

# Minneapolis Fire Department

## Standard Operating Procedures

### 2010 Patient Care Guidelines

Revised 10/12/2010

#### 9-105.03 – CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS DEBRIEFING (CISD)

In responding to an incident, you may be exposed to sights, sounds, smells, emotions, thoughts or demands that exceed normal working conditions or life experiences. It is common for firefighters to experience emotional "aftershocks" at the end of a tragic event. These are normal responses to abnormal events. While peer support can be helpful following a disturbing incident, a Critical Incident Stress Defusing or Debriefing (CISD) may be warranted, especially if the incident involved a child, or there was prolonged exposure to horrific sights or human suffering.

In these instances, a defusing or debriefing should be considered by all MFD supervisory personnel. All defusings and debriefings are confidential.

Ideally, a defusing should be conducted within 1-8 hours after the incident. Defusings usually last between 20-45 minutes. Debriefings are a group intervention technique applied between 24 – 72 hours after an incident and may involve more than one public safety discipline.

Participation in either a defusing or a debriefing is voluntary. The Minneapolis Fire Department has its own mental health professional skilled in psychological trauma and crisis intervention to assist supervisory staff in setting up or conducting these sessions. Mark Olson may be contacted by calling 612-919-7794. Any employee communication is considered private and confidential.

## Company Guidelines for Defusings and Debriefings:

1. The Chief of the Department has stated that personnel involved in responding to critical incidents will not be mandated to attend defusings or debriefings. However, Chiefs and Captains are encouraged to seek guidance and request them as necessary after assessing the emotional status of their crew members following a critical incident.
2. Companies will be allowed to go out of service to attend a defusing or debriefing.
3. Chiefs are encouraged to prompt their Captains to consider asking for a defusing or debriefing following any critical incident call they respond to, however they should never be ordered to get a debriefing.
4. The Captain will have the final decision as to whether or not his or her crew will attend.
5. Chiefs or Captains are encouraged to call the employee assistance office at 612-370-3845 or 612-919-7794 for additional consultation or guidance. You may also download the complete CISD guidelines from the M:/drive by clicking on [Fire], then Fire Shared Documents, then MFD Employee Assistance.

To request a defusing, debriefing or Metro CISM Team peer support:

1. Call Mark Olson, MFD Employee Assistance at 612-919-7794.
2. If MFD Employee Assistance is unavailable, call the Metro CISM Coordinator through the duty Deputy at 612-347-5710 to request a defusing or debriefing.

For information or to set up an appointment for individual or family counseling:

1. Contact the MFD Employee Assistance Office at 612-919-7794.
2. Contact Medica Optum Health EAP at 1-800-626-7944.
3. Contact Fire Department Chaplain at 763-520-5627.

## Traumatic or Life-threatening injuries to MFD Personnel.

Whenever a crew member(s) witnesses a traumatic, life threatening event or injury to another crew member(s) while responding to a call or while operating at an incident, that/those crew member(s) who witnessed the event will be evaluated by a licensed mental health practitioner

(MHP) or a medical person, usually the MFD Employee Assistance person or the EMS Chief, before returning to work for the remainder of the shift. If it is concluded by the mental health practitioner or EMS Chief that the crew member is not emotionally able to return to work, he or she will be taken off duty for the remainder of the shift and evaluated further to make sure they have appropriate personal resources and support before being released on their own.

Personnel will be evaluated following a critical incident if they meet the following criteria:

- The person exposed to the traumatic event must have experienced, witnessed or been confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of themselves or other crew members.
- The person's response during the traumatic event involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror.

If the MHP or EMS Chief doing the evaluation is not on scene, the person(s) who witnessed the event will be secured by IC or other fire department officer on scene until the MHP or EMS Chief arrives.

If the incident is a large scale response and/or longstanding operation, and manpower and additional resources are a concern, the IC will have the authority to suspend any evaluations to personnel until all resources and personnel are in place and the incident is under control. If this is the case, on scene support can be provided by trained CISM personnel such as the Metro CISM Team.