

Mental stress and fatigue

A flood can cause both emotional and physical stress. However, various reports attribute a major health hazard of floods to mental stress or psychological distress due to exposure to extreme disaster events (NDSU various years). Having experienced a devastating flood, seen loved ones lost or injured, and homes damaged or destroyed, flooding poses a long-term psychological impact on the flood victims. In addition, the cost and labor required to repair flood-damaged homes places severe financial and psychological burdens on the people affected, in particular the unprepared and uninsured. Post-flood recovery – especially when it becomes prolonged – can commonly cause mental disorders, anxiety, anger, depression, lethargy, hyperactivity, sleeplessness, and in an extreme case, suicides amongst the flood victims. Behaviour changes may also occur in children such as an increase in bed-wetting and aggression. There is also a long-term concern amongst the affected that their homes would be flooded again in the future. Dr Noji argues that many reported morbidity problems caused by disasters including hypertension and cardiovascular disease – and even leukemia and lymphoma – may be stress-related (Noji 1997). While more attention is usually paid to the clean-ups and repairs of the damaged buildings and properties during the aftermath, it is also required for individual victims to look after him/herself and his/her family, and when appropriate to obtain proper emotional support from local authorities, relief agencies, psychological counsellors, mentors, friends, relatives, etc.

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