University of South Australia | **WHS PROCEDURE**

Critical Incident Management

Introduction

This procedure outlines the requirements for the management of critical or potentially critical incidents at workplaces to minimise risks to health and safety and minimise their impact on people.

Definitions

Critical Incident is a traumatic event, or the threat of such (within or outside Australia) which has the potential to harm life or well-being and causes extreme stress, fear or injury to the person experiencing or witnessing the event.

Post-Incident Debriefing is a formal group process conducted by a professionally qualified person, to alleviate the pressures after a critical incident.

Traumatic Stressor is an actual or threatened event such as death, serious injury, human suffering or violence, such as accidents, including fatalities or near misses, assault (verbal or physical, including threats), robbery and serious physical injury.

Roles and Responsibilities

Executive Deans and Directors are responsible for:
- implementing the requirements of this procedure within their area of responsibility where a potential hazard of this nature has been identified
- ensuring risks are effectively controlled to prevent injury
- regularly monitoring and reviewing the effectiveness of risk control measures and where identified, implementing additional or alternate controls where circumstances change
- consulting with employees on critical incident practices or any proposed changes
- ensuring employees at risk are provided with the necessary skills in how to manage a critical incident
- ensuring the well-being of employees and others following a critical incident.

Employees are responsible for:
- not placing themselves or others at risk of injury
- reporting to line management any critical or potentially critical circumstances or significant symptoms which may have resulted from a critical incident
- assisting line managers with the identification of hazards, the assessment of risks and implementation of risk control measures related to critical incidents
- following established critical incident procedures
- availing themselves of the support mechanisms in the event of exposure to critical incidents.

Procedure

Identifying Potentially Critical Incidents

The potential for critical incidents to occur within or out of the course of university business is dependent on the type of activities undertaken.   Local hazards shall be identified as part of the process for managing and maintaining the workplace Hazard Register – Form WHS01. Risk shall be assessed and control actions prioritised for implementation accordingly.

The WHS Procedure *Managing Risks in the Workplace* and Form WHS02 - risk assessment worksheet outlines the risk management process.

When assessing risk for potentially critical circumstances, the workplace shall take account of, but not limited to, such matters as:
- the isolation and remoteness of worksites

- the shift work arrangements or weekend work
- amount and location of cash handling at the site
- the nature of contact with the public, in particular the potential for contact with people who may be distressed
- current procedures in place to manage a critical incident
- current known hazards and how these are controlled
- security arrangements at the worksite including the location and contact arrangements for FM Assist.

Managing a Critical Incident

Local procedures for the management of potentially critical incidents shall be developed in consultation with employees at worksites using the outcome of risk assessments to inform action required. Further assistance may be requested from WHS Consultants.

Training in the local procedure shall be provided to ensure that relevant employees are familiar with response protocol to minimise risk.

Critical incident procedures should consider the management of an actual critical incident and should include the following actions:

1. **Action at the time of occurrence of a critical incident**
   - Contact Emergency Services on **000** and/or FM Assist on **55 555** (internal university phones) or **1800 500 911** as soon as it is safe to do so
   - Ensure injured and/or traumatised employees, students and others are provided with an appropriate emergency response
   - Inform the relevant manager who may escalate the matter where required
   - Ensure support for employees, relatives and others is available in the event an incident is continuing.

2. **Action immediately following a critical incident**
   - Allow affected employees to contact their family/close friend to advise them of the situation
   - Assist others including members of the public with contacting their family/close friend, or assist them by arranging transport if needed
   - Ensure the site or anything associated with the incident is not disturbed in relation to a Police matter or when an investigation is required by SafeWork SA Inspectors
   - Provide people who have been exposed to the critical incident with emotional support and practical assistance
   - Inform the Manager: Work Health and Safety, the WHS Consultant and the worksite Health and Safety Representative (where relevant) of the situation
   - Inform the Enterprise Leadership Team where applicable
   - Inform all worksite employees about what has occurred as necessary
   - Provide an incident debriefing and support through the University Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider, (contact phone number: **1300 277 924)** and include this contact number in the workplace procedure.

3. **Action post critical incident**
   - Encourage employees to make an individual appointment with the EAP provider, to assess the need for further intervention
   - Conduct an investigation within 24 hours of the incident to record factual data about the incident and develop a good understanding of the type of incident and how it happened, so that decisions regarding necessary preventative action can be made. (Refer to the WHS Procedure – Hazard/Incident Reporting and Investigation for guidance).
   - Return the worksite to normal operation as soon as practicable (after an investigation has occurred for Police and SafeWork SA matters).
   - Record incident details and investigation outcomes in the Online Hazard/Incident Reporting system

Documents/Forms

Further advice on managing risks in University workplaces, including supporting documents and training courses are available on the Safety & Wellbeing website.

WHS Procedures

- WHS Procedure Managing Workplace Health & Safety Risks
- WHS Procedure Hazard/Incident Reporting and Investigation
- WHS Procedure Working Alone or In Isolation
- Online Hazard/Incident Reporting & Investigation system
- University Emergency Procedures

References

- Employee Assistance Program
- Work Health and Safety Act & Regulations (SA)
- Approved Code of Practice: How To Manage Work Health and Safety Risks