

Critical Incident Support

Information for family and friends

The environment in which Surf Life Saving operates has the potential for members to be involved in incidents of a traumatic nature. Such incidents could include the loss of life, the provision of emergency care, search and rescue operations, or a serious incident involving fellow members.

Members are affected differently by incidents, and it is the reaction of the individual which makes the incident critical for that person, not necessarily the size or nature of the incident. SLSNSW is committed to lessening the impact of critical incident stress on members, staff and their families by providing best practice support following an incident.

Support provided by SLSNSW

All members involved in a critical incident will be offered support in line with best practice. Members will take part in a group briefing session following the incident which will outline the support options available to them. Each member will then be contacted for well checks on three occasions in the month post-incident. These touch points give us the best possible chance of identifying members who may require further support as reactions may change in the days and weeks post-incident.

Referrals can be made to professional psychological support at any stage of the critical incident support process, either via the SLSNSW Employee Assistance Program, or by the member speaking to their GP.



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Reactions following an incident

Being aware of the possible reactions to experiencing or witnessing an incident can help you to recognise when someone you care about may be experiencing negative mental health outcomes. Possible reactions following a critical incident include:

- Avoiding reminders of event, such as the place it occurred, or people involved
- Constant negative thoughts and feelings
- Trouble sleeping or concentrating
- Displaying anger and irritability or sweating
- Being easily startled, constantly vigilant or highly strung
- Withdrawal from friends and family or a loss of motivation
- Feeling low and / or tired all the time
- Changes in appetite, sleep, weight or increased alcohol or drug use

How you can help

Critical incidents can cause distress and people will vary in their reactions to them. For most people, reactions to critical incidents are short-lived, subsiding within a few days or weeks.

If you are worried about someone you know who has been involved in a critical incident in SLSNSW, we encourage you check in and encourage them to seek support if needed.

SLSNSW's Member Welfare Officer can be contacted at memberwelfare@surflifesaving.com.au if you are unsure of how to access these services, or want to have a chat about which service might be best for a member you care about.



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