

## CRISIS MANAGEMENT

# Overcoming Crises at Work

As managers and supervisors, all of your responsibilities don't fit neatly into a job description. You soon find out that an essential part of your job is helping employees through unexpected situations. And that can mean helping them deal with a crisis.

Crises come in all forms but, by definition, a crisis is any abnormal or traumatic event that impacts an employee, group of employees or the entire organization. It could be anything from a natural disaster to an act of violence, an employee death, a layoff or merger or many things in between.

These incidents can have a significant impact on employees either directly or indirectly involved. And the negative repercussions can spread to the entire organization. No manager or supervisor is expected to be a counselor or social worker, but there are many ways to provide support that fits well within your managerial role.

In this issue of *Your Source*, find out how to prepare for a crisis, how to communicate during and following a crisis, helpful resources for employees and how to be responsive to employees while maintaining performance expectations.

Remember, you too are likely to be impacted in these crisis situations, so taking your own advice and accessing available services is essential.

### Go Online Today

Log on to access "Overcoming Crisis at Work" and other helpful resources in the *Spotlight* section. Log on now and register with your program's toll-free number.



**Farm Credit**  
**LifeManagement Program**

**1-800-937-2112**

For TTY Users 1-800-456-4006



*Log on now!*



### What are Common Trauma Reactions?

- A. Anger, frustration, irritability
- B. Withdrawal, isolation
- C. Tearfulness, uncontrollable crying
- D. Shock, confusion, denial
- E. Shaking, dizziness, chest pain, other physical complaints
- F. All of the above

*Check your answer on the bottom.*

### *Now That's an Idea!*

#### What Helps in a Crisis? Resources, Of Course!

Making resources available to employees can help in a crisis. Try these:

- Offer employees a quiet area for making calls or taking a break.
- Allow flexibility with employees' schedules and time off.
- Provide information on the topic, such as coping with stress or dealing with grief.
- Provide EAP contact information to employees. And post the toll-free number where all employees can see it.
- Encourage employees to rest and take time for personal activities.

## Natural Reactions to Natural Disasters

When natural disasters occur, the emotional trauma from loss of property or concern over loved ones extends to the workplace. At the same time, the physical business location may be damaged, or business operations interrupted—further adding to the strain on employees.

Communication is more important than ever to balance the need for supporting employees and retaining productivity. Consider the following:

- Meet with all employees to provide information on available counseling services and community resources. Answer their questions.
- Designate a contact person for employees needing help and resources and be sure that individual is readily accessible.
- Promote communication among employees by providing additional break times and make conference rooms available.
- Involve employees in a volunteer project such as a blood drive or fundraiser for the community. Lending a hand to others can help employees cope.

## Domestic Violence in the Workplace

Domestic violence doesn't stay home when its victims go to work. Employees can be harassed by phone calls, absent because of injuries or less productive from stress. Domestic violence is a serious, recognizable and preventable health and safety issue that impacts businesses and their bottom line.

**Be Proactive**—Employers can help prevent domestic violence by:

- Adapting workplace policies to address domestic violence
- Including domestic violence information in employee handbooks
- Offering counseling resources, particularly through EAPs
- Educating employees on domestic violence

**Take Action**—You can help an employee who is being abused by:

- Distributing the perpetrator's photo to security guards/receptionists
- Changing the employee's work shift or relocating the employee's workspace
- Developing procedures so security or employees accompany one another to their transportation.
- Referring the employee to the EAP or external professionals to help with developing a safety plan

*endabuse.org, stoprelationshipabuse.org and Center for Relationship Abuse Awareness*

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## Helping Layoff Survivors

When layoffs occur, remaining employees are impacted as well. They may feel anxious about their own job security or burdened by increased workloads. Here are some ways managers can help:

**Eliminate the guesswork.** Meet with employees individually to explain their roles, even if their responsibilities haven't changed. Discuss job responsibilities in light of the cutbacks, and your expectations for their performance.

**Give honest and consistent feedback.** Diffuse anxiety by being straightforward. Let employees know how they're doing, invite feedback, and take their concerns and suggestions seriously.

**Don't ignore anxieties.** Most employees want to do their jobs and do them well. What they need in return is appreciation for their efforts, and reasonable understanding of their feelings.

**Overwhelmed employees won't stay overwhelmed,** but they need support during the transition immediately following a layoff.

