	Matthews Police Department		
	General Order: Police Critical Incident Stress	Section 02: Administrative Requirements	Order #: 02-18
	Review: Annually in July by the Administrative Division Commander	Issue Date: 07/22/2020	

I. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines that will assist personnel in coping with extremely stressful incidents.

II. CROSS REF:

G.O. 08-05 Investigation Of Officer-Involved Shootings and Other Serious Incidents

G.O. 02-15 Early Intervention System

G.O. 02-17 Light Duty


III. DISCUSSION:

IV. POLICY:

Law enforcement duties often expose officers, dispatchers, and support personnel to emotionally painful and highly stressful situations that cannot be resolved through normal stress coping mechanisms. It is the desire of the Matthews Police Department to provide employees with information on coping with stress. The Matthews Police Department will take immediate action after such incidents to safeguard the continued good mental and emotional health of all involved employees, sworn and civilian.

V. DEFINITIONS:


1. Critical Incident Stress: An intense but normal reaction to any event that is sufficiently powerful enough to overwhelm usual coping mechanisms. Reactions to traumatic stress can continue for an extended period. These reactions may or may not seriously interfere with the ability to function in one's normal duties. Examples of critical incidents include:
 - A. shooting incidents;
 - B. death or serious injury to a fellow officer;
 - C. the sudden, unexpected or violent death of a person well-known to the law enforcement community;
 - D. multiple fatalities;
 - E. death of a child;
 - F. prolonged incidents such as hostage situations, particularly when a death or injury has occurred;
 - G. vehicle accidents resulting in serious injury or death;
 - H. or any call for service causing severe emotional and physical stress.
2. Traumatic Stress Response: An organizational response to critical incidents based on the needs of the Matthews Police Department.
3. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: A psychological disorder that can result from exposure to short-term severe stress or the cumulative effects of prolonged mild stress.
4. Critical Incident Support Supervisor: A supervisor dispatched to the scene that is not responsible for the incident whose primary responsibility will be to attend to the involved personnel. For the purposes of this directive, "supervisor" refers to the rank of Sergeant or Lieutenant.

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5. Defusing: A brief informal discussion with employees affected by the incident with the critical incident support supervisor, the shift supervisor, or the division commander, or Employee Assistance Program Representative assigned by Human Resources to ensure that the employees are emotionally stable and handling the situation properly. The defusing should be conducted prior to the end of the tour of duty but should not interfere with the investigation or the integrity of the scene. The defusing should be conducted individually with the affected personnel. Information shared during a defusing is not privileged information.
6. Tactical Debriefing: Also, referred to as an After Action Review (AAR). A formal discussion of the incident with employees who were involved in the situation. The debriefing should allow involved employees to explain their involvement and to ask questions. Actions that were conducted should be identified as "Actions to Sustain." Actions that could be improved upon should be identified as "Actions that Need Improvement." An action plan should be discussed to correct the "Actions that Need Improvement." Confidential information critical to the investigation should not be shared during this session. The personnel conducting the debriefing will be aware of indicators that an employee may be in distress. Information shared during a tactical debriefing is not privileged information. Areas of training focus should also be identified and shared with the Training Unit if not in attendance. It is recommended that officers assigned to the Department's Training Unit be in attendance.
7. Privileged Communication: Any communication made by the employee or immediate family member to a medical/psychological care provider.
8. Medical/Psychological Care Provider: For the purpose of this order, a medical/psychological care provider will refer to doctors and/or certified specialists contracted by the Town of Matthews to provide medical or psychological services to employees, including Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Services.
9. Chaplain: A member of the clergy who serves in a nondenominational capacity to aid employees in their spiritual health as well as other aspects of health and wellness.
10. Early Intervention System: A data-based system designed to assist supervisors and command in identifying employees whose performance warrants review and, where appropriate, outline intervention procedures in circumstances where the employee's behavior may have negative consequences for the employee, coworkers, the Department, and the general public. The overall focus should be the promotion of employee wellness.

VI. PROCEDURES:

1. Following any critical incident in which an officer uses deadly force, whether or not it causes serious injury or death, or an incident deemed critical by the Command of the Matthews Police Department, the involved personnel will be removed from line duties pending the investigation but will remain available for any necessary administrative investigation. As soon as practical, the employee(s) will be granted not less than 72 hours (3 Consecutive Days) of paid administrative leave by the division commander. Additional administrative leave days may be approved by the Chief of Police and/or the Human Resources Director.
 - A. During this leave, the employee(s) will remain available for administrative call-back needs.

