

## Signs of Rescuer Stress

Tragedies, deaths, serious injuries, hostage situations, threatening situations - these events are known as "Critical Incidents." People who respond to emergencies encounter highly stressful events almost every day. Sometimes an event is so traumatic or overwhelming that emergency responders may experience significant stress reactions.

The Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) process is specifically designed to prevent or mitigate the development of post-traumatic stress among emergency services professionals.

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) represents an integrated "system" of interventions which is designed to prevent and/or mitigate the adverse psychological reactions that so often accompany emergency services, public safety, and disaster response functions. CISM interventions are especially directed towards the mitigation of post-traumatic stress reactions.

### SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS

Physical *	Cognitive	Emotional	Behavioral
chills	confusion	fear	withdrawal
thirst	nightmares	guilt	antisocial acts
fatigue	uncertainty	grief	inability to rest
nausea	hyper vigilance	panic	intensified pacing
fainting	suspiciousness	denial	erratic movements
twitches	intrusive images	anxiety	change in social activity
vomiting	blaming someone	agitation	change in speech patterns
dizziness	poor problem solving	irritability	loss of or increase in appetite
weakness	poor abstract thinking	depression	hyper alert to environment
chest pain	poor attention/ decisions	intense anger	increased alcohol consumption
headaches	poor concentration/memory disorientation of time, place or person	apprehension	change in usual communications
elevated BP	difficulty identifying objects or people heightened or lowered alertness	emotional shock	etc...
rapid heart rate	increased or decreased awareness of surroundings	emotional outbursts	
muscle tremors	etc...	feeling overwhelmed	
grinding of teeth		loss of emotional control	
shock symptoms		inappropriate emotional response	
visual		etc...	

difficulties			
profuse sweating			
difficulty breathing			
etc...			

**\* Any of these symptoms may indicate the need for assistance, don't hesitate to make the call!**

For more information or help, please email Chaplain Schwartz or the Pennsylvania Critical Incident Stress Management (Cism) Team. Your email will be kept completely confidential.

**Chaplain Schwartz: [firefightingchaplain@cfaith.com](mailto:firefightingchaplain@cfaith.com)**

**Chester County Critical Incident Stress Management Team: [cism@chesco.org](mailto:cism@chesco.org)**