

1. Health

Disasters are very demanding and if you are not in good health, not only may you jeopardize your own health, but you may further tax the already stretched resources of the local community to respond to your health issues.

1. Are there any particular health hazards associated with this disaster response (e.g., smoke and poor air quality in forest fires) that would exacerbate any pre-existing health conditions?
2. Have you had a recent surgery or recently undergone any extensive medical treatment?
3. Are you on any medications that may make working long hours without regular sleep and/or meals difficult?
4. Is acquiring sufficient medication to take with you on this disaster assignment a problem?
5. Would you have any difficulty working long hours or walking a fair distance if regular transportation is not available?
6. Would an inability to acquire tobacco and/or alcohol create a stressful situation for you?
7. Have you had a recent medical check-up? Would your doctor disapprove of you going on this disaster assignment?
8. Have you had a recent dental check-up? Is there any reason to suspect any dental problems may surface?

2. Employment and Finances

In some cases your agency or organization will be paying for your wages while on assignment, in other cases you will be going on assignment as a volunteer. In either case, it is important to ensure that financial matters are looked after while you are on assignment.

If you are a volunteer and are employed

9. Will your employer be reluctant to allow you to take this assignment?
10. Will taking this assignment jeopardize your job in any way?
11. Are you in midst of any projects that would make it difficult for you to leave the office?
12. Have you recently been promoted?
13. Have you applied for another job and is it likely that you would be asked to an interview in the near future?
14. Will your employer pay for your time away from your job? If not, will it be financially difficult for you to take this assignment?
15. Have you talked to your colleagues about taking this assignment, and will taking this assignment create difficulties in terms of coverage?

16. Will you have to take holiday time to go on assignment? If so, will this disrupt any vacation plans with your family?

If you are a volunteer and are not employed

17. Are you looking for employment and if so, will this assignment jeopardize any possible job offers?
18. Will it be financially difficult for you to take this assignment?
19. Will taking this assignment affect your eligibility for Employment Insurance or BC Employment and Assistance?

In either case . . .

20. Will there be any problem paying bills while you are away?
21. Will there be any problem depositing cheques or making bank deposits during your absence?

3. Personal and Family Life

Circumstances can change – sometimes very quickly. Everyone has times when one’s life situation is more stable than during other times. Going on disaster assignment is demanding enough without having to worry about what is happening at home or leaving when things have been very stressful (either positively or negatively).

22. Has your life situation changed recently – for example: have you recently experienced a separation, divorce, or a period of marital discord? have you recently married or decided to live common-law? has there been a recent birth in the family? has a family member been seriously ill and/or is anyone in your family undergoing medical treatment?
23. Have you returned recently from another disaster assignment?
24. Have there been any recent traumas and/or critical incidents in your life?
25. Have you recently moved?
26. Have you recently lost your job or been laid off work?
27. Are there any significant financial stresses in your life?
28. Are there any important family occasions in the near future – for example, a graduation, expected birth of grandchild, significant wedding anniversary, or birthday?
29. Are there any religious observances that you follow that might make this disaster assignment difficult?
30. Do you have plans for a family vacation or anticipated trip?
31. Have you made any important commitments (family or organizational) that would be difficult to change and/or postpone (e.g., providing child care, caring for an elderly parent)?
32. Has it been a long time since you have had time off to yourself and/or to simply relax and enjoy life?

33. Has it been a long time since your will and other personal affairs have been updated?
34. Will taking this assignment be welcomed as an escape from having to cope with ongoing problems at home or in the workplace?
35. Will your family disapprove of you going on this assignment?

If you have answered “yes” to any of these questions you should seriously consider whether going on a disaster assignment at this time is a good choice for you. Experienced disaster responders know that there will always be another disaster and that before going to help others you have an obligation to yourself and your family to ensure that you are physically, financially, and emotionally healthy.

Developed by:
*British Columbia
Disaster Worker Care Committee*

Self-Assessment: Prior to Disaster Assignment

