

HELPING EMPLOYEES AFTER A CRITICAL INCIDENT

Responding appropriately to a critical incident in the workplace is essential for the health, wellbeing and resilience of your staff.

The speed and quality of response can greatly affect the time it takes for your business to return to normal after a traumatic or distressing incident.

1. Put workers' sense of safety first

Ensure your employees are removed from danger or exposure to distressing circumstances. It's important to reassure them and keep as calm as possible.

It's crucial to be seen by your employees to respond swiftly, appropriately and responsibly. This will restore trust and goodwill amongst your staff.

3. Offer them support

Ask your staff what will assist them. Seek their input and their guidance about what they need from you.

Offer to contact family members or external counsellors who can provide them with care or support. Be proactive in getting support for them.

Speaking to and debriefing with someone outside the organisation will be very helpful for your staff.

2. Acknowledge the seriousness of what has occurred

Reassure your employees that their distress is normal and appropriate, given the circumstances. Respond to their questions and take on board the concerns they may have. Encourage your staff to talk about what has happened.

4. Promote a Return to Normal

Emphasise the importance of stability for your staff and encourage them to stick to their normal routines.

A sense of safety and security is restored with a return to normal both at work and at home.

Your staff will benefit from seeing that their employer has a plan to safely and compassionately reestablish normal operations.

5. Monitor and Follow Up

Responses to critical incidents vary from individual to individual, and there can be delayed reactions. It's important to pay attention to changes in work performance or attendance over time after a critical incident.

External support services may be required immediately and on an on-going basis, depending on the nature and severity of the critical incident. This is especially true, since individuals process these events and their emotional responses in different ways and at different speeds.

It is especially important for managers and team leaders, who will take on the responsibility of assisting their staff to recover from a critical incident, to ensure they look after themselves as well.