



Critical Incident Crew

Support (CICS™): Training Outline.

Why train staff in initial response to critical incidents?

In the immediate aftermath of a critical incident, most people will experience some reactions; shock during the first hours, there may be distress and commonly people may find themselves having images of what has happened, with waves of intense emotion.

The response towards crew who have experienced a critical incident may influence the duration of their symptoms and their ability to recover quickly and effectively. Whilst there is an ethical duty of care, it is also clear that performance is likely to be affected following an incident on board.

When initial responses go unrecognised or unsupported symptoms can become established and once this happens are unlikely to resolve without psychological intervention. The impact on individual daily functioning in work, leisure, personal and professional relationships, safety and operational effectiveness on board are potentially extensive.

Why is crew support important after a critical Incident?

Whilst every person's experience of a traumatic event is unique, research has identified a number of factors that predict recovery. Initial symptoms will settle over time for most people, but a proportion may go on to develop long lasting symptoms of post-traumatic stress and other psychological problems.

Research also shows that perceived social support is a predictive factor in recovery from a critical incident, so it is important the people affected by crisis *feel* well supported, that their immediate needs are met, and they are listened to.

Early crew support can make a significant difference swift recovery and return to pre-incident performance.

Early intervention can influence a person's understanding of common reactions to critical incidents, encourage positive coping strategies and influence the recovery environment creating the best possible conditions for swift recovery and return to pre-incident performance.

The Critical Incident Crew Support Approach

CICS is an evidence-based approach designed to reduce initial distress, manage immediate practical needs, assist positive coping in the short and long term and identify those in need of additional ongoing support.

Guidelines suggest that a critical incident management plan provides a fully coordinated psychosocial response to the incident. CICS provides a unique solution for the maritime industry.

Critical incident stress debriefing and *counselling* are NOT recommended following an incident; research shows they are unlikely to be effective and may even cause harm. CICS provides an evidence based alternative combining best available evidence in psychosocial support from international organisations like the WHO with NICE (National Institute for Clinical Excellence) recommendations¹ for disaster planning and prevention of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

¹ National Institute for Clinical Excellence; NG116 <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng116>



CICS practitioners are trained to provide structured psychosocial support in the immediate aftermath of a critical incident on board a vessel. They work alongside senior company staff to advise and support them to implement best practice for crew support following a major incident.

How does CICS work?

A CICS meeting soon after the incident educates crew about common reactions, empowering them to use coping strategies that aim to optimise their recovery and provides them with tools to support themselves and monitor their recovery. Working alongside senior company staff the CICS meeting facilitates communication about the situational response, within the security or legal restrictions of the time.

The Critical Incident Crew Support (CICS) approach includes two major elements:

- Psychoeducation in the context of Psychological First Aid for critical incidents and
- Active Monitoring of reactions, following the Screen and Treat approach for critical incident response.

Psychological first aid with psychoeducation for critical incident response is a tried and tested approach, which aims to reduce the impact of critical incidents and promote speedy recovery through the support of compassionate and well-informed early responders. Whilst *Screen and Treat* involves the use of a validated, brief screening instrument for PTSD. Used immediately following the incident and at 1 month after the incident, the tool enables crew to monitor their own recovery and seek help if they are concerned. It facilitates timely assessment and psychological intervention for those at risk of a longer-term reaction to the incident, thereby supporting recovery as quickly and effectively as possible. The evidence-based Screen and Treat approach was developed by leading experts in the field of PTSD for use following major incidents, was evaluated in the response to the London bombings (Brewin, et al., 2008) and has been widely adopted nationally and internationally since that time.

Who should become a CICS Practitioner?

CICS is designed for people who are not mental health specialists. Sea-facing staff such as ship visitors, DPA's, HSEQ staff, and others who may be involved in the Emergency response team, chaplains, welfare support staff and similar roles can become CICS practitioners. It is also useful for senior staff to have an understanding of common reactions to trauma and the place of CICS within the Emergency Response Plan.

CICS provides a unique solution for the maritime industry.

Course Outline

The CICS course provides the essential understanding of the place of critical incident crew support, knowledge of common reactions to critical incidents, builds the skills required to support crew to restore functioning quickly and effectively through group based or individual psychological first aid meeting in the immediate aftermath of an incident.

The course is interactive with a mix of presentation, discussion, practice, and small group work.

Objectives:

- ✓ Explore the purpose and place of critical incident crew support.
- ✓ Understand the elements of a coordinated psychosocial response to a critical incident.
- ✓ Develop supportive communication skills following a crisis.
- ✓ Manage the immediate and short-term needs of crew affected by a critical incident.
- ✓ Develop confidence to provide crew support following a critical incident.



- ✓ Understand common psychological reactions to a critical incident.
- ✓ Employ evidence-based screening tool to understand when further support for assessment and/or treatment is recommended.
- ✓ Learn how to provide psycho-educational information following a critical incident to:
 - Understand typical reactions following a crisis event (ASD)
 - facilitate a 'healthy' response, positive coping and restore functioning
 - empower crew to monitor their ongoing reactions and know when to seek support
 - prevent ongoing problems developing
 - support each other and
 - understand how to access further support if needed.
- ✓ Understand the limits of critical incident response and 'Do No Harm' safety considerations.
- ✓ Consider self-care and support for colleagues in the critical incident response team.

Course materials include:

- The course handbook accompanies the training providing easy reference material for use during the course and in the future.
- Psychoeducation handouts for crew:
 - Coping with a Major Incident: this handout includes information for people affected covering common reactions to major incidents, advice on coping, supporting recovery and when to access further help and support if needed.
 - Coping with the sudden death of a crewmate
 - An evidence-based screening tool to empower crew to monitor their own recovery and assist identification of crew in need of ongoing support.
- CICS Practitioner's Code of Conduct
- A Certificate of Attendance is awarded on completion.

Course Duration

Two days – delivered in person or remotely online via Zoom.

Optional Consultation Fees

Optional ongoing remote consultation with Waypoint Maritime in implementation at the time of an incident, support to determine and review needs of people at risk of developing PTSD at 1 month follow-up, supervision of the CICS practitioners' team and clinical interventions for staff requiring further assessment or ongoing therapeutic support. Consultation fees on request depending on company needs.

About the Dr Pennie Blackburn

Dr Pennie Blackburn is a Consultant Clinical Psychologist (D.Clin.Psychol) and the proud daughter of a Master Mariner. Registered with the HCPC, member of the UK Psychological Trauma Society (UKPTS) and ESTSS (the European society of traumatic Stress). She completed her doctoral dissertation in prevention of PTSD in Fire Fighters. Pennie was a senior clinician and teaching and training coordinator at the Traumatic Stress Clinic in London at the time of the London Bombings in 2005. Pennie took her trauma response skills to the humanitarian sector, where she developed a number of innovative projects in places where access to professional help was not available. Since 2018 Pennie has focused her work on supporting mental health and wellbeing in the maritime industry, tailoring evidence-based practice for the maritime context.

Waypoint Maritime CiC is dedicated to promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in the maritime industry. We understand the unique challenges faced by seafarers and strive to provide the necessary resources and assistance to improve their mental well-being at sea. As a community interest company, Waypoint Maritime operates for social aims and any profits generated through trading are reinvested into furthering those aims through its statutory asset lock.

