

SOUTH PORTLAND FIRE DEPARTMENT

STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES

Policy #:	5.219	Effective Date:	8/6/2024
Title:	Critical Incident Debriefing / Defusing	# of pages:	2
Category:	Personnel	Classification:	Yellow

1. **PURPOSE:** To inform all Fire Department personnel as to when a defusing and/or a debriefing should be conducted.

2. DEFINITIONS

- **Critical Incident** – Any unusually challenging event that has the potential to create significant human stress and can overwhelm one’s coping mechanism. Critical incidents may include events such as serious traumas, suicides, pediatric cardiac arrests or traumas, line-of-duty deaths
- **Critical Incident Stress Management Team (CISM)** – A trained team developed for use after any critical incident designed specifically to manage traumatic stress associated with exposure to critical incidents
- **Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD)** – A crisis intervention tool used by the CISM Team designed to assist department members after an exposure to the same critical incident. These usually occur between 24 hours to one week after the incident.
- **Defusing** – Post-crisis group intervention led by trained on shift CISM Team members with on duty crews involved in a critical incident that would usually occur after the incident and before the crews are placed back into service.
- **Peer Support Team** – A group of department individuals, who are trained in stress management, who are familiar with outside resources and who are selected by their peers to provide support for department members in times of personal or professional conflict.
- **Unusually Stressful Incident** - An incident that may involve physical or emotional stressors outside those normally experienced. Unusually Stressful Incidents may include prolonged extrications, unusual or significant trauma, treating line-of-duty injuries, and incidents involving serious abuse or neglect.

3. GUIDELINES

A. Fire Department Personnel

- Whenever a Critical Incident occurs, the Duty Chief will contact the Peer Support Team to conduct a Defusing. The Defusing will occur before companies return to service. Upon consultation with the Peer Support Team, a determination will be made as to whether or not members involved in the Critical Incident will return to duty, or be relieved for the remainder of their shift.
- The Duty Chief and the Peer Support Team will arrange for members to participate in a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing as soon as deemed practical and appropriate.
- The defusing may be conducted by a qualified member of the SPFD Peer Support Team, SPPD Peer Support Team, Portland Fire Department Peer Support Team or Southern Maine Critical Incident Stress Management Team.

B. Civilians

- The Department and its Peer Support Team is not designed to assist civilians during times of Critical Incidents or Unusually Stressful Incidents. The Incident Commander at any Critical or Unusually Stressful Incident should contact TIPS via Fire Alarm to assist civilians.

4. REFERENCES:

- Policy # 5.220 Peer Support Team

By Order Of:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phil Selberg', written in a cursive style.

Phil Selberg
Fire Chief