

CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT**Introduction**

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) provides an organized approach to the management of stress responses for personnel having been exposed to a traumatic event in the line of duty. The use of CISM may decrease post-traumatic stress disorder, acute stress disorder, workman's compensation claims, fatalities, injuries, and suicide. The use of CISM does not prevent an employee from seeking individual consultation through the Employee Assistance Program or a trained Peer Supporter.

Agency Administrator Responsibilities**Identification of Event**

The agency administrator of the unit where the incident occurred is responsible for identifying an event as a critical incident. The agency administrator is the highest ranking line officer, regardless of agency, with direct responsibility for the personnel involved in the incident.

Request CISM

The agency administrator or designee is responsible for requesting CISM services from the CISM Coordinator as soon as possible after the event. The general accepted method for contacting a CISM Coordinator is through the local dispatch office or appropriate Coordination Center.

Provide Information/Pay Codes

The agency administrator or designee is responsible for providing the CISM Coordinator with information about the incident. The agency administrator is responsible for providing the CISM Coordinator with a budget code for expenses associated with CISM response.

Local Dispatch Responsibilities**Request CISM**

When the agency administrator has deemed an incident as a Critical Incident, attempt to fill CISM Response resources locally before placing the order at the appropriate Coordination Center. In the event the local dispatch center does not have local resources available, an order for a CISM Coordinator (THSP) will be placed with the local GACC within one hour of receiving an order from the agency administrator.

Identify a Logistic Support for CISM

The local dispatch center will identify a person to work with the CISM Coordinator to provide logistical support such as rooms, office space, etc.

Coordination Center Responsibilities**Request CISM**

Coordination Centers are responsible for contacting the CISM Coordinator and requesting CISM services within 1 hour of receiving the local Dispatch Center order. In the event the CISM Coordinator or qualified CISM Leader from that area is unavailable, the Coordination Center will pass the request on to another center or the National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC).

CISM Coordinator Responsibilities

- Decides on the size and make up of the group.
- Sets time frames for CISM activities with the CISM Leader.
- Provides follow up to the CISM Leader throughout the CISM Groups activities.
- Does an AAR with the CISM Leader at the close of CISM activities.

Definitions

Critical Incident: Any event which has a stressful impact sufficient enough to overwhelm the usually effective coping skills of either an individual or group. Critical incidents are typically sudden, powerful events which are outside the range of ordinary human experiences.

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM): A wide range of programs and services designed to prevent and mitigate the effects of traumatic stress.

Initial Incident Stress Defusing: This is a shorter and less structured version of a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) that usually occurs within a few hours of a critical incident. The main purpose of a Defusing is to stabilize the affected personnel so that they can return to work if necessary or go home without unusual stress. Defusings allow for initial venting of reactions to the incident, and provides stress coping information to affected personnel. A Defusing may eliminate the need for a formal CISD or enhance a subsequent CISD.

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD): A structured group meeting that emphasizes venting or show of emotions and other reactions to a critical incident. It also emphasizes educational and informational elements which are of assistance to employees in understanding and dealing with the stress generated by the event. Debriefings generally occur within 24 – 72 hours of the critical incident.

Individual Crisis Debriefing: One-on-one confidential assistance with any issue by trained peer supporter or mental health professional.

Peer Support: Personnel trained to assist their fellow employees by listening without judgment and maintaining confidentiality. They are also trained in positive coping strategies for stress, and to help others validate their thoughts and emotions about an overwhelming trauma or loss.