.

SAMHSA Resources

Information Clearinghouses
- Disaster Technical Assistance Center (DTAC)
  (800) 308-3515
  www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/dtac
- National Mental Health Information Center (NMHIC)
  PO. Box 42557, Washington, DC 20015
  (800) 789-2647 (English and Spanish)
  (866) 889-2647 (TDD)
  www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov
- National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI)
  PO. Box 2345, Rockville, MD 20847-2345
  (800) 729-6686 (English and Spanish)
  (800) 487-4889 (TDD)
  www.ncadi.samhsa.gov

Treatment Locators
- Mental Health Services Locator
  (800) 789-2647 (English and Spanish)
  (866) 889-2647 (TDD)
  www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/databases

Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator
- (800) 662-HELP (4357) (Toll-Free, 24-Hour English and Spanish Treatment Referral Service)
- (800) 487-4889 (TDD)
  www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov

Hotlines
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
  (800) 273-TALK (8255)
  (800) 799-4889 (TDD)

Other Federal Resources
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention—Mental Health
  http://www.bt.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/
- Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences
- Federal Occupational Health Employee Assistance Program for Federal and Federalized Employees
  http://www.foh4you.com or
  (800) 222-0364
  (888) 262-7848 (TTY)
- National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
  http://www.ncpstd.va.gov/topics/katrina.html
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services—Employee Assistance Program
  (202) 690-8229
  HHSEAP@hhs.gov

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Many people who are involved, either directly or indirectly, in disaster work find it to be a unique blend of stressors and rewards. Both are typically powerful parts of the experience. After deployment, many workers have found the return to normal duties to be a complicated, prolonged, and difficult process. While some were deployed, others maintained the ongoing operation of the office. They too have experienced additional unexpected and unwelcomed demands possibly resulting in stress. This brochure is intended to assist supervisors in easing transition, reducing potential difficulties, and enhancing the positive consequences for the work unit.

### Before Your Employees Return to Work

During disaster response and recovery efforts, your employees most likely worked under less than desirable conditions while taking care of others. Before they return to normal duties, you will want to offer your employees self-care tips to help them readjust to worklife. These include the following:

- **Maintaining a healthy diet, routine exercise, adequate rest/sleep.**
- **Spending time with family and friends.**
- **Paying attention to health concerns.**
- **Meeting neglected daily personal tasks (e.g., pay bills, mow lawn, shop for groceries).**
- **Reflecting upon what the experience has meant personally and professionally.**
- **Getting involved in personal and family preparedness.**

### Expecting the Unexpected

Upon returning to their routine duties, your employees may notice changes in themselves, coworkers, or their work environment. The following are a few examples of potential difficulties your employees may face and some tips on how you, as a supervisor, can help to overcome them.

#### Pace change

The disaster environment often moves at a pace that is much faster than the normal workplace. After working in a disaster response environment, this pace begins to feel normal. While working at one’s normal work, it may appear that people are moving at a much slower pace than before. It is easy to misinterpret this as laziness or lack of caring or motivation.

- **Help the deployed worker understand that it is probably him or her who has changed, not others.**
- **Discourage quick and unfair judgments, criticism, or assumptions.**

#### Unrelenting fatigue

Even when it seems like sufficient sleep, deployed workers may experience chronic fatigue. Sometimes chronic stress results in never feeling rested. Chronic fatigue may also be a result of a medical condition.

- **Recognize the factors contributing to chronic fatigue.**
- **Discuss and educate workers when appropriate.**
- **Encourage a medical evaluation if problem persists.**

#### Cynicism

Typically, during disaster work one sees the best and the worst in individuals and systems and it is easy to become cynical. This is expected. These feelings often diminish over time once a worker is able to focus on the positive results of his or her work.

- **Discuss with your worker if this behavior is disruptive.**
- **Assist employees in regaining perspective.**
- **Encourage a referral for help if this becomes a performance issue or begins to have an adverse effect on workplace climate.**

#### Disatisfaction with routine work

It is very rewarding to be involved, directly or indirectly, in saving lives and protecting our fellow citizen’s health and safety. Most work does not provide such dramatic and immediate reinforcement. Deployed workers might start seeing their daily work routine as lacking meaning and satisfaction. This is normal.

- **Relate your experiences.**
- **Encourage a medical evaluation if behavior is disruptive.**

#### Cultural issues

In any environment, a cultural mismatch exists. Whether the mismatch is more or less apparent, it is normal. It is important to appreciate and respect these differences.

- **Know the cultural groups that you supervise.**
- **Be aware of cultural issues.**
- **Seek guidance and consultation from members of/consultants for cultural groups.**
- **Acknowledge the limitation of your cultural understanding.**

### When to Seek Help

When in doubt, encourage employees to go see a health care professional.

### Coping Suggestions

- **Help workers find ways to use their disaster experiences to better understand themselves.** Deployed workers have had an experience/opportunity that not many people have had. During that experience they undoubtedly learned things about themselves. What stresses them most? What were they able to handle in ways that surprised themselves? What unrecognized skills/traits did they discover? What did they learn about how they function in extreme environments?
- **Find ways to use their disaster experience to enhance job function.** A deployed worker’s normal job role probably does not involve disaster response.