

POST HIGH STRESS EVENT PROCEDURES

(As suggested by the Law Enforcement Alliance for Peer Support:

www.msleaps.org/www.alleaps.org)

<i>Effective Date</i> January 1, 2015 <u>2017</u>		<i>Number</i>
<i>Subject</i> High Stress Event Procedures		
<i>Reference</i>		
<i>Distribution: All personnel</i>	<i>Reevaluation Date</i> April 30, 2015 <u>2017</u>	<i>No. Pages: 6</i>

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines that shall be uniformly applied following any high stress event that has resulted in death or serious bodily injury. This policy is intended to enhance the internal and external investigations, to inform the public as to the details of the incident as soon as practical, and to minimize any possible acute stress disorder of involved personnel.

II. POLICY:

AGENCY WELFARE:

It shall be the policy of this department to internally investigate any agency personnel involved in a high stress event and report findings to the people the department serves as soon as practical. Any use of force involving serious protracted injury or death to a subject shall be investigated by an outside agency. Findings of the outside agency may be presented to an appropriate prosecutor by that agency. Internal investigations shall remain a personnel issue and shall not be disseminated to the public except by consent of all parties and each individual person involved. Compliance with Open Records and Freedom of Information Acts is required.

PERSONNEL HEALTH:

It is the policy of this department to reduce symptoms of Acute Stress Disorder by adequately caring for each officer involved in high stress events. It is the responsibility of this law enforcement agency to provide personnel with training on stress disorders and to guide and assist in the reduction of stress related illnesses, injuries, and effects on post event performance. Therefore, it shall be the policy of this agency to take immediate and long term actions after such incidents to safeguard the continued mental and physical health of all involved personnel.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. *Acute Stress Disorder (ASD)*: An exposure to an actual or threatened death, serious or protracted bodily injury, or extreme emotional abuse either by being directly involved, witnessing, or learning of a high stress event when such exposure has the potential to cause a significant change in physical, cognitive, relational, emotional, and psychological function. This is further defined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual Fifth Edition (308.3) of the American Psychiatric Association.
- B. *High Stress Event (HSE)*: An incident which causes death or serious bodily injury to any person, an accident involving a death or serious bodily injury to any person the natural death of any person who is closely emotionally tied to agency personnel, or any situation deemed to be a high stress event by command personnel.
- C. *Officer Involved Shooting (OIS)*: a High Stress Event (HSE) in which any officer discharges a firearm outside of pre-designated training and results in death, injury, property damage, or public exposure of the discharge.
- D. *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)*: As designated in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual Fifth Edition (309.81) of the American Psychiatric Association; PTSD results from prolonged exposure to High Stress Events or exposure to a single event with psychological and physical reactions of Acute Stress Disorder remaining persistent for more than 30 days.

IV. PROCEDURES FOLLOWING HIGH STRESS EVENTS:

- A. Any Officer Involved in a High Stress Event shall:
 - 1. Make themselves safe and call dispatch for assistance in plain English.
 - 2. Remove and secure all weapons from suspects if ample assistance is unavailable. If assistance is available, all weapons shall be treated as they would be at any crime scene.
 - 3. Secure all suspects with restraining devices as soon as safely practicable, even if the suspects are wounded.
 - 4. Render aid to any injured person within the limits and expectations of training the officer has received. Emergency medical services shall be called immediately after officer safety issues have been resolved and the scene is secured. . If an officer is injured, the officer should conduct as many steps in this policy as possible after they have taken the necessary actions to minimize the effects of their injury(ies).
 - 5. The first responding non-involved supervisor shall notify the Chief of Police (Sheriff) of the incident. All other notifications to other department personnel will then be made through reverse chain of command.
 - 6. Secure the scene with scene tape as soon as safely practical. The scene supervisor or their designee shall maintain a log of ALL personnel who enter the scene.
 - 7. If the High Stress Event caused death or serious injury, the Chief of Police

(Sheriff) shall designate a department person to contact an appropriate outside agency to begin an immediate independent investigation.

8. Internal investigators shall proceed immediately to the scene to begin their investigation.
9. All officers involved shall be removed from the scene as soon as evidence is identified and a 10 second synopsis of the event is provided to responding supervisors. In no situation will any officer involved provide a statement to any person which takes longer than 10 seconds until a complete 3 Hour Break (see below reference in this policy) is completed. Officers are also prohibited from discussing the event via telephone, text, smart phone application, or any other media with anyone. The supervisor in charge of the scene shall provide a confabulation warning (of potential unconscious false and distorted early onset memories immediately after experiencing a high stress event) to all officers and any other agency personnel involved in the incident.
10. A 3 hour break from being interviewed or talking about the incident shall be taken by all officers involved. No statements will be given or taken during this break period by the officers involved, supervisors, or investigators. Supervisors shall protect the involved officer from any attempt by anyone to violate the “3 Hour Break” rule. Trained peer support counselors will provide a “defusing,” and printed handout materials describing probable reactions experienced after High Stress Events. Officers involved will hydrate with non- caffeinated and non-stimulant liquids such as “Gatorade” and will be encouraged to consume food during this 3 hour period.
11. Following the 3 hour break, and only after a defusing is conducted by peer support officer, supervisors, internal investigators and outside agency investigators may be allowed no more than a 10 minute time limit to obtain a statement from officers involved in the high stress event, and only after a confabulation and closure (a phenomena which causes “false memory” if the officer is interviewed too specifically, too soon) warning is given. The involved officers (or other agency personnel, e.g., dispatchers, or family members present at the event) must not be interviewed in the same room as criminal interviews occur unless the officer involved is under arrest. As with any internal investigation, the target officer and any other target agency personnel must be given written Garrity warnings and signed by the target officer and any other target agency personnel involved.
12. Any evidence in the possession of officers involved shall be surrendered to internal or external agency investigators when appropriate. All officers involved will submit to biochemical analysis to both internal and external investigators. An internal or external investigative supervisor may determine if the officer's duty weapon be taken for laboratory analysis. If there is no evidentiary value, such as DNA or fingerprint evidence on the weapon or if a sample bullet is on file, the weapon shall not be taken. If it is not taken, then the serial numbers on the weapon structure and barrel shall be noted at the scene. Supervisors will make arrangements for laboratory analysis of the weapon as soon as practicable. Where the duty weapon is taken, the supervisor shall:

- a. Take custody of the officer's weapon in a discrete manner; and
- b. Immediately replace the officer's firearm with another weapon, or advise the officer that it will be returned or replaced at a later time, as appropriate.

Any video or audio evidence shall be secured. Duplications of the video or audio evidence shall be provided to internal and external investigators. All officers involved shall be allowed to review any electronic evidence prior to providing a formal statement or in-depth interviews.

13. All officers involved shall not discuss the incident outside of an agency "need to know" basis. Exceptions are permitted with licensed behavioral health and medical professionals as well as certified and/or designated peer support personnel, the officer's attorney, and a close family member (e.g., spouse, parent, or guardian). No agency personnel, other than those designated by the Chief of Police (Sheriff) shall discuss the event with any member of the news media. This policy prohibits releasing the names of the officers and other agency personnel involved to the media.
14. All personnel are reminded of the policy regarding social media. High stress events are department related and any discussion or cause of discussion in social media realms is strictly prohibited and any violation shall be cause for disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.
15. All officers involved shall be placed on administrative leave for a minimum of 48 hours following the incident. Court appearances should be continued (postponed) and all other duty related work shall be postponed. Following this 48 hour period, all officers will be interviewed by internal and external investigators and formal statements or reports will be submitted. No detailed interview shall be permitted prior to this 48 hour period. No detailed interview shall be conducted prior to a "defusing" by peer support personnel.
16. Any agency investigation of the incident shall be conducted as soon as practical and findings made known to the officers involved immediately after the results are made known to the chief of police (sheriff).
17. Internal investigators should brief other agency members concerning the incident so that false information and rumors are minimized. It is recommended that outside agency investigators conduct a briefing of their findings to all officers involved, and as many agency personnel who have a need to know as soon as practicable for similar reasons.
18. When the High Stress Event was a shooting, all officers involved in the incident will complete firearms re-training prior to the return to duty. This should be conducted with a member of the peer support team present in order to evaluate as to psychological and emotional ability to return to duty.

V. PROCEDURES FOR PERSONNEL HEALTH FOLLOWING HIGH STRESS EVENTS:

A. Post-Incident Procedures

1. Immediately remove involved personnel from line duties pending evaluation. They shall remain available for any necessary investigations.
2. All personnel directly involved in a High Stress Event shall be required to contact an agency designated peer support officer for an immediate defusing and assessment. Involved personnel should also be encouraged to contact such licensed mental health professionals after a high stress event if deemed *potentially* necessary by peer support officer or supervisor. If a peer support officer or supervisor deems contact with a licensed mental health professional absolutely necessary, the officer involved shall visit a department approved licensed mental health professional prior to returning to duty. Only mental health professionals may be utilized who have received, and documented, specific training in law enforcement stress and high stress events. After the counseling sessions, the licensed mental health professional shall advise the agency as to:
 - a. If the officer involved should be placed on administrative leave, light duty, and for how long;
 - b. If the officers were relieved of their duty weapons after an incident, at what point shall the weapons should be returned and under what conditions (e.g., some range time);
 - c. A recommended continued course of counseling; and/or
 - d. A Back to Work Agreement
3. A member of the command staff or a peer support officer should encourage families of the involved officers to take advantage of available counseling services (e.g., EAP, peer counselors, chaplains).
4. This department also recognizes that dispatchers are affected in High Stress Events as well. All procedures relating to an officer will also include any dispatcher who was engaged in duties at the time of the event.

B. Daily Stress Recognition

1. As post-traumatic stress signs and symptoms may not arise immediately, or the officers may attempt to hide such symptoms, each supervisor is responsible for monitoring the behavior of unit members for symptoms of the potential post incident psychological injuries.
2. A supervisor may request to the chief/sheriff that an officer to seek assistance or counseling from a licensed health professional upon a reasonable belief that stress may be disrupting the officer's job performance.

C. Training

1. The agency shall provide employees with training pertaining to stress reduction, personal maintenance guidance of mental health, and the procedures contained in this policy on a at least annually.
2. Supervisors are responsible for making available to their unit members information about peer counseling officers and licensed health professional services on at least a quarterly basis.

BY ORDER OF

(Signature)

CHIEF OF POLICE(SHERIFF)