

**OPERATIONAL POLICIES
AND PROCEDURES**

OF THE

**LETHBRIDGE AND DISTRICT
FIRE DEPARTMENTS
CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

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CISM Program Partnerships

Although a Critical Incident Stress Management Program is peer-driven by emergency responders, numerous partnerships are necessary to assure the safe, professional, and standardized delivery of services. The following individuals acknowledge the teamwork required to deliver such a program:

Message from the Chief, Lethbridge Fire Department

Our commitment to the well being of our team members must be a priority. Each of us has a duty to provide support to our fellow emergency services team members. Our responsibility is to ensure the safe return of all our members to their families.

I praise everyone in their participation and delivery of this program. We will continue to take care of our fellow emergency services members and their needs through the efforts of our CISM group.

Brian Cornforth
Chief, Lethbridge Fire Department

Message from the President, Local 237, Fire Fighters' Union

Several years ago the International Association of Fire Fighters realized that the Fire Services was experiencing an inordinate amount of stress related problems with the men and women who are on the front lines. To address this ever growing concern the IAFF became a strong advocate for a method of dealing with this job related stress. To this end the IAFF encouraged all of its' affiliated Locals to develop a Critical Incident Stress Management program. The Lethbridge Fire Fighters Union, Local 237 has fully supported this program for the several years that it has been operating in the City and surrounding areas. The dedicated CISM team members have helped many of the first responders in our area to cope with the difficult events that they witness while performing their duties and all of our members commend them for their efforts. Local 237, IAFF fully supports the efforts of the CISM team and is thankful for all that they do.

Sincerely,
Wayne Johnson
President, Local 237
IAFF

Message from the CISM Team Chairperson

The Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Team recognizes that Emergency Response Personnel have a strong commitment to helping others, regardless of their own needs. This commitment may cause some to deny the emotions arising from dealing with the trauma of a specific event or a collection of circumstances. The CISM Team provides an avenue for dealing with the trauma, whether it is for individual members or a group of peers, by providing guidance and ongoing training to manage the long-term effects to all Emergency Response Personnel.

Marc Rathwell, Chairperson
Lethbridge and District Fire Departments CISM Committee

History of The Lethbridge and District CISM Team

In response to the physical and emotional demands of the work of an emergency responder, the Lethbridge and District Fire Departments developed a Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Program in 1989. Volunteer peer support Fire Department members, management, union, pastoral and mental health debriefers have worked collaboratively and supported this program since then.

Since the program's conception, the CISM Team has provided services to Lethbridge and rural Emergency Services throughout Southern Alberta. Volunteer team members have provided approximately 70 debriefings and 20 defusings since the program's conception. As well, the CISM Team has organized in-services and certified Basic and Advanced CISM training.

The CISM Committee supported a mental health debriefer to obtain the *Basic CISM: Train the Trainer* certification through the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ISIFC) in Baltimore, Maryland. As a result of this support, approximately three hundred people in southern Alberta have benefited and been trained in Critical Incident Stress Management as a result of the Team's initiative.

Thank you to the following CISM Committee members, past and present, who consistently contribute to the development of the CISM Program:

Elizabeth Brown, Reverend, First United Church
Paulette DeCoste, Retired Constable, Lethbridge Regional Police Services
Rhonda Edwards, Community Crisis Team and Community Crisis Beds, CMHA
Andy Good, Outreach Worker, Mental Health Program, CHR
Boyd Folden, Retired Rural Department Captain, Picture Butte
Glen Habkirk, Major, Salvation Army
Lorna Jones, Program Manager, Mental Health Program, CHR
Warren McEwen, Lethbridge Fire Department
Mike Ross, Deputy Chief, Lethbridge Fire Department
Fraser Stewart, Lethbridge Fire Department
Lise Schmidt, Retired Rural Department Firefighter, Picture Butte

The CISM Committee gives special recognition to the numerous Peer Support Debriefers who volunteer their time to support members of the Lethbridge and rural Emergency Services. Your involvement is graciously acknowledged.

Purpose of a CISM Program for Emergency Services Members

The development of a comprehensive CISM program for Emergency Services members is designed to mitigate the long-term effects of trauma and/or stress inherent in our work. Such a comprehensive program is designed to provide preventative and management strategies, supportive assistance and crisis interventions when required.

Our purpose in implementing such a program is to:

- Demonstrate commitment to and value for all Emergency Services members
- Demonstrate an acknowledgement of and response to the inherent stresses and emotionally impactful demands of the work we do
- Ensure all Emergency Services members, regardless of their function in the organization, have access to the program
- Promote a healthy work environment
- Assist all members to overcome potentially harmful impacts of stress and trauma and prevent the need for stress related medical leaves
- Improve productivity through greater retention of members

The comprehensive CISM Program must:

- Provide a continuum of services (from informal to formal interventions, and from unstructured, supportive interventions to structured interventions addressing critical incidents)
- Ensure professional, skilled and trained individuals provide CISM services
- Ensure confidentiality
- Be easily accessible in a timely manner
- Operate without fear of repercussions for members seeking such services
- Overcome perceived barriers of members seeking services (i.e., seeking help is a sign of weakness)
- Include preventative interventions to reduce the cumulative impacts of stress and trauma
- Promote a self care component for professional helpers that recognizes the inherent risks for professionals in helping roles
- Be helpful and supportive to individuals and teams
- Adhere to the standardized practices of the *International Critical Incident Stress Management (ISISF)* model of service delivery

Overview: Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)

CISM is a comprehensive approach referring to a range of preventative, supportive and crisis interventions by trained professionals and peers to mitigate an individual's response to a traumatic event. The following illustrates the types of CISM services as allocated across the crisis spectrum:

Pre-Crisis	Acute Crisis	Post Crisis
• Pre-planning • Pre-incident education • Ongoing education	• 1:1 Peer Support • On-scene support • Pastoral Support • Family Support	• Defusings • Debriefings • Referrals for professional treatment • Demobilization (disasters)

