

Tenth International Conference on Managing Fatigue: Abstract for Review

Safeguarding the Health, Safety and Resilience of Emergency Responders

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Problem

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention routinely sends its highly-trained staff to dangerous and inhospitable domestic and international environments to respond to public health emergencies. To protect their health, safety and resilience, behavioral scientists at CDC reviewed what other agencies do to protect the wellbeing of their emergency responders. Based on that review and expertise and insight from subject matter experts at the Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, a unique, interactive, award-winning training approach was developed.

Method

The goal of this initiative has been to train a group of non-clinical individuals to deploy to the field to assess and address the physical and emotional safety and resilience of themselves and their team members. This customized three-day training focuses on key Resiliency principles (including peer support, Psychological First Aid, stress management and coping skills) and Disaster Site Safety basics (e.g. electrical hazards, chemical and fire safety) that are compatible with the Incident Command System.

Participants also are immersed in a state-of-the art VRE (Virtual Reality Environment) that simulates the kinds of sights, sounds and even smells they might encounter in the field if they were deployed to either a primitive African village, or a city devastated by a hurricane, or a town rocked by an earthquake, or a community that's been hit by an RDD (aka "dirty bomb") or an area that's been exposed to a biological outbreak or deliberate anthrax release.

Results

Over 350 individuals have completed the training since its inception. Participants who complete the training are referred to as DSRT (Deployment Safety and Resiliency Team) members. They have received basic training to prepare them to function similarly to a medic in a military unit except their focus is on sustaining or restoring resilience not just on physical health.

Discussion

Pre-training and post-training assessments have been completed that provide data to support our assertion that this kind of training increases the knowledge graduates have relative to relevant resilience-enhancing principles and practices and disaster site safety basics. Post-training assessment also shows an increase in the perceived self-efficacy of those who have fully participating in the training event.

Summary

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention routinely sends its highly-trained staff to dangerous and inhospitable domestic and international environments to respond to public health emergencies. To protect their health, a unique, 3-day training focused on key Resiliency principles, and Disaster Site Safety basics was developed. Over 350 individuals have completed the training since its inception. Post-training assessment shows an increase in the perceived self-efficacy of those who have fully participating in the training event.