

COMMON STRESS REACTIONS

Critical Incident Stress is the reaction a person or group has to a critical incident. Cognitive, physical, emotional, and/or behavioral signs and symptoms can characterize the reaction. Reactions to any event may be immediate, delayed, or cumulative.

Individuals react to stress in their own way. Some of the more common reactions include:

- Re-experiencing the event or sensory elements of the event (sights, sounds, smells)
- Fatigue and/or depression
- Nausea or loss of appetite
- Substance abuse
- Headaches
- Memory loss or loss of concentration
- Irritability and/or anger
- Feelings of guilt
- Decline in job performance
- Family or marital problems
- Anxiety or fear



Goals of the CISM Team

- Respond upon request to critical incidents
- Accelerate recovery from events before harmful stress reactions have a chance to damage performance, careers, health, and families
- Provide information about critical incident stress and stress reactions that personnel can use to help themselves and their fellow employees identify when help may be warranted
- Provide an atmosphere of concern and caring within our workplace
- Offer personnel options for dealing with stress
- Reduce the impact of the stressful experience
- Reduce isolation and the feeling of being abnormal
- Promote psychological well-being and prevent delayed psychological reactions
- Improve coping skills for future incidents



CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT (CISM) TEAM



The CISM Team is a group of your coworkers from a variety of positions in the Department and in every area of the State. The Team exists to help you and your fellow employees who are experiencing normal reactions of stress brought on by abnormal situations or events.

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CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT

What is a Critical Incident?

A “Critical Incident” is an event that has a stressful impact sufficient enough to overwhelm the usually effective coping skills of either an individual or a group.

Examples of Critical Incidents:

- Line of duty death
- Suicide of a fellow employee
- Significant event involving children
- Knowing the victim involved
- Serious line-of-duty injury or near-injury
- Prolonged incident or difficult rescue
- Excessive media interest
- Accumulation of stressful events
- Particularly unusual or overwhelming traumatic injuries
- Any significant event

What is traumatic for one person may not be so for another, but stress can happen to anyone. Stress from a critical incident cannot be prevented. It is the result of exposure to trauma in one’s profession, but it CAN be managed.



What is CISM?

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is a comprehensive, organized, and established system for responding to critical incidents. The CISM process is not therapy. The goal of CISM is to return the person or group impacted by the incident to duty.



Fatigue and depression can be common after an incident.

CISM Support Services

- Pre-Incident education
- CISM Team
- On-scene support
- Debriefings
- Defusing
- Peer or one-to-one counseling
- Referrals to mental health services
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP) (CISM is a peer-supported program and is NOT a substitute for the EAP.)

Ways to Deal with Stress

- Alleviate some of the physical reactions of stress within the first 24-48 hours by alternating periods of appropriate exercise and relaxations.
- Keep busy, structure your time.
- Talk to people. Talk is the medicine that heals most.
- Avoid numbing the pain with drugs and/or alcohol.
- Reach out—people do care
- Help your coworkers as much as possible by sharing your feelings and checking on how they are doing.
- Do not make any big life changes. Keep your routine as close to normal as possible.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Do something you really enjoy.
- Eat well-balanced and regular meals. Avoid sugar and caffeine.
- Remember that what you experience is normal and expected reaction to a stressful incident.



Practicing yoga or exercising is a good way to alleviate stress.

Recurring thoughts, dreams, and flashbacks are normal; do not try to fight them. They will decrease over time and become less painful.

- Remember your spiritual side.