


**SURREY FIRE SERVICE
OPERATIONAL GUIDELINE**

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PURPOSE: To provide a means for addressing the mental and physical health effects of Surrey Fire Service personnel exposed to potentially traumatic incidents.

SCOPE: All Surrey Fire Service Members.

POLICY: All members shall be provided the opportunity to participate in a process that reduces the effects of Critical Incident Stress arising from witnessed and/or physically threatening incidents that are considered by the employee as stressful and/or traumatic.

Any member may seek professional assistance to deal with the emotional and physical stress of attending an incident by calling Worksafe directly at 1-888-922-3700. The initial phone call and 6 visits to a psychologist are provided in a confidential manner.

OVERVIEW:


Psychological stress reactions related to physical and witnessed trauma is complex. In an effort to mitigate the lasting impact of psychological stress the Surrey Fire Service has identified four levels of Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM). When successfully implemented, these interventions have proven to accelerate a healthy recovery process and therefore enhance the future well-being of fire fighters dealing with stress-related injuries which is the result of witnessed and/or physical trauma.

Based on industry research and best practices, there are two categories of group-based interventions that fall under the umbrella of Critical Incident Stress Management. These interventions are called defusings and debriefings and shall be initiated when an incident has the potential to adversely affect the current and future emotional health and well-being of fire service personnel.

A defusing can be an informal crew discussion or it can be led by a peer fire fighter with specialized training (CISM team member) in facilitating a defusing discussion. A defusing is a confidential and voluntary group intervention in which participants are given an opportunity to share reactions to an incident, vent emotions and learn about the stress recovery process. These discussions generally last from 30 to 60 minutes, but may go longer if warranted by the OIC and/or MFAP team member.

A debriefing is a more formalized group discussion that is designed to address a particularly distressing critical incident. Based on the core principles of crisis intervention, a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) is a 7-stage process that is designed to mitigate the impact of a critical incident and accelerate recovery to a pre-crisis level. The CISD process is facilitated by a specially trained team consisting of a mental health professional and peer support personnel from our CISM team. Ideally, debriefings are conducted between 24 and 72 hours after the incident has occurred and can be viewed as a more comprehensive group-based intervention. **It should be noted that all CISM measures are not considered therapy and should a member require further assistance on individual mental health challenges, resources can be found in Operational Guideline, Employee Assistance #5.02.05.03.**

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In the event of any member struggling with suicidal thoughts or ideations, they are to call 9-1-1 or swiftly visit a hospital emergency room. Should a disclosure of this nature be made to a co-worker or any city employee, it is the obligation of that co-worker to share this information with the duty chief in the timeliest manner possible.

An effective and readily available resource in the fire service is the support of each other. The friendship, comradery and time spent among crews have the potential to lessen life stressors and significantly reduce the lasting impact of difficult calls. In an effort to maximize this resource, we encourage all crews to engage in regular crew-led discussions on mental health and well-being. The complex nature of trauma means that no two people will interpret a traumatic event in the same way and therefore, it is the responsibility of each of us to look after ourselves and each other. Research has proven that talking amongst team members can often assist each of us in facilitating an on-going psychological healing process that makes work-related trauma more manageable in the short and long-term.

Procedure:

CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT LEVELS

Level 1: Psychological Health Maintenance: Officer led Crew Check-In discussions

A proactive step in limiting the effects of witnessed trauma on the job is sharing this experience with people for which you share a common bond. Crew Check-In discussions are a proactive way to facilitate understanding, foster a team-based environment and potentially reduce cumulative effects of stress and fatigue that often accompany witnessed trauma.

At the direction of the CISM team, at least two times per year, every crew is required to participate in an Officer led Crew Check-In. An Officer led Crew Check-In is a semi-formal discussion involving all crew members in which each member is given the chance to complete a mental wellness self-assessment questionnaire, share information involving the psychological challenges of any incident they have attended in the recent past (within six months). If a crew member is focused on discussing an incident beyond six months, it is acceptable to do so; however this crew member should consider the help of a mental health professional or at the very least, be directed to a member on the CISM team for guidance.

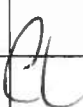
The Officer shall ensure the Officer led Crew Check In discussions are recorded in FDM.

Level 2: Crew-Led Check-In after an incident

A Crew-Led Check-In is an internal crew discussion for which the support of crewmates can assist one or more members in digesting the effects of a traumatic incident. This discussion should take place following any incident for which a death or serious injury has occurred, but is perceived by crew members as not being exceptionally disturbing. Crew-Led Check-Ins should be seen as an early intervention tool to critical incident stress, but not take the place of Peer-Led Defusings or a formalized Debriefing.

