



safe? help us? to be okay? okay?
 where do we start? How can we keep we keep will I still
 are we going safe? have a job?
 to be okay? why did this happen now?
 are our customers okay? happen to us? Who can help us?

When trauma and grief come to work

*A practical handbook for organisations,
 employers and managers to support staff,
 clients and customers after the
 Canterbury Earthquakes*



Acknowledgements

Skylight wishes to acknowledge the tremendous contributions being made by many to support the business community- as well as individuals and families – in the Canterbury area following the Earthquake events of 2010 and 2011.

Skylight is a charitable agency supporting anyone going through change, loss, trauma and grief – whatever the cause. It also supports those wanting to help others.

Please see our website for:

- [EARTHQUAKE SUPPORT WEB PAGE](#)
- a wide range of trauma support resources for all ages
- phone counselling
- training options

www.skylight.org.nz

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Introduction

Skylight has produced this very practical handbook for organisations, employers and managers to use as you respond to the earthquake events and their aftermath in Canterbury, and nationally.

The tragic and traumatic events, and their impact on people, are high in the minds of all New Zealanders. Even those that have not experienced the earthquakes directly are experiencing trauma and grief relating to it that is affecting their work and their interactions with colleagues, clients and customers.

For our communities to recover, our organisations and businesses need to recover.

Organisations and businesses directly affected by loss and trauma from the earthquake and its aftermath will recognise how crucial it is to support your staff, and also customers and clients as appropriate, to be able to move forward again – both as a business and as people.

Many businesses and organisations have been affected and the impact is profound. Working together as much as possible will be resilience in action. Use all the help available, such as this handbook, and the business continuity help options listed at the back.

Waiho i te toipoto, kua i te toiroa

Let us keep close together, not wide apart

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Please note:

Websites and phone numbers were correct as of 26 February, 2011.

They will be updated online if required.

The nature and impact of disaster trauma on people

Traumatic experiences are intense, distressing and threaten people's sense of safety and trust in the world. For a time, trauma can disrupt a person's ability to undertake normal daily home and work routines. It can also cause both predictable and unpredictable reactions in people. Such post traumatic stress reactions are completely normal after terrifying events, even if they don't feel normal. Some people wonder if they're going crazy. They're not. The intensity of reactions will gradually lessen with time and good support from others.

There is a wide range of reactions possible as people's minds and bodies adjust to what's happened – and to the memories and consequences of it.

Earthquake aftershocks inevitably increase the traumatic impact on people, with ongoing streams of adrenalin leaving them very much 'on alert', jumpy, on edge and hyped most of the time.

Pre-existing physical or mental health conditions may be made worse by the traumatic stress. Similarly, any difficult life issues already in play before the trauma may also continue to add extra stress to their situation.

Trauma affects people physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually and relationally. In other words – it affects people at every level.

“My house is destroyed. My family's left town. I'm struggling to think about work at all.”

“My nerves are shot to pieces. I don't know how to get back to my normal self. I'm looking for the switch and just can't find it!”

“I have tried to concentrate on what I need to do for work to get on its feet again and find my mind wandering onto other things. It's impossible to concentrate.”

“I keep seeing it again all the time. It just keeps coming into my mind. It feels like it's only just happened. Every time I come to work I have the pass the place I saw it.”

In an emergency, or if staff have suicidal thoughts and are in danger of self harm, **phone 111** or visit your nearest medical centre or hospital.

Common post traumatic stress reactions

tearful
detached – switched off
scared
flashbacks
distracted
guilt
unable to sit still – always moving
eating more or less
shocked and stunned
feeling unsafe
wanting to accuse or blame
hard to think properly
unable to move – wanting to be still
replaying of memories
confused
overwhelmed
disoriented
breathless or hard to catch a deep breath
pain too deep for words
forgetful
unable to remember
faint
terrified
angry
hot and clammy
unable to cope at all
unable to take information in
sleeping more or less
survivor guilt
dizzy
irritable
can't focus on anything
unable to cope
needing to search for the person
hysterical
nightmares
lack of interest in anything else
having suicidal thoughts or talking about suicide
wanting to be with others
panicky
questioning – asking 'Why?'
revengeful
feeling like it's unreal
asking lots of questions – wanting information to make sense of things
horrificed
not knowing even how to begin to deal with it
nauseous
disbelieving
irrational
frustrated
being afraid to go back to the place the trauma happened

How long will the reactions last?

Traumatic reactions don't fade away quickly. It's not uncommon for people to be so on edge that they just can't relax, or they can't believe the reassurances of others, even if they are 100% safe. It's very different from 'being upset' about something. Reactions can continue for some weeks or months, and some people may find they get worse for a while, or develop into a more acute disorder – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). (See across)

Healing and recovery from traumatic events will be different for everyone. Expect that it will take considerable time. Expect also that reactions are likely to be freshly triggered off in the future by different memories or reminders.

Typically, the more traumatic a person's experience, the more intense and long-term their reactions. However, someone can also be very traumatised by events that have happened to those who they love and care about, or even to those they don't know. Watching TV images and hearing media reports can be enough to impact people severely.

When does post traumatic stress become PTSD?

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) occurs if the psychological stress of experiencing a shocking event continues to be acute and intrusive, and resuming any normal functioning becomes impossible. A person's reactions will consistently be extreme. If this occurs, medical intervention and the support of specialist counselling, as well as the support of caring others, are all crucial to recovery.

