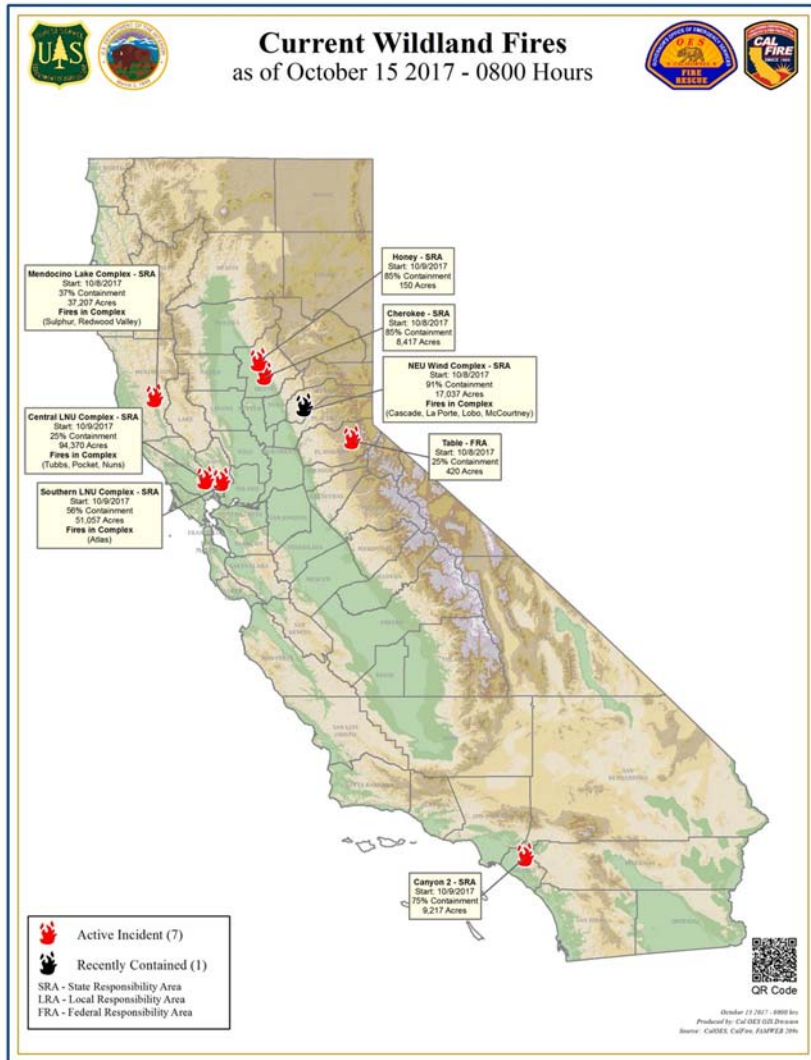


Companioning Disaster Workers in an Age of Catastrophe.

Enhancing Workforce Resilience: A Presence Ministry Model
North American Association of Christians in Social Work

Jon R. Wallace, MSW, M.Div., Disaster Ministries Coordinator,
Southern Conference, United Church of Christ





2017 DISASTERS:

FEMA-DR-4344-CA FIRES

- Thousands of personnel deployed.
- Hundreds of homes destroyed.
- Possibly hundreds killed.



FEMA

FEMA DR-4332-TX HURRICANE HARVEY



Applications for Individual Assistance:

321,244

\$\$ Approved for Individual Assistance:

\$1,065,882,028.55

\$\$ Approved for Public Assistance:

\$327,886,720.25



FEMA

FEMA DR-4337-FLORIDA HURRICANE IRMA



Applications for Individual
Assistance:
682,676

\$\$ Approved for Individual
Assistance:
\$737,939,690.57



FEMA

FEMA DR-4285-NC HURRICANE MATTHEW



Individual Assistance - Dollars Approved

\$98,308,522.34

Total Individual & Households Program (IHP) - Dollars Approved

\$68,711,498.41

Total Housing Assistance (HA) - Dollars Approved*

\$29,597,023.93

Total Other Needs Assistance (ONA) - Dollars Approved

28,997



FEMA

FEMA DR-4339-PR HURRICANE MARIA

FRONTLINES REPORT FROM FEMA STAFF: HURRICANE MARIA UPDATE #6:

I've wanted to share this one for a while but I've been hesitant... how can I post about what I'm going through when there are so many who are truly suffering?... so many who have gone weeks without access to fresh food and potable water, still not knowing how their loved ones are doing, living in roofless houses as rains continue to pour down day after day?

I know how fortunate I am.

I also know how hard my colleagues work and all that we're doing, giving, sacrificing.

Then I watch the news -night after night - as our President, my boss, makes a mockery out of the work that we're doing here; stealing focus from the people in need and from the hard work that's being done, until all anyone talks about is Trump fighting with the mayor of San Juan, Trump criticizing Puerto Rico for their bad economy (*that we created*), Trump threatening to take FEMA and other resources away. We're not even close to perfect but we're doing the best we can with what we have: limited information, limited connectivity, limited resources, and limited staff... Our agency is responding to five concurrent major disasters in PR, USVI, FL, TX, and CA; we are stretched thin. But we're all committed to doing our absolute best to support the response and recovery of PR (and USVI, FL, TX, and CA)... regardless of what you might read in a tweet.

**Individual
Assistance
Applications
Approved:**
182,373
**Total Individual
& Households
Program
Dollars
Approved:**
\$98,253,592.27



FEMA

Similarities between deployed military personnel and federal disaster workers.

- Extended separation from family, friends, and familiar support systems
- Extensive and extended contact with disaster- or terrorism-caused destruction, disruption, death, and other injuries
- Occurrences of vicarious post-traumatic stress, marital challenges, loneliness, and depression
- Concern from family about employee health and safety occasional verbal or physical assault; persistent negative media attention
- Personal illness or health concerns automobile or other accidents causing hospitalization away from home
- Renegotiating familial roles and responsibilities after an extended deployment absence.

Scope of Practice

The FEMA Region VIII Peer Support Specialist has primary responsibility to every FEMA employee coworker:

- 1.To encourage, support, and serve FEMA employees based upon a model of companioning, assistive presence, listening, and in- formation sharing in adherence to principles of confidentiality excepting only duty to warn situations.
- 2.To avoid and refrain from using a medical model or any kind of diagnostic classification system to determine employee wellness.
- 3.To encourage employee peer access to internal support including Alternative Dispute Resolution, Equal Employment Opportunity, and Employee Assistance and other work-life programs and assist peers to link with their own resources of support. (Wallace, 2013).

Centrality of Voluntary Inquiry

Voluntary inquiry, made by an employee, was at the heart of the Peer Support Specialist's efforts. A Peer Support Specialist may become aware of coworkers needs while going about their duties and may inquire generally of coworker welfare but an employee's voluntary inquiry and request for the listening ear, support, and encouragement from a Peer Support Specialist is paramount (Wallace, 2013).