

SECTION 18: AFTER YOUR DEPLOYMENT IS OVER

This section provides important information about things you need to consider once an operation shuts down and your deployment is over.

Once you complete this section, you will be able to describe the tasks that need to be performed once an ARES deployment comes to an end.

TURN OVER LOGS

When your deployment ends (or when your shift ends, if practical), hand off your logs and operational notes to:

- your replacement
- your unit supervisor
- the communications supervisor
- the site manager, or
- another designated emergency management authority.

In ICS organizations, all documentation is sent to the documentation section usually on a daily basis. In fact, all documentation is the property of the served agency.

If you do not know who should receive the logs, contact the EC or communications supervisor and request clarification.

You must keep a written copy of all traffic for at least seven years following the operation.

DEBRIEFINGS

Once a deployment is over, it is important that everyone involved work together to assess the effectiveness of the response. This helps us improve our processes and practices for future deployments. It also ensures that significant contributions are recognized.

In addition, debriefings ensure that individuals who have suffered significant stress during the deployment are identified and assisted.

There are two key types of debriefing:

- [Tactical debriefings \(see page 18.2\)](#)
- [Critical incident debriefings \(see page 18.2\)](#)

These debriefings will normally be hosted by your EC, and typically take place one to four days after operations are complete.

You may be asked to participate in a series of debriefings, depending on the specific circumstances of the incident and your deployment.

Tactical debriefings

A tactical debriefing is a learning tool that will improve your effectiveness and your team's capabilities during future operations.

During the tactical debriefing, your group will address the following questions:

- 1 What was the mission or goal: exactly what were you there to accomplish?
- 2 Did you have a clear definition of who you were to communicate with and what the likely traffic would be?
- 3 Did you accomplish your mission or goal?
- 4 What did you do correctly and what went well?
- 5 In what ways did you exceed expectations? If nothing exceeded expectations, why not? Were the expectations unreasonably high?
- 6 What items did not meet expectations? How can you improve on those items?
- 7 What specific training do you now need?
- 8 Other than training, what else needs improvement?
- 9 Were there any surprises? Why?

It is very important that every ARES participant in the event be given the opportunity to contribute during the debriefing.

If you are unable to attend the formal debriefing, or if the incident continues for a number of days and you wish to capture your input before the debriefing, contact your EC to find out how to record your comments.

Critical incident debriefings

An 'emotional debriefing' may be needed after an ARES participant is involved in a critical incident. An emotional debriefing can minimize the effects of incident-related stress. The debriefing is an organized, open discussion. When appropriate, trained professionals may take part, and may be able to offer concrete suggestions for overcoming stress related to the incident.

A critical incident is one that is:

- Sudden and unexpected
- Perceived as life-threatening
- Disrupts one's sense of control
- Disrupts basic assumptions and beliefs
- Results in physical or emotional loss.

Physical reactions to critical incidents can include:

- Headaches
- Exhaustion
- Sleep disturbances
- Appetite disruptions
- A nervous stomach.

Behavioral and psychological reactions to critical incidents can include:

- Anger
- Self-blame
- Fear
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Hyperactivity
- A pronounced startle response
- A tendency to withdraw or isolate oneself
- Over-sensitivity
- Emotional numbness
- A heightened sense of danger
- Flashbacks
- A preoccupation with the incident.

If you have been involved in a critical incident, ensure that your EC is aware of the incident and is able to host a debriefing, if one is required.

DEALING WITH POST-INCIDENT STRESS

What can I do?

- Don't make any life altering changes.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Rather than jumping out of bed and rushing to start your day, plan to get up 15 minutes earlier each morning and take time to meditate.
- Structure your time - keep busy.
- Don't brood about past events or fret about future obligations.
- Do things that feel good to you.
- Talk to people.
- Help your co-workers as much as possible by sharing feelings and checking on how they are doing.
- Give yourself permission to feel bad, and share your feelings with others.
- Keep a journal.
- Realize that those around you are also under stress.
- Be aware of numbing the pain with overuse of drugs or alcohol; you don't need to complicate this with a substance abuse problem.
- Reach out - people do care.
- Maintain as normal a schedule as possible.
- Spend time with others.
- Eat well-balanced and regular meals (even if you don't feel like it).
- Change your eating environment. Get out of the office and enjoy your meal in the park. Occasionally eat by yourself in silence. Eat slowly, and enjoy yourself.
- Take a brisk walk.