Eternal H&S Issues

As I write, a teacher friend of mine is driving northwards in Japan. As a young teacher in a school about an hour's drive north of Tokyo, she survived the earthquake, although aftershocks had everyone's nerves jangling. She was not directly impacted by the Tsunami and felt relatively safe on that score. Then came the news that the nuclear power station at Fukushima Daiichi was in trouble. She packed her possessions and drove south, hoping to find a safe haven beyond the threat of radiation. Now, after some days, she is heading back to attend the funeral of the principal of her school.

Nothing quite prepares us for disasters such as the people of Japan are suffering. There are times when all the Health and Safety rules and regulations seem to make no difference, when prior planning is overturned by cataclysm, and when infrastructure simply can't cope with the demands made on it.

This is when despair stalks among the shattered buildings and crumpled cars. But it is also the season of heroes: heroes who voluntarily expose themselves to harmful radiation so that others can be safe; heroes who open their homes to the homeless; heroes who refuse to give up in the face of adversity.

On a different level, disasters can strike our school communities with the same ferocious destructiveness. A student is murdered; a family left bereaved by a horrific accident; a teenager, loses hope and takes her own life. These events take school communities by surprise and despair stalks among the classrooms and on the playing fields. But it is also when heroes rise up. The teacher who takes the time to chat and pray with his students; the classmates who raise money; the staff who encircle a family with love and practical help are all heroes.

We never know when disaster may hit. Does your school have an emergency plan to nurture the hearts and souls of its students through traumatic times? If the Eternal Health and Safety of children is your top priority, what steps are you taking to help them ride out the difficult times and live with assurance in an uncertain world? TEACH

EH&S issues are a joint initiative between the Adventist Schools Australia Curriculum Unit and Avondale College.