

# SPRINGFIELD FIRE DEPARTMENT

Series 300

<b>Title:</b>	<b>Critical Incident Stress Debriefing</b>	<b>303</b>
<b>Category:</b>	<b>Health &amp; Safety</b>	<b>7/2017</b>

## CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS DEBRIEFING

The Springfield Fire Department will implement a Critical Incident Debriefing session whenever needed. Such incidents may include but are not limited to the following:

1. Unexpected death or a serious injury of a fire department member occurs on or off duty.
2. Death or serious injury of a civilian resulting when the fire department is involved.
3. Death or serious injury of a child resulting from:
  - Neglect.
  - Violence.
  - Conditions so extreme as to have a lasting effect on members.
4. A mass casualty incident.
5. An incident that is charged with profound emotion, e.g., firefighter placed in danger due to firearms, hostage situation, or threats of physical harm.
6. An incident where firefighters have been exposed to toxic or unknown chemicals which are likely to have lasting physical or mental side effects.
7. Any situation where an individual feels he or she must receive assistance.

## OBJECTIVES

- A. To identify events, situations, and incidents which may have a negative effect on the attitudes and personal well-being of fire department personnel.
- B. To identify conditions which will dictate the implementation of the department's Critical Incident Debriefing procedures.
- C. Definitions:  
**Critical Incident** - A critical incident is any significant emotional event that has the power, because of its own nature or because of the circumstances in which it occurs, to cause unusual psychological distress in healthy, normal people.

**Critical Incident Stress** - Originates with a specific powerful event, and can be identified by a variety of signs and symptoms: intrusive images such as nightmares and

“flashbacks,” a strong fear that the event might reoccur, withdrawal from normal activities, depression, anxiety, and various emotional and physical symptoms.

**Critical Incident Debriefing Team** - A group of trained coordinators which may include a mental health professional, a member of the clergy, and two peer counselors (firefighters).

**Critical Incident Debriefing** - A group meeting of emergency personnel that aims to defuse the potential for post-traumatic stress disorder and other stress symptoms. The structured discussion emphasizes that emergency workers are experiencing normal responses to abnormal events. The debriefing is based on two processes: emotional ventilation and stress education.

## **PROCEDURE**

The fire chief shall gather all pertinent information surrounding an incident when there is a belief that the need for a debriefing exists.

- A. Place all affected members out of service and request the Critical Incident Debriefing Team.
- B. Arrange a debriefing for all affected members pending a comprehensive review of lab reports, evidence, and other facts surrounding the incident.
- C. Personnel involved in this incident or involved as peer debriefers will be the only fire department personnel at the debriefing.
- D. The fire chief shall notify the debriefing team of the situation and what actions he has initiated.
- E. Critical Incident Debriefing shall be conducted in a location remote from the incident scene and in an area that will comfortably accommodate all personnel.
- F. All debriefing sessions shall be **confidential**.
- G. Any discussions, opinions, or observations associated with a Critical Incident Debriefing shall not cause or affect transfers, hamper promotional opportunities, or result in disciplinary actions.

Fire department personnel shall be alert to recognize and promptly report any incident or changes in behavior which may adversely affect Springfield Fire Department personnel.

On-duty firefighters shall be responsible for immediately reporting any event, situation, or behavior which may require a Critical Incident Debriefing. Reports shall be to the incident commander.