

What is a CISM Team?

Your local CISM Team consists of mental health leaders and volunteers from the area police, fire, rescue and emergency services departments.

These volunteers have received extensive training on how to conduct these interventions. Team interventions are confidential and are provided at no cost to emergency workers.

The Tidewater EMS Council, Inc. provides a platform for these volunteers to help their fellow police, fire, EMS, communications and hospital workers, as well as their families, deal with the traumatic and cumulative effects of stress from the unique jobs they perform.



The Tidewater EMS Council is a non-profit organization whose mission is the effective and efficient planning and coordination of emergency medical services in the southeastern and Eastern Shore areas of Virginia. The council undertakes management of the regional CISM team as a service to volunteer and career emergency workers of all types. CISM is an important process that helps emergency workers avoid “burn-out” and other serious consequences of on-the-job stress.



Recognizing Stress

Cognitive

- Poor Concentration
- Memory Problems
- Poor Attention Span
- Difficulties with Calculations
- Difficulties Making Decisions
- Slowed Problem Solving

Emotional

- Loss of Emotional Control
- Depression
- Guilt
- Grief
- Anxiety/Fear
- Feeling Lost/Overwhelmed

Physical

- Muscle Tremors
- Chest Pains
- Gastro-Intestinal Distress
- Difficulty Breathing
- Headaches
- Elevated Blood Pressure

Behavioral

- Excessive Silence
- Sleep Disturbed
- Unusual Behaviors
- Changes in Eating Habits
- Withdrawn from Contact

Critical Incident Stress

Information for

Significant Others



Tidewater Emergency Medical Services
Council, Inc.

CISM Team

General Information and Workweek Team
requests (757) 963-0632

Night/Weekend Team Requests (757) 622-1309

General Information E-Mail:
tidewater@vaems.org

On the Web at:
<http://tidewater.vaems.org/cism.html>



Critical Incident Stress

Your loved one has been involved in an emotion-charged event, often known as a critical incident. He or she may be experiencing a normal stress response to such an event (critical incident stress).

Critical incident stress affects up to 87% of all emergency services personnel. No one in this line of work is immune to critical incident stress, regardless of past experiences or years of service. Your loved one may experience critical incident stress at anytime during his or her career.

Important things to remember about critical incident stress

The signs of critical incident stress are physical, cognitive, emotional and behavioral. Your loved one has received a handout outlining these signs. A list is also printed on the reverse side of this brochure.

Critical incident stress responses can occur right at the scene, within hours, within days, or even much later.

Your loved one *may* experience a variety of signs/symptoms of a stress response, or they may not feel any of the symptoms at this time.

Suffering from the effects of critical incident stress is quite normal. Your loved on may not be the only one suffering; others share the event and are probably sharing the reaction to it.

You Can Help

The symptoms will normally subside and disappear in time if you and your loved one do not dwell on them.

Critical Incident Stress Management—CISM is a comprehensive system developed to help normal people deal with abnormal events.

All phases of our lives overlap and influence each other: personal, professional, family, etc. The impact of critical incident stress can be intensified, influenced or mitigated by our own personal, family and current development issues.

Encourage, but do not pressure your loved one to talk about the incident and their reaction to it. Talk is the best medicine. Your primary “job” is to listen and reassure. Remember that if an event is upsetting to you and your loved one, your children may be affected too. They may need to talk.

You may not understand what your loved one is going through at this time, but offer your love and support. Don't be afraid to ask what you can do to help.

Accept the fact that life will go on. Maintain and return to a normal routine as soon as possible.

If the signs of stress your loved one is experiencing do not subside within a few weeks or if they intensify, consider seeking further assistance. The CISM Team can help you and your loved one find a professional who understands critical incident stress and how it can affect you and the family.

You can also contact your Employee Assistance Program coordinator for help.



For more information you can call us through the TEMS Council at:
(757) 963-0632

After hours through the Crisis Center at:
(757) 622-1309