

Effects of Kocaeli Earthquake on the Turkish Emergency Response Systems

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The 17 August 1999 Kocaeli earthquake, which devastated several cities in the area of the Marmara Sea, created one of the most difficult emergency management crises faced by any nation in recent history. The earthquake struck at 03:02 hours and caused catastrophic damages over a wide geographic area. Communications systems linking affected municipalities with outside agencies were destroyed. Thousands were trapped in devastated buildings, including many of the officials who would be expected to provide the initial response efforts. Essential emergency response resources either were destroyed or severely damaged. This presentation focuses on the effects of the Kocaeli earthquake on the Turkish emergency response systems and the strategies being implemented to prepare one of the world's most active seismic regions for future natural disasters.

Keywords: damage; disasters; earthquake; Kocaeli; response; Turkey

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Theme 8. Education Issues in Disaster Medicine

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Educating the Medical Profession: Becoming Stress Resilient

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Doctors, nurses, paramedics and others engaged in the medical profession know it is a high stress vocation. Dealing with the sick and injured on a day-to-day basis, is stressful enough; however, the level of stress is compounded when one is involved in a disaster — the uncertainty of working with unknown colleagues, unstable conditions, and dealing with large numbers of seriously injured or dying patients. These conditions often can lead to the development of post-traumatic stress disorder. What can be done to reduce the symptoms of acute stress?

The first part of this presentation is designed to provide medical professionals, who are involved either as primary or secondary emergency responders, with an opportunity to identify the leading symptoms of, and reactions to post-trauma stress. In order to reduce the likelihood of acute post-trauma stress, it is important to identify: 1) when these reactions to stress are most likely to occur; 2) what factors are likely to increase an individual's susceptibility to acute stress; and 3) what factors, related to the incident, are more likely to cause traumatic stress reactions.

The second part of this presentation will discuss ways by which medical professionals can reduce the effects of post-trauma stress by applying: 1) six key principles to become stress-resilient; 2) steps to reduce personal post-trauma stress; and 3) effective leadership skills during, and post-disaster.

Keywords: disasters; health professionals; leadership; post-traumatic stress; stress; stress reduction