Common CISM Terms

- *Pre-planning* is the process of establishing a written plan of action in preparation for the management of critical incidents. This review determines that all emergency phone numbers are current, trained personnel have maintained required training, and the Operational Policies and Procedures are current and available, etc.
- *Pre-Incident Education* is the ongoing process of providing information, resources, in service training and educational seminars/activities to both the CISM Team and all members of Fire Departments.
- *Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD)* is a seven-stage psychoeducational group discussion designed to assist participants to manage symptoms resulting from exposure to a critical incident. The purpose of a debriefing is to reduce the psychological impact of a traumatic event, prevent the development of a post traumatic stress reaction, accelerate the recovery process, and identify those individuals who require professional follow-up. A debriefing occurs 24 to 72 hours post-incident. Debriefings are not psychotherapy and are not intended to replace psychotherapy.
- *A Defusing* means to render something harmless before it can cause damage (Mitchell and Everly, 1996). A defusing is a three-stage psychoeducational group discussion and is a shortened version of a debriefing. The purpose of a defusing is to reduce immediate psychological impact and symptoms and eliminates the need for a debriefing or augments a follow-up debriefing. A defusing occurs within 8 hours of the incident and is lead by either CISM trained peer debriefers or mental health debriefers if requested.
- *A CISM Debriefers* is a team member who has *minimally* completed a Basic CISM course, which is recognized by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Baltimore, Maryland and meets the eligibility, membership requirements outlined in these Operational Guidelines.

- A *Peer Support Debrief*er is a colleague who provides support and assistance to members of their own professional group. The use of peer support on an emergency responder CISM Team is essential.
- A *Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Team* is a group of fire department members, chaplains, and mental health personnel who have received special training in the area of stress reaction interventions (Mitchell and Everly, 1995 and 1996). This team is supported in principal by management and union. An emergency responder CISM team is peer-driven but clinically guided by mental health professionals.
- A *Critical Incident* “is any event, which has a stressful impact sufficient enough to overwhelm the effective coping skills of either an individual or a group. Critical incidents are typically sudden, powerful events which are outside of the range of ordinary human experiences.” (Mitchell and Everly, 1995 and 1996)
- *On-Scene Support* is the peer support services initiated, at or very near the scene, for emergency responders who are engaged in a prolonged or extremely stressful incident. The support is brief and targeted to those showing obvious signs of distress.
- *Vicarious Trauma* is a transformation in the employee’s inner experience resulting from empathic exposure to another individual’s trauma. By listening to the individual’s personal account of the traumatic event or experience in the context of a helping relationship, the caregiver is vulnerable through their empathic openness to the emotional and spiritual effects of vicarious traumatization. The effect of vicarious trauma is cumulative, permanent, and evident in the employee’s personal and professional life (Goody, 1999, Saakvitne and Pearlman 1996).

Vicarious Trauma may be recognized using the signs and symptoms listed below as a guideline:

- o No time or energy for oneself
 - o Disconnection from loved ones
 - o Social withdrawal
 - o Increased sensitivity to violence
 - o Cynicism
 - o Generalized despair and hopelessness
 - o Nightmares (Saakvitne and Pearlman 1996w)
- *Compassion Fatigue* – In that segment of the professional community committed to assisting people overcome adversity, Compassion Fatigue can seep into professional practice. Gentry and Baranowski (1999) and Laing (1998) suggest Compassion Fatigue can develop when the caregiver’s empathy is overtaxed and exhausted. This can occur with individuals who maintain good self-care skills. Compassion Fatigue (please refer to Vicarious Trauma and Burnout for additional information) is defined as the union of Secondary Traumatic Stress / Vicarious Trauma and Burnout in the lives of care providers (Figley, 1995b, Gentry & Baranowski, 1999 and Laing, 1998).

According to Laing (1998), the symptoms of Compassion Fatigue are:

- o Increased negative arousal
 - o Intrusive thoughts or images
 - o Difficulty separating work from personal life
 - o Lower frustration tolerance
 - o Decreased feelings of work competence
 - o Diminished sense of purpose and / or enjoyment with career choice
 - o Increased transference and / or counter transference in work
 - o Ineffective and / or self destructive behaviors
 - o Reduced ego-functioning with respect to time, identity or volition
 - o Hyper vigilance
 - o Depression, dread of working with certain clients
 - o Loss of hope
- *Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)* is an emotional reaction to a traumatic event or series of traumatic events.

Everly (1995) suggests the “key” features of PTSD are:

- o Exposure to a traumatic event wherein the person experiences a situation including actual / threatened death or serious injury, which results in an intense fear, horror, or helplessness.
 - o Recurrence of the event through “flashbacks, dreams, and persistent intrusive recollections of the event”.
 - o Avoiding the facts associated with the event and developing a “numbing of general responsiveness”.
 - o Persistent symptoms of “arousal, stress, or anxiety” associated with the event.
 - o The individual continues to experience the above symptoms over a one-month period.
 - o The symptoms cause significant distress and / or impairments.
- *Burnout* is a state of mind, which may be “...accompanied by an array of symptoms that include a general malaise: emotional, physical, and psychological fatigue; feeling of helplessness, hopelessness, and a lack of enthusiasm about work and even life in general” (Zastrow, 1989).

CISM Team: Eligibility and Membership

Roles and Responsibilities

- The Lethbridge and District Fire Departments CISM Committee will recruit Fire Department members, chaplains, and mental health therapists to serve as debriefers on an ongoing basis
- An application, interview, and referencing process (see Appendix 1 through 9) will be undertaken as determined by members of the CISM Committee to assess suitability of individuals for the peer support, chaplain, and mental health team members.
- The CISM Committee will select members to complete an interview process with the applicant:
 - Suitability factors such as the following will be considered:
 - Credibility amongst peers
 - High regard for confidentiality
 - Respected and respectful
 - Diplomacy, sensitivity
 - Responsible, follow through on commitments
 - Demonstrate commitment to own self care
 - Clear boundaries
 - Knowledge / performance factors such as the following will be considered:
 - Mastery of own workload
 - Other relevant training and years of experience brought to this role
- Individuals interested in the role of the CISM Committee Chairperson/Mental Health Clinical Team Leader should additionally have:
 - Knowledge of all CISM interventions to determine appropriateness of request
 - Demonstrated leadership ability
 - Organizational skills to coordinate the program
 - Availability for crisis contacts
 - Knowledge of community resources available to department members

