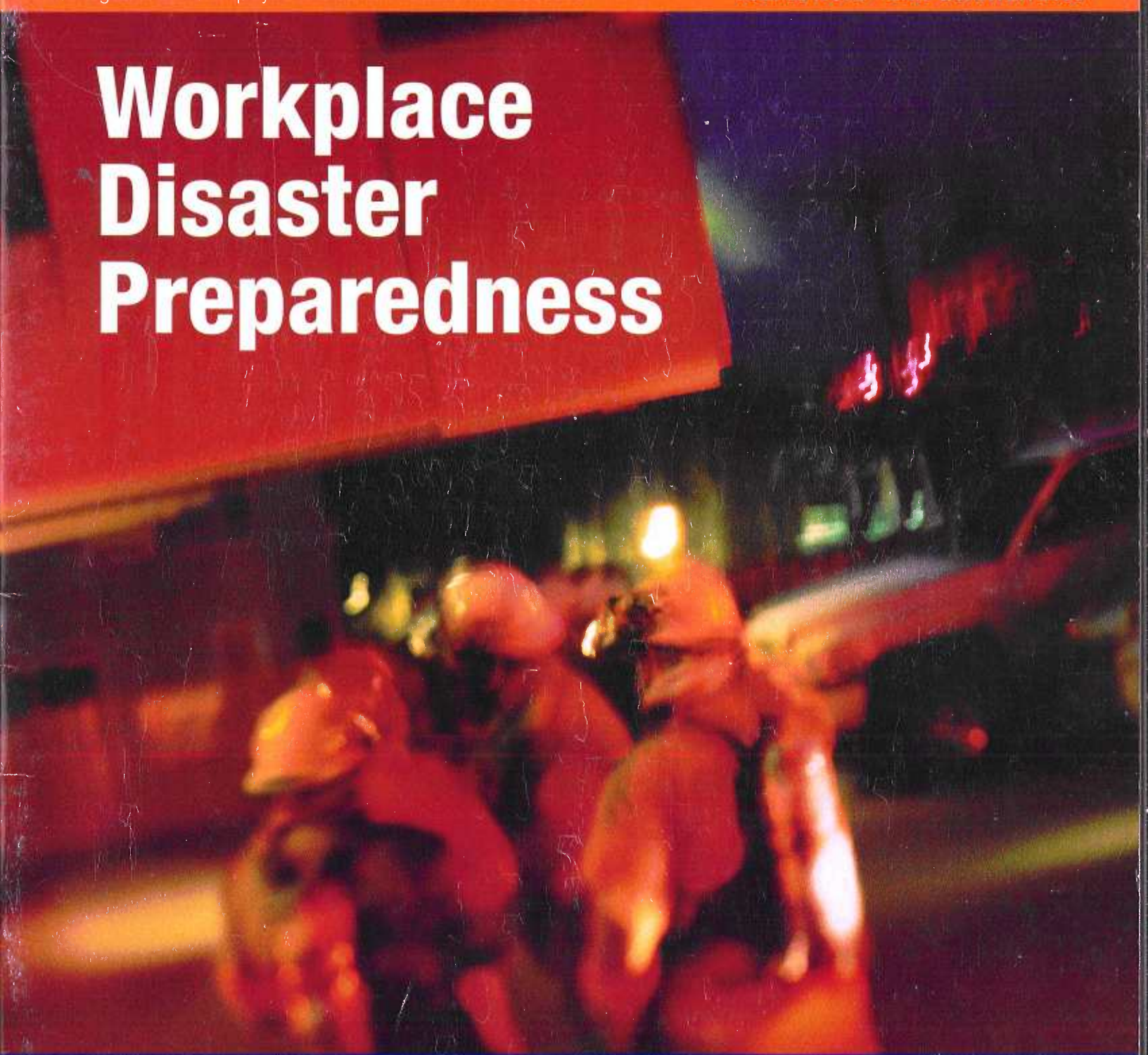


Journal of **Employee Assistance**

The magazine of the Employee Assistance Professionals Association

VOL. 35 NO. 2 • 2ND QUARTER 2005

Workplace Disaster Preparedness



Also Inside:
Addressing Work-Life Imbalance
Online Screening for Alcohol Use
EAPs and the Working Poor



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Focus

Workplace Disaster Preparedness 19

The considerations involved in helping employers and employees prepare for a disaster are many, but EAPs that address them can reap significant rewards.

Auditing Disaster Prevention 20
by William F. Badzmierowski, M.Ed., CSW

Disasters: Think, Plan, and Act 22
by Rocky Lopes

Gender and Disasters 25
by Brenda D. Phillips, Ph.D.

The EAP Critical Incident Continuum 28
by Jodi M. Jacobson, Ph.D., CEAP; Jan Paul, LMHC, CEAP;
and Dorothy Blum, Ph.D., CEAP

Preparing for the Olympic Games 31
by Andrew Armatas, M.A., D.C.H.*

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Work-Life: Organizations in Denial 7

by Cynthia A. Thompson, Ph.D.

