

# 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.

# CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT

- C. Do not send the person home until evaluated by an on-call Behavioral Health Specialist or designee per individual agency procedures.
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.