

Role of etcs in directing first responders to disaster



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Pony**

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Emergency Telecommunications professionals (ETCs) play a vital role in the quality of care of the residents in the communities in which they serve. This includes preservation of life, property and equipment during critical incidents which may involve unfavourable outcomes. Critical incidents are events of an unfavourable nature that include deaths in the normal course of work, multiple casualty incidents, natural disasters, power outages, and emergency events involving a large number of people. Critical Incident Stress is the ETC's reaction to these events which could interfere with one's ability to function normally during or after the event. The reactions could be physical stress on the body, cognitive impairments in thinking and emotional change in behavioural patterns, feelings, and personality. Immediate reactions include nausea, dizziness, increased heart rate, muscle pains, confusion, memory loss, difficulty in problem solving and making decisions, anxiety, fear, guilt, and hopelessness. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is a mental conditions which is caused by distressing events such as rape, assault, murder, kidnapping, automobile collision, or serious injury to oneself or others. These are the triggering events for PTSD which includes symptoms such as re-experiencing the event, nightmares, flashbacks, and anniversary of the triggering event could cause it. Later severe symptoms can include becoming withdrawn from family and friends, losing interest in activities previously enjoyed, or have difficulty feeling emotions, and being intimate with one's partner. Treatments exist for both CIS and PTSD and there are services available in one's area of residence to manage the onset of these conditions.

The First Responder in the video was an experienced ETC professional who was able to help as many people as he possibly could with the severity of the natural disaster that struck the town being a tornado which required a mass response on the part of the town. He went to each victim that he was able to help with their injuries, bruises, and abrasions all the while keeping in constant communication with coworkers on helping the victims, superiors on calling in additional units and supplies, and the general public on staying safe. The survivors were in a traumatic event and had feelings of being scared, anxious, in fear of their safety and security of themselves and their loved ones. The First Responders felt the same way but with more control and experience since they work as ETC's for a living, and if I were one during a tornado I would also feel scared, anxious and want to keep all of the victims in the area safe and treat their injuries using the established guidelines.

The crisis that occurred in the video could be classified as a natural disaster, which living in Southern Ontario have not had any personal involvement in since tornados, hurricanes, and tsunamis are rare occurrence here. There was the Toronto snowstorm in 1998 caused by La Nina weather patterns which brought record snowfall. My family and I were driving back from my uncle's house and our car kept getting stuck in position in the road which then required me to get out of the car to shovel near the snow tires in order for my mom to get the car moving further down because they didn't plow the smaller neighbourhood roads that that time which was late at night and it required constant shovelling of the roads just to get the car moving closer to our house which we eventually got to as the snow dissipated.

Personal approaches I would use to overcome the lasting effects a First Responder might suffer include getting CIS Debriefings and PTSD treatments. The debriefing is a regular series of meetings done by the organization the ETC is employed for, other coworkers, superiors and experts in the conditions of CIS with the purpose of the meetings being to get the ETC professionals to express their feelings on the events they were involved in, what impact it made on them physically in the form of injuries, psychologically in their cognitive patterns, emotionally in their relationships with others, and general behaviour both at home and in public. These meetings are a good approach for First Responders as it allows them to get more information about how to deal with their reactions to the above listed traumatic events, utilize support services that are available, and talking to trained experts such as social workers, psychologists, and therapists. For survivors the approach would be to use PTSD treatment that is provided through government services such as CMHA, services provided by their employer if they are employed such as a helpline, and services provided by private organizations such as Canadian Red Cross. The treatments these services offer include a combination of individual discussion, group discussion similar to the CIS Debriefings, and medication.

Methods I would use to increase awareness of CIS and PTSD to coworkers, family, and the public include through word of mouth such as discussion with these interested individuals who inquire about it what CIS and PTSD are, provide them examples of each so they have an idea of the types of events surrounding them such as using the videos watched in class or finding a similar event to it on the Internet. I would use social media websites to

educate the general public on CIS and PTSD with information pages about the conditions including what they are, symptoms, and treatment options available and contact information of the organizations that offer assistance to those who have CIS and PTSD. Other approaches include starting an outreach company which provides informational sessions to the general public in places such as malls, parks, schools, libraries, and community centres and provide the public brochures, pamphlets, booklets and contact information to organizations which offer assistance. I can also use media sources such as the local newspaper, radio station, and popular Internet destinations and present to these media sources information on CIS and PTSD in a presentation style that can accommodate their schedule.

The complexity of CIS and PTSD means there is much research to be done on these conditions by the established medical community and so for those with these conditions the chance to increase awareness about it doing their own research, being more proactive and by being an advocate for finding cures for these conditions. The best method is the method the individual uses in their own personal circumstance.

(Reference for CISD: Emergency Medical Responder 3rd Canadian Edition; Pearson Canada; Limmer, Karren, et. Al.; 2010 Toronto, Ontario, Canada; Ch. 2 pg. 16-17 in textbook)

PTSD from CMHA: http://www.cmha.ca/mental_health/post-traumatic-stress-disorder/

CISD: <http://www.info-trauma.org/>

<http://www.info-trauma.org/flash/media-e/mitchellCriticalIncidentStressDebriefing.pdf>

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