

Supporting Employees After a Bushfire

A bushfire can deeply affect individuals, families, and communities. Employees may experience a range of emotional and physical reactions. Providing the right support helps them recover and build resilience. Here are key ways to assist.



Understanding Individual Reactions

Everyone responds differently to traumatic events, and their needs will vary both initially and over time. Providing immediate and long-term support can help employees develop their own coping strategies.

Common reactions may include:

- Feeling overwhelmed, numb, or detached.
- Difficulty focusing or planning ahead.
- Tearfulness or intrusive memories.
- Sleep disturbances and nightmares.
- Questioning past actions or replaying the event in their minds.
- Physical symptoms such as fatigue or headaches.

These reactions peak in the first week and usually ease within a month. If an employee still struggles after two months, suggest professional support.

When to Encourage Professional Help

Beyond typical responses, some signs may indicate that an employee needs additional support. Encourage them to reach out to a GP or mental health professional if they experience:

- Feeling that their reactions are not normal.
- Thoughts of self-harm or hopelessness.
- Avoidance of daily tasks due to distressing memories.
- Being easily startled or experiencing panic attacks.
- Intense feelings of guilt or regret.

Creating a Supportive Workplace

- Encourage open communication—let employees share their needs instead of assuming them.
- Restore normal routines when appropriate, as structure can aid recovery.
- Allow additional time off if needed, while recognising that some may prefer the stability of work.
- Maintain regular contact with employees who are away from work.
- Foster a supportive environment where colleagues can share experiences and support one another.
- Respect individual coping styles—some may want to talk, while others prefer privacy.

Supporting Community Recovery

Consider workplace initiatives that allow employees to contribute to recovery efforts, such as donating supplies, offering accommodation, or fundraising for affected communities. Meaningful engagement can foster a sense of purpose and collective support.

Resources: [Beyond Blue's Bushfire Response Program](#)

To book an appointment with one of our counsellors, call or scan the QR Code



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