



## **EARTHQUAKE POST TRAUMA STRESS MANAGEMENT FOR SUPERVISORS / MANAGERS**

The tragedy on 12<sup>th</sup> May, 2008 by the most powerful earthquake in 30 years has brought much death, injury and destruction. It was traumatic to victims as well as witnesses to this unexpected disaster.

Human Dynamic is ready to support your company, employees & families who have been touched by this distressing event. We have ready counselors able to offer crisis support round the clock - help is just a call away. The following information may be helpful to you to manage the trauma.

### **INFORMATION SHEET:**

Whether an employee personally experiences or witnesses a traumatic event that involves actual or threatened death or injury, he/she is likely to develop unusually strong emotional reactions. **It is important to know that these reactions are Normal reactions to an Abnormal or traumatic event.**

These reactions may sometimes interfere with the ability to function either during the event or later. They may appear immediately after a traumatic event, a few hours or even days later. For some, it they may even take weeks or months to surface.

Depending on the severity of the event, these stress reactions may last anywhere from a few days to a few months or longer. With proper support and understanding, these stress reactions usually pass more swiftly. It is important to seek help early from professional counselors. Such assistance does not imply “weakness” or “craziness”, - it just means that the event was too powerful for the person to manage by him/herself.

#### **Physiological or Bodily Stress Reactions**

- Rapid or Irregular Heartbeat and Palpitation
- Shortness of breath, sweating
- Increased blood pressure
- Shaking, dizziness, tremors or restlessness
- Muscle tension
- Headache
- Nausea, stomach distress and/or Diarrhea
- Frequent urination
- Poor or interrupted sleep



- Disturbances to menstrual cycle
- Change in sexual functioning
- Loss of appetite
- Tiredness
- Teeth grinding

#### **Emotional Stress Reactions-**

- Feeling anxious and worried
- Feeling Fearful and tearful
- Feeling helpless & guilty
- Disbelief, denial or bargaining
- Irritability, agitation and anger
- Mood changes and depression
- Lacking in emotional responsiveness - shock, numbness
- Feeling detached from others & showing a restricted range of affect (e.g. inability to show love or kindness)
- Feeling hopeless, insecure

#### **Perceptual & Cognitive-**

- Reduced awareness of surroundings (e.g. in a daze)
- Poor concentration, forgetfulness and confusion
- Perceiving things as unreal or as unrelated to self
- Experiencing repeated images related to the trauma like nightmares, illusions, flashbacks or intrusive thoughts
- Inability to recall an important aspect of the trauma
- Difficulty making decision or solving problems
- Heightened alertness and being easily startled by sounds or movements
- Sense of foreshortened future (e.g. does not expect to have a career, marriage, children, or a normal life span)

#### **Behavioral-**

- Not wanting to be around people, keeping to self
- Avoidance of activities, places or people that remind them of the trauma
- Lack of interest or lowered participation in activities
- Increase in suspiciousness, negativity, blaming others
- Increased smoking or drinking



## **GUIDELINES ON HOW TO SUPPORT**

### **If you suspect any missing employee in the earthquake, you can...**

- Contact his family member with care and concern
- Ask them if they have any news from the employee
- Have they reached the Immigration Department (or relevant government department), if not, ask them if they want you to report to the ID, or they would like to do by themselves
- If they are very upset and worried about the missing member, try to show him empathy by reflecting their feelings.
- Not to create false hope but assure them the company will provide necessary support during the difficult time
- Refer them to Human Dynamic for further psychological assistance or grief counseling if the death is confirmed

### **For staff directly impacted by the earthquake, find out:**

- Where they are now
- If they have any injuries and their severity and if they need medical assistance or emergency evacuation
- If there are any family members/friends who perished or who are still missing. This group will need support - allow them to express feelings, be willing to listen to their grief over their loss. Let them know the type of support available to their family and themselves
- Offer assistance like the contact number of immigration offices, airlines, and offer to contact these on their behalf if necessary
- Remind employees to focus on Safety and to stay away from coastal areas
- It's a common reaction that the impacted employee may insist to stay in the site and look for the missing relatives/friends. Don't persuade them to return home quickly, rather show him understanding and remind them to get someone to be accompanied with and take care of his health if he should stay. It may be take a long time to accept the fact if they can't find the dead body-the denial stage may be prolonged. Human Dynamic can direct contact with him and offer grief counseling after getting his consent
- Provide an emergency number for employees to call for assistance and information

### **After the evacuation or managing loss:**

- Keep updating their condition and check in periodically with employees to see how they are doing emotionally after they have returned home
- Contact Human Dynamic to arrange Group Intervention for affected employees (this is best held within 24-72 hours after the incident has occurred)

Recommend Human Dynamic's Employee Assistance Program to employees in distress. Supervisors or managers refer their subordinates to EAP or encourage them to call our WLC hotlines throughout the region



## **LEADING THROUGH CRISIS**

### **What Helps**

#### ***Don't***

- ✘ Simply allow affected employees to “go on home” for an extended period of time.
- ✘ Isolate people suffering from traumatic stress.

#### ***Do***

- Give accurate information and provide continuous communication to help people regain a sense of control.
- Consult with HR, EAP consultants about your concerns.
- Allow those affected to express their feelings and be willing to listen.
- Allow time off for co-workers to attend services in the event of a funeral.
- Contact family members of any casualty victims, provide peer and management support for those who experienced or witnessed the trauma. Recommend counseling via EAP for affected family and co-workers.
- Recommend shorter shifts for individuals under stress.
- Look out for employees who display changes in personality and work habits and check periodically on how they are coping emotionally. Recommend EAP to employees having difficulty coping.

Pay attention to the needs of managers as they too are coping even as they give support to others. Arrange for a separate session for managers to get the support they need to lead