It's helpful to know and keep in mind that PTSD can emerge months, even years, after a traumatic event. Encourage those who are obviously struggling to seek professional help, without hesitation. You may be able to help facilitate this for them. Or if it's you, don't put off getting some help. Finding the right help to recover well is very important.

Contact The New Zealand Mental Health Foundation or see their website for helpful information about PTSD.

www.mentalhealth.org.nz or
phone **(09) 300 7030**

Also see Finding counselling support on [page 15](#)



The exhaustion and fatigue factor

When you, your staff, your clients and customers are impacted by traumatic incidents and their consequences, the pressure is extreme. People's minds and bodies are strained by the stress and pressure to try to 'get their heads around it' and to cope with what they need to do for themselves and others. Many will be working or doing things for long hours at a time. This is deeply exhausting.

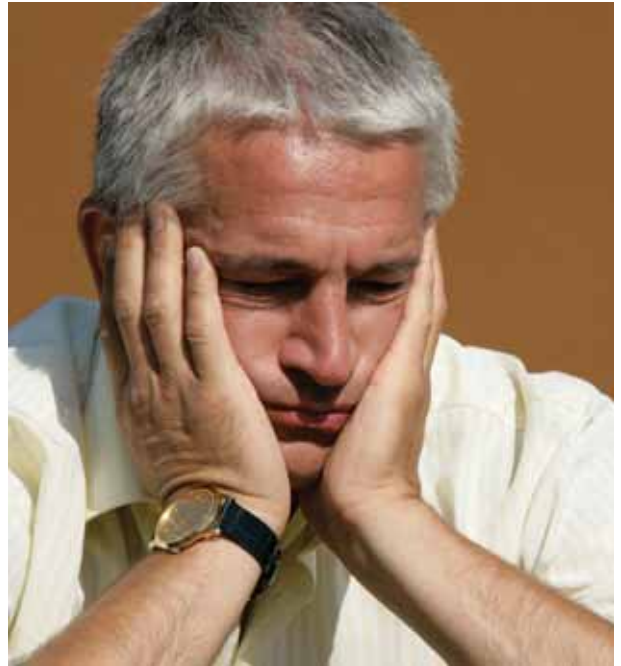
The effects can be:

- irritability
- quick anger escalation
- confusion
- lack of focus and concentration
- susceptible to illness and injury
- slower reaction times
- less co-ordination and balance
- human errors increase
- hesitancy in making decisions
- less self care – skipping meals, not drinking enough water, not resting or sleeping enough.

What helps?

When aftershocks occur through the night, if memories and flashbacks occur, and if family members can't sleep, then people's sleep can be very disturbed.

- Get as much sleep as possible – even if taken in snatches.
- Make yourself have proper, healthy meals through each day.
- Drink water through the day.
- Consider having a break away from your area if possible, to be able to sleep without aftershocks occurring.



Keeping employees, clients and customers safe

Options to consider:

- Look out for fatigue, especially for those driving or operating machinery.
- Adjust employee tasks as necessary.
- Give staff extra rest breaks.
- Allow short 'power naps' through their shift.
- Consider different start and end times.
- Provide good and supportive supervision.
- Supply food and hot drinks if that might help.
- Recognise that caffeine and alcohol can disrupt sleep, so consider providing an alternative.
- Consider bringing in 'fresh' staff from out of the region to give staff a break, or assistance.

Where does grief come in?

What is grief?

Grief is a normal human response. It's the combination of thoughts, feelings and reactions we experience in response to difficult change and loss of any kind.

Grief is the way we gradually adjust our lives to the reality of what's happened.

It's a necessary and important process for people to work through after loss and takes all the time it needs to take.

Grief after a traumatic event that has included the deaths of many people means:

- It is likely to be more intense.
- It will blend with traumatic stress reactions, which can be very similar to grief. (See [page 5](#))
- It will also reflect the influence of 'community grief' – being part of a wider group also grieving.
- Grief will be expressed individually but probably also with others, as a group and as part of a wider community.

See www.skylight.org.nz or phone 0800 299 100 for grief and bereavement support resources and information to support your own personal situation, or the personal situations of staff and their families or whānau, clients or customers. Skylight is a specialist not-for-profit organisation experienced and expert in this area and serves people anywhere

in New Zealand. See Skylight's ongoing support services for businesses on [page 28](#).

Grief affects people at every level – physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually and relationally. It will help to remember, and to share with staff, these key things:

- ▶ Everyone grieves differently.
- ▶ How we each grieve is as individual as our fingerprint.
- ▶ There are no 'right' or 'wrong' ways to experience grief.
- ▶ There are no rules. There is no set timetable.
- ▶ There are no set stages you have to pass through in order.
- ▶ Grief isn't a test. Grief isn't a race or a competition.
- ▶ There's no secret method to take grief instantly away.
- ▶ Grief will slowly get easier to handle, when people are able to take the time and space they need to come to terms with what's happened in their own way.



Grief can be like a wave...

Grief is like falling into the surf, being pulled over by a huge wave and knocked off your feet. You are dragged along and tumbled around. You are completely disoriented and lose your sense of direction. Just when you think you can't cope any longer, you are tossed back onto the sand.

You lie on the sand catching your breath. Slowly, you start to feel the warmth of the sun on your body. As you begin to relax, along comes another wave and it tosses you back into the surf and away you go again – out of breath, disoriented and increasingly exhausted.