CISM Team Training

- All CISM team members are required to complete a *Basic CISM Course* prior to participating as a team member
- CISM team members who have previously completed a Basic CISM course, will be required to complete the course again if:
 - They completed the course 2 or more years ago *and*

- o They haven't used or practiced the skills
 - o They haven't participated in a debriefing
- Within one year of commencing this role, each team member is required to complete *at least two CISM Training* workshops, organized by the Committee, annually.
- Team members are encouraged, but not required to take the *Advanced CISM Course*. The cost of this particular course, if requested, will be borne by the CISM Committee.
- All costs of such training, excluding work time lost, will be borne by the CISM Committee
- Chaplain and mental health debriefers will be required to complete "ride-alongs" for training purposes
- Besides the mandatory *CISM Team Training* requirements previously mentioned, the Mental Health debriefer will:
 - o Have a diploma or degree in a Human Services discipline relevant to mental health
 - o Be employed in a Mental Health Service area on a regular basis
 - o Have knowledge of substance abuse issues, neuropsychology, the physiological basis of behavior, and group process

CISM Team Responsibilities

- Maintain confidentiality, except when an individual is at risk to self or others
- Participate in any CISM intervention as per criteria and as deemed appropriate by the CISM Team Chairperson and Mental Health Clinical Team Leader
- Respond to requests for informal peer support as required and as available
- Identify organizational needs/patterns requiring CISM educational or CISM sponsored activities
- Make availability known to CISM Chairperson.
- Complete required training and demonstrate commitment to skill development deemed necessary to maintain standards of the CISM Team
- Encourage follow up, as necessary to members who may require EAP assistance programs or Mental Health services
- Identify issues which may potentially affect the CISM Team's integrity and/or cohesive performance

Role and Responsibilities of the Chaplain Debriefers

- Attend all defusings and debriefings when available
 - o Reassure members who encounter a faith crisis resulting from exposure to trauma
 - o Provide post defusing or debriefing follow-up
- Offer 1:1 spiritual support to members who have been exposed to a critical incident
- Provide on-scene support when requested
- Offer 1:1 spiritual support to members whose circumstances are outside of the CISM context (i.e. family illness, personal crisis situations) when deemed appropriate and/or requested
- Provide support and feedback to the Peer and Mental Health debriefers

- o Following defusings and debriefings
- Officiate at the “Tribute to Fallen Comrades” on a yearly basis
- Liaise with Fire departments management and CISM Chairperson regarding spiritual needs
- Lead prayer when requested and as appropriate

Role and Responsibilities of the Peer Support Debriefers

- 1:1 peer support is appropriate under the following circumstances:
 - o On an informal and ongoing basis following stressful incidents where a formal group intervention is not initiated (i.e. criteria not met for defusing or debriefing)
 - o A full CISM Team cannot be mobilized within the time frames of a defusing/debriefing
 - o A member is unsuitable for a group intervention (i.e. significantly impacted)
 - o During on-scene support
 - o For additional support following a line of duty death
 - o When a peer is known to be experiencing significant personal crisis
 - o When requested by a peer
- Support peers during a formal defusing or debriefing
- Provide follow-up to the Fire departments post defusing or debriefing:
 - o Contact participants who have been identified as requiring additional support
 - o Contact the Chief of the Fire department to determine whether additional services are required and monitor progress of members
 - o Seek consultation from a Mental Health Debriefers following a 1:1 contact if concerned about a member’s mental state
- Provide support and feedback to the Chaplain and Mental Health Debriefers:
 - o Following defusings and debriefings
- Advocate for the use of CISM services throughout Fire Departments in southern Alberta

Role and Responsibilities of the Mental Health Debriefers

- Lead the structured process of a defusing and debriefing:
 - o Assign follow-up responsibilities to Peer Support Debriefers
 - o Facilitate a referral to Mental Health Services when peer support follow-up is not assessed as appropriate due to risk factors
- Provide support and feedback to the CISM Peer and Chaplain Debriefers:
 - o Following defusings and debriefings
 - o Identify any issues related to the intervention or process
- Assure the CISM Team is adequately debriefed following a team intervention
- Provide consultation services and clinical support to the CISM team regarding:
 - o A planned CISM response

- o Research based stress management techniques

CISM Committee

Roles and Responsibilities of the CISM Committee

- The Lethbridge and District Fire Department CISM Committee will be developed from interested, skilled and trained Team members. Continued involvement from the Committee members will need to be demonstrated by ongoing involvement.
 - o Minimally, the Committee will consist of a Chairperson, Treasurer, one Chaplain debriefer, one Peer support Debriefing, one Mental Health Debriefing, and a Clinical Team Leader from Mental Health
 - o Any CISM Team member may sit on the Committee
 - o Committee participation is not required, *but strongly encouraged*, from *all* team members
- In some cases, an individual (i.e. administrative support, Captain, Rural Department Chief, Union or Management representative) may request to contribute as a Committee member and not as a team member (debriefing)
 - o In this case, appropriate duties will be assigned to support the CISM Team and Committee by the Committee

Responsibilities of the Committee Member

- Contribute to and forward agenda items to the Chairperson
- Participate in regular CISM Committee meetings on a monthly basis from September to June inclusive when available
- On a rotational or assigned basis, take meeting minutes at CISM Committee meetings
- Participate in the development and delivery of in-services and educational activities required for Fire Department members and the CISM Team in southern Alberta
- Address issues which may potentially affect the CISM Team's integrity and/or cohesive performance

Responsibilities of the Treasurer

- The CISM Committee Treasurer is a volunteer position *and* an active member of the CISM Committee
- The Treasurer will:
 - o Provide a yearly report (September) on the financial standing of the CISM Committee
 - o Manage all incoming (i.e. Committee sponsored training where revenue is generated, Union donations, etc.) and outgoing expenditures
 - o Reimburse personal costs incurred by Team members:
 - Gas when personal vehicle used to transport a Team