While work-family programs may provide some employees with useful resources, they do not address the root causes of work-life imbalance and often are not integrated into employers' strategic goals.

Kidnapping: How Can EAPs Intervene? 10

by Eduardo Villar Concha

By understanding the cultures of societies and workplaces and the differing perspectives of criminals and their victims, EA professionals can help minimize the impact of kidnappings on workers, their families, and their employers.

Online Screening for Alcohol Use 12

by Marc Belanger, M.A.

Online alcohol screening programs address privacy concerns of employees and thus encourage greater participation, opening the door to further intervention and treatment and helping reduce healthcare costs.

Can EAPs Help the Working Poor? 15

by Raquel Maria Warley, M.A., LMSW and Charlotte Elkin, LCSW, CEAP

The prevalence of uninsured and underinsured workers has put EAPs in a delicate and difficult position that threatens EA professionals' practices and the very survival of the industry.

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"Despite the growing popularity of 'family-friendly' initiatives, organizations today are still designed around the notion that the best employees can and should put their jobs first. And therein lies the problem."

Cynthia Thompson
"Work-Life: Organizations in Denial"

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The Vital Work of Planning and Training for Disasters

by Maria Hartley, LEAP



Maria Hartley

Are your employer and employee clients prepared for a hurricane? How about a fire that damages part of an office and disrupts electrical power? An attack on a worker by a former boyfriend or husband? Flooding from a leaking roof?

Any or all of these incidents could happen, and any or all could be a disaster. In large part, the outcome will depend on whether the employer and employees are prepared for such events and able to respond appropriately.

Developing a disaster preparedness policy with supporting plans and training employers and employees to execute them are the best ways to protect workers and property. It is the only way to keep business flowing smoothly if a disaster—any disaster—occurs. (The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act requires that we have a plan in place to protect our electronic data.) In addition, disaster preparedness planning helps focus attention on the many business processes that need to be tightened and/or updated, so in addition to the benefits of the plan itself, business systems tend to improve. It would be hard to put a dollar figure on the value of doing this well.

All that said, it is incredibly difficult to find the time and resources for such comprehensive planning and training. There are a great many considerations to take into account. Are communications systems in place to ensure that workers can contact each other and their loved ones during and after a disaster? Are records and other workplace documents stored in a secure place, and are they easily accessible? Are resources available to assist those who are most vulnerable to disasters—typically single parents and

heads of single-earner households?

As you consider these and other issues, reflect on how best to help your employer and employee clients prepare to respond to a disaster. I urge you to read Bill Badzmierowski's article on the value of conducting a disaster audit, Rocky Lopes' comments on the need for workers to ensure their families are safe, and Brenda Phillips' thoughts on how disasters affect some workers differently than others. As you ponder your professional role during a disaster, review the article by Dotty Blum, Jodi Jacobson, and Jan Paul on the EAP Critical Incident Response Continuum. And if you find yourself wondering how disaster preparedness can benefit your EAP as well as your employer and employee clients, read the piece by Andrew Armatas on how his EAP firm used disaster preparedness training prior to the 2004 Olympic Games to familiarize workers in Greece with the concept and benefits of employee assistance.

These articles, by themselves, would make for an interesting issue of the *Journal*, but I'm proud to say they're in good company. An article by Raquel Warley and Charlotte Elkin examines the impact that EAPs can have on low-wage workers, while Marc Belanger of Join Together discusses the value of workplace screening programs in addressing alcohol abuse. Cynthia Thompson asserts that many employers have not done a good job of aligning their work-life benefits with their corporate strategies and have failed to examine more fundamental aspects of worker satisfaction. Finally, Eduardo Villar looks at the impact of kidnappings on Colombian society in general and workplaces in particular and discusses how EAPs can

intervene.

While these articles touch on a wide variety of subject material, they all share a common thread. As employee assistance practitioners, we can help our clients in the vital work of planning and training for disasters and thus ensure our place at the table as workplace partners in other matters, such as screening for alcohol problems, developing effective work-life programs, and consulting on productivity issues.

I would also like to welcome the newest member of the Communications Advisory Subcommittee, Joan Clark, who has been in the EAP field since 1984 and is director of Coping EAP in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. We look forward to her contributions.

EAPA Communications Advisory Subcommittee

Maria Hartley, Chair
Columbia, S.C.
(803) 376-2668

Mark Attridge
Minneapolis, Minn.
(763) 797-2719

Tamara Cagney
Pleasanton, Calif.
(510) 513-4710

Joan Clark
Myrtle Beach, S.C.
(843) 449-8318

Eduardo Lambardi
Buenos Aires, Argentina
5411-4706-0390

John Maynard
EAPA Headquarters
(703) 387-1000

Bruce Prevatt
Tallahassee, Fla.
(904) 644-2288

Terri N. Schmidt
Park Ridge, Ill.
(847) 692-9462