And as before, just when you think you can no longer cope, you get tossed back onto the sand again. This experience can repeat itself again and again, but gradually you begin to spend less time in the sea and more time on the beach breathing normally and feeling the sun on your body.

The way grief often hits us when we least expect it is like the way waves can knock us over at the beach when we're not looking.

These sudden bursts are waves of pain, hitting us hard and then receding, so we can catch our breath again until the next one comes. While we can't easily control these bursts of pain, we can get through them and we can always know that we'll have some normal breathing times in between. Indeed, slowly, the waves come less often.

Supporting your staff's personal recovery

For some time you can naturally expect staff to find their work responsibilities more difficult to fulfil due to the enormous strain that they, and probably their family, whānau and friends, are under. Keep in mind the trauma and grief reactions listed previously and don't under-estimate their influence.

Allow staff time and space to talk together about what has happened. Be patient and compassionate, recognising that 'back to normal' cannot be possible for some time – if ever. Tap into the group dynamic to encourage staff to feel supported, bringing everyone together regularly. Communication is paramount and needs to be two-way. Gathering together often, even brief check-ins, is very important to help this happen.

Strained staff relationships might sometimes occur as people react differently to this extreme situation. Help staff remember to 'make room' for each other in this time by being as patient and tolerant as possible. You could suggest that distressed staff can take breaks as they need to, or perhaps doing things in new ways to make tasks easier for teams.

Some employees may want to work harder and longer hours as a way of coping. You may need to help them not to overdo this, so they can restore better balance and ensure they don't put their physical and mental health further at risk.

“

“This is such a terrible time. My manager said that he doesn't know exactly how I feel. I'm glad he said that, because he doesn't! He also said he realises that my trauma and grief just have to take their natural course until I am stronger again and able to work at the level I used to. I appreciated that. Now my first priority can be getting myself sorted and just taking my reactions as they come along. I felt huge relief after he spoke with me so supportively. His compassion meant a lot.”

”

*In a difficult time,
people might forget what you said,
or what you did,
but they will never forget
how you made them feel.*

What do different staff need the most right now?

While everyone has been affected, each person's story will be different in some way. Make the time to check on each individual's situation and needs. Build a plan with each person to help meet their most pressing needs, so they can work as well as possible.

Be aware that different personalities, genders, ages and cultures have different perspectives and styles as they grieve. You are likely to find that while some people will want to share very little, others will want to share a lot and express their emotions freely. You may also see while some will want to take action and 'do' things, others will not be able to do that and will be more hesitant.

Be respectful of such differences. Everyone's different and how they react isn't right or wrong. Try to role model tolerance and support. If you're not sure about cultural needs, ask the staff member what they need.

Recognise also that people's ability to cope will also be affected by any pre-existing physical and/or mental health conditions, which may have been exacerbated by the stress.

And your own needs? (See [page 16](#))

If an employee has died

The death of a staff member, or staff members, will have many implications for you and all your staff. You will grieve their loss and, together, have to adjust to working and interacting without them. It is a very painful loss. While such a loss is felt by everyone on the staff, people will still react in their own ways.

Encourage staff, especially close friends of the employee, to consider planning a tribute or memorial service, and perhaps a time of silence at your next staff gathering. You might also consider memorials, such as planting a tree or garden, establishing a fund to support their family and whānau, or displaying a piece of art, photo or something symbolic of the person to honour and affirm the value that person brought to your staff and business.

Take practical steps to let clients and customers know in an appropriate and respectful way. For example, writing a letter to customers or publishing a memorial in a local paper, but liaise with the family about this first if you can. Also, let staff and clients/customers know whatever steps you have taken to continue to provide services.

Skylight's respected handbook *Death Without Warning* is available from 0800 299 100 or online web shop at www.skylight.org.nz and contains a lot of helpful information.



If a staff family or whānau member has died

Working alongside someone whose family or whānau member has died is always hard, as you and your staff will want to offer support, respect that person's way of dealing with the situation and also avoid saying or doing anything to distress them further.

Skylight's respected handbook *Death Without Warning* is available from 0800 299 100 or online web shop at www.skylight.org.nz and contains a lot of helpful information.

Funerals and tangi

Different people will have different preferences about attending funerals, tangi or memorial services or not. Be respectful of this, while making sure your organisation or business is represented in an appropriate way. (Some funerals may be for close family, whānau and friends only.) Consider providing not only time to attend the funeral or tangi, but time off afterwards

If a staff member has been seriously injured

You will recognise that this situation needs planning and co-operation from staff, as you seek to support the person support while also continuing business activities. Thank staff for bridging the gap. Enable staff to visit as appropriate. Designate one person to liaise with the family and whānau and to make sure you are accurately kept up to date with the staff member's condition and recovery. Be aware that recovery from injury can take a long time. Use ACC and business continuity advisors to help you plan how to best work around this situation, and to transition them back to work when, or if,

the time is right.

If necessary, let clients and customers know, in an appropriate and respectful way, how things are progressing. Also, let staff and clients/customers know whatever steps you have taken to continue to provide services.

If a staff member's family or whānau member has been seriously injured

Once more, recognise the stress this places on the staff member. Do what you can to support them, as they support their family or whānau member. Taking time to talk with them and see how things are going from time to time is critical.

