September 12, 2017

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN BROWARD COUNTY
ADVISES THE PUBLIC TO BE AWARE OF STRESS RELATED SYMPTOMS
AND OFFER TIPS ON HOW TO COPE DURING THE HURRICANE IRMA
RECOVERY PERIOD

**HURRICANE IRMA **
Public Health Advisory #5

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(Fort Lauderdale) – The recovery period after Hurricane Irma could pose stressful days or even months for some people. People will need to recognize that it is normal to feel anxious about their own and their family's safety. Sadness, grief, and anger are normal reactions to an abnormal event such as Hurricane Irma.   Everyone will have different needs and different ways of coping. Stress can and will lead to serious illness.

<u>**Stress related symptoms could include**</u>:

- Difficulty communicating thoughts
- Difficulty sleeping
- Increased use of alcohol/drugs
- Limited attention span
- Poor work performance
- Headaches/stomach problems
- Tunnel vision/muffled hearing
- Colds or flu-like symptoms
- Disorientation or confusion
- Reluctance to leave home
- Depression, sadness, mood swings and feelings of hopelessness
- Crying easily
- Abnormal glucose(sugar) levels
- Gaining or losing weight
- Back, shoulder and neck pain
- Loss of appetite or increased appetite

Florida Department of Health in Broward County (DOH-Broward) recommends the following to help people deal with stress:

- Realize that everyone deals with stress differently, do not compare yourself with others or judge other people's reactions and emotions.
- Talk about it. By talking with others about the event, you can relieve stress and realize that others may share the same experience and feelings.
- Spend time with friends and family. They can help you through this tough time. Stay in touch with family members and friends outside the area.
- Encourage children to share their feelings and concerns. Use artwork(drawings) to allow children to express themselves, if they cannot easily verbalize their fears.
- Take care of yourself. Get as much rest and exercise as possible. Continue religious practices, or spiritual centering activities.
- Eat well balanced meals.
- Establish or reestablish your regular routines as soon as you can.
- Take one thing at a time. Complete one task before moving on to the next. Completing each task will give you a sense of accomplishment and make things seem less overwhelming.
- If you can, help. Give blood, help prepare meals for others, provide time for elderly parents or disabled and elderly neighbors. Helping others will give you a sense of purpose.
- Avoid drugs and excessive drinking. Drugs and alcohol will generally create additional problems that compound the stress you are already feeling.
- Ask for help. There are many resources available in our community.

In addition to the above, emergency response and volunteer workers should:

- Rotate work assignments from high stress to lower stress functions.
- Drink plenty of water and eat regularly.
- Eat healthy snacks like fresh fruits and other energy foods.
- Take frequent breaks from the scene.
- Talk about your feelings to process what you have seen and done.
- Pair up with a responder so that you may monitor one another's stress.

If self-help strategies are not working, then you may want to seek professional assistance.

For information on DOH-Broward services call (954) 467-4705 or visit http://broward.floridahealth.gov

RUMOR CONTROL HOTLINES: Broward County – 311, (954) 831-4000 or www.broward.org/hurricane - Florida: 1-800-342-3557

About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the Public Health Accreditation Board, works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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