

Critical Incident Stress Management Policy

Adopted date: Oct 26, 2022	Amended date: May 13, 2026	Next Review: 2032
----------------------------	----------------------------	-------------------

OBJECTIVE

The Van Anda Improvement District (VAID) is committed to supporting the psychological health, safety, and well-being of its employees and volunteers. This policy establishes a compassionate, confidential, and trauma-informed approach to responding to potentially psychologically traumatic events encountered during the performance of their duties.

DEFINITIONS

“Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)” A structured system of support intended to reduce the impact of potentially psychologically traumatic incidents and promote recovery.

“Critical Incident” A potentially psychologically traumatic event that may overwhelm an individual’s normal coping abilities and result in significant emotional or psychological stress.

“District” The Van Anda Improvement District (VAID).

SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees and volunteers of the Van Anda Improvement District who are involved in emergency response or who may be affected by a critical incident arising from District operations.

POLICY

The District recognizes that emergency response and related duties may expose employees and volunteers to potentially psychologically traumatic events.

The goals of the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) program are to provide support that:

- Minimizes the emotional impact of critical incidents;
- Increases personal resilience and coping capacity;
- Assists individuals in managing the immediate and longer-term effects of critical incidents; and
- Provides access to follow-up support, resources, or referral where appropriate.

A critical incident may include any event that has a significant emotional impact and may interfere with an individual’s ability to function or cope effectively, whether occurring in the workplace or in the course of duty.

POLICY P-09

Examples of critical incidents may include, but are not limited to:

- Death or serious injury of a colleague in the line of duty;
- Incidents involving serious injury or death of members of the public, particularly children;
- Incidents involving persons personally known to the responder;
- Being the victim of physical violence or threats of violence;
- Witnessing traumatic events at an incident or workplace;
- Working in proximity to, or in support of, a critical incident;
- Suicide or attempted suicide of a colleague;
- Incidents involving intense or negative media attention; and
- Any other event identified as a critical incident by the Fire Chief in consultation with a qualified CISM mental health professional or trained peer-support provider.

CISM SERVICES

- Critical Incident Stress Management services will be offered, not required, following a critical incident. Participation is voluntary, unless otherwise directed by WorkSafeBC or a qualified health professional.
- CISM services may include informal peer support conversations, group check-ins, or one-on-one discussions following an incident, as well as more structured interventions where appropriate. Informal peer support may occur immediately or as needed without formal activation.
- Where additional or more formal CISM services are considered appropriate, the Fire Chief may coordinate supports based on a needs assessment conducted by a qualified CISM mental health professional or a trained CISM peer-support provider.
- Any employee or volunteer affected by a critical incident may request CISM support directly, without stigma or prior approval.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND NON-DISCIPLINARY NATURE

Participation in CISM services is confidential and is intended solely for support and recovery. Information disclosed during CISM interventions will not form part of performance management, discipline, or operational investigations.

ROLE OF THE FIRE CHIEF

The Fire Chief, in the role of crisis manager, shall:

- Coordinate the activation of CISM services where appropriate;
- Ensure access to qualified mental health or peer-support resources; and
- Ensure that WorkSafeBC is contacted, where applicable, to provide support through the Critical Incident Response (CIR) Program.

POLICY P-09

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- WorkSafeBC Critical Incident Response (CIR) Program
- WorkSafeBC Occupational Health and Safety Policies
- Policy P-21 – Occupational Health and Safety