

“PERSONAL SAFETY, HEALTH and SURVIVAL”

Disaster response volunteers sometimes become so involved with helping others that they tend to forget to take care of their own families or themselves. The needs of disaster victims seem so large when compared with their own that volunteers can feel guilty taking even a moment for their own basic personal needs. However, if you are to continue to assist others, you need to keep yourself in good condition. **IF YOU DO NOT, YOU RISK BECOMING PART OF THE PROBLEM.** If your family is not safe and their needs are not taken care of, worrying about them may prevent you from concentrating on your duties.

Home and family always comes first, this is without question!! Before leaving home to go on an assignment, be sure you have made all of the necessary arrangements for the security and general well being of your home and family. Family members, neighbors and friends should know where you are going; when you plan to return and a way to get in touch with you should a home emergency arise. There may even be times when your family will need you more than your ARES/RACES group does. Obviously, this is a decision that only you and your family can make, and this is something that everyone should also discuss the possibility of and come to an agreement on before any emergency or disaster event takes place in order to avoid any last minute problems.

If you do elect to go out and once you are working with your group, you will need to continue to take care of yourself. If you become overly tired, ill or weak, you can not do your duties properly. **Rest, food and plenty of liquids are very important during disaster situations because of the amount of stress that is added to your lives.** Most people need at least **2000 calories a day** to function well, however in a stressful situation you may need more. Here goes that Boy Scout Motto again, **“BE PREPARED”**. In your READY/GO KIT you’ll need **HIGH CALORIE, HIGH PROTEIN** snacks to help you to keep going, but you will still need to have food that is more substantial. **DO NOT DEPEND** on someone else to feed you, maybe, if you are assigned to a shelter some of your nutritional needs will be met, but if you are out someplace alone you need to be prepared. Most grocery store stores have items that are great to eat and easy to prepare in the field, also MRE’s are an excellent choice to have in your READY/GO KITS. There are several good sites on the internet where you can find MREs, survival kits and much more, also military surplus stores often have these items.

The following four things are offered as considerations that will help you when you are out on an assignment:

1. Try to get at least **six (6) continuous hours of sleep in every 24 hour period.**
2. Many disaster assignments are in unsafe places and you should always be aware of your surrounding and the dangers that they may present. **Wear appropriate clothing.**

3. In some cases, **you may not need your own shelter** for operating or sleeping. You may be able to stay or work in the EOC, or a shelter. However, you may have to do these things from your car, a tent, camping trailer, a motor home or other suitable shelter may be necessary. **Your choice will depend on your needs and resources.**

4. Should you have a medical condition that could potentially interfere with your ability to perform your duties, it would be a good idea to discuss this with your Physician and EC ahead of time. For instance, if you are diabetic, you will need to avoid going for long periods without proper food intake and medication. Stress may also affect your blood sugar levels. If you have a heart condition you may only be able to help communicate from your home/QTH. Always let your EC, DEC, and anyone that will be working with you know of your condition so they can take the appropriate actions should something go wrong.