# After a Critical Incident at Work: A Practical Guide for Managers

A serious workplace incident can leave managers feeling unsure about how to support their team. In the event of a Critical Incident, a manager's role is to provide safety, information, practical support, and connection to appropriate resources. Providing safety means first addressing any immediate safety and medical needs, followed by proper emergency and reporting procedures.

Managers can use the following steps to communicate with employees and offer practical support in the days and hours following an incident.

## Take a moment to ground yourself.

Check in with how you are feeling before speaking with employees. If you are feeling too overwhelmed to communicate clearly, ask another manager to lead or support the conversation. Give yourself a moment to process everything and remember that you may also need support.

An optional grounding exercise. If helpful, take a moment to notice:

- ✓ ***Five things you can see.***
- ✓ ***Four things you can feel.***
- ✓ ***Three things you can hear.***
- ✓ ***Two things you can smell.***
- ✓ ***One thing you can taste.***

*Keep your eyes open and adapt or skip any step that is not comfortable or accessible to you.*

## Meet with employees and share clear information.

Arrange a brief update for affected employees either individually or in a group, as soon as it is practical to do so. It is okay not to have every answer right away. Focus on providing a calm, respectful space and addressing employees' immediate information needs.

- Share only confirmed facts about what happened and the current situation and avoid speculation.
- Explain what management is doing to address the situation and support employees.
- Respect privacy by sharing only the information employees need to understand the situation, avoiding confidential or unnecessary details.
- Acknowledge what is still unknown and let employees know when to expect the next update.
- Share all essential information with employees who are absent or unable to attend.

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→ **If you are arranging a critical incident response intervention with FSEAP**, explain what employees can expect, along with the details of when, where, and how the intervention will take place. Ensure employees know that these sessions are strictly voluntary, and that sharing personal reactions is optional.

## Respond with warmth and sensitivity.

If an employee becomes upset, acknowledge their feelings and listen without pressing for details. Ask simple, practical questions such as, "What would help you right now?" or "Is there someone you would like us to contact?"

You do not need to provide counselling or resolve their feelings. Focus on listening, addressing immediate needs, and helping them connect with appropriate support.

## Offer practical assistance.

After the meeting, some employees may appreciate a private check-in. Ask whether they need a quiet space, a break from their duties, or help contact someone they trust.

Before employees leave, check if they need help getting home safely. If there are concerns about driving, help arrange alternative transportation and, if necessary, have someone accompany them.

Where possible, offer to cover a taxi fare if a friend, colleague, or family member is unavailable.

## Follow up in the days ahead.

Check in privately with affected employees and continue to provide updates. Revisit practical needs, such as temporary adjustments to duties or workload, and remind employees how to access support. Everyone processes experiences differently, and support needs can change over time.

## Contact FSEAP for support.

**Unsure what support your team needs?** Contact FSEAP to discuss the incident, available support options, and practical next steps for your organization. Our experienced counsellors can help you consider appropriate support for managers and employees.

Visit this link to fill out an online request form:
FSEAP Critical Incident Response (CIR) - External Organization Request Form – Fill out form

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