



Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)



The Critical Incident Stress Management Program (CISM) is a joint initiative between PASS and the FAA that has been designed to help Air Traffic Organization (ATO) and Aviation Safety (AVS) employees effectively manage stress following a critical incident. Critical incidents include airplane accidents, natural disasters or the death of a coworker on the job.

The program is intended to help individuals identify and cope with their responses to such events. The focus of CISM is to provide reassurance and to minimize the harmful effects of job stress, particularly in crisis or emergency situations.

[PASS CISM Team](#)

PASS CISM Team

National Coordinators

Justin Achord (ATO)

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Team members

Hal Adkins (ATO)

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Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)

[Contacting CISM](#)

Contacting CISM

Whether you or someone you know has been involved in an accident, sustained an injury, or has experienced any sort of traumatic event, do not hesitate to call or text an on-call PASS CISM coordinator for assistance at **(202) 773-1744**. The on-call coordinator is a PASS member and trained peer debriefer, and someone is available 24/7/365. When directed, leave a message detailing your name, facility, contact information and a brief description of the event or situation. **All calls are confidential.**

Please reach out even if you are unsure whether you or the facility needs formal assistance. Any indication that there has been a critical incident or event allows the CISM team to ensure that everyone involved is safe and can offer assistance. If multiple employees are impacted by the event, a team member can travel to your facility to assist the group in-person.

Important to note: A call does not affect the medical records or reporting requirements for you or anyone else involved in the event. **Calls to the PASS CISM team, discussions with the debriefer, or even a formal meeting with a CISM peer is not a reportable event for anyone's medical records or reporting requirements.**

[For Facility Reps](#)

For Facility Reps

After any given critical incident or accident, the on-call coordinator for the CISM team needs to have a point of contact at a facility. Typically, this is one of the PASS facility reps. The rep (or a designee) should relay the following information to the on-call coordinator:

- Details of the incident/accident.



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- Who was on duty and witnessed the event and from what positions.
- Other employees working adjacent positions who indirectly witnessed the event.
- What are the work schedules of the directly involved employees? This is important to know if an in-person debriefing needs to be arranged. Suggest dates and times.
- Is a supervisor actively involved in the event? If so, he or she can join a debriefing with the employees provided there is not even one employee who objects.
- Does management expect impacted employees to return to work right away?
- Have affected employees filed a DOL [Federal Employee's Notice of Traumatic Injury and Claim for Continuation of Pay/Compensation](#)(CA-1) to document the event. You can contact PASS's [Office of Workers' Compensation Program \(OWCP\) representative](#).

Putting employees back to work too soon after a critical incident may become a safety issue because the mind is still distracted.

[Services Available](#)

Services Available

- **One-On-One EAP Meeting** – A confidential, one-on-one meeting with a licensed, professional employee assistance program (EAP) counselor through Magellan Ascend. Meetings are strictly confidential. It's just you and your counselor.
- **Defusing** – A brief process conducted within the first 12 hours immediately following a critical incident.
- **Critical Incident Stress Debriefings (CISD)** – A highly structured, peer-driven, clinician-guided discussion of the incident designed to reduce stress while enhancing recovery from the event. It is NOT an operational critique of the incident.
- **One-On-One Peer Support** – A conversation with a peer debriefer, a PASS member who has received special training in peer support techniques.

[Signs, Symptoms and Suggestions](#)



Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)

Signs, Symptoms and Suggestions

The impact of a critical incident can take both a physical and mental toll on those involved, resulting in a strong emotional reaction that can last well after the event has occurred. This can be a normal reaction for someone involved; however, it is important to be able to recognize any signs or symptoms, and take proper action accordingly.

The level of impact can differ from person to person. In any case, the most important thing you can do is find proper support after an event from family, friends or co-workers. The PASS CISM team is there to offer you support as well help you process the event in a supportive and confidential manner. PASS reps should also review these symptoms with the affected individuals to see how they are doing.

Signs & Symptoms:

- Fatigue
- Nausea
- Headaches
- Confusion
- Weakness
- Difficulty breathing
- Feelings of guilt or grief
- Change in appetite
- Emotional outbursts
- Sexual dysfunction
- Trouble falling/staying asleep

Suggestions:

- During the first 24 to 48 hours after the incident, alternating appropriate physical exercise with periods of relaxation can alleviate some of the physical reactions
- Talk to loved ones and/or coworkers and share your feelings
- Maintain a normal schedule
- Give yourself permission to feel upset
- Get plenty of rest and eat regular, well-balanced meals
- Keep busy and do things that feel good to you (exercise, craft, hobby)
- Don't make big life changes



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[For Coworkers Not Directly Involved](#)

For Coworkers Not Directly Involved

As a coworker, your understanding of the affected person's situation is vital to their ultimate success. By being aware of appropriate tools and coping strategies, you can put forth your best effort in dealing with the event.

- Express concern for their well-being.
- Let people talk about their experience.
- Provide physical, emotional and moral support.
- Communicate honestly.
- Minimize exposure to environmental stressors.
- Provide factual information and reduce the spread of rumors.
- Continuously evaluate the environment for additional vulnerabilities and strengths.
- Promote morale.
- Foster resilience and promote recovery through social support mechanisms.
- Watch for post-event related behavior changes between three to six months of the incident and on anniversary dates.

[For Family Members and Friends](#)

For Family Members and Friends

Having accurate information about typical reactions coupled with understanding and support from friends and family or other loved ones can make big difference to people affected by traumatic events.



Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)

- Listen carefully.
- Spend time with the traumatized person.
- Offer your assistance and a listening ear if they have not asked for help.
- Reassure them that they're safe.
- Help with everyday tasks, like cleaning, cooking and caring for the family.
- Give them some private time when needed.
- Don't take their anger or other feelings personally.
- Tell them that you are sorry such an event has occurred and you want to understand and assist in any way possible.

[Other Resources](#)

Other Resources

[Magellan Healthcare](#)

[Critical Incident Stress Management](#)

[Occupational Safety and Health Administration](#)

[U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#)

[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#)

[American Red Cross](#)