LAW ENFORCEMENT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

POLICE OCCUPATIONAL STRESS MANAGEMENT:

A GUIDE FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT MANAGERS

A RESEARCH PROJECT

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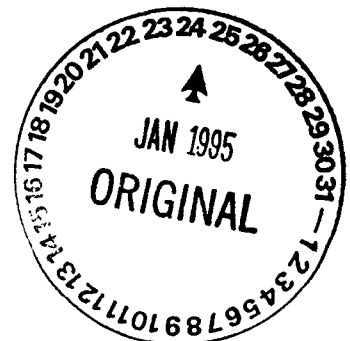THE LAW ENFORCEMENT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

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257

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

A commercial jetliner carrying 290 persons crashes upon take off, killing everyone on board. A detective works a case involving the sexual assault and murder of a 4-year-old child. The search and rescue team searches for three days for two reportedly lost children, only to discover that the children were murdered by their mother's boyfriend. A veteran police officer uses deadly force against a man who pointed a gun at him. The investigation that followed revealed that the gun was unloaded and the man had left a suicide note indicating his plan to provoke the police into killing him.

Events such as these can leave police officers emotionally drained and angry with a world that allows such events to take place. The stress that results from such incidents is called Critical Incident Stress. Critical incident stress can be costly to both the officer and the department.

> It is important to note that among the symptoms of critical incident stress are temporary confusion, the inability to make decisions and memory loss - problems that may drastically affect an officer's ability to perform, perhaps placing him in extreme danger. (Pierson 1989)

Less dramatic, but nevertheless harmful, is the stress that builds up over time. Viewing crime on the street level, dealing with a frustrated public, and the constant bashing of police officers in the press that is common in many cities can add stress to an officer's life. Police officers generally begin their careers with high hopes for *making a difference* and *helping people*. When they finally begin to see people, the courts, and life in general from a police officer's perspective; their values and belief systems can be challenged. Shift work and fast food meals add to the harmful effects of stress. New awareness and responsibilities come quickly for the new officer.

The new officer soon learns a street sophistication that teaches officers about the dark side of good people and the good side of bad people.

Authors Conroy and Hess wrote about the price police officers pay for doing their jobs, the "loss of innocence; cynicism and negativism; loneliness and sadness; isolation; and a constricted and inappropriate affect." (Conroy 1992) This is not to suggest that all police officers are emotional basket cases. Many experts assert that police officers as a whole are very strong emotionally and mentally. (Helwig 1993)

However, it is certain that many police officers and their families are profoundly affected by the stress that is part of the law enforcement career. Various studies have learned that between 87 and 90 percent of all public safety workers will suffer from the effects of critical incident stress. "A 1991 study of 728 police officers and 479 spouses revealed that 77 percent of the spouses reported higher than average stress that stemmed from their husbands jobs." (Helwig 1993)

Significance of Study

This paper will provide information about the management of general stress and critical incident stress. The information that is provided will serve as a guide for law enforcement managers to learn the causes of stress and will provide suggestions for the mitigation of the harmful effects of stress which is called distress.

The high costs of stress to the individual, the department, and society, demands the attention of law enforcement managers. "In 1981, the Los Angeles Police Department for the first time received more applications for stress related disability pensions than it did for injury related early retirements." (Daviss 1982)

4

The costs of stress in the workplace can be found in the following six major areas:

- ► Decreased productivity

- ► Absenteeism

- ► Officer dissatisfaction

- ► Conflict with co-workers

- ► Absenteeism

- ► Increased health insurance costs

- ► Increased turnover

  (Adapted from Shafer 1992)

Law enforcement managers do not have to stand on the sideline and hope for the best for their officers. There are proven methods to bring the stress level down for individual officers and the department as a whole. An effective stress management/critical incident stress management program can reduce officer burnout, turnover, health care costs, and employee conflict. An increase can be seen in officer and citizen satisfaction, productivity, and the quality of service provided to the community.

Operational Definitions

See Appendix A.

THE POLICE PERSONALITY

Police work is certainly not for everybody. It seems that police work brings out the very best in most people, but it unfortunately brings out the very worst in a few. Whichever way it goes, police work does tend to change certain attitudes and values in a person.

Rather or not police work is a positive or negative force in an individual's life in part depends upon the attitudes and beliefs formed by the officer early in their career. Law enforcement managers should strive for a department culture that encourages good mental and physical health.

