



EMOTIONAL and SPIRITUAL CARE (ESC) in Disasters

Definition of ESC:

Emotional and spiritual care in Emergency Disaster Services is providing physical, emotional, spiritual and mental support for individuals affected by the crisis. It is based upon the premise that within each of us, there is a spiritual knowledge and understanding, maybe best described as a spiritual nature. An ESC worker taps into that spiritual nature, regardless of a person's affiliation with a church or religion. Emotional & spiritual care is not part of what we do; it is what we do in every service we provide.

Emotional and spiritual care includes spiritual comfort and emotional support to those impacted by the incident, their families, as well as emergency first-responders coping with the stress of a disaster. This support may include comforting the injured and bereaved, conducting memorial services, and providing chaplaincy services. Emotional and spiritual care respects all faiths and traditions.

In addition, individual, family and group trauma intervention and emotional support may be available through trained personnel and Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) teams.

In some communities The Salvation Army offers meet and greet. The primary role of meet and greet is to provide support for evacuees and staff, mainly in designated reception centres, group/congregate lodging, staffing bureau or at disaster sites. Meet and greet services at these venues could: welcome evacuees, provide initial information, perform initial screening, help to maintain order, assist special needs evacuees, and ensure evacuees' needs are met.

What is an ESC encounter?

An ESC encounter is having a one on one conversation with a person or with a small group of people where you actively listen to what is being shared; it may, IF requested, end with a prayer. This encounter can take place at any of the following:

Food Service

- **Canteen ministry** – Having a dedicated ESC worker at the canteen to talk with / listen to the people as they are served
- **Table ministry** – ESC workers sit at the tables just to talk with / listen to rescuers or disaster survivors who were having meals there
- **Wish list idea** – ESC worker gathers list of “this is what I really need” from rescuers and/or disaster survivors





Distribution and Family Assistance Centres

- Waiting room presence – ESC workers are available in waiting/assistance areas.

Clean-Up and Recovery

- Neighbourhood visits, offering a bottle of water and clean-up kits and a listening ear.

Peer Support

- Care for peer who is deployed with you. This may be someone in canteen, warehouse or Incident Command.

Offer Worship Services in the community

- Chapel services for both volunteer workers and survivors
- Memorial services in the community for those who have lost loved ones

What is a seeker?

A seeker is someone (or group) who actively seeks you and requests you pray for them and may lead to a life changing commitment to Christ, although that is not always the case. This often happens during an ESC encounter or immediately following one with an individual.

What is NOT an ESC encounter or seeker?

An ESC encounter is not helping to serve without listening to or speaking with any individual. It is not “saying hi” to someone or a “God Bless” you as you serve.

EXAMPLE of what IT IS NOT: Canteen carries 1,500 meals to community – ESC worker helps serve meals but does not have time to speak with anyone, other than to say, “God Bless you” as the clam shell is taken. Ten may say the same in return as they take the food.

- Number of ESC contacts recorded 1,500. WRONG!
- Number of seekers recorded 10. WRONG!

Information provided by Major Roxzena Hayden