➤ Meals

Responsibilities of the CISM Committee Chairperson

- Maintain confidentiality, except when an individual is at risk to self or others
- Receive all formal requests for a CISM response
- In consultation with Clinical Team Leader, evaluate need for, coordinate, and mobilize CISM Team (including Peer and Chaplain debriefers) once deemed appropriate
- Oversee recruitment and through a variety of team activities, retain CISM team members
- Hold regular monthly CISM Committee meetings from September to June inclusive
- Schedule, set agenda and chair meetings
- Oversee educational and CISM sponsored events and delegate organization as appropriate
- Maintain CISM team roster and phone (*CISM Contacts*) numbers and *Record of Training* (see Appendix 13)
- Maintain emotional integrity of the CISM team (providing follow-up post intervention)
- Provide support to the CISM team with responsibility to access external resources to meet team's needs
- Liaise with Fire Department management, President of Local 237, Fire Fighters' Union, and Pastoral and Mental Health Services
- Act as official spokesperson for the CISM program
- For the purpose of the CISM Program accountability, assure resolution of issues identified by team members which may potentially affect the Team's integrity and/or cohesive performance
- Assure the overall CISM Program meets *ICISF* standards

Responsibilities of the Mental Health Clinical Team Leader

- Assist the CISM Committee to recruit, train, support, and monitor mental health debriefers who provide support to the team
- Mobilize mental health debriefers to assist in a CISM response in consultation with the CISM Chairperson
- In partnership, establish and maintain formal lines of communication with the CISM Chairperson, Fire Department management, Union, and EAP services
- For the purpose of the CISM Program accountability, assure resolution of issues identified by team members which may potentially affect the Team's integrity and/or cohesive performance
- Assure the overall CISM program meets *ICISF* standards

Revocation/Suspension of Team or Committee Membership

- Team or Committee membership can be revoked or suspended for the following reasons:
 - o Any breach of confidentiality
 - o Failure to follow policies or procedures
 - o Organizing CISM interventions or educational in-services without prior knowledge or consent of the CISM Chairperson
 - o Consistent failure to attend mandatory training sessions
 - o Falsely representing the CISM Team
 - o Personal boundary violations
 - o Failure to be present at an assigned debriefing when the member has made a commitment to do so
 - o Consistent failure to complete the required team paperwork or committee responsibilities
- All infractions will be forwarded to and reviewed by the CISM Chairperson
 - o The Chairperson will address the concern with the Committee
 - o The final decision on revocation/suspension will be determined by the Committee members
- The Chairperson will communicate the Committee's decision to the team member

Concerns Resolution

- Any individual may bring forward a concern related to the function or performance of the CISM Committee or Team
 - o All concerns will be submitted to the CISM Committee Chairperson
 - The Chairperson will obtain the necessary information related to the concern
 - The Chairperson will either call a special Committee meeting (if he/she deems the concern as urgent) or present the concern to committee members at the next scheduled meeting
 - Any committee member deemed to be in a conflict of interest will remove himself/herself from the decision making process
- The Committee will review the concern, and by consensus, determine an appropriate response
- The Chairperson will communicate the outcome to the individual initiating the concern
- The Chairperson will assure that corrective action is taken by the Team or Committee to address the concern

Policies and Procedures

The following policies and procedures are outlined to provide the CISM Team with the structure necessary to implement interventions as per ICISF standards:

Criteria for a Defusing and Debriefing

- Defusings and debriefings are *only* provided under the following circumstances as per *ICISF* standards:
 - Line of duty death
 - Serious line of duty injury
 - Sudden death or suicide of a peer
 - Significant injury or death of a child
 - Victim is known
 - High media interest
 - Prolonged operations with negative outcome
 - Failed missions as a result of operational procedures
 - Multi-casualties
 - Incidents generating intense emotion (i.e. high “yuk” factors or extreme environmental conditions)
- Exceptions to the defusing/debriefing criteria will be cautiously considered under the following circumstances:
 - Exposure to numerous incidents, that based on criteria alone, does not meet the criteria, but collectively have a significant cumulative impact on the Fire Department’s members

Serious CISD (Debriefing) Mistakes

- The ICISF has identified the following as serious debriefing mistakes:
 - Inappropriate timing of intervention
 - Inappropriate intervention (i.e. under or over use)
 - Untrained or team members with significant personal stressors
 - Mental health professional not being present
 - Inappropriate peer support
 - Inadequate preparation (i.e. lack of information, late arrival)

- o Breach of confidentiality
- o Altering or not following the CISM debriefing 7-stage model
- o Insensitivity towards participants (i.e. arguing, war stories, lack of support)
- o Inadequate Team post-debriefing
- o Inadequate follow-up to the department post-debriefing
- Specific policies and procedures have been developed to address these issues

Timelines for a Defusing and Debriefing

- Defusings are most effective when provided within the first 12 hours post incident
- Debriefings are most effective when provided 24-48 hours post incident
 - o Debriefings in disaster situation are delayed for 2-4 weeks post incident
 - o Debriefings in a line of duty death are delayed until after the funeral
 - o In the event that a fully trained CISM Team of peers, chaplain, and mental health Debriefers cannot be mobilized, the debriefing will be delayed

Defusings

- Defusings can be conducted by trained Peer Support Debriefers without involvement of Chaplain or Mental Health Debriefers
- The 3-stage process as per ICISF standards will be used
- The need for a follow-up debriefing will always be assessed following a defusing

Alternatives to Defusing/Debriefings

- In the event that a request for a defusing/debriefing does not meet the criteria, to avoid overuse, alternative interventions such as the following will be provided:
 - o Stress management educational session
 - o 1:1 peer support

Line of Duty Death

- The Fire Department's protocols will supercede the CISM Committee protocols
- CISM services will be closely coordinated and in support of the Department's protocols
- Only well-trained, experienced CISM Team members with no significant personal stressors will provide intervention
- Accessing the support of an external team will be evaluated to protect the integrity of the Lethbridge and District Fire Department CISM Team/Committee members

