



ICAO

**EIGHTH MEETING OF THE ASIA PACIFIC ACCIDENT
INVESTIGATION GROUP (APAC-AIG/8)**

(Wednesday, 21 October 2020 on Virtual Platform)

APAC-AIG/8-IP/4

Agenda Item 4

Agenda Item 4: Enhancing Accident Investigation Capabilities

CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT TRAINING FOR INVESTIGATORS

(Presented by Singapore)

SUMMARY

This paper shares the lessons learnt from the Critical Incident Stress Management Training attended by the Singapore Transport Safety Investigation Bureau.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The types of hazards that are commonly present at an aircraft accident site as listed in ICAO Circular 315, *Hazards at Aircraft Accident Sites*, are Environment, Physical, Biological, Materials, and Psychological. While it is relatively easy to identify and mitigate the first four hazards, it is not as straightforward for Psychological hazard.

1.2 As per Circular 315, Psychological hazard is *the stress and traumatic pressures imposed by exposure to the aircraft accident, and interaction with those associated with the air carrier and related aviation activities*. When responding to an accident site, investigators may inevitably be exposed to critical stress. These can be in terms of the sight and smell of human bodies and remains, and/or interactions with victims or distraught family members. Such exposure may have varying effects on investigators and may also have the potential of developing into Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) unknowingly. PTSD could affect a person's normal function if the condition is not identified and addressed early. Hence, it is important that investigators, or their family members, can recognise the signs and symptoms of PTSD.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 A Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) training would allow the investigators to understand the cause and effect of PTSD in order to be more mentally prepared when they respond to an accident site.

2.2 The Singapore Transport Safety Investigation Bureau (TSIB) invited a Psychologist who specialised in human factors in aviation to conduct a training session on CISM on 7 January 2020. The training was attended by all TSIB investigators and administrative officers. It aimed to raise their awareness on PTSD and to help them identify the signs and symptoms of PTSD early. Changing appetite, having flashbacks, being irritable, and having difficulty in decision making are some examples of the signs and symptoms of PTSD. The attendees were also taught tips on self-care and peer support to buffer against PTSD. Always having a well-balanced and regular diet and getting plenty of rest can help in preventing PTSD. After responding to a catastrophic accident, one of the tips

to aid psychological well-being is to make as many daily decisions as possible so that the person can feel that he/she has control over his/her life.

2.3 The CISM training is a form of pre-deployment preparation for TSIB investigators for responding to accident site, as well as for administrative officers who work alongside the investigators to provide peer support when the need arises. The training could help investigators to cope with the traumatic experience better and be less susceptible to PTSD.

2.4 Human beings are vulnerable to PTSD and while most people recover from a traumatic incident naturally, some will develop PTSD. If an investigator is not able to cope with the traumatic experience and developed PTSD, the CISM training would have equipped the investigators with skills to recognise the signs and symptoms of PTSD.

2.5 The attendees were told that it is normal for individuals to develop PTSD and they should not shy away from seeking professional help. Besides self-checking for PTSD, the attendees were also taught how to look out for co-workers who could have developed PTSD after going through site deployment or during site deployment. An example of support from co-workers is to have individual check-ins sessions where the person suffering from PTSD or having symptoms of PTSD is given a listening ear to talk about his/her experience and feelings.

2.6 After the deployment to a catastrophic accident site, it is a good practice to invite a psychologist to have a sharing session with the investigators, individually or in a group. Such sharing session, where investigators would be asked to share their encounters at the accident site, has been useful in sifting out individuals who are suffering from PTSD and rendering assistance to them.

2.7 The investigators who attended the CISM training fed back that they have a better understanding of PTSD and are more mentally prepared for responding to a catastrophic accident.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The Meeting is invited to note the objective and advantage and of the CISM training for accident investigators.

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