

Vermonters Are With You

Resources for Responders



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, which includes dispatchers, are exposed to challenging conditions, ranging from hearing frightening and violent interactions to witnessing serious injury, pain and loss including death. It is well-known that 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 may be intensified. Not only are there simply more individuals 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 self-care that much more important. In addition to the steps below, visit the [Vermont Department of Mental Health's](#) website for more resources.

Understand and Identify Burnout and Secondary Traumatic Stress

Responders experience stress during a crisis. When stress builds up it can cause

- burnout, which include feelings of extreme exhaustion and overwhelm; and
- secondary traumatic stress – stress reactions and symptoms resulting from exposure to another individual's traumatic experiences, rather than from exposure directly to a traumatic event.

Recognize the signs of burnout and secondary traumatic stress in yourself and other responders to

- be sure those who need a break get one, or
- if you or another responder needs help, to receive it.

Coping techniques like taking breaks, eating healthy foods, exercising, and using peer support, such as the [buddy system](#) can help prevent and reduce burnout and secondary traumatic stress.

It is normal to have these kinds of feelings in response to highly stressful circumstances. Talking about how you feel is important and helpful. You are not alone. Talk to a friend and seek professional help – see the numbers below.

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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.