Acknowledge the loss – talk about it honestly

Don't avoid talking with your staff about their losses at some point – however tempting. Don't let it become like an elephant in the room that everyone sees but nobody mentions as they have to squeeze around it all the time.

You personally need to acknowledge to them the degree of their losses and the traumatic experience experienced. Don't think there's a right or wrong way to do this – the wrong thing is more about saying nothing at all to them. Say, perhaps, something like

"I am sorry to hear about your loss/situation. I know this must be a difficult time for you (and your family or whānau). I would really like to be of help to you if I can, so please do contact me if I can help you." (And provide contact details written down.)

"Is there anything you can think of that may be helpful for you right now? Is there anything you'd like to know about? Or that I can find out about for you? If something does come to

mind, just let me know."

Offer specifics e.g.

"Can I do ___ for you? Would it be helpful if I ___?"

Create opportunities for breaks where staff can talk openly about their fears and concerns. This can be a time that is helpful for everyone.

Don't try to talk them out of their reactions

Never minimise the event they've experienced or say things like "you're lucky it wasn't worse for you," or "pull yourself together," or just try to get them to look on the bright side. Traumatically stressed people need to concentrate on themselves and their families at first. They will feel supported if you let them know you are concerned, want to help and are trying to understand. That way their recovery will be better assisted and their contribution to your business will be more possible.



Caring about staff families and whānau

People don't come to work without retaining links with those they care about the most. Helping them to look after those they love the most is a very important way to support them in their workplace. Think about what this could mean for you and your business, such as:

- finding out information they need
- finding out about resources they can use to support their family and whānau
- taking an interest in their family – knowing them by name
- meeting their families
- giving them time to attend to urgent 'home' matters as they arise
- allowing more 'check in' time by phone, if needed.

Be aware of any special days coming up

These are likely to be especially difficult for your staff, such as birthdays, appointments, holidays or Christmas. Let the person know they are in your thoughts. Speak directly to them or consider sending them an email or card.

Balancing the needs of different staff members

Everyone reacts differently and will have different circumstances at home. Some will have a greater capacity than others to continue working well.

Here are some ideas to consider:

- Let all your staff know that, while you want operations to continue running smoothly, you do realise it's a time for some flexibility and understanding that things may not run as usual, or may not go as planned.

see over...



- Encourage staff to contribute ideas for how best to manage the business challenges ahead. Creativity and innovative thinking can make a powerful difference.
- The grief of one staff member can trigger grief in others, from either recent or long past situations. Make room as people become distressed.
- Time together as staff with a trained counsellor can allow staff to vent their concerns and emotions, and also to ask questions.
- Arrange for individual staff to have access to a counsellor, if needed. (See [page 15](#)). One on one time allows for private conversations that can be very helpful.
- Re-establish business routines as best you can.
- Show ongoing appreciation to any staff carrying an extra load for a while.
- Take over some tasks yourself if possible.
- Be open to their suggestions about ways of supporting others also.
- Encourage staff to attend any relevant out of work events, such as hospital visiting or attending a funeral or memorial service. As best you can, proactively make arrangements at work for this to happen.
- Provide time for staff to attend to family needs as necessary,
- Consider planning relaxing time out together as staff. Perhaps staff could suggest ways to do this when the time feels right.
- Have an open door policy that encourages staff to seek care or information.

When to encourage them to seek additional help

Sometimes it is important for people to know when their recovery requires additional help. Encourage this as a way forwards and not as a personal failure. Personal recovery often needs to be supported by specialist knowledge to ensure their traumatic stress does not linger unnecessarily and/or develop into more serious physical or mental health problems.

Finding counselling support

Here are some of the counselling services available to you and your staff. You could also ask others about counselling services they have found effective.

- Workplace Support
0800 443445
- EAP – a 24/7 service
0800 327 669
- Relationship Services
0800 RELATE (0800 735 283) or
03 366 8804
- Skylight – Mon–Fri, 9-5
0800 299 100
- Victim Support – a 24/7 service
0800 842 846
- Citizens' Advice Bureau – ask what counsellors are near your location
0800 FOR CAB (0800 367 222) or enquire online at www.cab.org.nz
- Lifeline – 24/7 telephone counselling
0800 543 354

In an emergency, or if staff have suicidal thoughts, phone 111 or visit your nearest medical centre or hospital.

What about you?

In this very traumatic time, it will be easy to be so committed about supporting others and trying to manage business concerns that you forget something important – Yourself.

You're reading this because you're in a leadership position. You may be a business owner, a senior manager, a team leader or a board member. Whatever your role, keep in mind that caring for yourself will help you to be better able to do all you want to do for others, and for your business. Burning yourself out isn't going to be helpful.

What would you find most helpful right now?

What help could you access personally, or for your business?

Don't hesitate to make the most of the avenues for assistance that are available.

See Looking after yourself – a top priority across for some self care ideas.

Perhaps you could copy this page for your staff notice board also.

Consider talking with someone else about what's troubling you or challenging you right now.

For example, you could talk with a good friend, another manager or employer, a business mentor or perhaps a counsellor. It can help a lot.

(See [How talking to someone else can help page 18](#))



Perhaps one day, in turn, you will be able to assist other organisations, employers or managers facing traumatic times.

