

Critical Incident Response Guide

Environment Canada has suffered employee work-related fatalities and several accidents causing serious injuries. These fatalities, as well as any other incidents which fall outside the range of normal experience, are known as "critical incidents".

A "critical incident" is a workplace event such as an accident, injury, or fatality that causes emotional or psychological trauma in those exposed either directly or indirectly to the incident. It is an immediate and powerful abnormal experience which can overwhelm a worker's ability to function normally by causing strong emotional reactions. A critical incident may include any of the following:

Fatality/Critical Incident

- a. the death of an employee;
- b. a disabling injury (see definition below);
- c. the loss by an employee of a body member or a part thereof or the complete loss of the usefulness of a body member or a part thereof;
- d. the permanent impairment of a body function of an employee;
- e. an explosion;
- f. damage to a boiler or pressure vessel that results in fire or the rupture of the boiler or pressure vessel; or
- g. any damage to an elevating device that renders it unserviceable, or a free fall of an elevating device.

Disabling Injury

"Disabling injury" means an employment injury or an occupational disease that:

- a. prevents an employee from reporting for work or from effectively performing all the duties connected with the employee's regular work on any day subsequent to the day on which the injury or disease occurred, whether or not that subsequent day is a working day for that employee;
- b. results in the loss by an employee of a body member or part thereof or in the complete loss of the usefulness of a body member or part thereof; or
- c. results in the permanent impairment of a body function of an employee.

Even with a well thought out plan, it is still possible that a "critical incident" could happen again. It is for this reason that we have developed a step by step "Critical Incident Response Report" to help guide Environment Canada employees through the necessary steps to ensure a proper critical incident management process. In addition, a "Guide for Recognizing Critical Incident Stress Symptoms" has been created to aid in the identification of persons who may be experiencing critical incident stress.

Once the request for emergency assistance is received, how a response is handled can mean the difference between total confusion and a well coordinated rescue effort; therefore, it is extremely

important that the person who receives such a call deals with it in a calm and orderly fashion. The proper response can expedite the arrival of help for those in trouble.

The first step in an effective response is the "Critical Incident Response Report", which should be kept somewhere close and accessible. This report will help guide the responder in obtaining pertinent information relating to the incident and to activate the emergency system if necessary.

The second step is recognizing and responding to the symptoms associated with critical incident stress. It is imperative that management, family members and co-workers be properly notified of the critical incident and that help be made available as soon as possible to assist them in dealing with the situation.

The [Employee Assistance Program](#) (EAP) can organize a group session following a critical incident. Individual counselling services are also available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week by calling 1-800-268-7708 or 1-800-567-2803 (for the hearing-impaired).

Should further information be required, please do not hesitate to contact your Senior OHS Advisor.

Critical Incident Response Report

Type of Event		
Serious Accident / Fatality Accident	Time of Call:	
Exact location of Accident		
Nature/Extent of Injuries	Number of people injured	
What Survival Equipment do they have available (list or check):		
First aid kit	Matches (fire starting materials)	GPS
Adequate clothing/blankets	Water	Flashlight
Food	Safe Transportation	Shelter
What Communications equipment do they have available?		
Cell phone	Do not stay on the line if there is a chance of battery running out. Set up a call back time (every ½ hour minimum)	What phone number are they calling from?
Satellite phone		
Has any other emergency help been notified? If so who? When? By whom?		
STEP 2 – Emergency Response/Communications		
1. Call emergency help (Police/RCMP, ambulance, search & rescue, etc.) and advise/confirm rescue requirements per above.		
2. Provide emergency help with as much information as you have.		
3. Contact Branch Director or responsible authority, Regional Director General, and the Regional Occupational Health and Safety Manager.		
4. <u>Stay by the phone</u> until you are certain/notified emergency help has arrived.		
STEP 3 – Responder Contact Info		
Prepared by:	Date/Time of call	
Branch:	Telephone number:	

Critical Incident Stress Symptoms

Critical incident stress is the result of a critical incident occurring and is defined as the emotional, physical, and mental reactions an employee has to a critical incident. It can lead to reduced performance, emotional, physical or cognitive problems resulting in poor work performance, family stress, personality shifts, and a variety of other problems.

<p>Physical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- chills- thirst- fainting- fatigue- nausea- twitches- vomiting- dizziness- weakness- headaches- elevated BP- rapid heart rate- muscle tremors- grinding of teeth- visual difficulties- profuse sweating- difficulty breathing- chest pain	<p>Cognitive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- confusion- nightmares- uncertainty- hypervigilance- suspiciousness- intrusive images- blaming someone- poor problem solving- poor attention/decisions- poor concentration/memory- disorientation of time/place/person- difficulty identifying objects/people- heightened/lowered alertness- increased/decreased awareness of surroundings
<p>Emotional:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- fear- guilt- grief- panic- denial- anxiety- agitation- irritability- depression- intense anger- apprehension- emotional outbursts- feeling overwhelmed- loss of emotional control- inappropriate emotional response	<p>Behavioral:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- withdrawal- antisocial acts- inability to rest- intensified pacing- erratic movements- change in social activity- change in speech patterns- loss or increase of appetite- hyperalert to environment- increased alcohol consumption- change in usual communications

Resources:

OHS Contacts

<http://intranet.ec.gc.ca/sst-ohs/default.asp?lang=En&n=408275ED-1>

Employee Assistance Program (EAP) (available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week): 1-800-268-7708 or 1-800-567-5803 for hearing-impaired

Link to EAP website:

<http://intranet.ec.gc.ca/hr-rh/default.asp?lang=En&n=59DD43E7-1>