

## GREAT BASIN CISM / PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM

### INFORMATION AND MOBILIZATION PROCESS

A critical incident is any unexpected, traumatic event that affects an individual's feelings of personal safety, their ability to perform daily activities, and their ability to concentrate on their normal job duties. Critical incidents may also occur outside of work and still impact large numbers of employees. A critical incident is not defined by the event itself, but by the reaction that an organization, employee, community, or family has to the event.

The Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Program is designed for individuals affected by potentially traumatic events which are outside their normal experience. We need to respond to these in a way that is qualitatively different to that in normal situations. Individuals experience critical incidents in different ways and vary in their reaction to similar events. What may be traumatic for one person may not be for others. It is not possible to make rigid recommendations for all situations and employees.

Crisis intervention should be based on recognition of need, not strictly the occurrence of an event. It is important to get advice on what post-incident support would be appropriate as soon as possible. One of the challenges is intervening only where and when needed using the most appropriate intervention for the situation.

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is the selection and implementation of the most appropriate crisis intervention tactics to best respond to the needs of the situation at hand. CISM has multiple components that can be used before, during, and after a crisis. These components include a wide range of various activities including pre-incident education (PIE) which includes resiliency, planning and preparedness, acute crisis management, and post -incident follow up. The purpose of CISM is to mitigate the impact of an event, accelerate the recovery process, and assesses the need for additional or alternative services. Crisis intervention, which is a component of an overall CISM program, is provided through trained and carefully selected peer supporters and licensed Mental Health Professionals (MHP) who specialize in trauma.

### CRITICAL INCIDENT PEER SUPPORT (CIPS)

Critical Incident Peer Support is about peers, or "people of mutual respect" helping each other. In wildland fire, it is the shared culture and experiences which form the foundation of peer support. A Critical Incident Peer Support Group (CIPS) consists of a coordinator, group leader, peer supporters trained in critical incident stress response processes, and a licensed mental health professional (MHP). This model is commonly referred to as the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF) model and is the official Standard of Care for crisis intervention in the Great Basin.

Peer-to-peer programs facilitate opportunities for individuals to talk with trained peer supporters who serve as a "bridge" to connect with MHPs. Peer Support Groups can offer educational and social support and provide avenues for additional help if needed.

Experts believe that these techniques and processes, which are used in CIPS can help individuals improve their coping abilities and dramatically decrease the occurrence of post-traumatic stress disorders, lower tension and mitigate a group's reaction to a traumatic event.

The ICISF model provides a number of crisis intervention techniques. The CIPS group leader in coordination with a licensed mental health professional will determine the appropriate intervention strategy which may include, but not limited to, a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD). The CISD is the most misunderstood and overused term in the Critical Incident Stress Management processes. The term "debriefing" is used loosely and as a "catch all" for a variety of crisis intervention protocols

that are substantially different than the CISD application and structure. As per the ICISF model, a licensed mental health care clinician is required when a debriefing is conducted for personnel.

## TIMELINE STANDARDS

Crisis intervention **is not an emergency**; however, assistance should be ordered as a need is anticipated. Crisis intervention processes generally start no sooner than 48-72 hours after an incident. Crisis intervention can also be provided within a few weeks or longer depending on the incident. It is important to allow time for affected individuals to disengage operationally and re-connect with family or friends. Once this occurs individuals are typically emotionally ready to benefit from peer support.

## GREAT BASIN INTERAGENCY PEER SUPPORT GROUPS / TEAMS

The Great Basin does not maintain or mobilize Critical Incident Stress Teams (CIST), nor are they “on-call” or “in rotation”. The CISTs are assembled at the time of request, by the assigned coordinator and will be comprised of trained and certified “peers” selected to match the backgrounds and experience of those involved in the critical incident (helitack, engines, dispatchers, smokejumpers, etc). The CISM Coordinator selects only the best and most qualified for each assignment, including trainees. Those selected must be credible, experienced in fire and aviation, trusted, and held in high esteem. They must be sensitive to diversity and multi-cultural components within the agencies.

The CIST is mobilized through normal dispatch channels. Requests for CISM services are made from the unit’s dispatch to the Great Basin Coordination Center. The Great Basin Coordination Center will create the incident and associated requests in IROC. The Great Basin CISM Coordinator will provide the names of the CIST Members to the GBCC, and the order will be filled via rosters. CISM personnel are ordered as CIPL (peer group leader), CISM (peer supporter), and THSP Technical Specialist, and not as a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) or other mnemonics related to CISM.

