

# WHO WE ARE



The East Contra Costa Fire Protection District Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) team is comprised of your brother and sister firefighters, dispatchers, prevention personnel and chaplains. This team was formed to provide education for the purpose of building resilience to stress as well as life and incident related support for members of the district and their families.

CISM team members are trained and available to respond **24** hours a day, **7** days a week.

CISM team members are available to provide after incident defusings and debriefings, one on one peer support, and assistance engaging available resources.

If you, a coworker, or a family member need assistance, contact the on Duty Battalion Chief or a CISM team member directly.



# CISM TEAM CONTACT

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**24** Hours  
a Day      **7** Days a  
Week

**CONFIDENTIAL**

# CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT TEAM



# CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS

A critical incident is **ANY** event or incident that causes an emergency services worker to have an unusually strong emotional response as a result. This may be a high intensity traumatic incident or a “routine call” that triggers a strong emotional reaction. These reactions have the potential to interfere with an individual’s ability to function normally at the scene or later. Although the incident may be over, you may be having or may later have some strong emotional and physical symptoms. These are **NORMAL** reactions following an **ABNORMAL** event.



## PHYSICAL REACTIONS

Fatigue, nightmares, hyperactivity, insomnia, heightened startle reactions, a change in appetite, headaches, under-activity, nausea, vomiting, grinding teeth, weakness, tremors, increased blood pressure, and chest pains. CHEST PAINS require medical evaluation immediately.

## COGNITIVE REACTIONS

Difficulty in concentration, flash backs, difficulty making decisions, isolation, difficulty in problem solving, recurrent thoughts about the incident, blaming self or others, loss of concentration.

## EMOTIONAL REACTIONS

Fear, guilt, emotional numbing, anger, anxiety, depression, helplessness, violent fantasies, irritability.

## BEHAVIORAL REACTIONS:

Sudden or radical changes in: behavior, speech, or activities. Loss of emotional control, inappropriate emotional responses, obsessive compulsions or actions.

Sometimes the stress reactions do not appear immediately after the event, but instead you may not experience any symptoms until hours, days or weeks later. These stress reactions may also not be caused by a single event but instead a number of events from which the stress has accumulated over weeks, months, or years.

These signs and symptoms of stress may last a variable length of time which is also normal. With a strong support network of co-workers, family, and friends these reactions will usually pass within a couple of weeks. Additionally, your trained peer support members are available to you to provide support navigating this difficult season. However, at times, professional assistance may be the best avenue of help. This does not imply personal weakness, it simply means that the incident or incidents were very overwhelming.

## THINGS TO DO

- **WITHIN THE FIRST 24 TO 48 HOURS** engage in strenuous exercise alternated with relaxation which will alleviate and reduce most of the physical reactions.
- Structure your time—Keep busy.
- Talk to co-workers, friends and family. Do not isolate yourself.
- Reach out to others.
- Keep your life as “normal” as possible.
- Give yourself permission to feel bad; these are normal reactions to an abnormal event.
- Eat a good, nourishing meal, supplementing with a good multivitamin which provides vitamins C, B6, B12, Calcium and Magnesium as these vitamins help your body “normalize”. Avoid alcohol, caffeine, and sugars as these may increase your experience of the symptoms.
- Ask for help early. We are a community, let others be there for you as you are for them.