

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 are exposed to challenging conditions, including 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 awareness and self-care that much more important. In addition to the steps below, visit the [Vermont Department of Mental Health's](#) website for more resources.

Get support from team members: Develop a Buddy System

In a buddy system, two responders team up to support each other, monitor each other's stress, workload, and safety.

- Get to know each other. Talk about background, interests, hobbies, and family. Identify each other's strengths and weaknesses.
- Keep an eye on each other. Try to work in the same location if you can.
- Set up times to check-in with each other. Listen carefully and share experiences and feelings. Acknowledge tough situations and recognize accomplishments, even small ones.
- Offer to help with basic needs such as sharing supplies and transportation.
- Monitor each other's workloads. Encourage each other to take breaks. Share opportunities for stress relief (rest, routine sleep, exercise, and deep breathing).
- Communicate your buddy's basic needs and limits to leadership – make your buddy feel "safe" to speak up.

[Read more about the buddy system.](#)

It is normal to feel sadness, grief and depression in response to highly stressful circumstances. We might be irritable or withdraw from others. Talking about how you feel is important and helpful. Download the [CrewCare App](#). 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.