Warning signals of chronic stress or job burnout often appear in the form of changes in personality traits. An officer's personality plays a large role in their ability to cope with the stressors found in law enforcement. "Personality differences also account for a person's ability to employ coping mechanisms in the context of stressful situations." (Band and Manuele 1987) There are certain personality traits that are common in emergency services employees. The following are common personality traits: (Mitchell and Everly 1994)

- Control needs

- Obsessive traits

- Compulsive traits

- Action oriented

- High need for stimulation

- Need for immediate gratification

- Difficulty saying no

- Rescue personality

- Family oriented

- Highly dedicated

- Internally motivated

- High tolerance for stress

None of these traits are bad or negative within themselves. In fact, many of these traits help a person to be successful in the law enforcement profession. However, those same traits may also contribute to high levels of distress. The key is to maintain a balance in the area of personality traits.

Often, however, strengths become weaknesses when they are out of balance. One of the traits listed above is control needs. It is certainly easy to understand the need for police officers to be in control. The ability to control situations can be very important to survival and the ability to restore order during an emergency. But what about maintaining control at home? Former Virginia State Trooper Richard Southworth describes an event in which he inappropriately attempted to restore "order" at his home:

> Take, for example, the day my wife was trying to get our son to wash the dishes. They were locked in a battle of wills. After I walked into the kitchen, I evaluated the situation and immediately took control. I admonished my wife for being bossy, talked to my son about responsibility, and told everyone else to leave the room so that the job could get done. In less than five minutes, I issued a warning, dispersed the participants in the dispute, and got the job done. I acted like a good trooper. (Southworth 1990)

Southworth's family may laugh about this incident now, but it is unlikely anyone was amused at the time. It is this type of behavior that causes distress for the officer and his family. It is important to keep a healthy separation in the roles of police officer, spouse, and parent.

One personality trait that can help prevent distress is self-esteem. "People with high levels of self-esteem seem to be immune to some of the stresses that affect people with low self-esteem." (Band and Manuele 1987) Fortunately, officers can learn self-esteem and improve their resistance to distress.

GENERAL STRESS

It is important to note that a distinction has been made between general stress and critical incident stress. Although many similarities exist when comparing general stress and critical incident stress, there are also very real differences. Because of these important differences, this paper will examine these two distinct causes of distress separately. However, when stress management programs are discussed, the reader will discover that there are some connections between general stress and critical incident stress.

Stress has been defined as, the "arousal of mind and body in response to demands made upon them." (Schafer 1992) Not all stress is bad. When stress has a good effect, it is called positive stress or eustress. "Positive stress is helpful arousal that promotes health, energy, satisfaction, and peak performance." (Schafer 1992) When stress becomes a negative force, it is called distress.

"Distress is too much or too little arousal resulting in harm to mind or body." (Schafer 1992) Distress is very harmful to the body. "...the U.S. Surgeon General has estimated that 80 percent of the people who die of nontraumatic causes actually die of stress diseases." (Mitchell & Bray 1990) The cost of distress is high for law enforcement managers or individual officers to ignore. It has been estimated that "job stress costs the American economy in excess of $150 billion annually." (Mitchell and Everly 1994)

Distressed officers tend to perform poorly and may resign or be fired. The loss of a highly trained officer is expensive and a waste of scarce resources. For the individual; distress may contribute to illness, suicide, alcohol abuse, and family problems. It is important for law enforcement managers to learn to recognize distress in themselves and their officers.

8

It is also important that departments train officers to be aware of, and manage their stress levels.

The symptoms of distress may include:

- Depression

- Upset stomach

- Decreased concentration

- Uneasiness and/or edginess

- Increased use of leave time

- Loss of interest in work

These and many other symptoms of distress can signal a need for assistance.

Training directors should consider the inclusion of stress management training in annual or periodic training programs. Proper diet, exercise, and relaxation techniques can help prevent stress from becoming distress. While the stressors that contribute to distress and burnout of law enforcement officers occurs over a period of time, critical incident stress is centered on a single, tragic event.

CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS

Critical incident stress is also known as traumatic stress, or psychological trauma. Critical incident stress is the result of a powerful event that results in psychological trauma. As previously stated, various studies have learned that between 86 and 90 percent of all public safety workers will suffer from critical incident stress during their career.

