

# CRITICAL INCIDENT / SERIOUS ACCIDENT CREW STRESS DEBRIEF



## **DEBRIEFS SHOULD TAKE PLACE 1-2 DAYS FOLLOWING AN INCIDENT.**

A crew debrief is for the crew – they are needed when a traumatic event occurs at work, such as a death, serious injury, or disaster. All workers ability to function is immediately impacted. Debriefs also help with ongoing stress.

### **CREW DEBRIEF**

- + Crew debriefs are for co-workers indirectly impacted by the incident, those that were present or involved with the incident, not for the primary victim or their family.
- + A debrief is to reduce crew traumatic stress and is separate from the accident investigation process, although this also is a crucial step, so be sure to follow rules to shut down and preserve the scene.
- + Before operations restart, debrief at a location away from incident site to a safe, quiet, and comfortable location. For logging, this location could be at the landing, vehicle parking, or other common meeting place.
- + Meet as a group if small and people are generally comfortable with each other. Follow-up with one-on-one check-ins.
- + Have a conversation, led by any trusted team member willing to serve that role (does not need to be the supervisor). If possible, a trained person facilitates. But most critical is that the debrief takes place. The goal for the facilitator is to open communication, actively listen, normalize symptoms, and guide people to resources (not solve problems).

**1. INTRO** - Encourage voluntary discussion. It is okay if people feel upset or worried. Be honest, calm, and respectful. Participants should keep what is said as confidential.

**2. FACTS** - Each person should be encouraged to share their experience.

**“We are going to go around the room and give everybody an opportunity to speak if they wish. If you do not wish to say anything just remain silent or wave us (me) off and we will go onto the next person.”**

**“Can you give a brief overview of what happened in the situation from your view point?”**

The facilitator can get the conversation going by going first if necessary.

**3. THOUGHTS** - **“What was your first thought or your most prominent thought after the incident? Again we will go around the room to give everybody a chance to speak if they wish.”**

**4. REACTIONS** - Anger, frustration, sadness, loss, confusion, and other emotions may emerge.

**“What is the very worst thing about this incident for you personally?”**

**5. SYMPTOMS** - **“What symptoms have you been dealing with since this event?”** Team members listen carefully for common symptoms (see page 2) associated with exposure to traumatic events. **“This is what I am experiencing, what about anyone else?”**

**6. TEACHING** - Normalize the symptoms brought up and offer stress management information.

**7. RE-ENTRY** - Participants ask questions and give final thoughts. The facilitator then summarizes what has been discussed and shares final thoughts, guidance, and coming actions.

### **KEY RESOURCES**

<https://www.osha.gov/emergency-preparedness/guides/critical-incident-stress>

AgriStress Helpline, [www.agrisafe.org/agristress-helpline](http://www.agrisafe.org/agristress-helpline). If you or someone you know is struggling, call or text 833-897-2474

For those experiencing suicidal thoughts, contact the [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](https://www.988lifeline.org/) at 988



**PACIFIC NORTHWEST AGRICULTURAL  
SAFETY & HEALTH CENTER**



rev. 4/2025

**FOLLOW-UP**

Follow-ups can be with the original group or one-on-one. 1-3 follow-ups may be needed and some people may need a referral for professional care.

**Signs and symptoms of critical incident stress**

PHYSICAL	COGNITIVE	EMOTIONAL	BEHAVIORAL
Fatigue	Uncertainty	Grief	Inability to rest
Chills	Confusion	Fear	Withdrawal
Unusual thirst	Nightmares	Guilt	Antisocial behavior
Chest pain	Poor attention	Intense anger	Increased alcohol consumption
Headaches	Decision making ability	Apprehension and depression	Change in communications
Dizziness	Poor concentration, memory	Irritability	Loss/increase in appetite
	Poor problem-solving ability	Chronic anxiety	

**Ideas for follow-up**

A supervisor plays a critical role in supporting a work crew after a serious incident or close call. Showing care and vulnerability demonstrates strength and builds trust. Their questions should focus on checking in emotionally, understanding crew concerns, and fostering a safe, open environment for communication. Here are some thoughtful questions to ask in follow-up:

**1. Immediate Emotional Check-In (group or one-on-one as appropriate)**

- **How is everyone feeling right now?**
- **Does anyone need to step away or take a break?**
- **Are you feeling safe continuing work today?**  
Alert – use if a close-call and not a cases of a severe incident. If severe, operations should shut down)
- **Is there anything I can do right now to support you?**

**2. Encouraging Open Communication**

- **Does anyone have thoughts or impacts they haven’t had a chance to express?**
- **How do you want to be supported moving forward-individually or as a team?**
- **Do you feel like we’re handling this situation appropriately? If not, what can we do better?**
- **Is there anything specific I can do to help you feel more at ease in your work?**

**3. Processing the Incident**

- **What concerns do you have following the accident?**
- **Is there anything about what happened that is unclear or unsettling to you?**
- **What part of this incident has been the hardest for you to process?**
- **Has this changed how you feel about the job or the work environment?**

**4. Supporting Mental Health and Team Morale**

- **How are you all supporting each other right now?**
- **Would anyone find it helpful to talk to a professional, like a counselor or peer support team?**
- **What can I do to make sure you feel supported in the coming days and weeks?**
- **Do you feel comfortable coming to me if you’re struggling with this?**

**5. Identifying Safety and Work Concerns**

(These questions may also be helpful to use in an incident investigation – a separate step)

- **Do you have any concerns about our safety procedures that we should address?**
- **Is there anything about the job site or work conditions that is making you feel unsafe?**
- **What do you think we can learn from this incident to prevent future injuries?**
- **Do you feel like you have the right training and equipment to do your job safely?**