



## Interagency Critical Incident Peer Support

## Leadership Considerations and Information

### Four Sources of Stress Injury

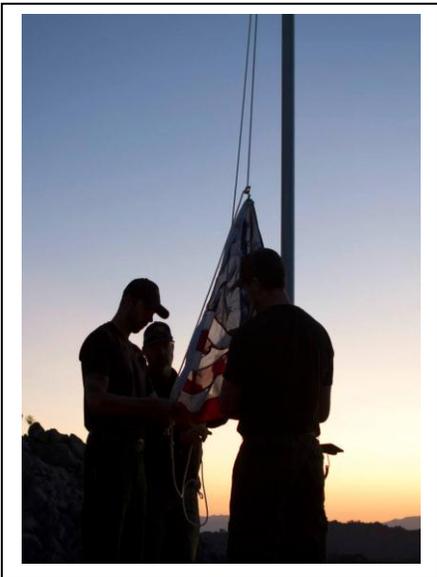
- Life
- Threat and Trauma of a Critical Incident
- Loss
- Wear and Tear

Most people (over 80%) have the resources and skills to be able to cope with traumatic events over time (3 to 12 months). One of the challenges for leaders is that it is difficult to know who the 20% are that could benefit from additional resources. The number of traumatic exposures and the strain of pre-event life stressors all contribute to the range of individual reactions. Traumatic events are one source of “stress injuries” to personnel.

The wildland fire and aviation community has strengths and resources that may buffer the impact of critical events. Training, engaged leadership, crew/unit cohesion, and a purposeful mission are important factors that strengthen fire personnel and mitigate the effects of operational stress and critical incidents. The close-knit community and the cohesion of the wildland fire community is a protective factor. It can also facilitate a shared sense of loss or impact across an entire organization when one or more members are directly affected by an incident. It is important to remember that managers are part of that community and will experience critical events on both an individual and leadership/management level.

### There are five essential needs that people have following a critical incident:

- Safety
- Calm effective communication
- Connectedness with Peers, the Organization, Family
- The skills and resources to cope
- Confidence in leadership, their mission and hope for the future



## After a Critical Incident

Providing support for the five essential needs that people have following a critical incident helps to reduce the risk of stress injuries and enhances productivity and accomplishment in the face of adversity. After a critical incident, the following are recommended:

### Evaluate

- What are the existing strengths and vulnerabilities?
- What has management already done?
- What resources are available or needed?
- Who can help (Critical Incident Stress Management/Peer Support)?

### Take Action

- Demonstrate concern for employees' well-being.
- Let people talk about their experience.
- Provide physical, emotional, moral safety.
- Honest communication.
- Minimize exposure to environmental stressors (e.g., heat, cold, noise, disturbing visual scenes, reporters and news media).
- Provide factual information and reduce the spread of rumors.
- Continuously evaluate the environment for additional vulnerabilities and strengths.
- Promote Morale/Cohesion.
- Foster resilience and promote recovery through social support mechanisms (e.g., friends, family, and activities).
- Watch for post event related behavior changes between 3 to 6 months and on anniversary dates.
- Be attentive to the needs of family members.

### Good Leaders are the Best Medicine

Leaders using the five core leader functions are the 80% solution:

- Strengthen
- Mitigate
- Identify
- Treat
- Reintegrate



For More Information Visit:

<http://gacc.nifc.gov/gbcc/cism/cismindex.htm>