

Vermonters Are With You

Care for Carers



Vermont's First Responders are a critical link in the state's healthcare and public safety network. When we call 9-1-1, we know that fire, ambulance or police will be with us as soon as distance and driving conditions will allow. Given the nature of the work, even normal, on-going response can be highly stressful and emotionally traumatic. First Responders, including dispatchers, are exposed to challenging conditions, including serious injury, pain and loss including death. The anxiety and grief that others experience can affect everyone around them; in addition, we feel our own sadness, grief and anxiety when exposed to upsetting or traumatic experiences.

During a disaster response, all of these factors are intensified. Not only are there more people in need of critical help, the need goes on for longer.

The Coronavirus is on-track to require increased First Responder involvement over months, making awareness and self-care that much more important. In addition to the steps below, visit the [Vermont Department of Mental Health's](#) website for more resources.

Responder Self-Care Techniques

- Limit working hours to no longer than 12-hour shifts.
- Work in teams and limit amount of time working alone.
- Write in a journal.
- Talk to family, friends, supervisors, and teammates about your feelings and experiences.
- Practice breathing and relaxation techniques.
- Maintain a healthy diet and get adequate sleep and exercise.
- Know that it is okay to draw boundaries and say "no."
- Avoid or limit caffeine and use of alcohol.

It is important to remind yourself that

- it is not selfish to take breaks,
- the needs of survivors are not more important than your own needs and well-being,
- working all of the time does not mean you will make your best contribution, and
- there are other people who can help in the response.

Responding to disasters can be both rewarding and stressful. Knowing that and coping as you respond will help you stay well. And that will allow you to keep helping those who are affected.

It is normal to have feelings of sadness, grief and depression in response to highly stressful circumstances. We may feel irritable or withdraw from others. Talking about how you feel is important and helpful. Download the [CrewCare App](#). Talk to a friend. Seek professional help – see the numbers below. You are not alone.

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**You
Are
Not
Alone**

Available 24/7 – If you need help, text VT to 741741

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
is available 24/7 at 800-273-8255

Dial 2-1-1 to find mental health services in your area

Vermont Peer Support Line – open 24 / 7
Call or text 833-888-2557



Click [here](#) or Google Vermont Department of Mental Health, for more information.