

OUR HEARTS ARE WITH YOU - TAPS NATURAL DISASTER RESPONSE

2/24/2021

Author: TAPS



TAPS offers assistance to military survivors impacted by natural disasters including COVID-19.

"We are grateful for TAPS who supported us when we most needed it. (They) honored my husband's legacy by helping our family." ~ TAPS military surviving spouse after Hurricane Maria in 2017

Photo courtesy of the [Virginia National Guard](#)

To our TAPS Families who are enduring the added stress of natural disasters during an already stressful time caused by the coronavirus pandemic, our hearts are with you. **You are not alone.**

We are always available to provide compassionate care to our military survivors in any circumstance. We also want to lessen the added stress you may be experiencing due to such emergencies. Our dedicated staff are synchronizing efforts with partners to ensure quality care for our surviving military families during these difficult times.

- Our **Care Team** answers calls from our Helpline 24/7 if you just need to talk.
- Our **Casework and Government Relations Team** has compiled federal resources available to you (see below).
- Our **Casework Team** assists you with understanding and accessing benefits and resources. They also are able to offer short-term emergency and financial assistance thanks to long-standing partners and strong supporters of TAPS mission.

Contact our [National Military Survivor Helpline](#) at [202-588-TAPS \(8277\)](tel:202-588-TAPS) to connect with us. Or, you can email casework@taps.org directly for information on available aid.

We are all in this together and together we will help each other through!

ARE YOU READY?

As military survivors, we know being ready for any contingency is critical to staying safe and reducing stress. Most of you have become experts in this over the course of your loved one's military career and in managing your own self-care after loss.

Remember, having a plan is an ultimate form of self-care. And, in these difficult times, making a plan has never been more important. It is reassuring when you know what to do at every stage of an emergency - **BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER** - and know you will never go through one alone. Be confident then in your ability now to map out the steps needed to guide yourself through an emergency.

You've got this! And we've got you! We've compiled some basic tips below from [Ready.gov](#) on what you can during every stage of an emergency. You can find more valuable information like this on their site, including how to discuss emergency preparedness and how to teach them valuable skills to cope in the aftermath of a disaster at [Ready.gov](#).

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Talk to your friends and family about how you will communicate before, during, and after a disaster. Your employer or school might have guidance too you'll want to factor in. Include your TAPS Family in your plan. Don't hesitate to contact us to let us know you're safe and/or need support.

PREPARE FOR DISASTER

The types of disasters that may befall us can differ greatly based on where we live and work. Be sure you know the risks of disaster types in your area and the safety protocols to follow for them. Check your home and personal property insurance coverage. Learn how to make your home

more secure in the face of those hazards. Verify what you need to do if you receive a local warning or alert.

BUILD A KIT

Gather supplies to last your household several days after a disaster. Don't forget to consider the unique needs of each person and animal in case you have to evacuate quickly. Include a supply of ziploc bags or fireproof containers to prevent damage to important documents, identification, medicines, and cash.

REPORT, RECOVER AND REBUILD

The types of disasters that may befall us can differ greatly based on where we live and the time of year. Be sure you know the risks of disaster types in your area and the safety protocols to follow for them. Check your home and personal property insurance coverage. Verify what you need to do to file an insurance claim as soon as possible to address any personal property damage.

If insurance does not cover all your damage, you may be eligible for federal disaster assistance through the [Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\)](#). Disaster assistance may include financial assistance for temporary lodging and home repairs, low-interest loans to cover uninsured property losses, and other programs to help individuals and business owners recover from the effects of the disaster.

If it is safe to do so, start cleaning up now. Take photos to document damage and begin cleanup and repairs to prevent further damage. Remember to keep receipts from all purchases related to the cleanup and repair.

FACTOR IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Remember that any current emergency recovery plan might be compromised because the pandemic has caused limited availability of resources and supplies. Plan accordingly based on the [Centers for Disease Control](#) recommendations. Consider what additional steps you need to take and additional items you need to stay healthy.

