Use the Three Ss of Survival to Weather Hurricane Season



The 2016 hurricane season officially runs from June 1 through Nov. 30, 2016, when the waters of the Atlantic Ocean are warm enough to produce tropical cyclones.

The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) predicts that the level of hurricane activity in the North Atlantic Ocean this year will be near-normal, with 10-16 named storms, 4-8 hurricanes and up to 1-4 major hurricanes.

Regardless of the overall number of storms forecast for the entire Atlantic Basin, on average the Canadian Hurricane Centre (CHC) responds to 4-5 tropical cyclone events each year, with one or two of those affecting Canadian soil and another two or three threatening offshore waters.

Safety professionals for companies based in areas that can be impacted by hurricanes should be sure their workplaces are prepared for such storms, which can cause flooding, take down power lines, damage buildings, etc. For example, learn five steps you can take to prepare for hurricane season and how to deal with the aftermath of a flood.

But you also need to prepare workers, who may be especially anxious this time of year.

A study by Wayne Hochwarter, the Jim Moran Professor of Business Administration at the Florida State University College of Business, surveyed approximately 600 full-time

Florida workers before the start of the 2013 hurricane season and found they had levels of anxiety comparable to those reported in years when hurricane season was more active:

- 50% of the individuals surveyed admitted they were worried about the impact a hurricane would have on both their home and work
- 34% said that even the thought of a hurricane scared many of their co-workers
- 33% indicated individuals in their company tended to be on 'pins and needles' right before the onset of hurricane season.

Hochwarter's research also shows that hurricane-related apprehension trickles into other aspects of work and home life, causing significant stress in both of these areas. Compared to less nervous employees, individuals who indicated heightened levels of anxiety over hurricanes reported:

- Lower rates of concentration at work
- Less willingness to work extra hours
- Greater concern that work and home lives would become imbalanced
- Reduced eagerness to provide constructive suggestions to improve work
- Decreased levels of passion for work.

To best manage hurricane-related anxiety, Hochwarter recommends what he calls the 'Three S's of Survival':

Strategy. Organizations must have a thoughtfully developed and effectively articulated safety plan in place that's understood by all employees. (See, 8 emergency preparedness and response tips and hurricane preparedness checklist)

Support. Companies must give employees help, empathy and encouragement to deal with anxiety occurring at both work and home.

Security. Organizations need to help employees develop the peace of mind needed to work without distraction and the knowledge to know that they can manage hurricane consequences on the home front as well.