



**Missouri Department of
Natural Resources
Administrative Policies and Procedures**

Chapter 1 Employee Relations

Critical Incident Stress Management

Effective date

Revised

Number: 1.10

May 23, 2011

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) recognizes the need to assist its employees who are dealing with stress as a result of being involved in a work-related critical incident. To meet this goal, this policy establishes a Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) peer support team and outlines the methods for team activation.

DEFINITIONS

Critical Incident: Work-related situations encountered by personnel that may provoke unusually strong emotional reactions which may interfere with the ability to function (personally or professionally) either at the scene or sometime later.

Critical Incident Stress: Uncontrollable physical and/or emotional reactions caused by involvement in the work-related critical incident.

GENERAL PROVISIONS

Team Goals

- Lessen the impact of a work-related traumatic incident.
- Assist our employees in addressing physical and/or emotional stress due to a work-related traumatic incident.
- Aid employees in determining whether or not they should seek professional assistance through additional counseling (EAP) beyond peer assistance.
- Accelerate employees return to routine functioning.

Team Guidelines

- Any DNR employee, regardless of position, is eligible to submit an *Application of Interest* for consideration as a member of the team. The application does not require supervisor approval, but does require supervisory support for all employees. Involvement on the team is strictly voluntary. An employee will be removed from the team of peer supporters upon their request or at the direction of the Departmental CISM Sponsor for cause.
- Applications will be reviewed and the team established in accordance with the Critical Incident Stress Management Procedures.
- Team Members are not counselors or therapists and will not hold any special licensing. Rather, the team is a peer support group and will serve as a sounding board for employees to share their experiences and feelings concerning the critical incident. If additional assistance is needed, team members will be trained in the manner in which to obtain appropriate services for the employee(s).



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- Team members will be required to attend a minimum of two crisis management classes before responding to an incident, as noted in the Critical Incident Stress Management Procedures. All subsequent training will be mandatory for members as long as they remain on the team. All training will be coordinated through the Department's Employee Relations Office in conjunction with the Human Resources (HR) Program, Training and Development Section.
- The team will facilitate "non-evaluative" discussions of employees' involvement, thoughts, reactions, and feelings of the critical incident.
- The team will be comprised of DNR employees as outlined in the Critical Incident Stress Management Procedures.
- As state employees, team members will respond to incidents as an additional job responsibility. Therefore, the team members will be acting in their capacity as a state employee.
- Expenses will be covered by the team member's local office budget.
- Team members will be required to sign a confidentiality statement. All information exchanged during sessions will be kept confidential and only discussed among the team if assistance from other team members is needed. **Note: The CISM team does not meet the legal criteria for PRIVILEGED COMMUNICATIONS to exist.**
- Established working criteria:
 - Activation of this team is priority. Team members will be expected to set aside their current work duties and personal commitments and respond to an incident within 24 hours.
 - Team members must be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.
 - Team members will be obligated to stay with the group for as long as necessary, for a maximum of 7 days.
 - Team members may be required to attend a team debriefing after deactivation from an incident.
- A team member can recommend that an involved employee be placed on administrative leave with pay. Under these circumstances, more advanced assistance from a mental health professional trained in critical incident stress counseling will be requested for the employee in question.

Process

The main focus of peer support is the health of the employee and their ability to fully function. All requests received will be considered whether or not the work-related incident occurred on or off duty. The team leader will determine the appropriateness of activating the team on a case by case basis. Should a disagreement arise from such determination, the Departmental Sponsor will have the final decision-making authority in the matter. Depending on the incident, one or more team members may be asked to respond.



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Team Activation

Criteria for Activation (work-related):

- Any death
- Serious injury
- A life-threatening situation
- Significant injury to a child
- The victim of an incident is known to an employee
- An employee is needed for personal identification
- Major incidents drawing media attention
- Incidents that are extremely grotesque by sight, smell, sound or other circumstance likely to produce an emotional imprint
- Incidents that produce unusual work team stress (i.e. weather-related)

Mechanism for Activation:

- Any Department of Natural Resources employee can request assistance from a team member through their chain of command.
- The district supervisor/program director will evaluate the circumstances of the event and determine the number of team members that need to be activated.
- The district supervisor/program director will contact the team coordinator requesting they respond to the incident.
- The team coordinator will activate the appropriate team member(s).

Team Deactivation

Criteria for Deactivation:

- One week (7 days) maximum for any team to be on assignment. In the event of a prolonged situation, additional team members will be brought in for assistance.

Mechanisms for Deactivation:

- The team coordinator will notify the team of deactivation.

Team Debriefing

- During activation, team members will meet at the end of each workday to do a mini-debriefing themselves, to maintain focus and prepare for the next session.
- After the team has been deactivated, a debriefing of the team members may be completed by other team members or trained individuals. Debriefing by a mental health professional that was not on the scene of the incident may be arranged, as appropriate.