



How To Respond to Critical Incidents

The first few minutes after a trauma are critical for determining injuries and taking appropriate action. It's also a critical time for managers and supervisors to observe employee reactions and reach out to any affected staff. Keep in mind that there are a wide range of reactions that people may experience.

The first and most profound reaction is often the effect of being physically shocked. When the physical shock begins to wear off, people often experience secondary reactions, which can produce a variety of behavioural changes in employees.

Effects from a traumatic incident can include:

Physical shock

Chest pains, dizzy spells, headaches, heart palpitations, lack of energy, neck or back pain, restlessness, insomnia/nightmares.

Emotional reactions

Mood swings, difficulty concentrating, paranoia, hyperalertness, depression.

Behavioural reactions

Daydreaming, decreased work quality, forgetfulness, reluctance to go back to work, repetition of tasks already done.

If you experience a traumatic event at work, follow these tips:

- **Remain calm.** Someone needs to take charge and that will require a certain amount of stable behaviour during what sometimes can be a chaotic time.
- **Call 911.** If appropriate, and contact security. Follow your company's emergency protocol.
- **Notify Human Resources** of the event and review possible support services available, including your EAP.
- **Assess the need for onsite group counselling.** Onsite debriefing services are available through your EAP.
- **Be available to listen** to what your staff needs to talk about. This is important to begin the recovery process.
- **Try not to minimize the trauma** in an attempt to make staff feel better. The best thing you can do is offer support.
- **Recognize that you are not immune to the trauma.** You may require your own support in time.
- **Offer your staff foods** that will rehydrate and replace vitamins and minerals. Try fruits, fruit juices, vegetables and water.