Disclosure of Information

- The CISM Team will reinforce the defusing or debriefing is for personal support and will curtail operational critiques
- During a defusing or a debriefing, participants will be advised *not to*:
 - Discuss details which could jeopardize an investigation
 - Provide details, which could lead to discipline as a result of deliberate violation of policies

Follow-up

- Follow-up is mandatory after a debriefing or a defusing:
 - The Mental Health Debriefing will identify the team member(s) responsible for providing follow-up:
 - Those responsible for providing follow-up will:
 - Contact the individual(s) identified as requiring additional support
 - Contact the Chief to determine the department's overall progress
 - Contact a mental health Debriefing if professional intervention is required
- The following materials will be left at the Fire Department following a CISM intervention:
 - *CISM Team Follow-up: Contacts* (see Appendix 11)
 - ***Critical Incident Stress Information Sheet*** (See Appendix 12 and 12A)

Scope of Practice

- During a debriefing or defusing, CISM Team members will provide stress coping strategies during the teaching stage that are:
 - Limited to what is considered reasonable and prudent
 - Supported up by literature in the areas of stress management as per consultation with the Mental Health Debriefers
- Licensed professionals on a CISM Team are required to participate under their regulating body or professional Association and:
 - Abide by their Association's professional code of ethics
 - Understand their Association's regulation of their participation within the context of CISM services

Informed Consent and Right of Refusal

- *Informed consent* during a defusing or a debriefing is necessary:
 - A description of the process followed will be included in introductory remarks

- o The CISM Team will provide an in-service and overview of the CISM Program to any Fire Departments upon request and on an ongoing basis
- *Right of refusal:*
 - o A member's attendance or participation at a defusing or debriefing is voluntary:
 - o Debriefings are *highly recommended*, to avoid under use, when the critical incident meets the criteria
 - o In the event that a member strongly objects to attending and chooses to leave:
 - Advise his/her choice of exclusion may not be in his/her best interests
 - Provide a list of CISM contact members and encourage contact

Note Taking

- Under no circumstances will a CISM Team member take notes during a CISM intervention
- Team members may utilize cards outlining the stages of a defusing or debriefing
 - o Participants will be informed of the purpose of the cue card

Confidentiality

- All CISM team members and the CISM Committee Chairperson are required and obligated to maintain the confidentiality of all Fire Departments or their members:
 - o Seeking an informal CISM response
 - o Requiring a formal CISM response
- When a formal CISM response is requested:
 - o The referral source will be informed that a CISM response was mobilized (or not) but no particulars will be shared with the referral source.
- Following a CISM intervention, the Debriefers involved (Peer, Chaplain, Mental Health) may provide the Fire Department's management with general strategies, which may be helpful to reduce the impact the incident has had on its members.
- Under no circumstances will information from other debriefings be discussed by the CISM Team during a debriefing
- Under no circumstances will the confidentiality of the members receiving CISM services be breached
 - o The only exception is when an individual appears to be at risk to themselves or others
 - o In this case, the immediate services of Mental Health will be sought
- Any breach of confidentiality will result in immediate termination of membership
- All team members are required to sign a *Team Membership Agreement and Confidentiality Form* (Appendix 10)

On-Scene Support

- On-scene support may be deemed beneficial and initiated:
 - o Only in consultation with and approval of the Platoon Captain
- The on-scene team can consist of peer, chaplain, and mental health Team members
- The Team will:

- o Function under the direct command and restrictions identified by the Platoon Captain
- o Work in a coordinated manner with other Crisis Services called to the scene
- o Clearly identify themselves and their purpose while on scene
- o Provide support and crisis management intervention
- o Refer those significantly impacted to Mental Health Services and/or the Emergency Department for assessment
- o Be debriefed following an on-scene intervention

Peer Support

- A peer support will consult with a mental health Debriefers:
 - o When an individual is identified as presenting a danger to himself or others
 - o If intervention is outside of his role and/or knowledge
- Peer support should not be required to report to active duty immediately following a CISM intervention

Family or Significant Other CISM Services

- The Committee will provide and/or include family or significant others in CISM in-services at a Department's request
- Under no circumstances will family or significant others attend a defusing or debriefing intended for emergency responders
- The department accessing CISM services can request inclusion of family or significant others
 - o The mental health Debriefers will arrange necessary resources
- An emergency responder's confidentiality, who has participated in a CISM intervention, will be maintained unless consent for discussion with the family or significant other is authorized
- In the event of a line of duty death, the Department's protocols will supercede the CISM Committee protocols (see Line of Death policy)

CISM In-Services and Ongoing Education

- Any Fire Department may request a topics for in-services or ongoing education
 - o The Committee will respond to specific requests if deemed appropriate
 - o Team member participation in the development and presentation will be based on the nature of the request

Shared Resources with Other CISM Teams

- On occasion, The Lethbridge and District Fire Department CISM Team may be asked to assist other teams requiring resources
 - o Presently, the Team has no formal reciprocity agreements
 - o The decision on whether to participate will be made on a voluntary and case by case basis

- The CISM Team may require peer support from other disciplines (i.e. police, nurses) under the following circumstances:
 - When a defusing or debriefing includes participants from multi-disciplines
 - When accessing external peer support resources, the CISM Team will use *only* peer support trained in the ICISF model

Disaster Situations

- The Municipality Disaster Services Plan will supercede the CISM Committee's protocols
- CISM Team members in this situation are responsible to their respective department or agency
- Accessing an external CISM Team is likely in the best interests of the emergency responders and the CISM Team to assure adequate resources are available

Fire Department Requests for CISM Services

- Any member of a Fire Department or his/her family, the Union, or management may:
 - Request a CISM response following a critical incident
 - Seek out a CISM team member for peer support
 - Suggest a CISM sponsored educational in-service
 - Consult with the Chairperson or his alternative related to potential need for services
- A CISM request and subsequent intervention does not require management approval *except* in a line of duty death or disaster situation (see protocols)
- Normally, CISM requests are *initiated* by a Communications Specialist (Dispatcher) with the Public Safety Communication Centre (403-329-1225).

