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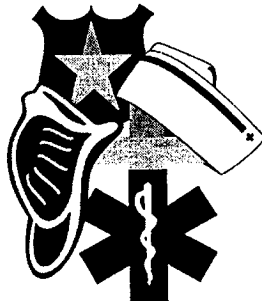
**INTERNATIONAL CRITICAL  
INCIDENT STRESS  
MANAGEMENT TEAM  
COORDINATION CENTER**

**24 HOUR  
EMERGENCY HOTLINE:  
(410) 313-2473**

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Managed by:  
*International Critical Incident  
Stress Foundation, Inc.*

Operated by:  
*Fire and Police Communications Center  
Howard County, Maryland*



## **WHAT IS A CRITICAL INCIDENT?**

*Tragedies ... Deaths ... Serious Injuries ... Hostage Situations.* People who respond in emergencies encounter highly stressful events almost every day. Sometimes an event is so traumatic or overwhelming that emergency responders may experience significant stress reactions. These events are known as "*Critical Incidents.*"

Emergency personnel who have these normal, although uncomfortable, stress reactions to extraordinary events are often confused by the changes they notice in themselves and others. Fortunately, *help is available!*

Over 350 specially trained Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Teams throughout all fifty states and in 23 other countries are prepared to assist emergency workers or organizations faced with a stressful incident. A **24 HOUR HOTLINE** allows the emergency personnel to link up with this network of CISM teams.

## **SERVICES PROVIDED BY COORDINATION CENTER**

- Assistance in locating local CISM support
- Maintenance of the CISM Team Registry
- Coordination of CISM teams in areas where there are no known CISM resources
- Provision of immediate stress consultation to emergency service organizations
- Consultations to United Nations

## RECOGNIZING CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS

Critical incidents may produce a wide range of stress symptoms, which may appear immediately at the scene, a few hours later or within days of the incident. Stress symptoms usually occur in four different categories: Cognitive (thinking), Physical (body), Emotional (feelings) and Behavioral (actions). The more symptoms experienced, the more powerful the stress reaction. The longer the symptoms persist, the more potential there is for lasting harm. The following is only a sample of stress symptoms that can show up after a critical incident.

### Cognitive

poor concentration	memory problems
poor attention span	difficulty making decisions
slowed problem solving	difficulties with calculations

### Emotional

guilt	grief
depression	anxiety/fear
loss of emotional control	feeling lost/overwhelmed

### Physical

muscle tremors	chest pain
gastro-intestinal distress	difficulty breathing
headaches	elevated blood pressure

### Behavioral

excessive silence	sleep disturbances
unusual behaviors	changes in eating habits
withdrawal from contact	changes in work habits

## STRESS SURVIVAL SUGGESTIONS

When emergency personnel experience significant stress from a critical incident, the following steps may help to reduce the stress until the incident is over or until a trained CISM team is located.

- Limit exposure to sights, sounds and odors
- Provide an immediate rest break of at least 15 minutes
- Have a friend stay with the distressed person
- Provide fluids, non-alcoholic and non-caffeinated
- Provide foods low in salt, sugar and fat
- Allow the person to talk about the experience
- Do not rush the person to return to work
- Protect the person from bystanders and the media
- Reassure the person that the stress experience is normal; most people recover very well from stress
- Show appreciation for the person's work
- Do nothing to embarrass the person
- Help the person make decisions

## USING THE EMERGENCY HOTLINE

Any emergency services organization or individual may use the **24 Hour Emergency Hotline** to call for assistance or information:

- If they need to know the location and contact numbers for a CISM team during an emergency
- If a situation distresses emergency workers and they need some guidance in working through the stress

## STATEMENT OF REFERRALS

ICISF and Howard County, Maryland do not certify or qualify the competency of the individual members of a CISM team. Referrals are made subject to the determination by the requesting emergency service organization or individual as to whether a particular team should be used.

For additional critical incident stress information of a routine nature, please call **(410) 750-9600**.

*The International Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Team Coordination Center has been made possible by the combined effort of two major groups. The International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc. provides training for the communications personnel and ongoing management of the Center in Howard County, Maryland. The Fire and Police Communications Center provides 24 Hour-A-Day operation of the Center.*