

# Maintaining Mental Health in Extreme Weather Events

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Talk

*The mental health consequences of single disasters for most people include mild stress and insomnia, high risk coping behavior such as increased alcohol use, and mental disorders such as depression, anxiety and traumatic stress.*

## Heat Waves

Humans can't tolerate high levels of heat without significant acclimatization, and when heat waves hit it can severely impact the population. Extreme heat has been associated with increases in aggressive behavior, domestic violence, and negative coping methods, like alcohol consumption.



*Prioritizing restful sleep, engaging in stress-reducing activities, staying hydrated, and accessing cool spaces are vital for maintaining mental wellbeing during hot weather.*

## Severe Storms and Hurricanes



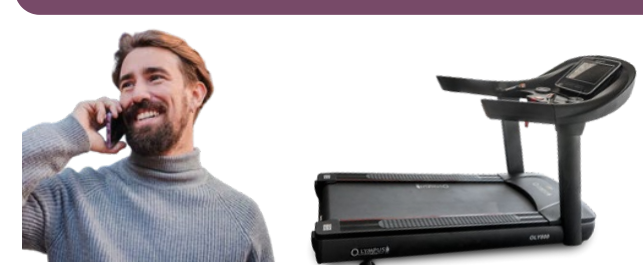
Experiencing a severe storm or hurricane involves not only physical challenges but also significant mental and emotional stress. Building strong relationships within your community can provide a vital support system before, during, and after the event. Engaging with neighbors and local groups fosters a sense of belonging and mutual aid, which are essential for emotional resilience.

*Practicing self-care can help lessen the negative effects of a severe weather event on mental health, but it's important to recognize that if mental health challenges worsen or persist, seeking professional help and counselling may be necessary.*



## Wildfire Smoke

Exposure to wildfire smoke is widely known to cause negative physical effects, but it has been shown to have negative effects on mental health as well. As smoke events may last for weeks at a time, it can be difficult to stop worrying about the threat of a wildfire as the smoke is a constant reminder. Try to limit your media exposure to wildfires to only what's necessary to keep you safe and aware of current conditions.



*It's not unusual to feel worried, stressed out, sad or isolated during a smoke event. Eating well, getting enough sleep, exercising indoors in a place with cleaner air, and staying in contact with friends and family can help.*

*Even in the absence of an event, the possibility or buildup to one happening can be a large source of stress. Preparation can help reduce the stress that you and your family may have about extreme weather:*

- Training on safe evacuation from disasters of different kinds
- Preparing a "go bag" with important documents, treasured memorabilia, and safety needs such as flashlights, solar batteries, and matches
- Keeping your car and home stocked with a several-day supply of water and non-perishable food.



*"Safety is a Core Value and Business Priority"*



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