Looking after yourself - a top priority

do nothing sometimes
have a rest – use power naps if you need
eat healthy food – drink water often
relax when you can – take breaks
exercise
get into nature – get outside for a while
take a break out of the region – even a short one
have a friend to stay for a while
cry if and when you need to – that's okay
laugh if you can – enjoy the things you can
take some deep breaths and slow down a bit
ask for what you need
be honest – pretending is exhausting and hides your real needs
forgive yourself – don't expect too much of yourself
give yourself permission to feel whatever you feel
encourage yourself
praise yourself for the things you've managed to do
don't feel guilty if you're having a good day
treat yourself to something you really enjoy
wear your favourite clothes
watch a movie or listen to music you really like
play a game – play sport
read books you enjoy or that inspire you
keep connected with people
spend relaxing time with family, whānau, good friends or neighbours
spend time with those who really care about you
spend time with your pets
be with yourself for a while
pray or nurture yourself spiritually, whatever that means for you
give yourself all the time you need to handle the things you need to
do things that make you happy
join a support group – in person or via the internet
keep yourself safe – don't make bad choices or take big risks
make something creative
bake your favourite biscuits, cook your favourite meal
find out information that might help you
give a hug – get a hug
be patient with yourself – you're only human
get the help you need if you feel stuck
keep asking till you get the help you're needing



“

“I think if you talk to someone but it doesn't help, find someone else. Don't give up first time round. Just find the right person.”

“I'm not much of a talker but talking to mates about it all was good. It helped me my head around stuff.”

”

How talking to someone else can help

People have said that talking things out with someone else can:

- help you understand yourself and your reactions better
- help you feel a lot better – it's a relief
- help your head to spin less and feel less confused
- help you sort out your feelings
- help put things into perspective
- give you suggested ideas or options you hadn't even thought of
- help you problem solve in a quiet, calm space
- provide someone else to help you deal with things – you don't have to feel it's just your problem anymore – someone else cares
- help you feel supported – you feel less alone
- mean that you've now got someone to keep talking it over with as you go along
- mean that you can be helped to find more help, if you need it.

What does a counsellor or psychologist offer that's extra helpful?

A trained counsellor or psychologist can offer all of these things, but they can offer them with extra skills and experience. This can make the experience of talking things out more helpful, because they are very knowledgeable about what people find most helpful as they come through tough times.

See Finding counselling support on [page 15](#)

Skylight offers phone grief and trauma counselling support Monday - Friday 9 - 5, for anyone affected by the Canterbury Earthquake.
Phone 0800 299 100.

Letting it out - Getting it out

Humans have emotions – particularly traumatically stressed humans. Feeling them is normal. Expressing them is constructive. Pretending they're not there doesn't work – they come out in one way or another.

People will have different ways of expressing how they think and feel about what's happened – including yourself. Some of us find expressing ourselves easy – others find it hard. The key is to find ways that suit you and then... to use them.

We've mentioned talking it out, but there are many other ways of 'letting it out' that can release a lot of tension inside. Sometimes you might not really know what it is you're feeling and thinking. It may just get all too big and flood your mind.

Finding a way to begin letting even a small amount of what's inside out, can help.

Better to let things out bit by bit than have them explode all at once with really unhelpful, negative effects.

Everyone's different – so what sorts of things can help you 'let it out'?

Many people find doing physical activity of some kind helpful release stress. Or try doing something creative. You know yourself best. What would work for you?

In this stressful time avoid risk taking or missusing alcohol or drugs. Keep yourself safe.



“

“I use all the anger and frustration to punch a punching bag that's up in my garage. Maybe I should take it in to work!”

“It's the garden for me, and lately a vegetable garden. It takes lots of physical effort but gives me time out. I definitely feel less stressed when I come back inside.”

”

As your business gets back to work

How are things today and what will we do next?

The situation is changing all the time. You will not be able to predict or control everything that happens.

You and your team need to manage and lead the recovery of your business.

Planning helps people feel prepared and builds confidence. Focus on what you do have control over. You will have your own work to do around business continuity and recovery.

Staff will also be interested and concerned to know what is happening to and how they can help. They will want to know about what's going to happen for the business and for their own jobs. They need to know what is being done to help them stay safe at work.

You need to provide accurate information to help people understand what has happened, what your plans are, what is happening now and what is involved.

- Communicate clearly what is possible and what is not.
- Let people know what your priorities are and how you intend to act.
- Involve staff in your business recovery and continuity response.
- Take up offers of help from those who want to help get things up and running.
- Recognise that staff may have opinions on

how things could have been or could now be managed better.

- Keep them up to date with progress and changes to the plan.
- Ask for their feedback on how things are going.
- Involve unions at all steps of your discussions and plans, if they are part of your organisation.



“They’re all waiting for me to say what to do and there’s so much I don’t know yet.”

“I hate having to tell customers we just can’t help them.”

“I can’t come in today, they’re pulling my house down.”

“When will you know?”

“We’re getting there – we’ve sent our first load off to customers this morning.”

“Can we find another way?”

“How are things today – and what will we do next?”



Support for managers and team leaders

- Be clear about the business approach to employment arrangements, such as pay, leave and bereavement leave, working from home and if children can come to work, so everyone gives employees the same information.
- Make sure managers and team leaders know recordkeeping regarding leave must be kept up to date, and agreements are clear and recorded.
- Support managers of staff who are picking up additional work – check on their capacity and encourage them to speak up if they are having any issues.
- Provide managers and team leaders with access to information about how to support their staff in respect to their individual reactions to what's been happening. (Use the content of [pages 4-9](#))
- Update staff contact details if they have changed.
- Help them to be aware of their own responses to the quake events, to plan how best to support their teams through these, and how to access support themselves when they need it.
- If you are part of a larger corporation, be clear about the strategic direction of the organisation or business, so that you are always sure of your facts.

