

Critical Incident Peer Support

Surf Life Saving NSW has engaged AccessEAP to provide a fast, professional and confidential service to members who have been involved in a critical incident. The costs of these services can often be covered by WorkCover NSW, and have been put in place to ensure the wellbeing of our members.

Members are required to complete the WorkCover Notification of Injury Form. This form is to be completed when a volunteer suffers an injury or illness where compensation is, or may be payable under the Workers Compensation (Bush Fire, Emergency and Rescue Services) Act 1987. This form must be submitted to WorkCover on 02 9287 4828 within 48 hours upon notification of intent to claim.

Ensuring the wellbeing of our members

The environment in which surf life saving operates is predisposed to the occurrence of incidents of a traumatic nature. These incidents are referred to as Critical Incidents. Critical Incidents may occur on or off the beach and they have the potential to evoke strong emotional, physical, behavioural and cognitive responses in those members directly and indirectly involved. Through WorkCover NSW, members are able to gain assistance in effectively managing the reactions following these types of incidents.

Critical Incident Peer Support Process

After any critical incident, members are encouraged to fill out the WorkCover Notification of Injury Form. This enables them to contact AccessEAP at any time in the following days, weeks or months to speak about the critical incident they have been involved in.

Ph: 1800 818 728

Find out more

Visit the AccessEAP website to view a range of information, links and tips covering a wide range of topics.

www.accesseap.com.au

Visit Surf Life Saving's website to gain information on the Critical Incident Peer Support Service or to access WorkCover information and forms.

www.surflifesaving.com.au

Assistance and funding for this material has been provided by WorkCover NSW through the WorkCover Assist Program.

SLSNSW Information for Duty Officers, Club Members and Families

How to use the Critical Incident Peer Support Service effectively



The role of Duty Officers, Club Members and Families

Everyone will respond differently in the aftermath of a traumatic event. Emotional, physical, behavioural and cognitive reactions are normal as individuals process and make sense of their experiences of the event. However, if these reactions continue and increase in intensity individuals may have difficulty coping in their day to day lives. Referral to the Critical Incident Peer Support Service may be encouraged to assist with the ongoing recovery process.

Duty Officers, Club Members and families play an important role in ensuring that the Critical Incident Peer Support Service is used effectively. Recognising the early warning signs of a member experiencing ongoing reactions and knowing how to refer that member to the Critical Incident Peer Support Service is a very important role.

Duty Officers, Club Members and families can help members by recognising the early warning signs.

Ensuring the wellbeing of our members

What To Watch For

- Significant changes in an individual's social and professional functioning (difficulties performing duties and responsibilities)
- Marked symptoms of anxiety: restlessness, irritability, anger.
- Avoidance behaviour (avoiding communication, activities, places and people associated with the incident.
- Withdrawal from others: loss of motivation.
- Appearing like 'being in a daze'.
- Appearing preoccupied or emotionally 'flat'.
- Difficulties with concentration, attention and decision making.
- Teariness, fatigue.
- Exaggerated 'startle response'.
- Increased alcohol consumption.

Referring a Member to the Critical Incident Peer Support Service

It can be a difficult task for Duty Officers, Club Members and families to know how to best offer assistance to someone experiencing ongoing distressing reactions.

As a Duty Officer, Club Member or family member, you can in private recommend that members contact AccessEAP for assistance.

- Explain that professional help is available through AccessEAP and that taking advantage of this service is a way of preserving psychological health rather than a sign of illness or weakness
- Emphasise that the counselling sessions are totally confidential and that no information from these sessions can be disclosed.
- Encourage the person to call 1800 818 728, but emphasise that it's entirely their choice if they use the service

AccessEAP is available by telephone 24/7 to provide immediate help for urgent matters.

Members may also wish to seek support from sources such as their local Doctor who may refer them to a Counsellor or Psychologist. Any avenue in which the member feels comfortable in speaking about the incident in which they have been involved is encouraged to be explored. Referrals to these services may also be covered by WorkCover.

