

Surf Life Saving NSW – Critical Incident Debrief Pack

To: Branch Presidents, Branch CEO's, Branch Directors of Lifesaving, Branch Support Staff, Duty Officers and Club Captains
From: Bernard Utteridge - Lifesaving Officer, SLSNSW
Date: 3 September 2015
Subject: Critical Incident Debrief Pack

Summary:	The environment in which surf lifesaving operates has the potential for members to be involved in serious incidents of a high-intensity and traumatic nature, and which do often involve death, serious injury and/or significant risk to lifesaving personnel. These are referred to as 'critical incidents'.
Objective:	To outline relevant procedures/processes and provide consistent and structured delivery of effective Critical Incident Debriefing.
Action:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) To maintain member welfare/support2) To ensure obligatory paperwork and data is recorded, collected and forwarded appropriately3) The Surf Life Saving response is documented for future review or for legal reasons (if required)4) Surf Life Saving is best positioned (through effective data collection) to provide drowning prevention recommendations to the Coroner and relevant local government authorities.

The Branch Duty Officer (or equivalent) should lead every Critical Incident Debrief as part of the Incident Recovery Phase. If a Duty Officer is not available an appropriate Branch Officer should be tasked to deliver the debrief.

What is involved in a Critical Incident Debrief?

The critical incident process can be broken into three separate parts:

- 1) Operational Debrief
- 2) Emotive Debrief (Psychological First Aid)
- 3) Expert Counselling (as required post incident)

1. Operational Debrief

The Duty Officer shall attend the incident and support the Patrol Captain ensuring that all members are operating in a safe and coordinated environment. At the conclusion of an incident the Duty Officer or an appropriate Branch Officer will lead the Operational Debrief, speaking to the patrol as a group as well as recording the members involvement (who was involved and in what capacity) and brainstorming the strengths and weaknesses of the incident.

The Duty Officer is to ensure that all paperwork is forwarded on to the Branch Director of Lifesaving within 48 hours of the incident.

**What incidents need a Critical Incident Debrief defined in the Critical Incident Pack 2015*

2. Emotive Debrief (Psychological First Aid)

Critical incidents can have a strong emotional impact, which can overwhelm the usually effective coping skills of the individual or group. Members may experience a number of different reactions to a critical incident, all of which are completely normal. The role of the Duty Officer is to identify any member who is demonstrating any signs and or symptoms of a critical incident and ensure that the member gets further support.

**Signs and symptoms as outlined in the Critical Incident Pack 2015*

3. Expert Counselling– if required.

SLSNSW has a contract with a private counselling organisation. Expert counselling plays the following roles in SLS Critical Incidents:

- Provision of trauma information/brochures
- Provision of three free 24/7 counselling sessions to members once approved by SLSNSW
- Provision of psychological first aid (emotive debrief) training to Branch Duty Officers and Peer Support Officers
- Provision of group counselling sessions for significantly traumatic critical incidents

Assure programs (immediate response): Duty Officer is to email the names of ALL members involved to lifesaving@surflifesaving.com.au . Once received the Lifesaving Officer on call will contact Assure Programs giving members approval to access 24/7 telephone counselling.

Accessing the Critical Incident Debrief Pack:

The new Critical Incident Pack can be found on Surf Life Saving NSW website. Please click on the links below for the following:

- Critical Incident Debrief Pack 2015: PDF format which can be downloaded and printed
<http://bit.ly/1NbKprv>
- Critical Incident Debrief Pack 2015 – Interactive: This format allows members to fill out the pack on any Computer, iPad, iPhone and Android
<http://bit.ly/1UoIWDz>
- Instructions: Gives direction on how to open, edit and email the interactive file
<http://bit.ly/1fWkfua>

For more information, contact Bernard Utteridge on:

Ph: (02) 9471 8000

Email: butteridge@surflifesaving.com.au