

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Dealing with a Critical Incident in the Workplace

You never know when a traumatic event will affect your workplace. Whether it is a natural disaster, death of an employee, or a robbery, it can send shockwaves throughout your organization. As a supervisor, employees will be looking to you for information, instructions, guidance, and support.

What is a Critical Incident?

A critical incident is an extraordinary event that can produce a reaction from employees. Some common examples of critical incidents include:

- Employee passes away on or off site
- Bank robbery
- Reduction in workforce or layoff
- Suicide of an employee on or offsite
- Natural disaster in town of your organization

Why is it Important to Manage a Critical Incident?

- To help employees deal with possible stress reactions
- To reassure that the workplace acknowledges the magnitude of the incident and cares for the well being of their employees
- To help employees and the organization return to productivity

What Reactions Can I Expect to See?

Affected employees will each have different reactions. Some may move on with business as normal, while others may feel more of an emotional response. Some employees will experience Critical Incident Stress, which is natural reaction of a person who has gone through an abnormal event. Common emotional and physical symptoms of critical incident stress include: anxiety, fear, headaches, sleep disturbance, or re-living the event over and over.

What to Do When there is a Critical Incident?

- Make sure you are familiar with your company's current policies, procedures, and communication plan for times of emergency or crisis. Review these plans with your employees regularly.
- Call the EAP for a Critical Incident consultation. An EAP counselor and the HR/Manager will discuss the situation and agree on the appropriate intervention plan based on your company's current needs.
- Refer employees to the EAP. Be attuned to the reactions of your employees. If you notice there are employees who are showing signs of stress, remind them that EAP has confidential assistance for them.

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