CISM-Experience

Better performance through stress management

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CISM

Critical Incident Stress Management

CISM is a comprehensive, systematic and multi-component approach for the management of critical incident stress
CISM Experience – How to enhance human performance after an accident

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Some Facts for ATC

- Air Transportation is one of the safest means of transportation

- But the risk ZERO does not exist. 100% safety can never be achieved

- The worst can happen at any time

- It happens unexpectedly, with brutality and the aftermath is very challenging
Could it have happened to me?
29/09/2006: GOL Flight 1907: 154 persons were killed
Lake of Constance, July 1st 2002, Zurich ACC
Tail of TU154 near Ueberlingen, Germany (01/07/2002)
Practical CISM - experience:

- If two controlled flights hit in flight (mid-air collision) - it’s not good news for the ATM-system involved

- It will put the ATM-system and it’s components (Humans, Machines and the Procedures) through a hard test

- Everything will be questioned, rechecked and put on scrutiny

- Do you normally work according to procedure?
"Hands-on" CISM-Experience:

- I am not a trained CISM peer and I have never led or directed a CISD (CISM-debriefing)

- But I have gone very closely through two mid-air collisions:

  - July 1st 2002: Lake Constance mid-air (Germany)

  - September 29, 2006: Mid-air over the Amazon (Brazil)
Mid-air occurred at FL 370 over Brazil 29/09/2006
Performing CISM – the various phases
Handling the aftermath of a mid-air collision

First phase:

- Dealing with the facts: What has happened?
- How many deaths? How many injured?
Initial questions/Fact finding:

- Initial understanding of the accident
- Talk to those directly involved
- What to say to re-assure them?
- Am I ready talking to them?
- Are they ready to listen to me (or us)?
A “peer” debriefing:

- Listen to the message of the involved
- Give time to listen and be quiet
- Show compassion
CISD
Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

- Introduction
- Fact Phase
- Thought Phase
- Reaction Phase
- Symptom Phase
- Teaching Phase
- Re-Entry Phase
Starting the CISM

Performing a CISM debriefing called CISD

The most important stages are:

1) Fact phase
2) Thought phase
3) Reaction phase
Starting the CISM

Performing a CISM debriefing called CISD

Fact phase

- Tell the traumatic story

**Important:** Hearing the same event, but told by somebody else – version by others
Starting the CISM

Performing a CISM debriefing called CISD

Thought phase

- Share the most prominent thoughts about the event

- This is a very emotional moment
Starting CISM

Performing a CISM debriefing called CISD

Reaction phase

- Identify the most traumatic aspects of the event – from their perspective – and try to connect it to an emotional reaction
The Reaction Phase

- The participants are asked to identify the most traumatic aspects of the event
  - I have lost aircraft in my sector
  - I saw it coming
  - It was a nightmare seeing the targets disappear
Phase TWO

Further elaborations

- How could this have happened?
- Have the safety features failed?
- Could there be any actions to correct this?
- Are we aware of the facts?
Talk to the fellow operators and colleagues
A crucial moment: Handle the colleagues and the fellow operators of the unit involved:

It could have happened to YOU!

- Not an isolated fact, but a complete ATM-system failure
- All safety barriers broken and or they didn’t work
- It could have hit everybody (solidarity/union)
- We need solidarity - a very strong union
- Let’s fight to improve the ATM-system, make it safer!
- The full truth comes out and gets known!
It is also a major crisis for the management involved

- Need to justify themselves
- What did you do to prevent this?
- Why didn’t you foresee this scenario?
- Under immense pressure (media)
- The political authorities and the government
- They will seek to release the pressure put on them:
  
  - Justify themselves? How?
  - Possibly accuse others
    - Pilots and the airlines
    - Equipment (TCAS)
    - Operators and controllers
Build a « coalition of fortune »
with the Management

- We stand together – We take the hits together
- Show compassion – don't deny all
- Refrain from shooting at each other
- Non-aggression pact – The ANSP is one unit
- No internal divisions are tolerated
- We have failed together!
Phase THREE

Accusations

- Who is responsible?
- Which consequences will this have?
- Can somebody be fired or be imprisoned?
The Press and the public opinion are looking for the « Scapegoats » and the « Culpados/Culprits »

- The ANSP involved has already had this and that
- It’s not the first time (incidents and reports appear)
- “Experts” will appear telling that they knew before....
- Shoots fill be fired and they will hurt a lot!
- A Mid-air collision is never “good news”
The role of the media and the press

Depois da bronca, as mudanças

Helena Chagas

- BRASILIA: Uma bronca geral, iniciada no gabinete presidencial e concluída numa das salas de reunião do Palácio, e mais uma série de críticas públicas a seus auxiliares responsáveis pelo trânsito aéreo, viraram ontem a decisão do presidente Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, no sexto mês consecutivo de crise nos aeroportos, enfrentar e superar, enfim, o aguaceiro do setor.

A principal medida em estudo é a restrição de voos do Ministério da Defesa e dos órgãos encarregados de controle aéreo.

A desmilitarização total do setor não deve ser adotada, mas é provável que algumas áreas e atribuições sejam transferidas a um órgão de controle da aviação civil. Representantes da Aeromarítima, hoje comandada pelo general Antônio de Souza, têm parti-
The operators directly involved
From my practical experience

For the ATCOs directly involved into the event:

- A big feeling of having completely failed
- Having « lost » flights put in their hands/under control
- Lack of comprehension - « why me » ?
- A big anger and great frustration (e.g. management)

Solution: CISM
Zurich ATCO: « I saw this situation almost every night »
This is the most difficult part (emotions)

- They need very intensive CISM - care

- They should be taken off the roster (without prejudice)
  - Mentally not ready
  - Inquiry starts to run
  - Legal actions pending
  - Management under pressure
  - Public opinion
  - Without prejudice (salary) and garanties
  - Their future is very uncertain
  - They are the visible part of the ATM-System
Conclusions
The « Chain of Events » that led to the midair needs to be understood and explained.

All involved operators need to « know » as quickly as possible how it happened (reasons).

To dispose of a LOGICAL ACCIDENT HISTORY is essential

Start to talk about immediate safety recommendations and start to work on the press and the public opinion
CONSTERNATION:

Acceptance of the facts, of the full reality
An accident can never be completely excluded

We need to get prepared - but despite serious preparations, the ATM-system, the Operators and the Management will be put to extreme stress.

CISM and other debriefing techniques help to overcome the PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder).

But it will take many years to overcome the traumatic events and permit to all involved to come back to a kind of “normality”
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Symptoms (PTSD) are often not « visible » - hardly detectable

- But they are present and need urgent treatment

- If not handled correctly (swift and decisive), it can lead to severe consequences (loss of confidence, drop outs, demotivation)

- It’s very difficult to “prove” the success of CISM, but it’s accepted that the return of investment, when facing a major crisis, can be excellent
We can prepare ourselves
But we can never be fully ready
Good CISM is essential to bring operators quickly back to OPS