



A manager's guide to traumatic incidents in the workplace

A traumatic incident can disrupt your workplace and cause major emotional reactions. Examples of such events include:

- A work accident, injury or act of violence
- An employee dies or commits suicide
- A store robbery

Since these are not usual events, it is hard for employees to work as usual.

As a manager, you have to help your employees — and business — get back to normal. But, you may also have experienced the event. We can help. This flyer provides tips to help both you and others.

Understanding how people respond to trauma

Trauma tends to shatter basic assumptions about life. People will be distressed. They may think:

Before the incident

- Life is predictable
- My world is safe
- I am in control
- Good things happen to good people

After the incident

- Expect the unexpected
- I feel threatened
- I have lost control
- Bad things can happen to good people

Even after the event is over, physical and emotional reactions can continue. It is common and *normal*

for people to feel these reactions hours, days and even weeks after. Time to recover depends on how severe the event was.

Strong support from close family and friends can help a person get through it faster. Sometimes it takes professional help. This doesn't mean the person is crazy or weak. It just means the event was too powerful for him or her to deal with it alone.

What to do after a critical incident

To balance the needs of both your business and your employees, follow these tips.

1. Know your company's policy for dealing with the press.
2. Call a meeting with affected employees.
 - Tell them what actions the company is taking. Let them know how or if they can contact the victim's family. Talk about security, counselors, etc.
 - Ask what they need most to feel safe again. Make changes as you see fit.
 - Remind them they are valued by the company. Materials can be replaced. People cannot.
 - Tell them you do not expect "business as usual" right away. Allow extra breaks and more talking than usual.
 - Allow coworkers to attend the funeral, if someone has died. (You may need to get help from other stores or departments to continue business that day.)



- Let employees know what they feel is normal (whether they feel scared, anxious, guilty, sad, angry, etc.).
 - Warn employees about possible unexpected events, sights or sounds that might remind them of the tragedy.
 - Provide emergency contact information.
3. Lighten the load for those affected, if possible. Prioritize duties that cannot be put aside. Decide which duties can wait. Pitch in where you can. Ask for help from other stores or departments where available.
 4. Be visible and available. Show you understand and care about what they are going through.
 5. Control rumors
 - Tell employees the facts. This helps to minimize rumors.
 - Ask one person to stay in touch with an affected family. This person will give the whole team regular updates. He or she will also check facts when needed.
 - Make sure all employees know how to reach this person.
 - Tell employees to check facts with this person before they spread news.
 - Provide public access information (hospital location, funeral arrangements, news sources, etc.).
 - Create a plan to address rumors if they start. How will you stop the rumors? How will you communicate correct information to employees?
 6. Make sure everyone knows about their EAP program and how to call it.