Stay in touch with staff

- Commit to regular meeting, phone, email, online update times so people can rely on them and everyone gets the same information.
- Make sure information that is shared on how staff, business neighbours, suppliers, clients and customers are coping is accurate, not hearsay.

- Be up front about what is happening with your premises in terms of health and safety.
- Discuss and agree, based on your previous experiences, how you will all respond if there is another strong quake are at work.
- Respond quickly to any misinformation with news on what is really happening.
- A quick catch up at the start and end of each day means you can talk concerns through and work on solutions together, rather than having conversations off and on in smaller groups during the day.
- Discuss whether you would like to create an event to mark what has happened – consider cultural responses as you decide together what would be appropriate.
- Celebrate things that are going well, for you as a business and in people's lives.
- Be visible and available – but not intrusive.
- Meet with your people together and individually.
- Stay in touch with staff who have not yet come back to work, by phone or email.
- Ask how individuals have been affected and how you can help – see [Balancing the needs of different staff members page 13](#) for more on this.

As a leader, you also need to be able to create a supportive environment for staff to deal with trauma and grief and recover in their individual ways. (See [Supporting your staff's personal recovery page 10](#))

If you are part of a larger corporation, you will also have to keep in touch with your organisation's future intentions, so that you can always be informed.

Be clear about day to day arrangements

- Stress that safety is a top priority.
- Let staff know you realise this needs to be a time for some flexibility and understanding that things may not run as usual, or go to plan.
- Get back to normal routines wherever you can.
- Work with staff health and safety representatives and the union/s as appropriate.
- Be clear about your approach to employment arrangements, such as pay, leave and bereavement leave, working from home, and if children can come to work, so all employees have the same information.
- Make sure your recordkeeping regarding leave is kept up to date, and agreements are clear and recorded.
- Provide access to information about potential employment issues so staff can find out anything more they need to know. (See links across)
- Ask staff to keep you informed of any changes to their contact details.
- Take care if you bring in people to help. Ensure everyone knows who is responsible for doing what.
- Be realistic about how you as a business can help staff in their personal circumstances – there is a lot of support available across your community. You don't have to do it all. See Finding counselling support [page 15](#) and Community support options available on [page 26](#).
- Clarify who can speak on behalf of the business to media. Ensure they have the most up to date information.

Where staff can find out more on employment issues

- ▶ Earthquake Factsheets Community Law Canterbury has prepared factsheets in the area of insurance, employment and tenancy. www.canlaw.org.nz
- ▶ Department of Labour Online advice designed to help businesses and their employees make good, safe, sensible and practical decisions in this difficult time. This includes overarching advice on Health and safety and Employment relations matters www.dol.govt.nz/quake/

Help people help each other

- Encourage staff to share what has happened and how they are getting things sorted out for their homes, whānau and families.
- have a go-to person who keeps up to date with community support and provides access to accurate and up to date information, for example, at your regular meetings, online or on a notice board.
- provide a space where staff can rest or talk with each other.

Supporting staff who work with clients and customers

What's happening in Canterbury is being talked about by everyone. It will come up in all sorts of conversations.

Frontline staff have experience in handling complicated enquiries and working with unhappy people. Listening to others' stories about what's happened to them in this extreme situation is difficult and may bring up their own experiences and grief.

They may also be asked for, or want to suggest, help which your business does not provide.

Support your staff to manage these conversations so that they are able to stay calm and focused, give accurate information and refer people on to other agencies as appropriate.

Talk with them about the nature of trauma and grief and the ways it can affect people, and how they relate to others. Anger and frustration can be part of this, and so can confusion and forgetfulness, tearfulness and distress. See [pages 4-9](#) for more on this.

Make sure everyone working with clients and customers knows:

- Exactly what services your business can provide at this time.
- How often information for customers will be updated.
- How they can best respond to distressed callers.
- How to balance listening to someone with getting the work done and making the line or time available for others. Talk about ways they can, with care, end or move conversations along.
- Who else they can refer people to for emotional or practical support.
- How to recognise when they are sharing their own story with a client/customer.
- How to signal that they need help if the person is at your worksite.
- How to signal that they need a break.
- Who they can talk with if they are unsettled or upset by what they have heard or thought about during the conversation. See [Finding counselling support on page 15](#)

“

“Picking up the pieces after a disaster will take a lot a time - for everyone.”

”



For businesses and organisations outside of Canterbury

Supporting staff who are experiencing trauma and grieving about what's happened is crucial.



“As we process and things filter through our brains, we all have our times of feeling everything's weird.”

“I know I wasn't there, but I still feel so upset and distracted.”

“I have friends who were injured – and know others who are having such a rotten time with their house. There's not much I can do, I keep going over how it must have been for them.”



The events of the past months have had an impact on all New Zealanders. Across the country and throughout every organisation and business, employees will have varying connections with events and a range of responses. Importantly, they may also be working in their own family, whānau and communities to support others as they grieve.

You can use the information in this handbook about supporting people through grief to tailor make your response to what's happening for your staff members.