CIST are mobile, self-sufficient, and available to travel to the affected individuals, or group’s, home unit or incident. This allows personnel to return home prior to receiving services rather than being held at the incident location or remain operationally engaged until the CIST personnel arrive.

## MOBILIZATION RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROCESS

### Agency Administrator

- **Identification Of the Event**

The Agency Administrator is responsible for identifying a critical event as a critical incident with guidance from the Regional CISM Coordinator. The Agency Administrator is the highest ranking agency line officer with direct responsibility for the personnel involved in the incident.

- **Request Critical Incident Peer Support**

The Agency Administrator, or designee, is responsible for requesting CIMT through unit dispatch, and ultimately GBCC. A CISM Coordinator will be assigned to work with the Agency Administrator and designated Peer Group Leader to decide the size and make-up of the group.

A resource order should **not** be placed until the CISM Coordinator has received information about the incident from the Agency Administrator or designee. The CISM Coordinator will assess the situation, determine the appropriate intervention strategy, determine dates, times, locations and assemble the CIPS group. The CISM Coordinator will provide the information to GBCC who will then request an order from the local dispatch center and fill the order via roster in IROC.

Generally, an assigned Peer Group Liaison will travel as soon as possible to the unit affected to gather facts, determine timelines and make an assessment of the individuals and groups that have been impacted.

- **Manage Information about the Critical Incident**

Acknowledge to employees that the critical incident has occurred. By providing factual information to your employees, you can help prevent rumors from spreading. Provide a consistent message to all groups. Address any rumors that may be circulating, or concerns employees may voice. Specific information for agency administrators and manager can be found at: <https://gacc.nifc.gov/cism/>

- **Support Employees**

Remember that traumatized employees need structure, facts, peer support, and instructions on what to expect next. Find out what employees are planning to do with their time once they leave work and provide accountability partners. Encourage them to spend time with friends or family members. Coordinate with fire and aviation staff to identify the employees most affected by the traumatic event and offer them a quiet place to be, but don't force them to be isolated if they'd prefer to stay with their co-workers.

### **Local Dispatch Center**

- **Request Critical Incident Peer Support**

The local dispatch center on behalf of the Agency Administrator may be responsible for contacting GBCC to request CIPS.

### **Great Basin Coordination Center**

- **Request Critical Incident Peer Support**

GBCC is responsible for contacting the CISM Coordinator and requesting Critical Incident support services as soon as possible after receiving a request. GBCC will assist the CISM Coordinator in the facilitating of resource orders as needed via a roster in IROC.

### **CISM COORDINATOR**

The Great Basin CISM Coordinator is a certified crisis intervention specialist who provides situational assessment for Agency Administrators, Managers and others to help determine the appropriate response. The CISM Coordinator will assist in determining the timing and type of support needed for the incident. Tactics are applied at the right time, in the right place and under the right circumstances. The CISM Coordinator will also provide a CIPS group which includes the expertise and screening requirements of a licensed Mental Health Professional (Clinician) who is experienced and trained in trauma.

The CISM Coordinator is responsible for the following:

- In consultation with the Agency Administrator makes the decision to mobilize a CIPS Group or provide a different intervention strategy.
- Identifies CIPS Group Leader, based on the nature of the incident, affected personnel, time frames and availability.
- Determines the number and type of peer supporters to respond with the CIPS Group.
- Maintains an active roster of trained and qualified group leaders and peer supporters.
- Coordinates with investigative groups to coordinate timing of crisis intervention services but does not associate with or share any information about their response. The perception could raise concern about confidentiality and those affected may be reluctant to talk with them.

**CRITICAL INCIDENT PEER SUPPORT GROUP LEADER**

A Peer Support Group Leader is a highly respected and trusted person from aspects of fire programs (dispatchers, engine crew members, hotshot, and other crews, helitack, smokejumpers, and many other specialties). A Group Leader has participated in numerous assignments as a Peer Supporter and has had enough exposure to various incidents and contacts to have the ability to bring “order to chaos” found after a critical incident. A Peer Support Group Leader is expected to navigate the “sea of good intentions,” without drowning.

