

MISSOULA POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY MANUAL



Subject:
OFFICER INVOLVED SHOOTING - CRITICAL INCIDENTS

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<i>Chapter</i> 7	<i>Policy #</i> 7.80	<i>Distribution:</i>
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References:

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines that shall be uniformly applied following any officer-involved shooting incident or critical incident that has resulted in death or serious bodily injury, in order to minimize the chances that involved personnel will develop or suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder.

While the purpose is to address shooting incidents, this policy may be applied to other high risk or traumatic incidents involving officers, such as serious vehicle crashes, exposure to mass casualty scenes, etc.

II. Policy

Law enforcement duties can often expose officers and support personnel to mentally painful and highly stressful situations that cannot be resolved through normal stress coping mechanisms. Unless adequately treated, these situations can cause disabling, emotional and physical problems. It has been found that officer-involved shootings resulting in death or serious bodily injury to a citizen or fellow officer may precipitate such stress disorders. It is the responsibility of this agency to provide personnel with information on stress disorders and to guide and assist in their deterrence. Therefore, it shall be the policy of this agency to take immediate action after such incidents to safeguard the continued good mental health of all involved personnel.

III. Definitions

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: An anxiety disorder that can result from exposure to short-term severe stress, or the long-term buildup of repetitive and milder stress.

Officer-involved shooting incident: A line-of-duty incident involving purposeful discharge of a firearm, especially where shooting causes death or serious bodily injury to an officer or other person.

Other traumatic incidents: any in line-of-duty incident where an officer is exposed to unusual levels of stress or trauma.

IV. Procedures

A. Handling officers at scene of incident

1. A supervisor shall be immediately dispatched to the scene of the incident and shall assume primary responsibility of caring for involved personnel.

The Chief of Police and/or on-call Staff Officer will be immediately notified and respond to the incident if deemed appropriate. The Chief of Police and/or on-call Staff Officer will assist the Shift Commander in determining if an outside agency will be summoned to take charge of the investigation.

2. The supervisor shall make appropriate arrangements for all necessary medical treatment of injuries if not already tended to.
3. During any period where the involved officer is required to remain on the scene, but has no immediate duties to fulfill, the officer will be taken to a quiet area away from the scene of the incident. A peer counselor or other supportive friend or officer should remain with the officer(s), but will be advised not to discuss details of the incident.

An officers' personal emergency data sheets maintained in personnel files, names of supportive offices and friends will be maintained for such purposes. (These are in locked files in the ACOP's office.)

A member of Missoula Police Protective Association Executive Board will be notified of an officer involved shooting or other critical incident as soon as practical.

4. The supervisor should arrange for the officers directly involved in the incident to leave the scene as soon as possible and be taken to a quiet, secure and private setting.
5. As soon as possible, the supervisor will meet with the involved officers.
 - a) No caffeine or other stimulants or depressants should be given to the officers unless administered by medical personnel.
 - b) Only minimal, preliminary questions should be asked about the incident. The officers should be advised that a more detailed questioning will be conducted as a course of the investigation.
 - c) Any standard investigation that will occur concerning the incident should be discussed with the officers. Include that the investigation may be handled by an outside law

enforcement agency; that samples of the officer's blood and urine may be taken as evidence, etc.

- d) The officers should be advised that they may seek legal counsel.
 - e) The officers should be advised not to discuss the incident with anyone except a personal or agency attorney, investigating agency detective, department investigator, or union representative until the conclusion of the preliminary investigation.
 - f) An officer will be allowed to go through at least one full sleep cycle before having to write a report or provide more than preliminary information.
 - i. The information gathered will be used to ensure safety and to allow for a proper investigation of the scene.
6. The supervisor shall determine whether the circumstances of the incident require that the officer's duty weapon be taken as evidence. In all incidents where the officer fired the weapon, this will be standard.
- a) Take custody of the officer's weapon and spare clips in a discrete manner.
 - b) Replace it with another weapon and clips.
7. Involved officers should notify their families about the incident as soon as possible. When an officer is unable to do so, an agency official shall personally notify his family and arrange for transportation as needed. Support officers and/or friends named on the emergency data sheet may be used here too.
8. At all times, when at the scene of the incident, the supervisor should handle the officer and all involved personnel in a manner that acknowledges the stress caused by the incident.
9. The involved officer and family members need to be advised that the time frame before the involved officer is finished with preliminary requirements following the incident may be several hours at a minimum.

B. Post-Incident Procedures

- 1. Directly involved personnel shall be removed from line duties pending evaluation but shall remain available for any necessary administrative investigations.
- 2. All officers directly involved in the shooting incident shall be required to meet with the agency designated specialists (psychologists) for counseling and evaluation as soon as practical after the incident. Arrangements for the appointment will be made by the Administrative Captain. After the counseling sessions, the specialists shall advise the department:

- a) Whether it would be in the officer's best interest to be placed on administrative leave or light duty, and for how long.
 - b) What will be the best continued course of counseling.
3. Any agency investigation of the incident will be conducted as soon and as quickly as practical.
 - a) Involved officers and involved support personnel will attend all debriefings as directed.
4. A department staff representative will brief other department members concerning the incident so that rumors are kept to a minimum. Department members are encouraged to show the officer involved their concern.
5. All personnel involved in a shooting incident will be advised they are not permitted to speak with the media about the incident. Officers shall refer inquiries from the media to a designated department spokesperson, unless otherwise authorized to release a statement pertaining to the incident.
6. In order to protect against crank or abusive calls, officers should be advised to have phone calls answered by another person for several days if their names are released to the public.
 - a) In some cases, the involved officer may want to stay with a friend or relative for a few days. The involved officer will always keep the department advised of their location during the initial time period.
 - b) Officers should be aware that on-line media allows "blogs" for citizens to post personal opinions on events reported in the media. Those opinions may be insulting and/or offensive to the officers involved in a shooting and officers may want to avoid reading those posts.
7. Officers directly involved in the shooting incident shall be required to re-qualify with their temporary weapon as soon as practical.
 - a) Upon the return of the involved officer's assigned weapon, another re-qualification will take place.
8. Family members of the involved officer are may take advantage of available counseling and/or support services through the EAP or contacting www.safecallnow.org.

C. Daily Stress Recognition

1. As post-traumatic stress disorders may not arise immediately, or the officers may attempt to hide the problem, each supervisor is

responsible for monitoring the behavior of unit members for symptoms of the disorder.

2. The Chief of Police may order an officer to seek assistance from mental health specialists upon a reasonable belief that the stress may be disrupting the officer's job performance.

D. Miscellaneous

1. While this policy specifically addresses shooting incidents, its applicability and intent may apply to other types of incidents resulting in major trauma or emotional distress of officers.