An important first step is letting them know you recognise what is happening for them. Other support can include making information available about grief and how to support children. For this, see www.skylight.org.nz or phone 0800 299 100 for grief and bereavement support resources and information to support the personal situations of staff. Skylight is a specialist charity experienced and expert in this area and serves people anywhere in New Zealand.

The advice about looking after yourself also applies to managers and team leaders right across the country.

Helping staff support their Canterbury colleagues

Managers in organisations with people outside of Canterbury will be aware how keen they are to know what's happening and how they can help their colleagues.

- Make it clear that the health and safety of people is your top priority.
- Provide accurate and up to date information on what is happening for staff, suppliers, customers and clients.
- Use as many ways as you can to help people stay in touch as things develop: email, your intranet, website, social media like Facebook.
- Respond quickly to any misinformation with news on what is really happening.
- Be clear if you do not want people getting in touch with Canterbury colleagues right now.
- Be specific about when it's ok to return to business as usual conversations and interactions with Canterbury staff.
- Talk about your business-wide approach to support Canterbury – thank the people that are picking up work usually done in Canterbury and others who are supporting them in turn.
- Let staff know how they can support the Canterbury recovery effort, such as through the Red Cross. Be open to their ideas but also aware of what is practical and useful support at this time.
- Create a way for staff in other places to send messages to their colleagues – such as the intranet or Facebook, or collect them centrally and send by mail.
- Provide ways when possible, for Canterbury staff to respond.



“Are they ok?”

“What can we do to help?”

“How can we let them know we've got their back?”

“Who's going to do their work now?”

Support for clients and customers

Your clients and customers will have varying expectations of how you can support them at this time and as things develop. They will want to know how they will be affected.

- Contact clients/customers directly and use your answer phone, website and email to provide information.
- Make sure everyone gets the same accurate and up to date information about what you can do and provide.
- Be honest and upfront about disruptions and realistic about timeframes.
- Let people know quickly when things change.
- Be clear about whether or not clients/customers can visit your premises.
- Support your frontline staff to listen to client/customer experiences – see Support those who work with clients and customers. (Page 23)
- Have a link to other support information for local businesses and individuals on your website – see Business continuity information and support links on [page 30](#) and Community support options listed here.

Community support options available

There are various community resources and agencies that are offering support, practical help, resources and helpful information that may be useful for clients and customers – and also perhaps for staff and yourself.

Victim Support

0800 842 846, or they can be contacted through your local Police station. (A 24/7 service)
See also www.victimsupport.org.nz

Your local Citizens Advice Bureau

0800 367 222 or see www.cab.org.nz

Skylight

0800 299 100 or see www.skylight.org.nz
For loss, trauma and grief support for all ages, including children and teens

Use local telephone counselling lines

Lifeline – 0800 543 354 – a 24/7 service
Youthline – 0800 37 66 33, Free TXT 234,
Email/MSN talk@youthline.co.nz
Whatsup kids phone line 0800 42 8787
12noon to midnight, every day
Kids line 0800 54 37 54 Weekdays, 4–6pm

Budgeting services

Phone (04) 471 1420 or see www.familybudgeting.org.nz

Support groups

Ask at your local Citizens' Advice Bureau, Community Centre or phone Victim Support.

Other support in your local community could be:

- ▶ Your doctor/nurse
- ▶ Community health centre
- ▶ Hospital social worker
- ▶ Counsellor/psychologist
- ▶ Church/faith groups
- ▶ Minister/priest/faith leader
- ▶ Hospital chaplain
- ▶ Marae-based services
- ▶ Mental health team
- ▶ Public health nurse
- ▶ School counsellor
- ▶ School social worker
- ▶ Family support agencies
- ▶ Community cultural centre services



Offering Support Resources

Skylight is a specialist NZ trauma and grief support agency that has available support resources to help people, of all ages, deal with the earthquake's aftermath. Some of the most useful resources are:

- Death Without Warning - a NZ handbook
- Something Has Happened - for 3-6 yr olds
- When Tough Stuff Happens - for 7 - 12 yr olds
- The Journey Through - for teens
- Grief is Like a Wave - a booklet for teens and adults
- Understanding the Losses - for parents and those supporting children
- When You're Grieving - for adults
- A range of booklets for children and adults on bereavement, injury, and other topics.

See www.skylight.org.nz or phone 0800 299 100 for more about these.

Skylight's ongoing support services for businesses

Earthquake Support Website

Skylight has set up an extensive earthquake trauma and recovery support webpage for families, friends, carers, support professionals, organisations, employers and managers. See www.skylight.org.nz – links to the support page are on the homepage and can assist with the grief, trauma and loss support and recovery right now, and in weeks and months to come. It features key information, links, downloads, helpful articles and support resources relating directly to loss, disaster, trauma, bereavement and grief – for people of all ages.

In addition, Skylight can offer the following to businesses:

When Trauma and Grief Come to Work

A practical handbook for organisations, employers and managers to support staff, clients and customers in the aftermath of the Canterbury earthquakes

This handbook is available for download from our website www.skylight.org.nz
For further hardcopies please phone 0800 299 100
or email reception@skylight-trust.org.nz

Earthquake Support Phone Counselling

This will be available free, for anyone impacted by the earthquake in any way, and delivered by

professionals experienced in trauma and grief support. Available 9am – 5pm weekdays.
Phone 0800 299 100 to arrange a phone appointment.

