


<p>Standard Operating Procedures</p> <p><u>OP P-01</u></p> <p>Revised: 01-01-21</p>	 <p>Management & Administration</p> <p><u>Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)</u></p>	<p>Date:</p> <p>07-01-03</p> <p>Approved by:</p> <p>F/C Rader</p>
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SCOPE

This policy identifies the application of critical incident stress management to all personnel of the City of Huntington Fire Department.

PURPOSE

The objective of this policy is to provide interventions for occupational stress and trauma exposure within 72 hours after critical incidents in order to mitigate occupational stress injury.

RESPONSIBILITY


It is the responsibility of all City of Huntington Fire Department personnel to comply with this OP.

DEFINITIONS

1. **Critical Incidents:** Any high risk, high reliability, high stress event that has the potential to create significant human distress and interfere with a person's usual coping mechanisms.
2. **Critical Incident Stress:** A state of high cognitive, emotional and physical arousal stress response. A normal reaction to a critical incident. This stress reaction can continue for an extended period. Critical incident stress may or may not seriously interfere with the ability to function in one's normal duties.
3. **Debriefing:** A specific technique designed to assist others in dealing with the physical or psychological symptoms that are generally associated with trauma exposure. Debriefing allows those involved with the incident to process the trauma exposure.
4. **Debriefing Team:** May include fire department personnel who are trained in debriefing methods, compass wellness coaches, and employee assistance program (EAP) representative(s). Additional professional counselors will be made available to assist and support as necessary.

EXAMPLES OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS

1. Serious injury or death of a firefighter or other emergency personnel on-duty or off-duty.
2. Mass Casualty Incidents.
3. Suicide of a firefighter.
4. Serious injury or death of a civilian resulting from fire department operations (Ex. auto accident).
5. Death of a child or victimization of a child.
6. Loss of life of a patient following a rescue effort.
7. Incidents that attract extremely unusual or critical news media coverage.
8. At the Commanding Officer's discretion.

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DEBRIEFING OVERVIEW

Fire department personnel who have responded to critical incidents, been exposed to operational stress and trauma that results in the likelihood of critical incident stress may qualify for a critical incident debriefing. When applying debriefing techniques, an appropriate and effective standardized protocol must be followed when assisting responders and employee crisis survivors of any critical incident. On-site evaluation and peer counseling by a debriefing team member should also be considered for some critical incidents when time and circumstance permit. In such situations, debriefing teams can observe for acute reactions and provide appropriate support, encouragement, and referral to services for personnel involved in the critical incident. Team members should be considered a resource available to chief officers and company officers for assignment to rehab, welfare, or other areas as needed.

ACTIVATION OF THE DEBRIEFING PROCESS

Chief Officers and Company Officers will determine when an incident is identified as a critical incident. The debriefing team will be contacted and the incident will be evaluated for the level of debriefing required. The specific debriefing service utilized will depend greatly upon how early the team is activated and the nature of the incident.

DEBRIEFING ATTENDANCE

Attendance to a debriefing is recommended for and limited to all personnel who were directly exposed to the critical incident and the debriefing team. All debriefings will be **confidential**. Call-out pay for off-duty personnel to attend a debriefing will be considered on a case by case basis and must be approved by the Fire Chief and City Manager.

LOCATION

Chief Officer(s) will determine the location for the debriefing which will have ample space, privacy, and freedom from distractions.

DEBRIEFING TYPES

Several types of debriefings may be conducted depending on the particular critical incident. They may be conducted on an individual one-on-one basis, or more typically small groups of not more than 25 members led by a Chief Officer and/or the Debriefing Team.

1. Debriefing: Conducted within 72 hours of the incident.
2. Optional Follow-Up Debriefing:
 - a. Follow-Up Debriefing 1: Conducted 1 week after the incident.
 - b. Follow-Up Debriefing 2: Conducted 6 weeks after the incident.
3. Optional Check-In (with Compass Wellness Coach)
 - a. Wellness Coach can provide mental health resources and referrals at any time.