A Crew Led Check-In must be conducted following any incident that the OIC or a crew member feels would be of benefit for themselves or at least one crew member following any incident. If any member is adversely affected by an incident, they are encouraged to discuss

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this impact with their officer to determine if a crew-based intervention is required and/or identify mental health resources offered to members. If the member is not comfortable with approaching their OIC the member is encouraged to approach any Member on the CISM team. Every effort should be made by each crew member to keep this discussion confidential and should only be breeched to a CISM peer if a crew member is in need of further assistance.

Procedure for a Crew-Led Check-In:

- The OIC will facilitate an informal “crew discussion” following any unusual or emotionally significant incident
- The OIC will initiate this crew discussion based on his/her observations or feedback from at least one crew member
- The OIC will utilize a “Crew Check-In Checklist” document (located on Intranet, specific details listed further down) to facilitate the discussion
- The Crew Check-In must be added to the incident record in FDM by checking off the appropriate boxes
- Crew Check-In should only be applied to a crew within a single station. If multiple stations are involved, the defusing must be led by a CISM peer
- Information on how to conduct a Crew Check-In can be found on the Fire Service intranet site located at: Intranet > Fire Service > General > MFAP/CISM.

Level 3: A CISM Peer-Led Defusing

A CISM Peer-Led Defusing must be arranged with a Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) team member for incidents in which there is a moderate likelihood members will be negatively affected by an incident attended. A CISM Peer-Led Defusing is a more formalized discussion that involves the crew and at least one member of the Critical Incident Stress Management team. This type of defusing is to be conducted as soon as possible (1 to 4 hours) following a critical incident. If it cannot be conducted within 12 hours after an incident, a debriefing should be considered in collaboration with the battalion chief. Where appropriate, a formal debriefing may also be required following the completion of the defusing and an assessment of the reactions or wishes of the participants should be considered.

Recommended Criteria for a Peer-Led Defusing:

- Severely injured or burned victim(s)
- Death of a patient under circumstances that have the potential to evoke an emotional response to responders
- Neglect or violence affecting any person
- Members exposed to multiple critical incidents over a short period of time
- Close encounter that could have caused a member’s death
- Serious injury or death of a civilian resulting from fire service operations
- At the request of a member of the fire service
- Any other incident in which there is a moderate likelihood members will be negatively affected

It is important to recognize that the crew can request a defusing even when the incident attended does not include one of the criteria listed above.

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Procedure for a CISM Peer-Led Defusing:

- This should follow an incident in which any member feels the CISM peer defusers should be involved.
- A peer led defusing should occur within 12 hours of an incident or consideration should be given to schedule a debriefing led by a mental health professional as soon as possible.
- Two peer defusers should be used whenever possible, ideally in a ratio of one defuser to five personnel.
- Following the defusing, the peer defusers must make an assessment to decide whether a debriefing should also be scheduled.
- Within one week of the defusing, the peer defusers should make contact with each participant to assess their mental well-being.

Level 4: A Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD)

A debriefing must be scheduled for any incident in which there is a high likelihood that members will be negatively affected by an incident. A critical incident sufficient enough to warrant a debriefing is one that most fire service personnel would consider to be severe and out of the ordinary of everyday fire service experience. A CISD is to be scheduled for any incident in which fire service personnel feel should be managed by a mental health professional and/or outside peer.

Examples that warrant a CISD may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Multiple deaths
- Death of, or severe injuries to a child
- Mutilation or dismemberment of a person
- Major disaster/mass casualties
- Close personal relationship to a victim by a Surrey Fire Service member
- Serious injury, death or suicide of a Surrey Fire Service member
- At the request of a member
- Any other high stress incident brought to the attention of a CISM CISD team member
- If after conducting a defusing, the CISM defuser feels a debriefing should follow

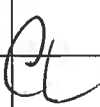
Procedure for Initiating a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing:

- Any of the examples listed above require a CISD within 24-72 hours
- A CISM team member assigned to lead a defusing may wish to elevate the intervention to a debriefing once the details of the incident are assessed
- A CISM team member will assist with the debriefing and serve as a resource to the mental health professional and the members involved.

INITIATING AN INTERVENTION (DEFUSING OR DEBRIEFING)

The request for any level of intervention can be made by any fire service personnel by contacting the OIC, Battalion Chief, Dispatch Supervisor, exempt Chief or any CISM team member. If possible, dispatch should alert the Duty Chief, Battalion Chief or any CISM team

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member to a potentially significant incident as soon as they are able. The Battalion Chief or CISM team member should follow up with the crew involved to determine the seriousness of the incident and the necessity for scheduling an appropriate level of intervention. Additionally, the Incident Command Officer may initiate the process for serious incidents while still on scene by contacting dispatch or the Battalion Chief, without interference to the emergency scene.

