

Hurricane Distracting You At Work? Help However You Can!

Dear Stephen:

I live in Chicago and have been watching Harvey's devastation of Texas for the last two weeks nonstop. I have cousins who live around Houston, and while everyone I know is safe and sound, the situation is just shockingly horrible. I've felt so helpless and scared and then all of a sudden Irma hit Florida, and Jose is right behind it. It seems that everyone I know (including myself) has family or property of their own in Florida — even Disney World is closed!

It is strange, but I feel that all this worry and stress is affecting my job. I am obsessed with refreshing the weather forecasts and reading about the devastation all over Texas, the Caribbean and Florida. It has also become a popular topic among all of my customers and colleagues, so it is impossible to escape. I

can see that it is affecting my productivity at work, and I'm worried that my boss is noticing.

Beyond that, I'm also a little embarrassed that this is hitting me so hard. The rest of my office seems to be taking it in stride, and I'm not sure why, but I just can't help but be consumed by these hurricanes. What do I do? Is this just me or is it on other people's minds while they are working, too?

Yours,

Scared Stiff



You can send your workplace questions to Stephen at: StephenSays@bellow.press.

Questions selected to be answered, will appear in this column. Please use the Subject: Stephen Says for all emails. Stephen Viscusi is a bestselling author, television personality, and CEO of The Viscusi Group, global executive recruiters located in New York. Follow Stephen on Twitter @WorkplaceGuru, Like Stephen on Facebook; and follow him on LinkedIn.

Dear Scared Stiff:

There is nothing wrong with you. Everyone is in the same boat (excuse the pun in this circumstance), and I bet almost everyone you work with is thinking about these storms, too. It would not be normal for them to be taking it in stride. Everyone is freaking out. Even those living nowhere near the storms. So, no, you aren't the only one feeling this way. Hurricanes, tornadoes and earthquakes — any natural disaster, really — are always scary and seeing storms of this size, in succession, is unprecedented.

In times like these, commissions and profits should be the least of our concerns.

It is human nature to care about our family, neighbors and friends, and we should all be deeply disturbed by the terrible footage coming out of Houston, Florida and the Caribbean — people's entire lives, all of their possessions, even their homes, reduced to flotsam floating down a flooded freeway. In the face of so much devastation and destruction so far away, the sad truth is we are often largely powerless. One thing you can do is donate to The Red Cross and other local charities, and if you have time and the means, you can even take a trip down to help out. If you cannot afford to make a donation, contact some of these charities and see what goods they need. Then organize a collection in your office or building or neighborhood. I myself have been equally affected by the horrors I've seen on my television and have called multiple foundations to pledge donations.

Just because we feel powerless doesn't mean we can't help.

This is the essential point, and it should apply to our bosses and companies, too. In difficult times like these, we need support from those people closest to us. For many of us, the place where we spend the majority of our waking hours is in the office. I am sure your preoccupation with these catastrophic hurricanes will affect your productivity personally, and it might even affect your company's sales.

While no one likes to lose money, the marginal dip in productivity will be so negligible that in the face of your very real concern, I would genuinely hope all levels of your company would be understanding. This is a good litmus test for determining whether or not you work for a decent company. If anyone gives you a hard time about being distracted in the next couple of days, explain yourself to them, and if they

still don't get it, well, I'd dust off my resume and start sending it around. In times like these, commissions and profits should be the least of our concerns. If your company cares more about their bottom line than how you're feeling, then you are likely at a place where not many people care about you. See if you can get your company involved in the charity work you're doing. You never know, maybe the whole office is feeling like you are, and they just need someone to mobilize them.

For the most part, we have seen that our industry is a giving industry, and I have read about how much companies have already given. As I talk to people all over the country I cannot help but be proud our little industry jumped right on that bandwagon. Share how you're feeling, and get active. I think you'll be surprised by the response you get.

Stephen