A Peer Support Group Leader Will:

- Oversee the implementation of the elements of the established program. These elements include a set Standard of Care and established boundaries of competence. These are defined as what is appropriate, along with the laws of ethical behavior, while staying within the limits of their training and experiences and scope of practice.
- Required to keep confidences, be committed to the program while adhering to established limits and protocols. Staying aware of their boundaries and seeking guidance and assistance when appropriate.
- As leaders, they are held to a high standard and must demonstrate respect and integrity for what crisis intervention is and what it is not.
- Function as the liaison between the local unit and the peer support group.
- Provide the team members with reporting times, lodging and meeting locations.
- Coordinate with Clinician(s) in determining the appropriate crisis intervention tactics to be applied with specific individuals and groups.
- Brief the Clinician as to what our expectations are for the meetings and travel.
- Allocate peer supporters based on background and culture.
- Coordinate with the group(s) daily when the groups are in multiple locations.
- Incident Business Management duties such as approving time, monitoring work/rest, and driving hours.
- Keep the coordinator informed as to the status of the assignment via daily call(s).
- Demobilization of resources and providing travel information to Coordinator/Point of Contact, and dispatch center.

**PEER SUPPORTER**

A Peer is an individual with a professional history, often having historic recognition for background and experience within the “culture” of the wildland fire community who has a willingness to assist others in times of crisis. Peers come from all different aspects of the wildland fire community, dispatch, aviation, direct suppression crews or modules, engines and fire and aviation managers. The best peers are individuals who share the same backgrounds, i.e. engine personnel to engine personnel. A peer to a firefighter on a hotshot or veterans crew for example, would have substantial (and preferably current) experience on the fireline and within the hotshot/veteran crew community.

Peer Supporters will:

- Assist the CIPS Group and Clinician in providing Crisis Management Briefings, debriefings, small group sessions, one-on-one support and information sharing as directed.
- Assist the CIPS Group Leader and Clinician in setting up and organizing formal meetings (location, seating, refreshments, assembling resource information and literature to be available at debriefings, etc.).
- Are self-sufficient (Travel Card or Credit Card).
- For peers of fireline personnel, they are required to have all of their required PPE to meet with affected personnel on the fireline, in spike camps and other remote locations.
- Prior to the arrival of the CIPS Group Leader they may be called on to initiate contact with local managers and staff to explain the peer support program, gather information and coordinate logistics.
- Prior to the arrival of the CIPS Group Leader they may be called to meet informally with those affected or involved with the critical incident.

## **MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL / CLINICIAN**

Prior to any crisis intervention, the CIPS Group Leader and clinicians will meet and agree to the appropriate intervention techniques, format and the roles each will perform during the process.

It is the responsibility of the Peer Supporters, through their crisis intervention presentations, to help the affected personnel get comfortable with the Clinician and their role in the process.

The Clinician(s) will:

- Provide affected individuals any information that they feel is appropriate during and after the peer supporter's presentations.
- Address any issues which are outside of the Peer Supporter's training and established boundary of competence.
- Apply their expertise, as they deem necessary.

Mental Health Professionals whose services will exceed \$2500 must be ordered through the National Interagency CISM Contract. The Great Basin CISM Coordinator will coordinate with the National CISM Coordinators who will generate the task order for the contract.

Due to the ad hoc nature and extremely vast, very rural area protected by the wildland fire community the assigned clinician should factor in the limited availability of any follow up care, Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which is offered.

## **ETHICS, CONDUCT, AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

All CIPS personnel are required to maintain the highest levels of confidentiality and integrity. Those impacted by a traumatic/critical incident may find it difficult to open up and express themselves to those they do not trust, respect, or find credible. All CIPS members must work to maintain themselves worthy of trust, both on assignment and in their professional day to day jobs. Peers who are trustworthy, demonstrate integrity and respect in what they do, are the key element to assisting individuals in crisis.

## **CISM COORDINATION WITH SERIOUS ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION TEAMS**

### **Coordinated Response Protocol and Facilitated Learning Analysis (Forest Service)**

Consideration will be given to employees involved in investigations and learning review teams as to the timing of crisis intervention services. When Coordinated Response Protocol (CRP) or Facilitated Learning Analysis activities are being conducted it is important for the CISM Coordinator to provide a CISM Liaison to those groups. The CISM Liaison will coordinate intervention and investigation timeframes with the FLA or CRP Leaders. When possible and practical, the CIPS Group should provide crisis intervention to employees prior to being interviewed. Personnel who have been through an appropriate crisis intervention session prior to being interviewed may be better able to tell their story and experience less anxiety during the process.