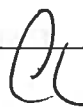
The Battalion Chief will:

1. Confer with the incident OIC to ensure that a peer led defusing is sufficient for the incident of concern and may initiate Level 3 debriefing if required.
2. Ensure the crew is able to continue performing their duties until the defusing can be arranged.
3. Identify on duty CISM team members to conduct the defusing. Off duty CISM team members may be required if on duty personnel are not available.
4. After consultation with the CISM team member, make arrangements for time and location of defusing as well as movement of personnel and apparatus to accommodate the defusing.
5. If a CISM team led peer defusing cannot be coordinated within 12 hours, contact the Duty chief to request a debriefing.

The CISM Team Member should:

1. Collect information about the incident and report to the Battalion Chief with recommendations for the level of CISM response required, as well as resources necessary to defuse the incident.
2. Select a convenient location remote from the scene and in an area that shall comfortably accommodate all personnel
3. Contact the assisting CISM team member before proceeding to the defusing site and pre-plan the defusing.
4. Prepare all printed materials required. All information can be found on the intranet under Fire Service>General>MFAP Corner.
5. Advise the crews involved, dispatch and the Battalion Chief that they will be out of service until the defusing is complete.
6. Contact the MFAP coordinator and the Duty Chief to advise that a defusing took place.
7. Maintain confidentiality.
8. Ensure the OIC or Dispatch Supervisor has entered the CIS defusing in the FDM incident record.

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Level 4 – Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

The Battalion Chief will:

1. Confer with the incident OIC to ensure that a debriefing is required for the incident.
2. Ensure that the crew is able to continue performing their duties. If one or more members cannot continue the Duty Chief shall be notified.
3. Notify the Duty Chief that a CISD process will be taking place.
4. Contact WorkSafe at 1-888-922-3700 to make a request to hold a debriefing.
5. Identify on-duty CISM team members to assist with the debriefing. Off duty CISM team members may be required if on duty personnel are not available.
6. After consultation with the WorkSafe representative and the CISM team member, make arrangements for time and location of the debriefing as well as movement of personnel and apparatus to accommodate the debriefing process.
7. Provide MH professional with an introduction letter (Mental Health Professional Debriefing letter) and copy of this policy.

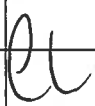
The Mental Health Professional will:

1. Consult with the Battalion Chief to gather details about the incident and the number of crew members involved as well as time and location of the debriefing.
2. Make contact with the CISM team member assigned to assist with the debriefing to make necessary preparations for the debriefing.
3. Conduct the debriefing following the established CISM debriefing model.
4. Remain available following the debriefing for questions and consultation.
5. Provide contact information for future follow up by any member involved.

The CISM Team Member will:

1. Consult with the Battalion Chief to gather details about the incident and the number of crew members involved as well as time and location of the debriefing.
2. Liaise with the mental health professional assigned to assist with the debriefing to make necessary preparations for the debriefing and provide support and information.
3. Assist with the debriefing by means of observing, providing information and educational materials, and follow up with each member involved.
4. Provide contact information for future follow up by any member involved.
5. Contact the MFAP coordinator and Duty Chief to advise that a debriefing took place.
6. Maintain confidentiality.
7. Ensure the OIC has entered the CIS defusing in the FDM incident record.

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PROGRAM GOVERNANCE

Employee Support Team (EST)

- The Employee Support Team's mandate is to assist members dealing with occupational and non-occupational related stressors
- The EST will work with the CISM team to plan efforts to reduce the effects of CIS on all fire service members
- The EST shall arrange and approve funding for the initial training for CISM team members. The committee will make recommendations to the fire service to allocate a reasonable budget for on-going training with the purpose of keeping CISM team members current with the latest methods and techniques involving CISM. On-duty members shall be released from the roster if staffing levels permit. Off duty members shall attend on a voluntary basis.


Critical Incident Stress Management Team (CISM Team)

- Trained defusers will be referred to as members of the Critical Incident Stress Management Team.
- The task of the CISM team is to provide an organized approach to the management of critical incident stress responses.
- CISM team members will lead defusing and assist with debriefings.
- CISM team members will develop awareness & training material annually to support the program.
- Regular CISM team meetings shall be held to establish selection criteria, initial training, continuing education and team direction.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

- The Employee Support Team (EST) shall consist of equal members appointed by the Surrey Fire Fighters' Association, and management and a mental health professional for oversight.
- The EST shall meet in January and September each year or when called as needed by any EST member.
- The EST shall determine the membership requirements for the CISM team.
- The EST shall utilize the WorkSafe Mental Health Professionals to facilitate debriefings as required.

See also: **OG #1.04.02.02**
 OG #5.02.05.02

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|  <hr/> Signature of Fire Chief | This O.G. Replaces 5.02.05.01 Issued on: May 11, 2012 |
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