



OPERATIONAL STRESS INJURY



PREVENT • RESPOND • RECOVER



PREPARE

BEFORE THE INCIDENT

1



EDUCATE

Understanding exposure to stress, the formation of stress injury, its physical effects and risk factors should be part of all training, including for new members.

2



REPEAT

Stress injury training should be recurring to normalise and destigmatise the discussion of mental health topics.

3



BUILD RESILIENCE

Organisations should develop a method to promote resilience and connection within teams. Organisations should ensure there is continuous education about stress injury, and that a monitoring tool is used routinely in the day-to-day activities of the team and the individual rescuer.

4



PLAN AHEAD

Mountain rescue organisations should develop strategies for the assessment of, the ongoing monitoring of, and the team response, to a potentially traumatising event. Other responding agencies should be included in this planning.

5



REDUCE STRESSORS

Successful organisations reduce exposure to stressors and proactively offer support. They should develop social cohesion and have zero tolerance policies on bullying, harassment, emotional and physical abuse.



RESPOND

DURING THE INCIDENT

6



PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID

Psychological First Aid (PFA) should be practiced to provide practical, effective, and timely interventions. The five intervention principles (safety, calm, self-efficacy, connection, and hope) should be used when implementing PFA. PFA can be used for rescuers, casualty, family, and bystanders.

7



OPT OUT

If feasible, rescuers should be able to "opt out" of potentially traumatic exposures, although avoidance can be a sign of PTSD. Organisations should where possible limit exposure to potentially traumatic exposures.

8



TACTICAL PAUSE

Consider a "tactical pause" when there has been a major change to the mission goals, for example, a change from rescue to body recovery.



RECOVER

AFTER THE INCIDENT

9



REVIEW & DEBRIEF

After action reviews or debriefs should be timely when a potentially traumatising event is identified. The focus should be on establishing the facts of the incident, what went right and areas for improvement. Acknowledgment of the incident stressors should occur, but this should not retraumatise the participants.

10



UNDERSTAND RECOVERY

Rescuers and team leaders should understand the elements of stress injury recovery and the normal timing of the stress cycle. A structured approach over time should be utilised to provide support to exposed rescuers and agencies. Rescuers should be supported to have a break from rescue if necessary.

11



CULTURALLY AWARE SUPPORT

Mental health professionals working with SAR personnel should be familiar with the rescuers' tasks and culture of the organisation. A common language should be used consistently.



LOOK AFTER
YOURSELF



LOOK OUT FOR
EACH OTHER



STRONG TEAMS
SAVE LIVES

*Resilient today,
Ready tomorrow.*