Most of those officers will get better within a few weeks of the incident. It is estimated that "4 to 10 percent will develop a severely debilitating post traumatic stress disorder." (Kirschman 1992)

"Law enforcement officers are often at higher risk of experiencing psychological traumas than persons in many other occupations. Accidents, assaults, manmade and natural disasters, and shootings are examples of situations in which officers are involved more frequently than are average citizens." (Ayres 1990)

Critical incident stress has been described as "the stress response produced when a person is exposed to a disturbing traumatic event." (Mitchell and Everly 1994) Signs of unresolved critical incident stress include: (Mitchell and Everly1994)

- intensifying stress symptoms despite time passage or help given

- intrusive images (dreams or flashbacks)

- emotional numbing

- fear of repetition of the event

- hyper startle response

- loss of interest in usually enjoyable tasks

- depression

- intensified anxiety

- emotional outbursts

- withdrawal from others

- memory dysfunction

- other significant signs

Critical incident stress may include behavioral, cognitive, physical, and emotional symptoms. The symptoms of critical incident stress may include:

- Flashbacks

- Traumatic dreams

- Memory disturbance

- Persistent intrusive recollections of the trauma

- Self-medication (eg., alcohol abuse)

- Anger, irritability, hostility that is difficult to control

- Persistent depression, withdrawal

- A "dazed" or "numb" appearance

- Panic attacks

- Phobia formation

(Mitchell 1993)

THE CRITICAL INCIDENT

Law Enforcement officers are routinely exposed to critical incidents. "A critical incident is any event which has a stressful impact sufficient enough to overwhelm the usually effective coping skills of either an individual or a group." (Mitchell 1993) Examples of critical incidents include:

- Line of duty deaths

- The suicide of a co-worker

- Multi-casualty incidents

- The use of deadly force

- Death or injury to a child

- Hostage incidents

- Assaults and other line of duty injuries

11

- Other events that overwhelm coping skills

James D. Sewell of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement recently wrote about the traumatic stress that can result from the investigation of multiple murders. Sewell wrote, "With the response to and investigation of such crimes comes significant and unique traumatic stress to law enforcement personnel." (Sewell 1993)

Phoenix police officers Patricia Grimmett and Tommy Abril confronted a gunman who had killed a secretary and wounded two others in the Phoenix city offices more than two years ago. That confrontation ended when Abril shot and killed the gunman. These two brave officers were awarded the Mayor's Medal of Courage for their courageous action that prevented a further loss of life. The event forever changed their lives.

"They don't feel like heroes. 'It has almost destroyed my life,' Abril, 46 says. Grimmett, 41, calls the experience 'devastating,' adding, 'I'll get through it, but I'm scarred for life.'" (Benson 1994) Abril said about his marriage, 'My marriage has taken a beating. (My wife) was surprised when it happened. She knows what kind of person I am, that I wouldn't hurt anyone. It has changed everything.' (Benson 1994)

Abril's concerns are well founded. "The emotional impact of a shooting incident has been recognized as the most traumatic experience a law enforcement officer can face during his or her career." (Ayres 1990) When an officer is involved in a critical incident, life just does not go on as usual.

The officer, the officer's family, and the department can be profoundly affected by a deadly force incident. It is common for a police officer to leave police work following the use of deadly force.

"Approximately 70 percent of officers involved in shootings leave their police departments within 5 years." (Mashburn 1993)

In the article "After the Gun Goes Off," the author (Bettinger 1990) supplied the following solemn statistics regarding officers involved in shootings:

- Nearly two-thirds will suffer some significant form of post shooting trauma

- 20 percent will be divorced within one year

- Between 9 and 30 percent will experience sexual dysfunction

A 1980 study regarding police shootings found that "80 percent of the involved officers indicated some level of emotional distress or complicating problems developing after the incident." (Nielsen 1991) A 1987 study found that 60 percent of the involved officers reported that the shooting had resulted in "a substantial impact on their subsequent lives." (Nielsen 1991)

Another element of critical incidents is personalization. There is a big difference in working a fatality accident involving a stranger, and in working a fatality accident involving your neighbor or a close friend. When a victim or event is personalized, it tends to defeat coping skills and may result in the development of critical incident stress.

