

HELPING EMPLOYEES REACT AFTER A TRAUMATIC EVENT

Give all employees “**the facts**” about the incident. This is best done in person, but can be done through any proven effective communication system (e-mail, memo).

A. Helpful hints about “breaking the news”:

- Keep employees together if possible and in an area they are familiar with
- Give **the same** information to everyone — don’t try to “sugar coat” it. Use the words dead or died.
- The news should be given by someone whom the employees are familiar with
- Tell them what happened
- How it happened (if known)
- Status of victims — how they are doing
- Police investigation, e.g., what the police are doing
- What the company is doing to help the employee(s) — victims(s) and/or family

B. Once the news has been given, allow for individual grief reactions:

- **Acknowledge**: *“This is a very difficult time for the business and for each employee.”*
- Allow time for employees to talk about their feelings
- Acknowledge the incident in internal company communications (newsletters, meetings, etc.)
- **Reassure** employees
- If incident involved a safety issue, explain what is being done for their future safety
- Acknowledge everything that the employees “did right” during and after the incident.

C. During this time, someone should:

- Protect employees as much as possible from being re-victimized by the media or others who may want to take advantage of the situation
- Educate employees about how to cope emotionally after a traumatic event
- If a death occurred, plan on a concrete way of remembering the deceased (plaque, planting a tree, memorial fund)