



#104

CITY OF CHARLOTTETOWN FIRE DEPARTMENT ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE: **CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS INTERVENTION**

ORIGINATING DATE: **2007**

EFFECTIVE DATE: **JUNE 1, 2007**

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APPROVED BY: **FIRE DEPARTMENT MANAGEMENT TEAM**

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General:

Personnel that have been exposed to serious incidents or personally significant incidents may exhibit stress-related problems. The objective of this procedure is to provide professional intervention to minimize stress-related injury to Department personnel.

The Critical Incident:

Fire Department response to incidents that may cause personnel unusually strong emotional involvement, which may call for some form of critical incident stress intervention (i.e., defusing, debriefing, or one-on-one contact). The following are examples of incidents that require intervention:

- Any incident that affects any member profoundly, where he/she may need confidential support.
- Serious injury or death of a fire department member or other emergency personnel (including suicide).
- Mass casualty incidents.
- Death of a child, or violence to a child.

- Serious injury or death of a civilian resulting from fire department operations (i.e., auto accident, etc.).
- Loss of life of a patient following rescue efforts by fire department personnel.
- Hindered, failed, or complicated situations that affected goals (possibly cause of death, or injury).
- Incidents that attract extremely unusual or critical news media coverage.
- Any incident that is charged with profound emotion.

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- 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.

ON-SITE MANAGEMENT:

Minimizing exposure to these stressful incidents result in fewer stress-related problems. The Incident Commander (IC) should reduce this exposure by rotating personnel and by removing initial personnel from the scene as soon as possible.

Any personnel directly involved in high-stress incidents (particularly previously listed examples) should be considered as high priority for immediate removal from the scene. Relief from duty for these personnel may also be a consideration.

ACTIVATION OF THE CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS PROCESS:

All department officers bear the responsibilities for recognizing significant incidents that require intervention. When an incident is identified as a “critical incident,” a request for a defusing or debriefing should be made as soon as possible.

Any officer, or crew member who may have experienced a traumatic event may initiate the CIS process by contacting the CIS Coordinator. The CIS Coordinator in conjunction with the IC will evaluate the incident and determine what level of intervention is necessary (i.e., defusing or debriefing). The form of intervention utilized will depend

greatly upon how early the CIS is reported and the nature of the incident. Strict confidentiality is to be maintained during the entire process.

The CIS Coordinator will begin the process of intervention decided upon. The CIS Coordinator will be responsible for contacting other CIS members and Social Services when necessary. The CIS member will also make arrangements for the meeting place.

Any member who feels the need for a personal, confidential one-on-one or defusing may initiate the process by contacting the CIS Coordinator.

The CIS Coordinator will be responsible for coordinating the critical incident process. Follow-up care and other support functions may be coordinated by Social Service.

The CIS Coordinator will contact the member involved by telephone or in situations where the critical incident warrants, make contact in person to determine what form of intervention is necessary.

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TYPES OF INTERVENTION:

The type of intervention by the CIS Coordinator will be determined by confidential discussion of the critical incident with the Chief Officers, company officers and crew members.

The types of intervention are as follows:

One-On-One – Done by either a Fire Department CIS team member **or** professional counselor. One-on-ones may be done anytime.

Defusing – Conducted normally by Fire Department CIS team members, no professional counselor involved, within close proximity, preferably immediately following an incident, being confidential and lasting approximately 30-40 minutes.

Debriefing – Critical incident debriefing is not a critique of fire department operations at the incident. Performance issues will not be discussed during the debriefing. The debriefing process provides formats in which personnel can discuss their thoughts and reactions and **to** reduce the stress resulting from exposure to critical incidents. All debriefings will be strictly confidential. Debriefings are conducted by professional counselors and fire department CIS team members and should be done within 72 hours of the incident but after 24 hours if possible. Debriefings are formal lasting one-to-two hours and may be preceded by a defusing a short time after the incident.

Follow-up Debriefings – Are rare and are usually conducted weeks or months after the incident where there is concern of delayed or prolonged stress symptoms. This type of debriefing may be done informally.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance of defusing or debriefings is **strongly recommended** for all personnel who were **directly** exposed to the traumatic aspects of an incident selected for intervention. Exceptions may be granted following assessment by the CIS Coordinator involved.

LOCATION

Defusing and debriefings may be conducted anywhere that provides ample space, privacy, and freedom from distractions. Any meeting facilities, centrally located to the involved members are worthy of consideration. Examples of meeting places are Fire Training Center, Community Room or City Hall Meeting Room. The selection of the site will be determined by the CIS Coordinator.

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THE CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS TEAM

The CIS team will consist of professionals in stress-related counseling as well as Fire Department personnel. The Fire Department CIS team members' role in the CIS process will be to assist and support the professional counselors as necessary during a debriefing process. During a defusing the Fire Department CIS team members will conduct the defusing without a professional counselor present. One-on-one meetings may be conducted by either a professional counselor or Fire Department CIS team member, depending on what the incident calls for and/or what the involved personnel request.

RELIEVING PERSONNEL FROM DUTY

Circumstances of a critical incident may result in a recommendation by the CIS team that individual or groups be taken out of service.