Following a critical incident, help should be provided for officers and their families. When critical incident stress goes unchecked, the result can be distress, divorce, alcohol abuse, suicide, and illness. A department that does not offer assistance to an officer involved in a critical incident is at least ethically negligent and possibly legally negligent. There are many sources of help available, often at no or little cost to the department. (See Appendix B for a list of resources.)

PERSONAL FACTORS THAT HELP PREVENT DISTRESS

There are factors that help an individual overcome the harmful effects of critical incident stress. These factors can be grouped into two general categories: personal and organizational. Personal factors include: lifestyle, spirituality, coping skills, and personal support systems. Organizational factors will be discussed in a following section of this paper.

Lifestyle factors include fitness, nutrition, general stress management, and other lifestyle patterns. In order for a law enforcement officer to remain healthy in a stressful and demanding job, their lifestyle must be purposeful and consistent. Too many officers are caught up in fast food meals, no exercise, and ever increasing body weight. A reasonable amount of fitness should be maintained in order for the body to do its part in the war against distress. A fitness program should include both aerobic exercise and strength conditioning.

Walking, swimming, and running are forms of aerobic exercise. Weight lifting and calisthenics are popular forms of strength conditioning. Exercise periods should last thirty to sixty minutes, at least three times per week. Officers who have medical problems, or have not been physically active for several years, should consult their family doctor before starting an exercise program.

Nutrition is also important in the battle against distress. A balanced diet will aid in fighting stress and in maintaining good health. A low fat diet that includes fresh fruits and vegetables are recommended. The intake of sugar, salt, and alcohol should be limited. It is also important to avoid foods that have a high content of animal fat. Additional information on nutrition can be obtained from the American Heart Association or the family doctor.

Stress management is a continuous process that must be personalized for each individual. One person's distress is another person's exciting challenge. It is important that each individual becomes aware of their personal level of stress tolerance. If an individual lives at or above their range of stress tolerance, the impact of a critical incident can be even more harmful. If an officer has a very high level of stress, they should get into a stress reduction program before a critical incident occurs. It is recommended that every department make stress management information available to all employees.

Other lifestyle factors include the use of relaxation techniques, getting adequate rest, and avoiding the use of tobacco products. Alcoholic beverages should be avoided immediately following a critical incident or if an individual is distressed for other reasons.

The importance of spirituality should not be overlooked. Law enforcement officers should be encouraged to pursue their individual spiritual beliefs. Law enforcement chaplains are often very helpful following a critical incident, and many have received specialized training in dealing with critical incidents.

> People who have a belief in an afterlife, and those who believe that there is a benign and caring force or power or being or God, who is concerned about the needs, activities, and feelings of human beings, tend to be able to cope well with high degrees of stress for longer periods. (Mitchell & Bray 1990)

Personal coping skills are very important in the battle against distress. "Coping under stress involves an active, adaptive process in which an individual employs strategies to manage a specific environment." (Band and Manuele 1987) In studying the prognostic factors that influence the development of posttraumatic stress disorders, Nielson listed coping style as one factor "that most frequently affect or predispose the action." (Nielsen 1991)

15

It has been demonstrated that personal support systems are very important in overcoming the harmful effects of critical incident stress. Healthy personal support systems can be made up of spouses, family members, and friends. A caring spouse or friend can be a tremendous encouragement to an officer who has suffered emotional trauma.

It is also important to recognize that the family of an officer who is suffering from critical incident stress will also suffer from the officer's distress. When departments plan training for critical incident stress management, families should be included as well as the officer. This will help the family in thoroughly supporting the distressed officer, and in the allaying of the harmfulness of the critical incident stress on the family. An informed spouse is a strong ally in the management of critical incident stress.

ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS

A 1974 study highlighted the importance of organizational factors to street-level officers:

> Overall, in considering what is bothersome to policemen, one can see that there are two major sources of psychological stress. First are the individual incidents that affront the officer's self-image and professionalism. Second are those factors which clearly arise out of the nature of police work. Of the two, the first seems to be more bothersome to the policemen. It appears that, as undesirable as they may be, the officer is willing to put up with stressors of the second type if he is receiving support for the problems in the first area. (Kroes 1974)

Organizational factors that should be examined include the management style of all levels of management and organizational culture. Management style is a combination of management philosophy and the manner in which management relates to employees. Management philosophy drives issues such as centralization/decentralization of authority, reward and discipline systems, policy making, and many other management issues.