Procedure for Accessing CISM Services

- Contact the CISM Chairperson or his alternative in the order listed below:

- The CISM Chairperson or his alternative will:
 - Contact the Mental Health Clinical Team Leader or his/her alternative in the order listed below:

- o Evaluate the CISM request in consultation with the Clinical Team Leader or his alternative based on:
 - Individual vs. group needs
 - Criteria
- o Identify the discipline of the participants (i.e. firefighters, RCMP, nurses, etc.) who will be present
- o Determine the most appropriate CISM response
- o Mobilize a trained CISM Team and provide all pertinent details
- o Ensure that all members impacted have access to a CISM response through coordination with the referral source
- o Educate the referral source to requirements (i.e. room availability, refreshments)

Responsibility of Fire Departments Accessing Services

- It is the responsibility of the Fire Department requesting and accessing CISM services to:
 - o Provide specific and relevant details to prepare the CISM team
 - o Identify any operational issues or team conflicts that may complicate the intervention
 - o Identify the professional disciplines of participants (i.e. fire fighters, RCMP, etc.) to assure appropriate peer support can be arranged
 - o Notify *only* those emergency responders *directly involved* in the incident of the time and location of the intervention
 - o Identify any needs of emergency responder significant others (i.e. family)
 - o Provide a comfortable location, free of distractions, to accommodate the intervention
 - o Provide refreshments following the intervention, with focus on low caffeine, nutritional snacks
 - o Participate in follow-up with the assigned CISM team member post intervention as per the confidentiality policy

Civilian Requests for CISM Services

- Under no circumstances will the *Lethbridge and District Fire Department Critical Incident Stress Management Team* participate in civilian defusing, debriefings, or on-scene support
 - o Civilian requests will be forwarded to Victim's Services Unit or Mental Health Services
 - o It is noted that some Team members (i.e. Pastoral and Mental Health debriefers) serve on civilian teams)

- When appropriate, CISM Team members and/or the CISM Committee will provide consultation to and share their expertise with community agencies interested in establishing a civilian CISM team

Operational Policy and Procedure Review

- The Operational Policies and Procedures will be reviewed every two years minimally and under the following circumstances:
 - o Significant changes are made to CISM interventions and policies by ICISF
 - o There is significant change to the CISM Team/Committee structure
 - o The outcome of the *Concerns Resolution* process determines the need
- CISM Team and Committee contact numbers will remain current

CISM Team Member Contact Numbers

CISM Team Chairperson

Chaplain Services

Peer Support (Fire Department)

Peer Support (Police Services)

Paulette DeCoste 327-3964 (H)

Peer Support (Nursing)**Mental Health****Emergency Contact Numbers****Rural Fire Department Contacts**

Department	Contact	Number
Barons	Michael Dean	757-2138
Blairmore	Jamie Margetak	562-2486
Blood Tribe	Denis Chief Calf	737-2216
Cardston	Jacen Abrey	653-4818
Coaldale	Andy Van Rijn	345-4720
Coalhurst	Matt Conte	394-7581
Coutts	Mark Stanford	335-2534
Fort Macleod	Tim Caughlin	553-4994
Lethbridge	Dispatch	328-6060
Magrath	Tim Laucher	758-6628
Milk River	Randy Kukucska	647-2009
Nobleford	Harold Wielkie	824-3869
Picture Butte	Sam West	732-5688
Pincher Creek	Tom Harnos	627-9504
Raymond	Charlie Holt	752-3595
Stirling	Brian Still	756-3673
Taber		223-4777
Warner	Rick Carlson	642-3989

Emergency Contact Numbers

Service	Contact Name	Number
Disaster Services	Elbert Manderville	380-2273
Distress Line	pager	327-7905
Lethbridge Community Crisis Team	pager	329-5630
Lethbridge Fire Department	Chief Brian Cornforth	320-3803 (W) 894-8174 (C)
Lethbridge Regional Hospital	Emergency Department	388-6301
Lethbridge Regional Police Services	Main Desk	327-2210
Public Safety Communications Center	(911 dispatch)	
Red Cross	Main Office	327-7117
Salvation Army	Major Glen Habkirk	328-8376 (H) 328-2860 (W) 330-5311 (C)
Victim's Services Unit	Laraine Stuart	330-5023 (W) 394-6537 (H)

APPENDIXES

Application: Lethbridge and District CISM Team
 Reference Check: Peer Support (Letter)
 Reference Check: Peer Support Form
 Reference Check: Chairperson (Letter)

Reference Check: Chairperson Form
Reference Check: Chaplain Debriefing (Letter)
Reference Check: Chaplain Debriefing Form
Reference Check: Mental Health Debriefing (Letter)
Reference Check: Mental Health Debriefing Form
Team Membership Agreement and Confidentiality
CISM Follow-up: Contacts
CISM Information Sheet
Additional Resources
Record of Training

Appendix 2:
Reference Check: Peer Support
Lethbridge and District Fire Departments CISM Team

Date _____

Dear _____

The following individual, _____, has applied to become a member of the *Lethbridge and District Critical Incident Stress Management Team (CISM)* in the capacity of a *Peer Support Debriefing*. As part of the formal recruitment process a reference check is required.

Suitability factors such as the following will be considered:

- Credibility amongst peers
- High regard for confidentiality
- Respected and respectful
- Diplomacy, sensitivity
- Responsible, follow through on commitments
- Demonstrate commitment to own self care
- Clear boundaries
- Commitment and availability

Knowledge / performance factors such as the following will also be considered:

- Mastery of own workload
- Other relevant training and years of experience brought to this role

This role requires a volunteer commitment to participate in unscheduled CISM interventions such as defusings, debriefings, and 1:1 peer support, mandatory CISM training in-services twice per year and Fire Department in-services.

_____ has provided your name as a reference and your input, to assure the CISM Team meets the highest standards of trained Peer Support, would be greatly appreciated.

