



Seldovia Gazette

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16 °F / -9 °C

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CISM Training for Seldovia Fire and EMS Department

by Mary Glover



Left to right: LTC Chaplain Bert McQueen, CMC, MSW, Instructor
Jane Schultz, Kenai Peninsula EMS Coordinator
Alix Chartier, Mary Glover and Mike Driscoll, Seldovia Fire & EMS

The weather outside is frightful,
but the class inside is delightful.....

Three persons from the Seldovia Fire and EMS Dept. have journeyed to Soldotna for the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) training and Assisting Individuals in Crisis, two, two-day courses yielding 2 continuing education units (college credit hours). The three taking the class are Alix Chartier, Mike Driscoll (Co-Fire Chief) and Mary Glover. (The weather outside is approximately 9°F.) Arrangements for taking the class were made by Lisa O'Leary, Seldovia EMS Chief and Jane Schultz, Kenai Peninsula EMS Coordinator. Jane Schultz replaced the position vacated by Sue Hecks when Sue Hecks went to Anchorage to become the Executive Director for the Southern Region EMS Council, Inc. Jane Schultz is also in attendance in the CISM class. The twenty attendees come from Homer, Anchor Point, Steward, Soldotna, Ninilchik, and Anchorage. Within the twenty attendees, there are five pastors/chaplains in attendance.

After a critical incident, ideally the diffusion session will be an "automatic" occurrence for all responders connected with the incident and this session is held within 24 hours after the incident. Next, a "hot seat" session may be held (or may not be held) wherein the entire run is reviewed as to how it may have been done better. The debriefing session occurs 1-10 days after the incident and 3-4 weeks after a mass disaster. The debriefing session is a seven phase process. The CISM team members consist of: one leader/facilitator person and at least two "peer" personnel. There is also a ratio of CISM team members to number of attendees at a session.

What is very interesting about the CISM Group Crisis Intervention is that this is a relatively new field. It actually started around 1986 and can be an area of expertise for mental health personnel, responders who no longer have physical strength to be on a response team but still would

The first class covers an average a hundred pages a day in the text manual together with hands-on application and roll-playing. CISM is a group crisis intervention learning program for rescue personnel and its psychosocial process of a critical incident. The program we are studying was developed by Jeffrey T. Mitchell, Ph.D., C.T.S., and is the accepted standard of care that is used by the United Nations and the US Coast Guard. Rescue personnel are always confronted with serious life-threatening and life-loss situations. Although responders are almost always Type A personalities, they too are effected by the tragedies in life and this class provides a methodology for defusion and debriefing of an incident. Both the defusion process and the debriefing process are strictly confidential and only for the benefit of the participants. It is also suggested that a CISM team be deployed to another region to perform the processes. In other words, our team in Seldovia would be a CISM team for another city and another CISM team in another city would come and conduct the defusion or debriefing for the rescue personnel in Seldovia. The reason is because often it takes a little distance to be of the best assistance to rescue persons connected to the incident. Only participants in a rescue are allowed to attend a CISM debriefing, i.e no attorneys, reporters, spectators. As I said before, the debriefing is strictly confidential and nothing is written, reported, recorded or discussed after the meeting. This is to assure that responders can know that they are free to discuss whatever they want to talk about without fear of repercussions. It has statistically been proven that this methodology improves retention in police departments, fire departments, emergency room personnel, EMS personnel, etc.

like to actively participate in a program, or a specialized area of expertise for any responder. CISM is not a platform for any type of psychological therapy.

Outside of CISM is a process for a “town meeting” for the general public after a critical incident. This process is an educational process to facilitate accurate reporting of the incident and give information about assistance that is available at the time. The purpose of this process is to facilitate the actual disaster, dispel misinformation and structure the relief process.

The second class is the development technique of the SAFER-R Model of Crisis Interventions with Individuals. This is a progressive “interview” conversation that has a number of steps to facilitate information and provide a verbal catharsis of a traumatic event. This is not a substitute for mental therapy, but rather a process of understanding, mechanisms of action, and facilitation access to continued care. This process was developed by George S. Everly, Jr., Ph.D., F.A.P.M.

This most interesting class has been taught by LTC Chaplain Bert McQueen, CMC, MSW. Chaplain McQueen is the contact person in Anchorage for APD and EMS departments and organizes the teams to be deployed after critical incidents have occurred. As a result of this class, Chaplain Keith T. Randall, together with Jane Schultz are now the contact persons for the Kenai Peninsula.



Photo to the left is the Emergency Response Center (ERC) Building in Soldotna. It is the 9-1-1 headquarters for lower Kenai Peninsula. Seldovia, Homer and Anchor Point calls are received here and dispatched to the respective on-call (local) dispatcher who then makes the call out.

This is also the building that houses the headquarters for the Spruce Beetle Management Program.

Emergency Operations Management - EOM Services are also in this building. (This is the emergency plan for major



disaster relief programs.)

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