

Critical Incident Stress Management Policy

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing and
Employee Assistance Team



Revised July 2015

Division of Parks and Recreation

North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources

Critical Incident Stress Management

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section	Title
	Directors Statement
1.0	Purpose
2.0	Policy
3.0	Definitions
4.0	Procedures
5.0	Activation
6.0	Team Member Selection Criteria
7.0	Notification / Activation_Request Flow Chart

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Stress is a part of the normal physical and psychological influences in our daily lives which we all need in order to function. Moderate stress can be beneficial to people's lives however; stress can be difficult to live with when it is the result of a bad or difficult experience.

The potential exists for traumatic events to occur in our lives and jobs while working with a public agency such as the Division of Parks and Recreation. These events may have physical, mental or emotional impact on the employees involved. Research indicates that early intervention with affected employees can reduce the impact of a traumatic event on one's life and expedite a healthy recovery. The mental and physical health and safety of Division employees is of the highest priority. This policy will give guidance to supervisors during a critical or traumatic incident in order to offer assistance to any employee involved in a traumatic event.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael A. Murphy", is written over a light gray rectangular background.

Michael A. Murphy

1.0 PURPOSE

To establish policy and procedures for providing support for employees and family members involved in critical incidents. Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is a systematic approach to assist affected staff members cope with the loss, trauma and stress of a traumatic incident through the use of a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD), which is specially designed and offered to employees who are affected in the workplace.

The debriefing process has both psychological and educational components; however it should not be considered psychotherapy. It is a structured group meeting in which participants are given the opportunity to discuss their thoughts and emotions about a traumatic incident in a structured environment.

A traumatic event may have physical, mental or emotional impact on the individuals involved. Research indicates that early intervention can minimize the impact of a traumatic event on a person's life and can actually expedite a healthy recovery. The expected outcome of trauma response activities is to reduce the occurrence of post-traumatic stress responses in employees who have experienced a traumatic event.

2.0 POLICY

It shall be the policy of the North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation to provide peer and professional support for employees and families of employees involved in work related critical incidents.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

Employee: Any employee of the Division of Parks and Recreation

Family Member: Any immediate family of any employee that is involved in a traumatic incident or has knowledge of such incident that is work related.

Traumatic (Critical) Incident: An incident that creates significant stress, anguish, physical or psychological pain, fear or other harmful effects to an employee(s). A traumatic incident may involve one of the following but is not limited to:

- Use of force situations in which there is death or serious injury of any involved person.
- Death of an employee.
- Vehicle accident with death or serious injury to any person.
- An employee involved in an incident that due to the nature of the incident overwhelms the employee's ability to safely perform their duties.

- Accidental discharge of a firearm resulting in an injury.
- Serious injury of an employee.
- Incidents involving unusually large number of victims.
- Any occurrence that is unusually stressful or distracting and would be improved by appropriate intervention by the critical incident stress management program.

Employee Assistance Team (EAT): NC Division of Parks and Recreation employees who have been trained in a certified program as Peer Support Counselors and the State Employee's Assistance Program (EAP) Consultants that are contracted by the Office of State Human Resources (OSHR) who will facilitate / help facilitate the debriefing.

Defusing: A brief intervention by the incident commander or site supervisor within a few hours after a critical incident. The purpose is to provide employees directly involved with the incident a chance to verbalize immediate concerns and to be made aware of the common after effects of a critical incident.

Debriefing (CISD): A structured group meeting in which participants are given the opportunity to discuss their thoughts and emotions about a traumatic incident in a structured environment with a licensed mental health professional present. It is preferred that debriefings are facilitated by EAP Personnel or a licensed mental health professional assigned / contracted by the EAP.

Allied Agency or Division: Any city, county or state agency or division requesting or providing assistance with peer support personnel in a CISD.

4.0 PROCEDURES

The purpose of CISM is to support employees who are involved in traumatic incidents. No activities by the Employee Assistance Team (EAT) shall be considered part of any investigation or operation critique. EAT personnel will not interfere with administrative or criminal investigations following traumatic incidents. Traumatic incidents listed in Section 3.0 will be reported to the District Superintendent. The fact that an employee is involved in one of the traumatic incidents does not preclude or require him or her from participating in the defusing or debriefing. Employee Assistance Program (EAP) personnel or their representatives and EAT will state a warning to employees involved in the defusing/debriefing process that they should not make any statements of fact that may be important to any criminal or administrative investigation. The CISD process is intended to address the human emotions associated with this type of traumatic incident.

The EAT will adhere to the formal defusing and debriefing formula. No Peer Support Personnel will provide advice or recommendations that should be given by a licensed medical professional. Information from defusing, debriefing and one-on-one counseling sessions gained by EAT will be held in confidence with the following exceptions:

- Information suggesting the employee is a danger to him or herself.

- Information suggesting the employee is a danger to another person.

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) and Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) operations are a component of the Incident Command System (ICS). The ICS was developed primarily for forest services and wildland management agencies for the purpose of managing wildland fires. However, from the beginning, the system was designed to be flexible enough to handle all forms of emergencies besides fire, including search and rescue, floods, earthquakes, hurricanes and other disasters. Because of this flexibility, ICS has become a standard for incident management. In the event of a major incident the Incident Commander may be responsible for coordinating efforts with the Parks Chief Ranger (PACR), a District Superintendent or designee for a critical incident stress debriefing with division personnel before demobilization.