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2. Administrative investigations will be conducted as soon as practical. However, investigators will be cognizant of the traumatic stressors following a critical incident and allow breaks if necessary.
3. A peer officer will be available to the employee(s) following the incident. This officer may be selected by the involved employee(s) to allow for a high level of comfort. The peer officer may sit with the employee(s) during periods of waiting, contact family members if requested, and provide for necessary physical needs such as acquiring a change of clothing, food, drinks, etc. The peer officer may also be available to assist with employee(s) needs at home or with transporting the employee(s) to required meetings, medical/psychological visits, etc.
4. A brief defusing for all affected personnel is recommended as soon as is practical following a critical incident. This usually should be done prior to the end of the tour of duty. This meeting can be conducted by the Department Chaplain, members of the Command Staff, Human Resources or their appointed designees such as EAP.
5. If the affected personnel are clearly experiencing significant stress, the supervisor, division commander, or Chief of Police shall recommend medical/psychological treatment or contact the Department Chaplain.
 - A. The employee(s) Division Commander is responsible for coordinating with Human Resources and EAP to schedule appointments with a medical/psychological provider.
 - B. The response should take place within 72 following the incident or as soon as available.
 - C. It is recommended that all personnel directly involved in the incident, including communications personnel, citizen volunteers, or any other employee attend medical/psychological treatment and the tactical debriefing.
 - D. Generally, defusing and medical/psychological treatment participation should be mandatory, although Command Staff and Human Resources have the discretion to exempt attendance if it would constitute an unreasonable hardship for any individual to attend.
6. Employees directly involved in a critical incident involving serious injury or death may meet with EAP and/or the Town contracted medical/psychological provider for a confidential session to address post-incident trauma reactions and stress management. In some cases, the officer(s) may be required to meet with EAP and/or the Town contracted medical/psychological provider before returning to duty.
7. All officers who willfully discharge their firearm in the course of their duties (except animal euthanasia) and officers or employees directly exposed to the incident will meet with EAP and/or the Town contracted medical/psychological provider for a confidential session to address post-incident trauma reactions and stress management.
 - A. This session will be arranged by Human Resources. If possible, this session will occur within a few days of the incident, follow up sessions may occur if necessary. This will not be a fitness for duty evaluation and no report will be required from these visits, except that the employee did or did not attend. The employee's first-line supervisor will work with Human Resource to ensure that the initial and any follow-up appointments are made.

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- B. The involved officer(s) Division Commander will be responsible for making reasonable attempts to keep the officer(s) informed about the progress of the investigation(s) and other pertinent information on a regular basis.
8. In the event of a critical incident involving serious injury or death to an officer, the Matthews Police Department recognizes that support personnel and non-sworn employees can be seriously affected. A traumatic stress response will be implemented if needed.
9. The Matthews Police Department strongly encourages the family of the involved employee(s) to take advantage of available counseling and support services provided through the Town of Matthews.
10. The Public Information Officer will make reasonable attempts to keep employees informed on a timely basis of critical incidents. Department members are encouraged to show the involved employee(s) their concern and support.
11. When considering assignment for administrative duties following a shooting incident, returning an officer to an area of the department they are most familiar with may be helpful in the psychological adjustment. The determination of the assignment will be made based on the availability of positions based on Department and Town policies covering light-duty and with input from the affected officer(s).
12. Human Resources will evaluate on a case by case basis with the employee and their supervisor any need for an additional leave of absence or accommodation as a result of the incident.

VII. RESPONSE TO OTHER INCIDENTS:

Immediate supervisors of both sworn and non-sworn personnel will consider the impact of incident stress situations on individuals and of the basic unit's functioning. Following the department's Early Intervention System policy, they may coordinate with Human Resources to contact EAP to provide support to the individual, the unit, and potentially for the entire Matthews Police Department. The goal of all interventions is to minimize the impact of incident stress and facilitate the return of affected personnel to active duties as quickly as possible.

VIII. TRAINING:

All officers should receive initial and regular training and counseling regarding

1. Early Intervention System
2. Mental Health First Aid and related Topics
3. The use of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP)