



**Division 08**

**Health and Safety**

**Chapter 03 – Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Team**

January 2009

**POLICY**

This General Order shall set forth the policies and procedures for operation and utilization of the Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Team.

The Prince George's County Fire Department recognizes that critical incidents can be stressful to personnel. Communication sessions known as Critical Incident Stress Debriefings (CISD) can facilitate stress management in the aftermath of a serious incident.

**DEFINITIONS**

N/A

**PROCEDURES**

**1. Program Operation/Components**

The CISD Team members shall be selected by the Fire Chief or his designee. The Coordinator of the Employee and Volunteer Assistance Programs (EAP/VAP) will serve as the CISD Team Coordinator. The team shall consist of, at least:

- One additional member of the EAP/VAP staff
- Three representatives from the professional clinical community (i.e., social workers, psychologists, or nurse therapists)
- Three representatives from the Prince George's County Fire Department

Participation in annual in-service training, as well as quarterly meetings, will be required to enhance team skills and knowledge.

Application for team membership will be accepted in January of each year, and can be obtained by contacting the team coordinator at 301-883-6270.

**2. Clinical Services/Disaster Response**

The CISD Team shall be requested by the Fire Chief or designated Incident Commander to assist at the scene of a disaster to serve in an advisory capacity concerning critical incident stress symptoms in personnel. In addition, the team will provide on-the-scene support to any personnel who are on a work break during a prolonged disaster incident.

**THE ONLY TEAM MEMBERS THAT WILL RESPOND DIRECTLY TO THE SCENE OF ANY INCIDENT SHALL BE UNIFORMED FIRE OR EMS PERSONNEL, FAMILIAR WITH PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.**

Upon arrival at an incident, team members will report directly to the command post for assignment. Non-uniformed members of the team shall be utilized away from the scene to provide short term diffusing sessions as personnel leave the incident and/or go off duty. In addition, all team members will be utilized in the aftermath of the disaster to provide critical incident debriefing services.

**3. Critical Incident Response**



The CISD Team may also be requested by the Incident Commander to assist at the scene or in the aftermath of a critical incident. A critical incident is defined as an incident on a smaller scale than a disaster that may have serious impact on the personnel.

Examples of critical incidents include, but are not limited to:

- Serious injury or death of emergency team member in the line of duty, or threat of serious injury or death
- Serious injury or death of a civilian as the result of Fire Department activities, (i.e., investigator shoots suspect, 9-1 involving apparatus)
- Death of a child, particularly if unusually tragic circumstances are involved
- Any loss of life which follows prolonged expenditure of physical and emotional energy in rescue
- Physical and/or psychological threat to rescuers, including hostage situations
- Extremely negative attention from the media or community
- Any mass casualty incident
- Back-to back traumatic incidents that may have a cumulative effect on personnel

**4. Activating the CISDT for Disaster Services and Critical Incident Services**

Requesting the CISD Team to respond to the scene of any incident shall be the responsibility of the Incident Commander.

Activating the CISD Team to respond to the aftermath of a critical incident shall be the responsibility of the bureau of Special Tactical Operations' Commander on duty.

In the case of multiple calls to the EAP from personnel on the call, the EAP Coordinator may request permission to extend critical incident debriefing services to personnel on the call. The CISD Team Coordinator shall be notified of a disaster or critical incident (as defined above) by the Bureau of Fire/Rescue communications so that the team can prepare to respond if they are requested by the fire chief or Incident Commander.

All requests for CISD Team response shall be forwarded to the CISD Team Coordinator who will gather information on the severity of stressors on the call and dispatch the team as appropriate. If the magnitude of the incident is beyond the scope of the team to provide complete services, mutual aid response from another CISD Team will be recommended by the Prince George's County Fire Department CISD Team to the Fire Chief. Upon approval of the Fire Chief, Mutual Aid CISD Teams will be called.

**5. Educational Services**

It shall be the responsibility of the CISD Team Coordinator to arrange for annual training for Bureau of Special Tactical Operations Commanders, as well as other Incident Commanders, in the policies and procedures of the Prince George's County Fire Department Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Team. The CISD team Coordinator will also provide training for front-line personnel in Critical Incident Stress Management.

**REFERENCES**

N/A

**FORMS/ATTACHMENTS**

N/A