Please feel free to contact me at (phone number) should you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

Signature

Appendix 3:
Reference Check: Peer Support
Lethbridge and District Fire Departments CISM Team

1. Applicant's name. _____
2. How long have you known the applicant? _____
3. In what capacity have you know the applicant?

—
4. Based on the *Suitability Factors* described above, do you feel that the applicant demonstrates these characteristics, which are crucial to a Peer Support Role? Please comment.

5. Based on the *Knowledge /Performance Factors* described above, do you feel the applicant demonstrates these characteristics, which are crucial to the Peer Support Role due to the time commitment expected? Please comment.

6. Is the applicant able to give feedback in a constructive manner and receive feedback? Please comment.

Signature

Date

Thank you for taking the time to complete this reference check.

Appendix 4:
Reference Check: Chairperson
Lethbridge and District Fire Departments CISM Team

Date _____

Dear _____

The following individual, _____, has applied to become a member of the *Lethbridge and District Critical Incident Stress Management Team (CISM)* in the capacity of Chairperson. As part of the formal recruitment process a reference check is required.

Suitability factors such as the following will be considered:

- Credibility amongst peers
- High regard for confidentiality
- Respected and respectful
- Diplomacy, sensitivity
- Responsible, follow through on commitments

- Demonstrate commitment to own self care
- Clear boundaries
- Commitment and availability

Knowledge / performance factors such as the following will also be considered:

- Mastery of own workload
- Other relevant training and years of experience brought to this role

Organizational factors such as the following will also be considered:

- Knowledge of all CISM interventions to determine appropriateness of request
- Demonstrated leadership ability
- Organizational skills to coordinate the program
- Availability for crisis contacts
- Knowledge of community resources

This role requires a volunteer commitment to coordinate the overall program and provide leadership to the CISM Team.

_____ has provided your name as a reference and your input, to assure the CISM Team meets the highest standards of trained Peer Support, would be greatly appreciated.

Please feel free to contact me at (phone number) should you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

Appendix 5:
Reference Check: Chairperson
Lethbridge and District Fire Departments CISM Team

1. Applicant's name. _____

2. How long have you known the applicant? _____

3. In what capacity have you know the applicant?

4. Based on the *Suitability Factors* described above, do you feel that the applicant demonstrates these characteristics, which are crucial to a leadership role? Please comment.

5. Based on the *Knowledge /Performance Factors* described above, do you feel the applicant demonstrates these characteristics, which are crucial to a Chairperson's role due to the time commitment expected? Please comment.

6. Based on the *Organizational Factors* described above, do you feel the applicant demonstrates the leadership characteristics required to manage a CISM Team? Please comment:

7. Is the applicant able to give feedback in a constructive manner and receive feedback? Please comment.

Signature

Date

Thank you for taking the time to complete this reference check.

Appendix 6:
Reference Check: Chaplain Debriefer
Lethbridge and District Fire Departments CISM Team

Date _____

Dear _____

The following individual, _____, has applied to become a member of the *Lethbridge and District Critical Incident Stress Management Team (CISM)* in the capacity of Chaplain *Debriefer*. As part of the formal recruitment process a reference check is required.

Suitability factors such as the following will be considered:

- Credibility
- High regard for confidentiality
- Respected and respectful
- Diplomacy, sensitivity
- Responsible, follow through on commitments

- Demonstrate commitment to own self care
- Clear boundaries
- Commitment and availability

Knowledge / performance factors such as the following will also be considered:

- Mastery of own workload
- Other relevant training and years of experience brought to this role
- Active role in a community church

This role requires a volunteer commitment to coordinate the overall program and provide leadership to the CISM Team.

_____ has provided your name as a reference and your input, to assure the CISM Team meets the highest standards of Pastoral Support, would be greatly appreciated.

Please feel free to contact me at (phone number) should you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

Appendix 7: Reference Check: Chaplain Debrief Lethbridge and District Fire Departments CISM Team

1. Applicant's name. _____
2. How long have you known the applicant? _____
3. In what capacity have you know the applicant?

—
4. Based on the *Suitability Factors* described above, do you feel that the applicant demonstrates these characteristics, which are crucial to a Chaplain's role? Please comment.

5. Based on the *Knowledge /Performance Factors* described above, do you feel the applicant demonstrates these characteristics, which are crucial to a Chaplain's role due to the time commitment expected? Please comment.

6. Is the applicant able to give feedback in a constructive manner and receive feedback? Please comment.

Signature

Date

Thank you for taking the time to complete this reference check.

Appendix 8:

Reference Check: Mental Health Debriefer
Lethbridge and District Fire Departments CISM Team

Date _____

Dear _____

The following individual, _____, has applied to become a member of the *Lethbridge and District Critical Incident Stress Management Team (CISM)* in the capacity of a *Mental Health Debriefer*. As part of the formal recruitment process a reference check is required.

Suitability factors such as the following will be considered:

- Credibility amongst peers
- High regard for confidentiality
- Respected and respectful
- Diplomacy, sensitivity
- Responsible, follow through on commitments
- Demonstrate commitment to own self care
- Clear boundaries
- Commitment and availability

Knowledge / performance factors such as the following will also be considered:

- Mastery of own workload
- Other relevant training and years of experience brought to this role

This role requires a volunteer commitment to participate in unscheduled CISM interventions such as defusings, debriefings, and 1:1 peer support, mandatory CISM training in-services twice per year and Fire Department in-services.

_____ has provided your name as a reference and your input, to assure the CISM Team meets the highest standards of trained Mental Health support, would be greatly appreciated.

Please feel free to contact me at (phone number)_should you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

Appendix 9:
Reference Check: Mental Health Debriefers
Lethbridge and District Fire Departments CISM Team

1. Applicant's name. _____
2. How long have you known the applicant? _____

3. In what capacity have you know the applicant?

4. Based on the *Suitability Factors* described above, do you feel that the applicant demonstrates these characteristics, which are crucial to a Mental Health Debriefers? Please comment.

5. Based on the *Knowledge /Performance Factors* described above, do you feel the applicant demonstrates these characteristics, which are crucial to the Mental Health Debriefers role, due to the time commitment expected? Please comment.

