

Appleton Police Department



Critical Incident Employee and Family Handbook

Appleton Police Department Critical Incident - Services and Protocol

The department recognizes that even though stress is inherent in policing and is cumulative, employees occasionally become involved in a critical incident which places them under extreme emotional stress. The purpose of this handbook is to provide you and your loved ones information in assisting you with dealing with the aftermath of this incident.

The Appleton Police Department values its employees and understands that every employee will deal with the emotions of an incident differently. This information is being provided to you and your families to let you know what you can expect in the upcoming days and weeks.

Critical incidents are typically sudden, powerful events, which fall outside the range of our ordinary human experiences. Because they happen so abruptly, they often have a strong emotional impact, even on an experienced, well-trained officer. Law Enforcement Officers don't have the luxury of fleeing in a life or death situation. We are trained, and have taken an oath, to sometimes run towards the danger, when most others would run away.

This handout is meant to help officers and their families understand the process and services available to them after a critical incident. The family members and significant others of officers involved in a critical incident are encouraged to accompany the officer to required meetings with the department's mental health professional and avail themselves to the departments other services.

If you have any questions during the process you are encouraged to contact the appropriate person and we will do everything we can to answer your questions and address your concerns.

Departments contracted mental health professional:



Kelly Ziemann
Ziemann Counseling and Wellness
800 S. Lawe Street, Suite 109
(920) 659-8374

Outagamie County Peer Support Team – Brochure is attached

ComPsych Guidance – City Resources Program Ph. 844-393-4982

At the time of the incident

- ✚ If you used your firearm you should holster it and not remove the magazine or reload your gun. If you used a rifle you can leave it at the scene if you dropped it or can turn it over as directed by the first responding supervisor.
- ✚ You will be asked to provide a *public safety statement* to the first responding supervisor so they can follow through with their responsibilities and the best and most credible investigation can be done.
- ✚ Once the scene is secured and stabilized take a step back from the scene and gather your thoughts. Take mental notes of your surroundings, do some autogenic breathing, and slow yourself down. You have done your part; it is now up to others to do theirs.
- ✚ You will be asked to have a companion officer called to be your partner through the remainder of the incident. This can be anyone not directly involved in the incident. They can either respond to the scene or meet you at the station. This officer will help provide for any physical needs, contact people you wish contacted, and support you and your family during the process.
- ✚ You will be given a ride from the scene by another officer or supervisor. **You are encouraged to personally notify your family of the incident.** There is usually no rush to get to the station because you will be waiting for representation to respond and other steps in the process to be completed. You will be asked to remind your family members to stay off of social media.
- ✚ You will be allowed to call or visit other family members, as you see fit. If you want one of them to respond to the station to meet you that can be arranged through your companion officer.
- ✚ At the station your firearm, magazines, and other equipment will be collected or inventoried by the investigators, this is part of the investigation, and is also needed for the use of force review. You will be provided with a replacement weapon immediately.
- ✚ At the department you will be given a quiet area to meet with your representatives, family, and any mental health support personnel. You can change out of your uniform for the remainder of the process once authorized by the investigating agency.
- ✚ If the mental health professional was able to respond you will have your first mandatory meeting with them (Education and Support Debriefing). This purpose of this session is to provide you with information and support.
- ✚ If a voluntary walk through was not done initially with investigators, you may be asked to go back to the scene to do this. It will help you to start putting the pieces of the incident back together and it will help you recall the incident when you give your statement. Representation is encouraged during this step of the process. If you agree to it, a blood draw will be completed. You should consult with your representatives about this step in the process.
- ✚ **Media notifications:** After you have notified your family members, the public will be provided with your name, photo, and basic employment information. This is public record and must be released. To minimize the impact on your family, and limit the amount of media attention, the best strategy is to minimize the number of releases and news cycles so every effort will be made to do one release with the names of those involved and a basic update of the incident, with a statement that no further comment will be made until after the conclusion of the investigation. The media will spend more time digging into the history and record of the subject and interviewing family and friends and that usually becomes the focus of the story.

After the incident

The following things will **generally** occur after the incident; if you have any questions you are encouraged to call the department point of contact.

