



CRITICAL INCIDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

You're saving lives on the water
but who's supporting you?

It can be tough out there.
If you feel like you need help,
even just to talk things through, we're here.

Just reach out



**Support can be requested at any time. There is no cut-off period after an incident.
All support can be accessed via 1800 049 933**

CRITICAL INCIDENTS

As a member of Marine Rescue NSW, you might be involved in a critical incident at some stage.

This could involve:

- Search and rescue incidents (successful or unsuccessful)
- Body recoveries
- Boating accidents
- Abuse/assault from members of public
- Medical emergencies/injuries
- Resuscitation attempts (successful or unsuccessful)
- Coordination of radio communications and/or SAR response
- Supporting members of the family of missing/deceased/injured persons

All personnel will have different reactions to critical incidents. It is important to note that it is the individual's REACTION to an incident that makes it CRITICAL for that person, not necessarily the size or the nature of the incident.

Critical Incident Support Services (CISS) are available to support all members of Marine Rescue NSW who might be experiencing a traumatic or stressful reaction following their operational duties. This service is delivered with the support of the NSW Rural Fire Service.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF STRESS REACTION

You might experience a stress reaction shortly after an incident but it might also take some time.

Some of the symptoms you might experience include:

Physical

- Headaches, fatigue
- Shock symptoms
- Appetite changes

Thoughts

- Concentration difficulties
- Nightmares, hyper-vigilance
- Intrusive images and/or thoughts of the incident
- Memories of previous events
- Self-blame

Emotions

- Fear, guilt
- Anxiety, depression, sadness
- Anger, agitation
- Feeling lost or abandoned

Behaviour

- Withdrawal from others
- Avoidance and fear of the situation or reminders of the incident



1800 049 933

MRNSW CISS - provided with the support of the NSW RFS



- Increased alcohol/drug consumption
- Emotional outbursts
- Sleep disturbance

UNDERSTANDING STRESS AND WHAT YOU CAN DO

Stress is the body's way of sourcing energy in order to operate outside our normal comfort zone. Stress can be caused by internal stressors, such as thoughts or feelings, or external stressors, such as poor health, conflict, noise etc.

Stress will not resolve spontaneously; we need to take steps to break the cycle of stress. It is important to identify what causes you stress and to put in place some steps to help reduce it.

These steps might help:

- Think about what has helped you cope in the past and what you can do now.
- Take time to eat, rest and relax, even if it is for short periods.
- Try to keep some perspective; remember that you are not responsible for solving everyone's problems and no one expects you to.
- Minimise your intake of alcohol, caffeine or nicotine and avoid non-prescription drugs.
- Check in with your friends and family. Spend time with your fellow crew to see how they are going and have them check in with you. Find ways to support each other.

GUIDANCE FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS

- Be available to listen if the person wants to talk; encourage but don't pressure them.
- The simple act of being heard can go a long way towards someone gathering their thoughts and feeling more at ease.
- If it seems that the situation is worsening with your loved one or friend and you are not sure what to do, please call for CISS Support - guidance can be provided to you, too.

TYPES OF ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

On Scene Support (immediate)

Where possible, a CISS team member may be present on-scene to provide immediate support and initial assistance to any distressed members.

Small Group Support (shortly after)

This would typically be held within the first 24 hours after an

incident. It is designed to help reduce stress and tension, promote a return to normal function and prepare participants to seek further assistance. It allows initial ventilation of feelings and for the wellbeing of members to be checked.

Powerful Event Group Support

This would typically be held from 48 hours up to three weeks after an incident, with the aim of helping people understand and manage their reaction and accelerate a normal recovery. The emphasis is on helping mitigate distress, building resiliency, setting appropriate expectations and identifying healthy coping resources.

One-on-one (any time)

Any member of Marine Rescue NSW can request confidential one-on-one assistance at any time. This allows more individual attention and can be over the telephone or face-to-face.

PARTICIPATION

Participation is highly encouraged for any Marine Rescue NSW member directly involved in a critical incident, however, involvement in the CISS program is not mandatory.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is maintained regarding any Critical Incident Support Services provided. No information regarding the name, personal reactions, feelings, problems or behaviour of any member will be recorded or disclosed unless it is required by law, to sustain life, or is the express wish and with the consent of the individual receiving the support.

COSTS

This program is provided at no cost to Marine Rescue NSW members involved in critical incidents.

MRNSW CISS

For support (24/7) call
1800 049 933