16

These two factors can play a very large role in creating distress among police officers. "...research demonstrates that law enforcement officers are not as bothered by field situations (problems on the street) as they are by the working conditions, role conflicts and ambiguities, and the administrative milieu within which they function." (Ayres 1990)

The organizational culture should also be examined for factors that cause or contribute to distress. Harvey A. Goldstein, Ph.D. wrote about police organizations, "Police departments traditionally are the least tolerant of individual differences and weaknesses, devalue compassion and are least invested in reducing the stigma of mental illness within its ranks." (Goldstein 1988) The environment described by Goldstein will not only foster distress, it will discourage distressed officers from seeking help.

Management style can be one of the most problematic organizational stress factors of all. Management style factors such as policy making, discipline, rewards, and the distribution of authority, have a great impact upon field officer's level of job stress. The management style factors most often identified by line officers as stressors are the lack of employee autonomy, a lack of management understanding, support for lower level officers, and policy making.

Many autocratic law enforcement managers still proudly manage their departments just like they did twenty-five years ago. The problem with that "traditional" approach is that many things have changed in the last twenty five years. "In the traditional police organization, authoritarian management approaches predominate, with relatively little attention or concern being given to individual problems or human factors." (Reiser 1974)

Police officers report that the lack of management attention to human factors is responsible for much of the stress they experience in their job.

17

"An officer is better able to cope with the stress he faces if he feels that his superiors know and understand his problems and are in his corner. It is clear that to some extent patrol car officers feel let down by the administration. Instead of the administration's taking some pressures off the officers, they often create new ones." (Kroes 1974)

The rookies of the nineties are much different from the rookies of the sixties. The new officers of today are not generally military veterans and they are more likely college educated. Today's rookie officer will ask questions about why things are done a certain way.
They expect to have input into their jobs and their career paths. When the young officers are told that they do not have a right to ask questions or request assignments, the young officers become frustrated and confused. "Educated law enforcement officers want more responsibility and discretionary power in performing their tasks and in many cases are only frustrated by the many layers of authority and the decision making process." (Ayres 1990)

The issue of autonomy is not going to go away. Unfortunately, many law enforcement managers have dug themselves a foxhole, and readied themselves for a siege. These managers fail to understand that a reasonable amount of autonomy is not only healthy for the officers, but also the organization as a whole. "The traditional paramilitary law enforcement organization of today is not conducive to a healthy workplace. The hierarchical structure creates a social gap between the top and bottom, distorts and dilutes information traveling through the many levels, and decreases the sense of professionalism and subsequently the self-esteem of those at the bottom." (Ayres 1990)

The question of rather or not management "properly supports" the rank and file officer becomes especially important following a critical incident.

18

A 1974 study of 100 officers in the Cincinnati Police Department found a great deal of concern about support from management following a shooting incident. "The officers were concerned over lack of administration support, and were afraid of the consequences of their having used force, ie., brutality complaints." (Kroes 1974)

Many officers believe that management makes policies just to harass or intimidate them. It is true that there is often very little communication between management and the rank and file regarding the formation of department policies. One police officer commented, "I just wish we could forget about where we smoke, and how we park our cars and get back to police work. What the people with the gold badge in the main office seem to forget is that the man in the street is doing all the work." (Crank and Caldero 1991)

When officers have been involved in critical incidents, they look for reassurance from their supervisors that they have performed competently. Supervisors, for many reasons, are sometimes reluctant or unable to provide that reassurance immediately following an incident. The best approach is to have a plan in place to deal with critical incidents. Departments should also consider programs that train officers to deal with occupational stress and assist with personal problems that may arise.

STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

There are a number of programs that can be very effective in reducing and/or eliminating police occupational stress. Employee assistance programs have become popular with both private and public employers in recent years. In most cases, a contract is made with a professional mental health organization to provide a basic package of services.

Larger police agencies sometimes hire one or more mental health professionals, as department employees, to provide these services.

The typical employee assistance program will include access to one or more mental health professionals for assistance in dealing with both job related and personal distress. Generally, the department will pay for all visits for situations related to the job, and a set number of visits to deal with personal problems such as divorce or a death in the family.

