
Helping the Helpers!

Emergency Service Personnel are becoming more aware of the stressors unique to their occupations. These stressors, to which the providers are routinely exposed, often show themselves in physical, cognitive, emotional and behavioral symptoms.

The Seven Mountains / Susquehanna Valley CISM team is a cooperative effort of the LTS - Lycoming, Tioga, Sullivan & Seven Mountains EMS Councils. Critical Incident Stress Management interventions provided by the team assist individuals after stressful calls to lessen the impact, helping responders return to their regular lives. Services are provided to any emergency response agency requesting assistance at no charge. The highest priorities for the team are to maintain confidentiality, to respect the feelings of those involved, and to assist peers after traumatic events.

CISM interventions are NOT criticisms of emergency response or critiques of operations. CISM is a peer led process that offers various forums where personnel directly involved in an incident can discuss the normal reactions and feelings that they may be experiencing as a result of the incident.

The CISM Team aims to normalize and lessen the stressful responses to critical events experienced by emergency service personnel, returning them to the valuable services that their communities depend upon them to provide.

How to ask for help?

The Seven Mountains / Susquehanna Valley CISM Team is available 24 hours a day by calling:

Lycoming County Office of Public Safety

570-433-3166

OR

Mifflin County Office of Public Safety

717-248-9607

Either County's 9-11 Center will alert the team of the request. One of the team members will work with the requesting agency to coordinate the best time for a CISM intervention. Peers from the CISM team will meet with the responders providing one of the CISM techniques. After the intervention, someone from the team will follow-up with the requesting agency to determine whether additional services are needed.

Coordination of the team is through the LTS & Seven Mountains EMS Council's using funding obtained through a DOH grant.

CISM

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What is a Critical Incident?



Jeffery Mitchell, Ph.D., defines a critical incident as, “any situation faced by Emergency Service Personnel that causes an unusually strong emotional reaction which has the potential to interfere with their ability to function either at the scene or later...All that is necessary is that the incident, regardless of the type generates strong feelings in the emergency worker.”



Who should participate?

Any person directly involved in the operation of a traumatic event or any person for whom the event has elicited an usually strong reaction.

Why do you need the team?

Factors and events may cause a provider to suffer the impact of stress and may have little to no effect on another. However, research has demonstrated that very few personnel are left unaffected by stressors inherent to emergency services and public safety.

What type of CISM intervention should take place?

Critical Incident Stress Management works best when provided soon after a traumatic event and in conjunction with other CISM techniques.

On scene support occurs while the event is still in progress providing individual interventions.

Crisis management briefing is targeted at large groups and provides an update of the event followed by stress management education.

Defusing are typically conducted within the first 12 hours of a critical incident.

Debriefing work best when conducted within 24-72 hours after an event.

What can the CISM Team do for you?

- Reduce** the fallacy of “uniqueness.”
- Provide** peer support to fellow emergency service providers.
- Provide** a mechanism for ventilation of feelings before harm occurs.
- Forewarn** those who have not yet been impacted by a traumatic event and remind about coping strategies to promote normalcy.
- Provide** stress education.
- Promote or restore group cooperation.**



Signs and Symptoms of Excessive Stress:

Physical:

- Excessive sweating
- Dizzy spells
- Increased heart rate or blood pressure
- Nausea
- Headaches

Cognitive:

- Confused thinking
- Difficulty with decision making
- Disorientation
- Nightmare/Intrusive thoughts

Emotional:

- Shock
- Anger
- Grief
- Depression
- Feeling hopeless / helplessness / overwhelmed

Behavioral:

- Problems sleeping
- Changes in normal routine
- Changes in eating
- Withdrawal from others
- Abuse of substances