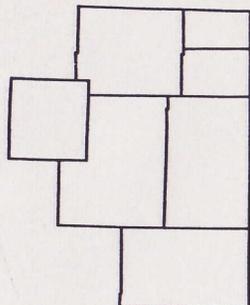


In Conclusion

The Critical Incident Stress Management Process is available to any emergency service requesting the team services. All information discussed during the debriefing is strictly confidential and will not be discussed with those not at the session. Only general information

regarding the team functions and responses will be released.

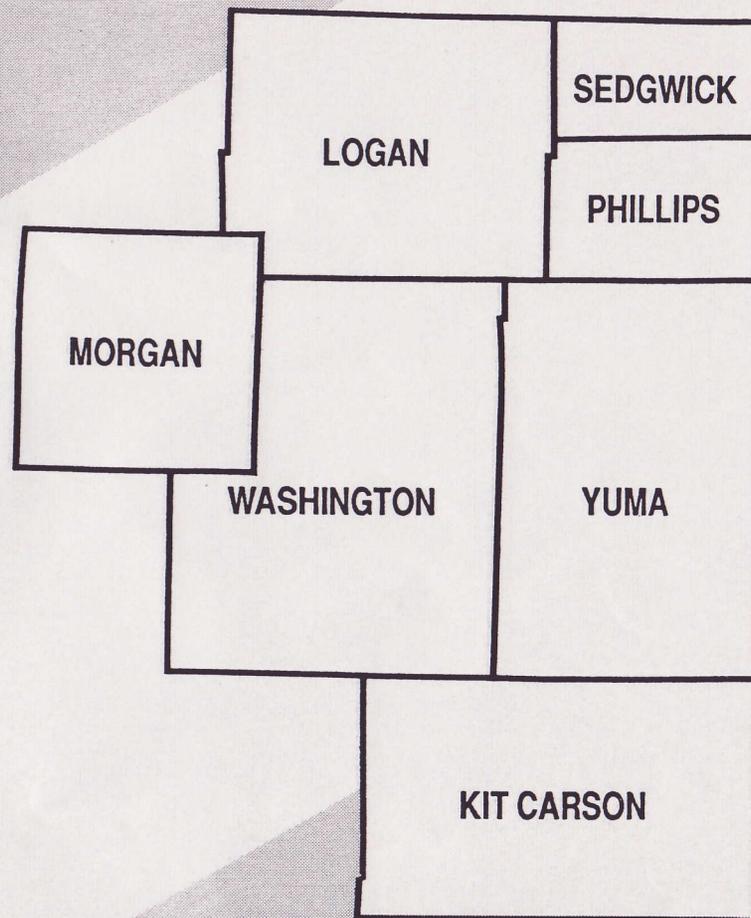
For further information regarding the High Plains CISM team or for additional copies of this brochure, contact a team leader or call W-Y Communications, 970-848-0464.



High Plains CISM
P. O. Box 512
Yuma, CO 80759

High Plains Critical Incident Stress Management Team

Serving the 13th Judicial District



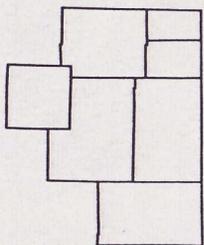
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The Problem

Emergency services personnel have become increasingly aware of the toll that the unique stressors encountered in their occupations may take on the quality of their lives. The very nature of their jobs may expose these individuals routinely or periodically to stressful events which they may or may not be able to work through satisfactorily on their own.

Factors that cause stress to one individual may be nonstressful for another, but research has shown that a very small percentage of emergency service personnel are actually not affected by stress. Approximately one-half of the large percentage of those who demonstrate symptoms related to stress can resolve these alone – the other one-half continue to be affected.

Responses to stress may be immediate and incident specific; they may be delayed for a period of time after an incident; or they may be cumulative, building up over a long period of time and can include many incidents. Multiple factors affect an individual's response to stress and include factors specific to the stressor, such as the individual's personal qualities and past experiences and the resources available to him.



It has been demonstrated that certain events, such as the death of a child, the death of a co-worker, high-rise fires and multiple casualty incidents, are particularly stressful for emergency workers. Any of these events, plus a host of others, may cause or contribute to a critical incident for an emergency worker or for a group of workers.

A critical incident has been defined by Mitchell as, "Any situation faced by emergency service personnel that causes them to experience unusually strong emotional reactions which have the potential to interfere with their ability to function either at the scene or later All that is necessary is that the incident, regardless of the type, generates unusually strong feelings in the emergency workers."^{*}

A Solution

The High Plains Critical Incident Stress Management Team has been established to provide a form of crisis intervention specifically designed to assist emergency workers to reduce the number of psychological casualties among their ranks.

Through the CISM process, emergency personnel are provided a tool to potentially alleviate overwhelming emotional feelings and physical symptoms. The CISM also addresses very real issues that contribute to the loss of valuable employees, thereby salvaging not only careers, but resources, knowledge, expertise and human caring.

The Process

The Critical Incident Stress Management Team consists of a three member response team. Debriefers are volunteers who are familiar with emergency services. They are carefully selected from the following career groups:

- mental health professionals – psychologists, social workers
- EMS personnel
- fire service personnel
- chaplains
- EMS instructors
- hospital/emergency room nurses
- law enforcement and communications personnel

Following application and selection, debriefers receive training in the area of stress and the critical incident stress management process. They are committed not only to the recognition of critical stress in emergency workers, but to providing a means to improve the quality of the lives of its victims.

A formal debriefing session is optimally conducted 24-72 hours following an incident. It should generally not be postponed for longer than one week. On occasion, psychological intervention may be needed on a scene, but a formal debriefing is best held after a 24 hour normalizing period following the incident.

Assessing the Team

The High Plains Critical Incident Stress Management Team may be utilized by any emergency service agency in Colorado. A representative of an agency re-

quiring assistance may contact the team leader by calling: 970-848-0464 24 hours a day.* You will be asked the following information:

- your name and telephone number
- your agency name, address and telephone number
- the nature of the incident
- the perceived urgency of the situation, i.e., requiring immediate intervention or a formal debriefing

The dispatcher will then contact the team leader either immediately or the next morning at your preference. The team leader will call you to obtain further information and to arrange details of the debriefing such as location and the number of personnel expected.

The High Plains CISM Team also does school crisis intervention and is a member of the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF).

Your Agency Responsibilities

Your agency should request attendance at the debriefing session by all personnel involved in the incident. In some circumstances, family members and significant others may be included in the session. Discuss this with the team leader.

Provide a comfortable space, if possible, that is free from interruption and is large enough to accommodate personnel and debriefers.

The services of debriefers are volunteered.

^{*}(Mitchell, Jeffrey T.; When Disaster Strikes The Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Process; *jems*; January, 1983; pp 36-39) Dr. Mitchell is a researcher, instructor and author on stress and disaster psychology.

*Dispatch service is provided by W-Y Combined Communications of Yuma.