If a fatality occurs on a Forest Service incident or a Forest Service employee is involved in a line of duty death on another agency's jurisdiction or incident, the Coordinated Response Protocol process is activated. Through Forest Service policy CISM reports directly to the CRP Leader. The CISM Coordinator will assign a Liaison to report to CRP and keep the CIPS Group separate so they can remain anonymous and not be associated with an investigative authority.

### **Serious Accident Investigation (Department of Interior)**

The CISM Coordinator or Critical Incident Peer Support Group Leader will coordinate with the SAI Leader to scheduled meeting timeframes and locations. Because SAI does individual interviews rather than group interviews it is important for them to conduct their meetings prior to crisis intervention/CISM activities. When SAI is in place, CISM reports directly to the Agency Administrator. The only time CISM

does not report directly to the Agency Administrator is when CRP is in place.

### **INCIDENT WITHIN AN INCIDENT**

If an incident such as a line of duty death occurs while an incident management team is in place, CISM may be requested however it's the responsibility of the Agency Administrator to do so. CISM reports directly to the Agency Administrator and a Liaison to the Command and General Staff will be assigned by the CISM Coordinator. The Liaison will make necessary arrangements including logistics and will schedule meeting times, determine attendees and establish meeting locations. This should not be done by the incident management team.

If an incident management team remains in place after a serious accident or fatality, limited CISM services can be provided to the IMT and their resources while they are operationally engaged. It is recommended that the resources who were directly affected be released and have an opportunity to disengage prior to receiving any crisis intervention services.

### **CIPS, EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM AND ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

#### **CISM/Peer Support (Short Term)**

Crisis intervention is considered to be a short-term, adaptive process that helps individuals return to their daily routines more quickly and includes information and education. Employees have the option of visiting EAP, and at any time may choose it for assessment and/or on-going counselling. Peer support can be seen as the connecting link between the employees and EAP services.

#### **EAP (Long Term)**

EAP is almost always recommended for follow up care after crisis intervention has taken place. When requesting assistance from EAP after a critical incident, request a Clinician that specializes in trauma. EAP Clinicians more commonly practice in areas of family problems, substance abuse, etc. and not in the area of trauma.

EAP offers:

- Support during natural disasters.
- Legal and financial advice.
- Grief counseling.
- Available for families.
- A free service.

#### **Additional Resources (Long Term)**

The CISM Coordinator also has access to Mental Health Professionals who are familiar with the culture of wildland fire and specialize in trauma. The CISM Coordinator will assist in the referral process if requested.

## APPENDIX 1

### DEFINITIONS

#### **Critical Incident**

A critical incident is an extraordinary event that overwhelms the usual coping abilities of personnel. Examples of critical incidents include, but are not limited to the following:

- Line of duty death
- Suicide of a co-worker
- Entrapment
- Burn-over
- Acts of terrorism
- Serious line of duty injury
- Discovery of a dead body
- Involvement in several stressful events in a short period of time
- Any event that has an unusually powerful impact on personnel

#### **Catastrophic Incident**

Catastrophic incidents are those situations which have an extreme impact on numerous individuals or organizations. These incidents may draw significant media attention. The level of trauma to personnel, families and a community is substantial.

#### **CIPS Group**

A group of individuals consisting of fire and aviation personnel trained in various aspects of crisis intervention. The CIPS Group usually consists of three or four peer group members and a group leader but depends on the incident, numbers of individuals and organizations affected, etc. In addition to peer supporters the group includes Mental Health Professionals who specialize in trauma and are familiar with the wildland fire community. The CIPS Group is assembled by the Critical Incident Peer Support Group Coordinator when a request is received.

#### **Crisis Management Briefing (CMB)**

A structured meeting designated to provide information about the incident, control rumors, educate about symptoms of distress, inform about basic stress management, and identify resources available for continued support if desired. The goals of a CMB include providing factual information, instill a sense of leadership, reduce chaos, and enhance credibility. The CMB is designed to assist those involved directly or indirectly with the incident and is not intended for the media.

#### **Defusing**

A three-step crisis intervention tool designed to assist a homogenous group of people after an exposure to the same significant traumatic event. The purpose of a defusing is to mitigate the impact of the event, accelerate the recovery process, and assist the need for additional services. A defusing was never intended for and should ever be used on a primary victim. Due to the timing of the CIPS Group response defusings are rarely done.

#### **Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD)**

This is often provided as a seven-step crisis intervention tool designed to assist a homogenous group of people after an exposure to the same significant traumatic event. It may be used as part of an integrated package of interventions within the CIPS response. Critical Incident Stress Debriefings require a licensed Mental Health Professional.

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