



Overcoming the Invisible Crisis: Managing Responder Fatigue & Stress in Disasters

COAD General Membership Meeting: November 4, 2026, at 1:30 p.m. on Webex

In emergency management, we are trained to focus on the crisis in front of us, but what about the toll the job takes on us and our teams? Long shifts, critical decisions, and sustained adrenaline lead to responder fatigue and chronic stress. The recent FIFA WC 2026 event highlights this perfectly with multiple operational pressures, logistics, interagency coordination, high-risk scenario trainings, and more in addition to normal day-to-day operations, and often back-to-back disasters with little (if any) time to recover.

The COAD will have a presentation in November that will address how to recognize the warning signs and build operational resilience before burnout takes over. This will include things such as:

- **The Anatomy of Burnout:** Recognizing the psychological and physical signs of fatigue in yourself and your staff.
- **Operational Impact:** How prolonged stress compromises decision-making, situational awareness, and team safety.
- **The "Cool Down" Phase:** Best practices for demobilization, psychological first aid, and transitioning back to normal operations.
- **Building a Resilient Culture:** Practical organizational strategies to embed rest, rotation, and mental health support into active response plans.

This presentation and discussion will lead to actionable self-care protocols tailored for high-stress deployments, a checklist for supervisors to monitor and mitigate team fatigue during extended activations, and local and agency-specific mental health resources available for immediate support. After the presentation, there will be reports from all the COAD committees, general updates, and information sharing.

If you need an invitation, please reach out to: Jennifer.LHeureux@dmh.mo.gov.

