

TITLE: CRITICAL INCIDENT DEBRIEFING	
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PURPOSE:

To provide guidelines on the actions to be taken following an incident that does or could provide stress or trauma to persons involved in the incident, in particular the attending lifesavers and lifeguards.

SCOPE:

This Guideline applies to

- Lifesavers, club captains and/or team leaders
- Lifeguards, and lifeguard supervisors
- Coastal managers

This Guideline applies to volunteer lifesavers and employed lifeguards in both ocean and stillwater environments.

GUIDELINE DESCRIPTION:

1.0 General

Many important tasks must be completed following a major incident involving first aid or resuscitation. These tasks are collectively referred to as 'debriefing'. There are many purposes for debriefing, and the style of the process will vary with every case and be determined locally. Certain aspects, however, must be considered, even if only briefly.

2.0 Debrief session

2.1 A lifesaving incident debriefing session generally requires the lifesaver and lifeguard supervisor to:

- Assess the reactions and welfare of the lifesavers and all others involved.
- Review the effectiveness of all the procedures carried out and make recommendations, where appropriate, on the lessons learned.
- Review the use of special and routine equipment that was used, whether it was appropriate, whether it was in a proper state of repair and whether different equipment could or should have been made available.
- Review all aspects of the call and the help given by outside organisations, such as the police or ambulance service.
- Consider the need for formal written reports. Some incidents require a great deal of paperwork and this should be given to a person familiar with the case so they can prepare formal reports and complete logbooks such as the patrol log.
- Consider the value of seeking reassurance from people, such as the club medical officer, whether everything possible was done during the emergency.
- In some cases, appoint a person or persons to liaise with the media.
- Seek follow-up information from other sources such as hospitals, police, the coroner, etc., in cases where it is warranted.

2.2 NOTES

- Be vigilant for the need for peer group counselling among anyone involved with the incident.
- Statements may also be required from key individuals involved in the incident. Although sometimes not a nice experience, these are best written immediately after the event while important information is still fresh in your mind.
- If follow-up information is required, one person should be nominated to fulfil this role.

DEFINITIONS:

Critical incident stress, also referred to as post-traumatic stress, means 'physical and/or emotional disorder caused by excessive amounts of stress'.

Debrief means 'to receive information from a person involved in a mission or task'.

Post-traumatic stress, also referred to as critical incident stress, means 'physical and/or emotional disorder caused by excessive amounts of stress'.

REFERENCES:

Surf Life Saving Australia, 2003. Surf lifesaving training manual, 32nd edition. Elsevier Australia Pty Ltd.

APPENDICES:

Nil