

CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT

PURPOSE

To establish guidelines for dealing with a critical stress incident (e.g., effects on incident personnel).

PROCEDURE

1. A critical incident is defined as any incident faced by personnel which causes them to experience unusually strong emotional involvement.
2. Examples of a critical incident include:
 - A. Serious injury or death of a co-worker.
 - B. Mass casualty incidents.
 - C. Serious injury or death of a civilian resulting from emergency scene operations (e.g., auto accident, etc.).
 - D. Death of a child or violence to a child.
 - E. Suicide of a co-worker.
 - F. Loss of life of a patient following extraordinary and prolonged expenditure of physical and emotional energy during rescue efforts.
 - G. Incidents that attract extremely unusual or critical news media coverage.
 - H. Any incident that is charged with profound emotion.
 - I. Any incident in which the circumstances were so unusual or the sights and sounds so distressing as to produce a high level of immediate or delayed emotional reaction.
3. General signs and symptoms to be aware of:
 - A. Obvious distress such as crying.
 - B. Shock looking (like a statue).
 - C. Unusual behavior.
 - D. Acting out of character.
4. Immediate care.
 - A. If possible, remove the person from contact with visual, smell and sounds of the scene for 15-30 minutes; then reassign to a different task.
 - B. If not possible to take out of service, reassign to another task.
 - C. Do not send the person home until evaluated by an on-call Behavioral Health Specialist or designee per individual agency procedures.

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5. On-scene protection (minimizing the effects).
 - A. Brief before deployment. (Let crewmembers know what to expect.)
 - B. Work as a team. (Everyone goes in together, everyone comes out together.)
 - C. Limit exposure to the scene. (If they don't need to see it, don't let them.)
 - D. Establish rest areas away from the scene.
6. Activating a Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Team is mandatory on the following incidents:
 - A. On-duty death or serious injury to co-worker.
 - B. Responding to an incident that involves the suicide of a co-worker.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- Follow individual agency procedure.
- Consider agencies employee assistance program.