



Santa Cruz Consolidated Emergency Communications Center


495 Upper Park Road
Santa Cruz, California 95065
(831) 471-1000 Fax (831) 471-1010

9-1-1 FIRE
POLICE
MEDICAL



Scotty A. Douglass
General Manager

COMMUNICATIONS MISCELLANEOUS POLICY/PROCEDURE

Policy No.	7620.80	Date Issued:	June 3, 2009
Section:	7600 – Incident and Tactical Dispatch Procedures	Date Revised:	
Accreditation Standards:	CALEA 2.2.6, 3.4.7		
SUBJECT:	PROCEDURE FOR CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS DEBRIEFINGS		
APPROVED:	 Scotty A. Douglass, General Manager		

1.0 Purpose

To define the general process to be used when determining whether to schedule a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing and when determining the most appropriate personnel to attend a debriefing. These guidelines will also be utilized to educate employees of the different types of debriefings.

2.0 Definitions

2.1 Critical Incident – An event that may cause stress and trauma that are significant enough to reduce the coping skills of an individual or a group of individuals. Critical incidents are typically sudden, emotionally powerful events that fall outside the range of ordinary human experiences.

Examples of critical incidents could include (but not limited to):

- a Mass Casualty Incident (MCI)
- any unusual or traumatic event, such as an officer-involved shooting
- any incident involving death or *serious* injury to a child
- any incident involving death, injury or suicide of a co-worker or other emergency services employee

2.2 Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) - A CISD is a closed, confidential discussion with a person or persons involved in a critical incident relating to the feelings and perceptions of those directly involved in a stressful event. A CISD ideally will take place within 48 to 72 hours of the event and is intended to

provide support, education and an outlet for views and feelings associated with the event in a controlled, structured and safe environment. A debriefing is designed to reduce stress and enhance recovery from the critical incident. A CISD is not an operational critique of the incident. Performance issues should not be discussed during the debriefing.

- 2.3 Tactical Debriefing - A tactical debriefing is a closed discussion that reviews a specific incident in detail, in chronological order, for the purpose of discussing what was done well, what could have been done better, and how to improve future responses to similar events. Attendance is generally limited to one or two employees from each participating agency in order to facilitate the focus of the discussion. Ideally the attendees are those who participated most directly in the event – i.e. the main call taker, the main radio dispatcher(s), and a division representative(s) (i.e.- Patrol, Investigations, Fire, Ambulance) from each participating agency.
- 2.4 Command Debriefing - A command debriefing is a closed, confidential discussion involving the Command Staff of any and all agencies participating in the event.

3.0 Scheduling a CISD

There are several different ways that a CISD can be accomplished, depending on the nature of the event, the circumstances surrounding the event and the needs of the individual employees, as follows:

- Hosted by a User Agency – in reaction to a critical public safety event in which Netcom employees participated, i.e. an officer involved shooting or MCI.
- Hosted by Netcom – in reaction to an in-house event of some kind, i.e. the illness or death of a co-worker or close family member. The Peer Support Team may be involved in recommending a Netcom-hosted CISD.
- Supervisor Suggestion – individual employees may be advised by their Operations Supervisor of available resources such as the Peer Support Team or counseling services available within the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

4.0 Invitations for Attendance

When a User Agency employee calls Netcom to invite our participation in a debriefing, the initial call should be forwarded to a Lead Dispatcher, who should obtain the following info:

- Type of debrief (CISD, Tactical or Command)
- Target audience
- Date, time and location of debrief
- Agency contact person and phone number

The Lead Dispatcher should notify their Operations Supervisor as soon as possible, being guided by the time of day and the length of time remaining until the debrief, either by

calling/paging them immediately, or by leaving detailed email and voicemail messages including all the pertinent info about the debrief and the contact person.

5.0 Authority to Determine Attendance

The Operations Supervisors will ultimately decide who attends any debriefing. Their decision will be an informed one, and may be guided by several factors:

- Personal observations
- Referrals from employees trained in symptom recognition
- Requests from individual employees that fall within the appropriate criteria

If a request for attendance to a CISD is denied due to staffing considerations, lack of appropriate criteria, or any other reason, the Operations Supervisor should still refer that employee to the Peer Support Team, Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or any other appropriate counseling resource if they feel it necessary and appropriate.

6.0 Staffing Coverage for Attendance to a Debrief

When it is necessary to locate immediate need or emergency coverage to fill vacancies created by attendance at a debriefing, Operations Supervisors may use voluntary and/or mandatory OT assignments. In cases where it has been deemed appropriate for a significant number of dispatchers from the same shift attend a CISD, the Operations Supervisor may utilize the Emergency Response Team (ERT) for coverage. If the Emergency Response Team (ERT) is activated for coverage, the Operations Supervisor will notify the General Manager as soon as possible.