

What if timing is not critical?

To get the best information the key tips are:

1. Use the funnel approach – start with broad, open-ended questions and then move to specific questions, but avoid using questions that contain part or all of the answer, unless as a last resort. Ask open-ended questions (e.g., “Tell me what just happened?”)
2. Don’t interrupt
3. Give people time to collect their thoughts
4. Prompt when appropriate, (e.g., “Thank you, tell me what happened next.”)

Guiding principles

As a responder, whether or not the person you are treating is a casualty or potential suspect, it is important and professional to build a relationship based upon a climate of trust, respect, empathy and justice.

As a police officer you may be the first person in authority that the casualty has seen. If the person is a suspect, studies show that perpetrators are more cooperative with the police and are more likely to confess, if treated with empathy right from the first contact with a person in authority.

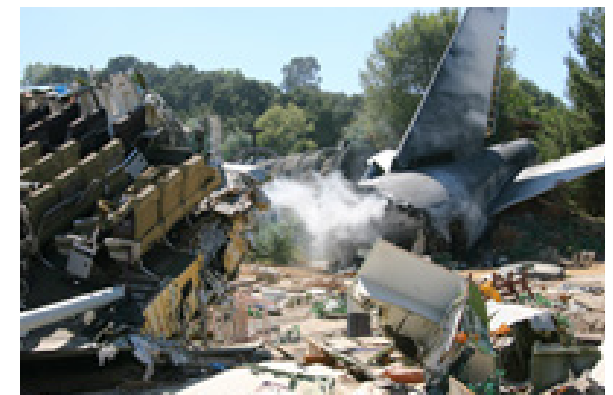
Casualties and civilians who assist at the scene of an incident have stated that the initial words of a first responder have a major impact on their emotional recovery. When you show respect and empathy for all those involved they feel valued and appreciated thus leading to a speedier recovery. When efforts of civilians have not been acknowledged, or when they have been treated abruptly, this can have a long-lasting negative impact

If you can't thank the person at the time, a follow-up communication will assist in reducing long-lasting negative impacts.

Things to say to your affected witnesses and casualties

- Provide clear information.
- Clearly state what you can and cannot do.
- Ask what the person is feeling or how they are doing.
- Tell the person that you feel touched or are moved by their pain or situation.
- Thank them (if appropriate) for the help they have provided to others.
- Help people focus on short-term goals. This will help them cope with the immediate reality more effectively.
- Be willing to accept people for who they are, what they say, how they express their concerns, and how they define their particular losses.
- Be tolerant if people repeat their stories. This is common. Remember that “time, talk and tears” are important elements of healing.
- Always try to get back to people if you say you will.
- Do not claim that you fully understand the person’s situation.
- Do not try to tell people how they should or should not be feeling even if their feelings seem inappropriate to you.

Tips for Police Officers Questioning & Interviewing Casualties & Witnesses after a Mass Casualty Incident (MCI)



It is common to experience emotional reactions after any traumatic event.

The following tips can help you in questioning and interviewing casualties and witnesses after an MCI. This information is general in nature; always check with your immediate supervisor to confirm how you should approach the situation and to answer specific questions.

What is a Mass Casualty Incident (MCI)?

An MCI is any event where people have been through a traumatic event involving multiple casualties. This could be after a major transportation accident, an earthquake, a mass shooting or other event. People's lives may have been threatened; there may or may not be injuries, or deaths.

This was a pretty scary experience for people. What reactions will they be having?

It will be normal for people to feel very anxious after such an MCI. People may feel confused, scared, angry or sad.

They may be crying or, conversely, appear exhilarated that they have survived. Some people may appear very calm or suppress their emotions. Everyone will experience the event differently – there is no “right” way to feel after such an event.

Is it ok to reunite victims with family or friends?

Most people will want to reunite with their families and friends and to reassure them that they are okay. For many people, until they have made that contact it will be difficult for them to concentrate on anything else.

A Victims Services Worker can help them reunite with their family member in a safe way that will not affect or jeopardize their potential testimony.

They're pretty upset – when should I make an immediate referral?

You should immediately refer if the person:

- ... is struggling to remember basic information like their own name, names of loved ones, their location, the date or what happened in the last 24 hours
- ... is incontinent
- ... engages in unhelpful repetitive actions
- ... hallucinates -- hears voices, sees visions
- ... is afraid of killing self or another
- ... is unable to make simple decisions
- ... is excessively flat, unable to be aroused, completely withdrawn

If I have to interview someone, what can I do to help them calm down

Victims Services Workers, or other trained persons can practice **Psychological First Aid (PFA)**.

Psychological First Aid is a quick, effective tool intended to be delivered in the immediate aftermath of a disaster or MCI. It is intended for people who are experiencing acute stress reactions and appear to be at risk for significant impairment in functioning.



What is psychological first aid (PFA)?

Psychological First Aid has five key objectives:

1. Establish **safety** and **security**
2. **Connect** to restorative resources
3. **Reduce stress-related reactions**
4. Foster adaptive **short- and long-term coping**
5. **Enhance natural resilience**

Psychological First Aid has five key objectives:



Look

- Contact and engage
- Provide safety and comfort
- Stabilize

Listen

- Gather information
- Provide practical assistance

Link

- Connect victims with social supports
- Teach coping strategies
- Link them with collaborative services

What if timing is critical - I have to question the witness right away?

If timing is critical to obtaining information from a witness (for example, if someone's life or safety is at risk, such as in a hostage situation) your role will be to quickly question any potential witnesses for information to assist those responding to the event. Psychological First Aid only takes minutes and can be highly beneficial to you in ascertaining clearer and more concise information from a witness.

Once you start, the key questions are:

1. Do you require immediate medical attention?
2. Where were you?
3. What have you seen?
4. Is there anything you can tell us that would help us?