

Manager fact sheet:

Supporting your team after a critical incident



When your team has experienced or witnessed a critical incident, your response as a manager can make a meaningful difference.

Your role is to provide calm, practical support, help people access appropriate care and maintain a safe, steady environment as your team begins to process what has happened.

Responses can vary from person to person. Some employees may show signs of distress immediately, while others may appear unaffected at first and notice the impact later. Some may not experience any symptoms.

What is a critical incident?

A critical incident is an event that may significantly affect your wellbeing, sense of safety or ability to cope. This may include:

- A workplace accident or serious injury
- Exposure to violence, threats or aggression
- A medical emergency
- The death or serious injury of a colleague, client or member of the public
- A natural disaster or major workplace disruption

How your team, might feel

After a critical incident, team members may experience a wide range of reactions. These responses are often a normal reaction to an abnormal event.

They may feel:

- Shocked, anxious, sad, angry or overwhelmed
- Unusually quiet, withdrawn or emotional
- Restless, tense or distracted
- Tired or unable to concentrate
- Unsettled by memories, images or thoughts about what happened
- Concerned about returning to normal duties
- Unsure whether their reaction is normal

As a manager or leader, you may also be impacted by the critical incident, which can result in processing the event yourself, while also supporting your team. To assist with supporting your team members through a critical incident, you can contact the [PeopleSense Manager Assistance Program](#), which is available to all managers and leaders.

**You don't need to be the person directly affected to feel the impact.
Witnessing an event, supporting others through it or hearing about it
afterwards can all have an effect.**

What to do if a team member (s) has experienced a critical incident

1. Check in and listen

Make time to check in and ask how they are doing. Listen without judgment and avoid making assumptions about how they should be feeling.

2. Respect individual responses

People react to critical incidences differently. Some may want to talk about what happened, while others may prefer privacy. Avoid comparing reactions or placing expectations on recovery.

3. Encourage support early

Remind employees that support is available through their EAP, GP or other health professionals. Early support can help people process what has happened and develop coping strategies.

4. Stay connected

Recovery may take time. Continue checking in over the days and weeks following the incident, as the impact is not always immediate.

5. Look after yourself too

Managers can also be affected by critical incidents. Recognise your own response and seek support if you need it.

Seek professional support

You do not have to manage the situation alone. PeopleSense, your EAP, can provide guidance for managers, through the [Manager Assistance Program](#), supporting employees after a critical incident.

PeopleSense can also provide support directly to affected employees through confidential counselling, welfare checks and follow-up psychological support where appropriate.



Reaching out early makes a real difference.
Contact [PeopleSense](#) to book a confidential appointment with a qualified psychologist.

If you are having thoughts of self-harm or suicide, seek urgent support immediately. Call 000, Lifeline on 13 11 14.

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