Training and Workshops

Skylight can offer training to businesses to better equip them with skills and strategies to effectively support staff, customers and clients impacted by the earthquakes and their aftermath, and to look after themselves.

Topics can include:

- trauma
- PTS – post traumatic stress and coping with it
- grief
- survivor guilt
- vicarious trauma and grief
- self care
- professional resilience
- starting conversations around difficult topics
- dealing with traumatised and grieving clients/customers.

Personalised Support Packs Posted

You can request a personalised support pack for your own family, staff, and clients, tailor-made for their particular circumstances, which will be posted. We have a wide range of specialised support information relating to earthquakes, disaster and trauma. To request this phone 0800 299 100 or +64 4 939 6767
or email rs@skylight-trust.org.nz



Courage does not always roar.
Sometimes, it's the quiet voice at the end of the day
gently saying,
"I will try again tomorrow".

Maryanne Radanbacher

Business continuity and recovery information and support links

Business continuity and recovery play a pivotal role in keeping your business or organisation running in the midst of disruptive events. Your business may already be working to action a plan you had in place for such a time. Or you may have found that this event is of such severity and impact that you need a different plan. Or you may not know where to start.

There are many avenues to source help with your business recovery and continuity. See below a list of key links and contacts, but also contact your own service providers to see what assistance they can offer you.

Recover Canterbury

www.recovercanterbury.co.nz

This website provides practical advice and extensive information for business continuity and recovery following the Canterbury earthquake.

Support for Small Businesses

<http://www.business.govt.nz/news-and-features/news-test/support-for-canterburys-small-businesses-and-their-employees>

Business New Zealand

www.business.govt.nz/managing/implementing-health-and-safety/recovering-from-a-disaster

Information for businesses in Canterbury and Canterbury affected by the earthquakes, provided by the NZ government's business support site. This page outlines some of the steps you can take to help your business recover

from a disaster and provides many excellent links.

If you need help and advice about business issues arising from the Earthquakes you can call the government's Biz Information line on 0800 42 49 46.

Department of Labour

www.dol.govt.nz/quake/

Providing online advice designed to help businesses and employees make good, safe, sensible and practical decisions in this difficult time. Includes information on Health and Safety and on Employment Relations matters.





ACC

www.acc.co.nz

ACC is aware of the immediate needs of businesses in the Canterbury region, and their employees. All levy invoices that were due to be sent to self-employed people and businesses in the Canterbury region are now on-hold. This will be reviewed on Tuesday 22 March. They have also put on-hold any debt collection activity. They have a range of payment options available to businesses, including direct debit payments and payment plans. If you are concerned about your levy or making a payment, please contact them to discuss the options available to you. Making a claim: If any of your employees were injured in the earthquake, then if they have not already done so, the first step should be for them to see a treatment provider. The provider will help them fill in an ACC claim form and send it to ACC.

ACC have staff and specialist teams in Canterbury and across the country who are able to help injured people. They will work with you and your employee to understand their needs and any safe return-to-work options, subject to local resource availability. Should ACC need

to set up a weekly compensation payment for your employees and you are unable to provide ACC with the earnings information they need, please let them know as soon as possible. They will be able to source some information from Inland Revenue, so that payments can be made to your staff. ACC's Business Service Centre is available from 8am to 6pm Monday to Thursday, and 8am to 5pm on Friday. Call 0800 222 776.

For ACC claims enquiries please call 0800 101 996.

Fact sheets and up-to-date information for businesses, including information for injured people, is also available at <http://www.acc.co.nz/making-a-claim/canterbury-earthquake/index.htm>

Inland Revenue

www.ird.govt.nz

Inland Revenue understands that if you're in Canterbury or the Canterbury region your first priority will be your families and homes. However, they recognise that taxpayers will face difficulty as a result of the earthquake and will eventually need information on different aspects of taxation as well as other programmes they administer, such as Working for Families Tax Credits, student loans and child support. Inland Revenue will take a flexible approach to quake victims, and will take account of the impact of the February Canterbury earthquake when dealing with the tax matters of individuals and businesses affected.

They have a special Inland Revenue Disaster Response phone line if you're facing difficulties - 0800 473 566.

Factors that build up resilience

Research confirms these factors play a significant part in helping us to build up our resilience to cope with life's knock backs. They are just as relevant to businesses and organisations as they are to individuals.



- ▶ **Support circle** – positive relationships with supportive family, whānau, friends and colleagues
- ▶ **Self worth**– believing in one's own value
- ▶ **Sense of competence** – knowing one's strengths
- ▶ **Life skills** – problem solving, decision making, communication, goal setting, information sourcing
- ▶ **Flexibility** – able to adjust and bend a little as circumstances change
- ▶ **Creativity** – trying to approach things in new ways
- ▶ **Sense of humour** – being able to laugh at things, to put things into perspective at times
- ▶ **Perseverance** – giving things a go, and keeping on trying and working at it – despite set backs
- ▶ **Self care** – caring for personal needs as a way of building up one's strength
- ▶ **A hopeful outlook** – looking beyond the present to a more positive future ahead.



**“Although the world is full of suffering,
it is also full of the overcoming of it.”**

Helen Keller

He aha te mea nui o te ao?
He tangata! He tangata! He tangata!

What is the most important thing
in the world?

It is people! It is people! It is people!



www.skylight.org.nz