Employee wellness programs have also been popular in recent years. Employee wellness groups encourage exercise and weight control. Many departments allow officers to use a certain amount of duty time per week to engage in physical exercise. It is a good idea to provide training to all participants in safe exercise procedures.

Peer support and or assistance groups are also beneficial. A peer support group is made up of police officers who are willing, and have been trained to help their fellow officers overcome difficulties related to stress. Peer support members may also be called peer counselors. They are not mental health professionals, but are generally trained in areas such as listening skills, stress reduction techniques, and referral sources. Peer support groups can be very useful in helping troubled officers. Peer support groups may also play a major role in critical incident stress. That role will be discussed later.

Stress management training should be provided on a regular basis to all officers. Stress management training should also be offered to family members. This will help build a personal support system for the officers. It is important to recognize that when an officer becomes distressed, the officer, his family, and the department will be harmed.

Although there is some overlap of goals and training, an employee assistance group and the critical incident stress management team should not be one and the same. "With some exceptions it has been found that EAPs are usually *not* the best group to coordinate Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) teams because the duties and procedures of an EAP do not necessarily blend with the duties and procedures of a CISD team" (Mitchell & Bray 1990) Critical incident stress is best managed and addressed by a critical incident stress debriefing team.

CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

Critical incident stress management programs have been organized on the local, regional, state, and multi-state levels. Rather a program is organized for one department, or for a whole state, the elements are essentially the same.

The critical incident stress management effort is centered around a team made up of mental health professionals and peer counselors. Mental health professionals are people who have completed advanced degrees in and are employed as a mental health professional. Mental health professionals may be employed as psychologist, licensed professional counselors, pastoral counselors, etc. Each critical incident stress debriefing team must have a mental health professional who serves as the team's clinical director.

Peer counselors are officers who have been specially trained in critical incident stress management techniques. Training for peer counselors is offered around the United States by many different organizations. The basic course in critical incident debriefing procedures is typically 16 to 24 hours, while the advanced course would be an additional 16 hours. The peer counseling course is typically 16 hours.

Following their initial training, peer counselors function at the direction of the teams clinical director.

There are a number of services that a CISD team can provide. According to Mitchell and Bray (Mitchell & Bray 1990), there are ten basic services that should be offered by a critical incident stress debriefing team. They are:

- ▶ Pre-incident stress training to all personnel

- ▶ On-scene support to obviously distressed personnel

- ▶ Individual consults when only one or two personnel are affected by an incident

- ▶ Defusing services immediately after an incident to assist crews in returning to service

- ▶ Demobilization services after a large-scale incident

- ▶ Formal Critical Incident Stress Debriefings 24 to 72 hours after an event for any emergency personnel involved in a stressful incident

- ▶ Follow-up services to assure that personnel are recovering

- ▶ Specialty debriefings to non-emergency groups on occasions when no other resources are available in a timely fashion within the community

- ▶ Support during routine discussions of an incident by emergency personnel

- ▶ Advice to command staff during large-scale events

As stated above, pre-incident education should be provided to all department employees. Pre-incident education should alert officers to the dangers, symptoms, and causes of critical incident stress. An overview of post-incident procedures should also be provided. Post-incident procedures would include defusing, debriefings, and possible referrals for follow-up care.

Following a critical incident, the critical incident stress debriefing team may respond to the scene of the critical incident if the operation is expected to be protracted. If not, the team would respond to some other designated place. Before the involved officers leave for the day, a defusing should be conducted. "The defusing is a shortened version of the Critical Incident Stress debriefing (CISD). Defusings are designed to either eliminate the need to provide a formal debriefing or to enhance the CISD if it is still necessary to provide one." (Mitchell 1993) A defusing may be conducted by a mental health professional or a peer counselor.

Critical incident stress debriefing is "a group meeting or discussion about a distressing critical incident. Based upon core principles of crisis intervention, the CISD is designed to mitigate the impact of a critical incident and to assist the personnel in recovering as quickly as possible from the stress associated with the event." (Mitchell 1993)

Debriefings are presented by "CISM trained mental health professionals, clergy personnel and peers either from other jurisdictions or who are off duty and not directly affected by the disaster." (Mitchell 1993) It is important that defusings and/or debriefings are made mandatory for all officers involved in a critical incident. By making the defusing and/or debriefing mandatory, there is no burden placed on officers to decide rather or not "they need help." It also eliminates the possibility of peer pressure keeping an officer from attending.

