

Critical Incident Stress (Peer Support)

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What is Critical Incident Stress?

“A critical incident is an extraordinary event that overwhelms the usual coping abilities of personnel.”

Definitions

- Critical Incident
- Critical Incident Stress Management
- Crisis Management Briefing
- Defusing
- Critical Incident Stress Debriefing
- Peer Support

Critical Incident:

Unusually challenging events that have the potential to create significant human distress and can overwhelm the usual coping mechanisms of an individual or a group. They are typically sudden, powerful events, which are outside the range of ordinary human experiences.

Critical Incident Stress Management:

CISM is a coordinated program of tactics that are linked and blended together to alleviate the reactions to traumatic experiences.

Crisis Management Briefing:

This is a structured meeting designed 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.

Defusing:

A 3-step small group crisis intervention tool designed to assist a homogeneous group of people after an exposure to the same significant traumatic event.

This occurs 24 hours after the incident.

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing:

A specific small group crisis intervention tool designed to assist a homogeneous group of people after an exposure to the same significant traumatic event.

This occurs within 72 hours after the incident.

Peer Support:

Providing crisis intervention services by fellow employees who have received specific training in crisis intervention, communication, stress management and other related topics.

Timeline - Why it's Important

Support intervention processes generally start no sooner than 48-72 hours after an incident. It is important to allow time for affected individuals to disengage and reconnect with family or friends. Once this occurs, individuals are typically emotionally ready to benefit from peer support.

Mobilization process:

- CISM Coordinator received request
- Coordinator will gather intel and assemble peers according to the need
- Orders are placed with local dispatch center (do not order a CISM team)
- Team lead works with POC for team needs

Agency Administrators Guide to Critical Incident Stress

Additional Resources

- Employee Assistance Programs (EAP)
- Wildland Firefighter Foundation
- Life Challenge Program
- You Will Not Stand Alone
- Hospital/Family Liaison Training

Final Thoughts:

- Remember to take care of yourselves
- If you have a critical incident please contact me as soon as possible
- Be leaders, know your plans, and encourage others to seek help

Questions?