5.0 ACTIVATION

Upon the occurrence of critical incidents involving employees of the Division of Parks and Recreation, the immediate supervisor of the involved employee(s), and / or the Park Superintendent will contact the Parks Chief Ranger (the District Superintendent may handle if the PACR is unavailable) who will activate the CISM program if it is determined that CISD and the EAT is needed after consultation with the District Superintendent and other supervisors. This notification will be made as soon as possible after the incident. Information on the nature of the incident, the involved employees, the time and location of the incident and the current status of the incident will be provided to the Parks Chief Ranger (or District Superintendent if applicable). In the event that the Parks Chief Ranger or District Superintendent is involved in a critical incident, one of the other District Superintendents will be asked to activate the CISM Program, contacting the Employment Assistance Program and coordinate the Division's EAT operations.

The Parks Chief Ranger (or the District Superintendent if applicable) will determine the resources needed to provide the defusing and/or debriefing of the involved employee(s) and if immediate or delayed response by the Division's EAT is required.

The Parks Chief Ranger (or District Superintendent if applicable) will contact Peer Support personnel from the Division's EAT to determine availability and the number of personnel needed for a possible deployment if activation is needed. One EAT member will be asked to take the Division's lead role in the debriefing. The nature and scope of the traumatic incident will be given to all responding EAT members.

Activated EAT personnel responding to a debriefing will travel in Division Uniforms and vehicles and will be considered to be on-duty for the duration of the activities. The Parks Chief Ranger (or District Superintendent if applicable) who made the initial activation call to EAT personnel will designate the dress of the day for the debriefing.

Upon deployment, Division personnel will be under the supervision of the Parks Chief Ranger. For each incident the Parks' Chief Ranger will designate an Employee

Assistance Team (EAT) Leader who shall be responsible for all administrative and operational procedures during the deployment. The EAT Leader will coordinate all EAT activities, in conjunction with assigned EAP Personnel, once on-site at the Park involved in the critical/traumatic incident.

Debriefings will be held in facilities not associated with the Park or Division if possible but regardless should be held in a location that is private and provides a “safe” place for participants to step away from the debriefing if they are feeling overwhelmed.

It will be the practice that the Division will offer all employees involved in critical / traumatic incidents the services of the State’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and the Division’s CISD program. The Parks Chief Ranger (or the District Superintendent) may request an evaluation from a designated psychologist or the Employee Assistance Program via the Chain of Command for a recommendation as to the fitness for duty of an employee involved in a traumatic incident. This evaluation will help to determine if the employee is capable of serving in his or her job capacity if the Division’s EAT, the EAP Personnel or its contractors, informs the Division that an involved employee is a danger to him/herself or others.

The Employee Assistance Team (EAT) Leader will document the debriefing with a Case Incident Report (PR-63) with all the appropriate information and coding with the exception of the involved employee names. The EAP Facilitator and Peer Support personnel can be documented

In the event another State agency or division, or any city or county government unit makes a request to the Division of Parks and Recreation for personnel assistance with Critical Incident Stress Management, the Chief of Operations will make a decision to provide personnel or assistance to those requesting agencies based on availability of Division resources.

A committee consisting of the Employee Assistance Team and co-chaired by the Parks Chief Ranger will review the CISM Program annually. A report of the review with recommended changes to operational activities will be provided to the Chief of Operations.

The EAT personnel and the committee should attempt to meet at least annually and attend periodic CISM refresher training as Division resources allows.

6.0 TEAM MEMBER SELECTION CRITERIA

It is the Division’s goal to have an Employee Assistance Team (EAT) that can provide trained peer support counselors during a critical incident debriefing that is made up of a diverse group of employees from all job categories. The EAT should be made up of volunteer employees who have a desire to help their fellow employees who may become involved in a traumatic incident in the work place. With park units and employees spread

across the State, it is important to have enough trained peer support counselors that are dispersed across the entire Division. Although a specific number of trained personnel is not specified, a goal of approximately 12-16 trained personnel is ideal (~3-4 per district).

Criteria for EAT Members / Peer Support Counselors

- Participation should be voluntary
- EAT Members should have at least two years of full time employment as a permanent employee with the Division.
- EAT Members should have a “Meets Expectations” or above on their VIP Work Plan and shall not have any current personnel actions in their personnel file.
- EAT Members should be of good moral character and understand the importance of the program’s confidentiality.
- EAT Members must have the approval of their immediate supervisor, Park and District Superintendents.
- Division employees who are interested in becoming a EAT / Peer Support Counselor should submit a memorandum of interest through their chain of command to the Chief of Operations’ office for approval.

7.0 CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS DEBRIEFING NOTIFICATION/ ACTIVATION REQUEST FLOW CHART

Field Staff / Field Supervisor



Park Superintendent



District Superintendent and Parks Chief Ranger



Chief of Operations



Division Director



Division Employee Assistance Team (EAT) for Availability *(Typically
2-3 members are needed depending on the number of Park staff involved
in the incident)



Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

(McLaughlin Young Group – (888-298-3907 - 24/7 Hotline)

*(Coordination of EAP and/or contracted licensed professional and the Division's EAT
team to incident debriefing)*

Division Employee Assistance Team (EAT) as of July 2015

Angelia Allcox

Peter Mitchell

Lee Amos

Jane Conolly

Kelley King

Karen Johnson

John Schell

Guideline History

Originated: R. Bowling February 2003

Revised: B. Dowdy July 2015