Critical incident stress debriefings are conducted 24 to 72 hours following a critical incident. The emotional response to a critical incident may not surface for 24 or more hours following the incident. There are seven stages in the debriefing process:

- Introduction

- ▸ Fact

- ▸ Thought

- ▸ Reaction

- ▸ Symptom

- ▸ Teaching

- ▸ Reentry

The value of the critical incident stress debriefing process can be seen by examining two very similar air disasters. The following information (Mitchell 1993) came from a study of an aircraft crash in San Diego in 1978 and an aircraft crash in Cerritos in 1986.

Following the San Diego crash, only inconsistent one to one crisis intervention was done. In contrast, following the Cerritos crash, extensive demobilizations and follow-up care was provided. The two areas that show a great difference is loss of personnel, and increase in mental health assistance utilization.

Following the San Diego crash, there was a 31 percent increase in mental health assistance utilization in one year and a loss of 29 public safety workers within one year that had been involved in the response to the crash. Following the Cerritos crash, demobilizations were provided and the result was outstanding. Only one public safety worker was lost within one year and the increase in mental health assistance utilization was very small (1 percent).

The following informative tables were compiled by psychologist Dr. Jeff Mitchell (from NIMH, 1979; 1983; Duffy, 1979; Freeman, 1979; Honig, 1987), and published in the book Critical Incident Stress Debriefing: An Operations Manual For The Prevention Of Traumatic Stress Among Emergency Services And Disaster Worker. (Mitchell 1993)

These tables demonstrate that demobilizations (debriefings/defusings) are effective management

tools that will not only help the individual officers, but also help the department retain trained

and experienced officers.

TABLE 1

	SAN DIEGO	CERRITOS
	(1978)	(1986)
Total Killed	125	82
Plane Survivors	0	0
Home destroyed	16	16
Civilians killed on ground	15	15
Emergency personnel engaged	300	300
Body parts recovered	>10,000	>10,000

(Compiled by J.T. Mitchell, Ph.D. from NIMH, 1979; 1983; Duffy, 1979;
Freeman, 1979; Honig, 1987)

TABLE 2

San Diego and Cerritos Air Disasters' Impact on

Emergency Workers with and without CISD Intervention

	SAN DIEGO	**CERRITOS**
Interventions	Sporadic 1:1	12 CISD
	Crisis intervention	Demobilizations
		Hotline
		Follow-up
Loss of Ranking Police	5 in one year}	
Loss of Fire Personnel	7 in one year}	1 in one year
Loss of Paramedics	17 in one year}	
Increase in mental health utilization	31% in one year	1% in one year

(Compiled by J.T. Mitchell, Ph.D. from NIMH, 1979; 1983; Duffy, 1979; Freeman, 1979; Honig, 1987)

Experts (Mitchell 1993) have identified eight important elements of a successful critical incident stress management program:

1. Early intervention.

2. Opportunity for catharsis.

3. Opportunity to verbally reconstruct the trauma.

4. Establishment of a behavioral structure within which to conduct the group process (a behavioral "roadmap" of sorts).

5. Establishment of a structured psychological progression (a psychological "roadmap" of sorts).

6. Group support.

7. Peer support.

8. Opportunity for follow-up.

"In the final analysis, debriefings and defusings demonstrate that someone cares." (Mitchell 1993)

SUPPORT PERSONNEL

When planning stress management and critical incident stress management programs, support personnel should not be left out. Communications officers, jailers, etc. are also exposed to occupational stressors and critical incident stress. Many dispatchers believe that their job is misunderstood and undervalued by police officers and management.

"Dispatchers may experience undue stress which may affect their handling of critical incidents, possibly with harmful consequences to police officers and citizens." (Payne 1993)

If law enforcement managers would sit down in a corner of the communications room and observe the communications personnel during a critical incident, they would gain a new respect and understanding of that function.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This is a difficult time to work in law enforcement. Law enforcement officers do not enjoy the support and respect of the public as was once the case. The level of violence and apathy in the American culture is stressful for everyone, and especially those who are charged with keeping order. The observation that law enforcement work is stressful is not news to those who are doing the job.

> Concern about police work is underlined in a recent survey conducted by the training Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) on the training needs of state and local law enforcement agencies. The respondents represented by sample 90.0 per cent of all sworn officers in the United States, and the majority of these rated the category 'handle personal stress' as the number one training priority. (Reese 1986)

The demands made upon law enforcement officers of the 1990's are both numerous and stressful. "Contemporary law enforcement officers, unlike earlier counterparts, must function as counselors, social workers, psychologists, negotiators and investigators, as well as police officers fulfilling their mission of serving the public." (Reese 1986)

These demands, or stressors, may result in distress and/or burnout. Law enforcement officers can be trained to minimize distress and burnout. When an officer is successful in managing the stress in his or her life, the officer, his or her family, and the department all win.

Management styles should be examined to insure that management staff at all levels are flexible enough to provide leadership to a diverse group of officers. A smart manager will strive to have a win / win relationship with all of their subordinate officers.

28

It is self-defeating management behavior to create unnecessary stress among the rank and file officers. Law enforcement managers should recognize that a constant barrage of new policies are confusing and stress producing. Reality calls for written policies and directives to be issued, but make sure that they are really needed and will be understood by the officer on the street. Many progressive departments involve officers from all levels of the department in developing and improving policy.

Critical incidents should be taken seriously by all levels of management. This is not to suggest an overreaction. Managers should project confidence that the involved officers will emerge from the incident emotionally healthy. Defusings and debriefings should be a routine event that all of the involved employees expect to participate in.

Critical incident stress management works and makes a real difference in the lives of officers who have been involved in critical incidents. Law enforcement managers have an ethical and professional responsibility to work to eliminate the development of critical incident stress in department employees.

Departments should invest in the well-being of employees by funding needed stress management programs and training. By investing in such programs, departments win by retaining valuable officers, saving money lost to sick leave, health insurance claims, etc. The officers win by preserving their careers, health, and family life. And the best reason of all, taking care of the officers is the right thing to do.

APPENDIX A

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

<u>Critical Incident</u> - A crisis event that has a strong stressful impact and overwhelms individual or group coping skills. (Mitchell and Everly 1993)

<u>Critical Incident Stress</u> - The stress response experienced by an individual or group of individuals following exposure to a critical incident.

<u>Critical Incident Stress Debriefing</u> - "A group meeting or discussion about a distressing critical incident." (Mitchell and Everly 1993) This seven step process is intended to mitigate the distress caused by exposure to a critical incident.

<u>Defusing</u> - A three part, shorter version of the critical incident stress debriefing process.

<u>Demobilization</u> - An intervention process that serves as a transition from the critical incident back to routine duties.

<u>Distress</u> - "Is too much or too little arousal resulting in harm to mind or body." (Schafer 1992)

<u>Stress</u> - "Is arousal of mind and body in response to demands made upon them." (Schafer 1992)

APPENDIX B

RESOURCES

<u>GENERAL INFORMATION</u>

North Texas Critical Incident Stress Management Team
Ms. Cameron L. Brown
Emergency Management Office
1000 Throckmorton
Fort Worth, Texas 76102
817-871-6170

Cop Care Inc.
Mr. Gene Gentile
P.O. Box 1038
N. Massapwqua, NY 11758
516-421-COPS

Joan Lanning, Ph.D.
Saint Joseph Hospital
1401 South Main Street
Fort Worth, Texas 76104
817-347-1962

Euless Police Department
Captain Harland Westmoreland
205 N. Ector Drive
Euless, Texas 76039-3595
817-685-1551

D/FW Airport Department of Public Safety
Sergeant David K. Pruitt
P.O. Drawer 610687
D/FW Airport, Texas 75261-0687
214-574-4454

American Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc.
P.O. Box 204
Ellicott City, Maryland 21041

TO ORDER BOOKS AND VIDEO TAPES

Chevron Publishing Corporation
5018 Dorsey Hall Drive, Suite 104
Ellicott City, Maryland 21042

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

North Texas Critical Incident Stress Management Team
Ms. Cameron L. Brown
Emergency Management Office
1000 Throckmorton
Fort Worth, Texas 76102
817-871-6170

Texas Department of Health
1100 West 49th Street
Austin, Texas 78756
512-834-6700

Federal Emergency Management Agency
Region VI, Federal Center
800 North Loop 288
Denton, Texas 76201-3698
Attn: Mr. Michael C. Simmons
817-898-5331

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