LOOK FOR THE HELPERS

Follow Mr. Rogers' advice: "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping."

Find and enlist your helpers — the reliable emergency and weather resources which communicate vital information and organize incident response. Below we've compiled a list of

the best federal resources we know which will serve you well **BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER** a natural or manmade disaster. Knowing what to do in an emergency includes knowing who to turn to for help. Remember, you can always turn to TAPS.

FEDERAL RESOURCES TO PREPARE FOR NATURAL DISASTERS

[American Red Cross Preparing for Disaster During COVID-19](#): COVID-19 is likely to be with us for a long time, and that is why we must prepare a little differently for other disasters that may affect our communities. There are actions that you can take to prepare while still protecting yourself from COVID-19 during a disaster. Use this guide to help you plan.

[Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) and Prevention Emergency Preparedness, Response, and COVID-19](#): COVID-19 has made preparing for and responding to disasters and emergencies a little more complicated, but also more important during hurricane and wildfire seasons. People, especially those who are at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19 and live in areas prone to hurricanes and wildfires, should prepare. Here are some suggestions on how to do that.

[Department of Homeland Security Disasters and Emergencies](#): The Ready Campaign asks individuals to do three key things to prepare for the unexpected: get an emergency supply kit, make a family emergency plan, and be informed about the different types of emergencies that could occur and their appropriate responses.

[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#): Learn about who is most at risk for emotional distress from wildfires and where to find disaster-related resources.

[Take the You Are the Help Until Help Arrives Web-Based Training](#): Life-threatening emergencies can happen fast and emergency responders aren't always nearby. You are the help until help arrives. Being prepared yourself with some life saving basics allows you to better help others through an emergency too.

[U. S. Department of Agriculture \(USDA\) Disaster Resource Center](#): Here you will find information about specific disasters and emergencies, how to prepare, recover, and help build long-term resilience, as well as information about USDA assistance during disaster events.

FEDERAL RESOURCES TO RECOVER FROM NATURAL DISASTERS

[American Red Cross Disaster Relief & Recovery Services](#): The American Red Cross Emergency Resource Library provides tips and strategies for preparing, responding, and recovering from disasters and emergencies.

[Department of Homeland Security Disaster Assistance for Veterans](#): After a natural disaster, if you're a Veteran, you can find help and support through the VA and other resources on this page. You can also access the VA Disaster Assistance for Veterans **[brochure](#)** or the VA's Live Veterans Disaster Response Line: **[800-507-4571](tel:800-507-4571)**

Department of Veterans Affairs Natural Disaster Information for Veteran Borrowers: If you have a VA loan and your home was affected by a natural disaster, we encourage you to take steps to ensure you receive the assistance you need.

Disaster Assistance Improvement Program: Disaster Assistance streamlines survivor access to disaster services and information and makes applying for disaster assistance easier.

FEMA Disasters & Individual Assistance: If you, your family, or your home were individually impacted by a major disaster, FEMA can help support your recovery. Download the **Individuals and Households Program Fact Sheet** to learn more. You may also call FEMA toll-free at **1-800-621-FEMA** (1-800-621-3362) to apply for assistance or check your application status.

FEMA Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) Locator: FEMA Disaster Recovery Centers (DRCs) are accessible facilities and mobile offices you can visit to learn more about FEMA and other disaster assistance programs. You may also visit to ask questions about your case. DRCs are set up in convenient areas after a disaster to make them easier to find. The DRC Locator helps you find the hours, services, and locations of DRCs near you.

Tricare: Disaster Information: Tricare provides up-to-date, critical information that may affect your health benefits. They will include information gathered from a variety of sources, including other federal agencies and departments, state and local government and the news and media. Additional information is provided about health benefits before, during and after a disaster.

This article was first published on the TAPS website on September 16, 2020 and has been updated to include personal insurance and FEMA guidance after experiencing a natural disaster.

Related Articles: