

Organising Psychological Crises Aid for Traumatized People

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What is Falck? — Falck is one of Scandinavia's leading companies within service and safety, that deal with rescue, security, and safety tasks for the public and private sectors. Falck employs approximately 15,000 persons, and has a turnover of approximately 4.5 billion kroner annually.

History and Customers — Falck developed the Psychological Emergency Centre six years ago. It started as a natural extension of the other emergency services that Falck offers. The first group covered with this service was Falck's approximately 400,000 families who subscribed for transportation services for the ill and injured. The next step in the development of the psychological emergency centre was to offer the services to both private companies and public municipalities. Today, 17,000 workplaces (public or private) with 320,000 employees can draw upon these services. The companies range from the very small to largest in Denmark and employ 260,000 people. We cover all parts of the transportation sector (flights, trains, busses, and ships), and thereby, also a very large number of passengers. Lastly, we serve counties providing assistance to their residents in cases of larger accidents.

Professional Profile and Incidents — After an incident has occurred, a country-wide net of 50 psychologists and 40 specially trained, leaders in the provision of emergency services are ready to provide a targeted effort to ensure that the persons involved get the help they need at the given time. We have a flexible system that is adapted to the needs of the specific company or agency. We negotiate with each company for the type of incidents they wish us to provide services for, what response times they prefer, and what kinds of help they want.

The typical incidents for which they request assistance are those that arise in traumatic crises, and not those that result from the more general stress symptoms or life crises. Typically, we provide assistance in situations in which there has occurred an acute death among colleagues or spouses, a work accident, traffic accidents, or in cases of violence or severe threats. But some companies we also help in cases of dismissals, alcohol and drug problems, and other life events of the employees.

Main Elements of Psychological Emergency Aid — The main elements of assistance include: 1) the rescue plan; 2) the control centre; and 3) the acute duty guards; 4) the 24-hour advisory service; and 5) trained crisis psychologists. All of the 116 people working in or for the Psychological Emergency Centre are trained regularly, specialize in their specific roles, and are updated with the newest research.

1) *Rescue plan* — We offer assistance with the development of a rescue plan for the companies that ensure that selected key persons and the management of a company know how to act in acute critical situations.

A rescue plan is an important element when an accident does occur, and when it can become difficult to think constructively and clearly.

- 2) *Control Centre* — The first acute help and crisis management is provided using telephones by specially trained personnel at the Alarm Centre. This ensures that the correct help is put into action. A company can reach the Alarm Centre 24-hours a day through the use of a special telephone number.
- 3) *Acute duty guard* — Depending on the extent of an accident, a guard on duty is available at short notice, partly to assist, deal with, and manage the rescue efforts, and to ensure notification of the police and the media of the accident, and partly to provide the employees involved with psychological first aid.
- 4) *24-hour advisory service* — 24-hours each day, when an accident has occurred and afterwards, psychologists are available to supervise the management of the accident, and to assist the persons by telephone with Psychological Emergency Aid.
- 5) *Trained crisis psychologists* — After an accident has occurred, psychologists who specialise in Crisis Psychology are available. The treatment can be provided at the home of the person(s) affected, in the company's premises, or at the premises of the psychologist. No official patient registration takes place.

Research into the effects of intervention of crisis-therapy — The primary method used in the network is psychological debriefing. Two years ago, an investigation into the therapeutic effects of the interventions offered by Falck's psychologists was begun. We will be able to present the result of this research effort.

Keywords : crises; critical incidents; debriefing; first aid; plans; psychological services; psychologists; psychology; psychological emergency centre; rescue; responses; trauma