Education and Support Defusing – w/in 24 hours

Immediately after, or within 24 hours after the incident if possible, you will be required to meet with a mental health counselor. The purpose of this meeting is to allow you the opportunity to meet with someone trained in the body's response to critical incidents and allow you the chance to express your feelings if you wish. They will discuss with you some of the feelings you may have had and will educate you on some of the things that may occur in the future. Your family members are encouraged to also meet with the counselor if they would like to discuss their feelings or if they have questions. There is no cost to you or your family for these sessions.

Administrative Assignments

Administrative Duty – Immediately after the incident

You will be placed on *administrative duty* to allow you to develop the coping skills needed to help you deal with the impact of the incident and meet the other requirements that will be expected of you the next several days. Administrative duty is defined as paid leave while at home, with an expectation that you are available for phone calls or follow up meetings. The length of the *administrative duty* will be determined by the Chief.

The time spent on administrative duty should not be viewed as discipline or a finding of any fault. We placed you on this type of duty to allow you and your family the time to begin the process of recovering from this highly emotional incident. Your pay, benefits, and any vacation or compensatory time are not affected. You will be allowed to attend any training and do any fitness testing that you had already scheduled.

Many of your co-workers will want to show their support as the incident is being investigated. It is up to you how you want to inform them of how you are doing, but you cannot discuss the incident with them while it is being investigated. During the process you and your family members are encouraged to contact the supervisor assigned to you if you have any questions or concerns. Please use only this supervisor as a point of contact so we can avoid any confusion or conflicting information.

Modified Duty – approximately 72 hours after your formal interview

About 72 hours after the completion of your official interview, and any follow-up interviews, you can expect to be placed on *modified duty* at the station. We know that returning to the work place and a work cycle, even in a modified way, will help you process the incident and recover quicker. **If there are concerns and you don't feel ready to return to modified duty we will work with your mental health provider to arrange an appropriate time for your return.** While on modified duty you will be assigned to do work that doesn't involve face-to-face contact with the public but is still important and police related. We know everyone processes these incidents differently and our goal is to help you and your family successfully recover from this incident. While on modified duty you will be encouraged to arrange time with a firearms instructor. This is not for training purposes, it is to help you transition back into your duties.

Interview with Investigators

You will be asked to provide a formal statement to investigators. Absent extenuating circumstances, that statement will usually not occur prior to two sleep cycles after the incident, approximately 48 hours, but that is frequently dependent on interviewer and officer schedules. The interview will take place in a private area of the department and you will be allowed to have a union representative and/or union attorney present, and/or a private attorney of your choice present during the interview.

Full Debriefing

After your interviews are complete, and investigators approve, we will try and schedule a full debriefing for you and all those involved in the incident. It is helpful for everyone involved to meet and “put the pieces” together and be a support for each other. This is voluntary and is a CISM debriefing led by a professional, not a tactical debriefing.

Case Updates

The supervisor assigned as your liaison will provide whatever updates they can to you on the status of the investigation and when you can expect your firearm back. The investigation will be thorough and complete, and will eventually be released to the public.

District Attorney Review

The final report will be forwarded to the District Attorney for their review and decision. They will make sure you stay informed of the process and any decisions they make before they make them public.

Return to Duty Assessment

After your interview, and prior to returning to full duty status, you will be required to meet with a mental health provider, who is not our department contracted provider, for a *Return to Duty Assessment*. This will be done at no cost to you and on duty time.

Return to full duty status

After the District Attorneys decision, and your Return to Duty Assessment, the Chief will work with you to schedule your return to full duty status. When you return to full duty status your work assignment and any special requests to ride with a partner will be accommodated as much as possible.

Administrative Review

There will be an administrative review of the incident, this will likely happen after your return to duty. They will review the investigation, issue findings and make recommendations to the Chief. The Chief will determine the disposition at that time. There will not be an automatic administrative investigation, but the Chief may order one if he deems it necessary.

Follow-up Services

Follow up care is strongly encouraged for all officers and their families. The impact of an incident is long lasting and extends out past the involved employee. It is important for you and your family to know that services will continue to be available to them.

Six and 12 Month Meetings with MHP

You will be mandated to meet with the department mental health professional approximately six and twelve months after the incident. This is a check-in to see how you are doing and to offer any other services to you and your family. These meetings are confidential and the department is only notified that you attended the meeting. These meetings will be scheduled and coordinated by the Assistant Chief.

Your department point of contact: _____ **Ph.** _____

Revised December 18, 2018 - TLT