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Honoring September 11

The first anniversary of September 11 will most likely evoke memories and emotions in everyone, particularly those within the federal workplace. To help your organization honor the day, Green Spring Health Services provides the following ideas to assist organizations with their remembrance-planning activities.

- Provide employees with red, white and blue pin-on ribbons.
- Suggest employees wear something red, white and blue. Make sure management participates to encourage everyone's involvement.
- At 8:54 a.m., observe one minute of silence.
- Encourage employees to contribute to the Smithsonian Institution's September 11 Digital Archive at www.911digitalarchive.org.
- Collect food and money for your local food bank. Keep a running total of how many pounds are collected and announce the final amount at the end of the day.
- Provide free, on-site massages.
- Post tips on how to deal with stress and trauma connected to the events.

Critical incidents: are you prepared?

The events of September 11, 2001, put everyone on alert. They made federal employees in particular understand the importance of having a critical incident plan in place. But as the significant anniversary approaches, how prepared is your organization?

Green Spring Health Services, a consultancy and Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider, offers guidance for agencies evaluating their overall process. Specifically, agencies should have an up-to-date disaster plan, security policy, human resources procedure and list of available outside assistance.

Disaster plan

This plan should cover all three phases of a disaster: the Emergency Phase (immediately



after emergency strikes), Early Post-Impact Phase (day after disaster to 8-12 weeks) and Restoration Phase (8-12 weeks and ongoing). It should also address the impact on the organization resulting from any type of critical incident.

Other key components should:

- Empower managers to address employees' emotional needs and support them as they manage employee job performance during such a time.
- Promote positive coping strategies for employees.
- Emphasize prevention and awareness.
- Identify the organization's key operating units.

- Indicate which workspaces need to be functional.
- Develop a team comprising key members of each operating unit.
- Develop ways to obtain personnel information quickly in case family members need to be notified.

Security

As agencies re-evaluate their security policies, they need to consider their risk levels. Most incidents involve workplace violence, not terrorism. In either case, supplementary security measures and education will create a safer work environment and ensure employees are prepared. Following are some workplace design considerations that will help achieve that goal:

- Building location – If constructing a new building, set it as far from the street as possible with landscape in between.
- Secure entry points – Minimal entry points allow for proper monitoring.
- Restrict visitor access – Have all visitors screened to limit access to workspace.
- Cluster visitor area near reception areas – Move conference rooms, libraries and cafeterias close to reception, so they are distanced from workspaces.
- Restrict access to building systems – This includes HVAC equipment and water supply. Consider installing emergency shut-off switches.

Human resources

Human Resources departments need to act immediately when a critical incident occurs. Below are some steps they can take to be prepared:

- Back up personnel records in two locations – one at an off-site facility.
- Establish a response team of employees within

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the organization and designate assignments for each person.

- Establish a “phone tree” for calling employees and their families.
- Have personnel records immediately accessible so all employees can be accounted for in an emergency.
- Establish a company hotline for family and friends. Provide a support group for those working the hotline.
- Establish telephone lists of key contacts, including vendor information.

Additional assistance

Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) are a good resource for organizations during critical incidents. Familiarize your employees with the program and be sure to post the information throughout the workspace.

If you need assistance in evaluating your agency’s critical incident plan or would like more information, visit *FedSource’s* Web site at www.fedsource.gov.



Acquisition and the human capital crisis

The human capital crisis has affected nearly every facet of the federal workforce. While employee reductions and retirement waves continue, the amount of work to be done seems to remain the same – even increasing in some cases. This has left agencies with overstressed and stretched workforces, particularly in the acquisition management field.

Acquisition professionals are adapting by changing the way they work. Offices have been regionalized to ensure efforts are not duplicated and that a qualified, experienced team can provide assistance. Additionally, they are striving to work more effectively across integrated teams. By becoming involved in the strategic planning process from the beginning and working with colleagues from other departments, they can better manage projects, workloads and potential issues.

While these efforts continue on an overall basis, there are some additional ways acquisition professionals can contribute to their success. W Gregor Macfarlan, a Senior Research Fellow with non-profit research center Logistics Management Institute, provides the following suggestions:

- Join and get involved in professional organizations. Organizations like the Institute for Supply Management and the National Contract Management Association are ideal. They provide access to a network of professionals, where individuals can swap ideas and find out about the “latest and greatest.”
- Participate in training. Education is important in knowing and understanding

the best way to get things done. It can be as simple as attending seminars, conferences or private-sector workshops.

- Use outside resources where possible. There are a variety of ways to secure extra “hands on deck” to meet project deadlines. For example, organizations like *FedSource* can assist in providing custom solutions and managing the acquisition process, allowing acquisition professionals the time they need to focus on bigger issues.

Of course, federal managers can also provide support to help their acquisition professionals work more effectively. Specifically, management should:

- Support and direct their attention to these acquisition changes. If not, they will never resonate.



- Encourage employee participation in associations and educational opportunities.
- Build these goals into the agency’s performance measures as well as the employees’ personal performance plans.
- Include procurement professionals in their initial strategic planning process.

For more information on the evolving role of acquisition organizations, or to receive information on additional acquisition resources, contact *FedSource*.