6. Is the applicant able to give feedback in a constructive manner and receive feedback? Please comment.

Signature

Date

Thank you for taking the time to complete this reference check.

Appendix 10

Lethbridge and District Critical Incident Stress Management Team
Team Membership Agreement and Confidentiality

I, _____, have read and understand the *Operational Procedures and Policies of the Lethbridge and District Fire Departments Critical Incident Stress Management Program (revision 2003)*.

Confidentiality

- All CISM team members and the CISM Committee Chairperson are required and obligated to maintain the confidentiality of all Fire Departments or their members:
 - Seeking an informal CISM response
 - Requiring a formal CISM response
- When a formal CISM response is requested:
 - The referral source will be informed that a CISM response was mobilized (or not) but no particulars will be shared with the referral source.
- Following a CISM intervention, the debriefers involved (Peer, Chaplain, Mental Health) may provide the Fire Department's management with specific strategies, which may be helpful to reduce the impact the incident has had on its members.
- Under no circumstances will the confidentiality of the participants be breached.
 - The only exception to the above is in the case where an individual appears to be at risk to themselves or others. In this case, the immediate services of Mental Health will be sought.

I understand that any breach of confidentiality will result in the immediate termination of my membership on the Lethbridge and District Fire Departments Critical Incident Stress Management Team.

I also agree to abide by the policies and procedures as outlined.

Signature

Date

Witness

Date

Appendix 11: CISM Team Follow-up: Contacts

The CISM Team members checked below participated in your defusing or debriefing. Please do not hesitate to contact **any** member of the team. Your contact will be kept strictly confidential.

CISM Team Chairperson

Chaplain Services

Peer Support

[illegible]

Mental Health

Appendix 12: Critical Incident Stress Information Sheet

You have experienced a traumatic event or critical incident (any event that causes unusually strong emotional reactions that have the potential to interfere with the ability to function normally). Even though the event may be over, you may now be experiencing or may experience later, some strong

emotional or physical reactions. It is very common, in fact quite normal, for people to experience emotional aftershocks when they have passed through a horrible event.

Sometimes the emotional aftershocks (or stress reactions) appear immediately after the traumatic event. Sometimes they may appear a few hours or a few days later. And in some cases, weeks or months may pass before the stress reactions appear.

The signs and symptoms of a stress reaction may last a few days, a few weeks, a few months, or longer, depending on the severity of the traumatic event. The understanding and the support of loved ones and your peers usually help the stress reactions to pass more quickly.

Here are the common signs and symptoms of a stress reaction:

PHYSICAL * Chills, thirst, fatigue, nausea, fainting, twitches, vomiting, dizziness, weakness, chest pain, headaches, elevated BP, rapid heart rate, muscle tremors, shock symptoms, grinding of teeth, visual difficulties, profuse sweating, difficulty breathing	BEHAVIORAL Withdrawal, antisocial acts, inability to rest, intensified pacing, erratic movements, change in social activity, change in speech patterns, loss or increase in appetite, hyperalert to environment, increased alcohol consumption, change in usual communications
EMOTIONAL Fear, guilt, grief, panic, denial, anxiety, agitation, irritability, depression, intense anger, apprehension, depression, emotional shock, emotional outbursts, feeling overwhelmed, loss of emotional control, inappropriate emotional response	COGNITIVE Confusion, nightmares, uncertainty, hyper vigilance, suspiciousness, intrusive images, blaming someone, poor problem solving, poor abstract thinking, poor attention, poor decisions, poor concentration or memory, disorientation of person, place, or time, difficulty identifying objects or people, heightened or lowered alertness, increased or decreased awareness of surroundings

*Any of these symptoms may indicate the need for medical evaluation. When in doubt, consult a physician.

As an emergency responder, it is important to acknowledge these symptoms. The suggestions offered in a defusing, debriefing, or 1:1 may be helpful for you to speed up your recovery. However, if your symptoms persist and begin to affect your ability to function or your relationships, it is important to seek help. Occasionally, the traumatic event is so painful that professional assistance may be necessary. This does not imply craziness or weakness. It simply indicates that the particular event was just too powerful for the person to manage himself. Please contact a CISM Team member for additional support.

Appendix 12A: Additional Resources

If you feel that you require additional support, services and/or contact numbers, which may be helpful, are:

Mental Health Services • Blairmore 562-3222 • Cardston 653-5115 • Fort Macleod 553-5040 • Lethbridge 381-5260 • Pincher Creek 627-1121 • Raymond 752-7960 • Taber 223-7932	Distress Line 327-7905 • 24 hour operation Lethbridge Family Services 327-5762 Your Family Physician Your Chaplain
AADAC • Lethbridge 381-5183 • Crowsnest Pass 562-2966	Community Crisis Team 329-5630 • Lethbridge only • 0700 to 0100
EAP Services • If available through work	

Appendix 13: Record of Training: Lethbridge and District CISM Team

[illegible]

Appendix 1:
Application: Lethbridge and District CISM Team

Name Address				Position Applied For:		Provide the Name and Address of Two (2) References
				Peer Support/Debriefers		
				Chaplain Debriefers		
				Mental Health Debriefers		
Contact Numbers				CISM Committee Chairperson		
				Mental Health Clinical Team Leader		
Home		Work		Both Committee/Team Member		
Cell		Pager		Committee Member Only		

CISM Courses Completed		Year	Describe Qualifications and Experience	Employment
	ICISF Basic		Emergency Responder: Clergy or Mental Health: Are you prepared to do ride-alongs for cross Training purposes? Other: <i>Current Criminal Records Check Required</i>	Present Employer: Occupation: Describe any limitations your employment will have on your ability to respond to Unscheduled CISM requests.
	ICISF Advanced			
	ICISF Peer Support			
	ICISF Chaplain			
	ICISF Train the Trainer			
	Other:			
Are you prepared to take the CISM training required to obtain and/or maintain Team qualifications?				

Why are you interested in joining the CISM Team?

Signature:

Date:

