

# SOP 5.05 – Critical Incident Management

Section 5 – Emergency Operations

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Effective Date – 10 December 2020

Review Date – 10 December 2022

Electronically Controlled Document

## Purpose

To describe the procedure to be followed by applicable agency personnel involved in critical incident management

## Scope

This standard operating procedure (SOP) applies to all Life Saving Victoria (LSV) personnel (i.e., paid staff, officers and volunteer members) where engaged in critical incidents.

## Policy Statement

LSV requires all members to adhere to the established policies, procedures and guidelines to ensure safe and effective practices relating to critical incident management

## Responsibilities

Lifesaving volunteers, lifeguards, local operations officers, duty officers (among others).

## Definitions

Name	Definition
LSV	Life Saving Victoria

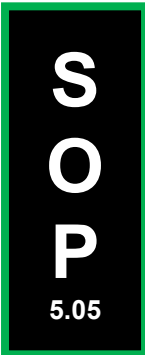
## Procedure

### Definition

A critical incident is any situation faced by emergency service personnel that causes unusually strong emotional reactions which have the potential to interfere with their ability to function either at the scene or later.

### Introduction

It is an unfortunate reality that at some point while performing lifesaving duties most lifesavers will be involved in a critical incident. To assist with the management of critical incidents, LSV offers a variety of services and resources for members:



- training of key personnel in psychological first aid,
- external counselling services, and
- flyers and pamphlets.

Health practitioners encourage people affected by traumatic events to seek the support of family, friends, community and professional groups.

Always talk to your doctor at any time if you feel very distressed or your reactions are interfering with your work or relationships or contact LSVComms to seek assistance.

## Process

Critical incidents reported to LSVComms may include

- contact with deceased person,
- resuscitation,
- unsuccessful/long/complicated rescue,
- when a patient is a child,
- serious injury to self or another member,
- exposure to gruesome sights, and
- threat to life.

LSVComms 13 SURF (13 7873) will advise the

- lifesaving operations officer,
- state duty officer,
- state emergency management officer, and
- director of lifesaving services.

Lifesaving operations officer to

- attend the scene and conduct a voluntary operational debrief.
- If unable to attend, appoints representative (e.g., assistant lifesaving operations officer/training and assessment officer or similar) to attend and conduct the session.

Voluntary operational debrief:

- Will be conducted by the lifesaving operations officer or appointed representative, who will do the following:
  - first, refer to Psychological First Aid documentation before conducting an operational debrief;
  - record names and phone number of members involved and lifesaving operations officer promptly sends to LSV Lifesaving Operations;
  - conduct operational debrief and assist club to gather information needed for prompt completion of Incident Report Form and SurfGuard's Incident Report Database;
  - provide LSV Critical Incident Information brochures to all members and highlight Lifeline service;
  - advise that LSV stress management personnel can be accessed via 13 SURF number; and
  - follow up with members via phone 1–2 weeks later with options for additional assistance.

#### Critical incident closure:

- Lifesaving operations officer advises LSVComms when Operational Debrief complete.
- Lifesaving operations officer gives site report to director of lifesaving services.

There is no standard recipe for how people cope with trauma. Each person has a unique way of recovering, and they should be supported in using strategies and resources that suit them and that are readily available.

#### Following a stressful event, ensure the following is done:

- Spend time with people who care.
- Give yourself time.
- Find out about the impact of trauma and what to expect.
- Try to keep a routine going—work, study and at home.
- Return to normal activities.
- Talk about how you feel or what happened when ready.
- What can you do right now?
  - Do things that help you relax.
  - Do things that you enjoy.

#### DON'T do the following:

- Use alcohol and drugs to cope.
- Keep yourself busy and work too much.
- Engage in stressful family or work situations.
- Withdraw from family and friends.
- Stop yourself from doing things that you enjoy.
- Avoid talking about what happened at all cost.
- Take risks.



## When to Get Help

#### If someone

- doesn't feel any better after two weeks;
- feels highly anxious or distressed;
- his or her reactions to the traumatic event are interfering with home, work or relationship; and
- is thinking of self-harm or harming others.

#### *Some of the signs that a problem may be developing are*

- being constantly on edge or irritable;
- having difficulty performing tasks at home and work;
- being unable to respond emotionally to others;
- being unusually busy to avoid issues;
- using alcohol, drugs or gambling to cope; and
- having significant sleeping difficulties.

#### *Where to get help*

LSV Comms – 13 SURF (13 7873) and Lifeline – 131114 or [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)  
Kids Lifeline – 1800 55 1800 (for those 5 to 25 years of age).

## Review

Date of Issue	10 December 2020
Date Effective	26 December 2020
Date to be Reviewed	1 July 2022
Date to Cease	10 December 2022

## Authority

The Life Saving Operations Council Executive has approved this SOP under section 8.3.6(e) of the Life Saving Victoria By-laws, 2019.

