

## Psycho-social Emergency Preparedness & Collaborative Responses to Tragic or Traumatic Workplace Events

Psychosocial Preparedness & Response Services  
(P- S EP&R)

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Employee Assistance Services/ Assistance des Employés  
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## P-S EP&R Services

What is it?

- In the aftermath of the Swissair Plane Crash (1998) & 9-11 (2001):
- The Canadian Government mandated Employee Assistance Services to develop a trauma preparation & response program to
- 1) promote a culture of prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and resilience among employees of federal departments and agencies
- 2) establish a national network of psycho-social providers who would provide the psycho-social response during and following a large scale traumatic event

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## Psycho-social Emergency Preparedness & Response Services

Part 1: Promoting a Culture of Prevention & Preparedness

- P-S EP&R Services created manuals for Managers, Employees & First Responders promoting prevention, mitigation and preparedness in both official languages
- The Manager's Manual and e-Guide , *Preparing & Responding to Workplace Trauma*, posted on the Government's Intranet & Extranet & distributed to all managers in federal workplaces across Canada with offer to provide training in its principles
- The Employee's Manual, *Preparing for & Responding to*

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## P-S EP&R Services

### Part 1: Promoting a Culture of Prevention & Preparedness

- The Federal First Responders Guide posted on the Government's Intra and Extranet:
- For Employees : *Preparing for the Stress of Disasters & Mass Emergencies-Federal Emergency Responders- Employees Action to Reduce & Manage Stress*
- For Employers: *Preparing for the Stress of Disasters & Mass Emergencies-Federal Emergency Responders- Organizational Actions to Reduce & Manage Stress & Support Employees*
- These can all be found on the Canadian Government extranet at

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## P-S EP&R Services

### Part 1: Promoting a Culture

- P-S EP&R Services created presentations, workshops and hand-outs for managers and employees offered on a cost recovery basis based on content of manuals.
- P-S EP&R Services participates in Canadian Government planning & response protocol covering planning of all large scale international events held in Canada

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## P-S EP&R Services

### Part 1: Promoting a Culture

- Recent examples: COP11, the international Kyoto Protocol meeting in Montreal in 2005, the "Three Amigos" Summit of the US, Canadian and Mexican heads of government last August at Montebello, PQ , a Francophonie Summit to be held later this year in Quebec City as part of Quebec's 400th birthday, and the 2010 Winter Olympics.
- At COP11, P-S EP&R Services offered employees and managers workshops in preparing for and coping with intense work schedules, and preparing for and coping with workplace disruption

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## P-S EP&R Services

### Part 1: Promoting a Culture of Prevention & Preparedness

As a new initiative to prepare federal employees to cope with large scale workplace disruptions, the programme developed a project to prepare employees for a pandemic flu event

This initiative produced documents informing employees of pandemic flu risk and what they can do to prepare & cope with it

& a document helping employees prepare for the impact of such an event on their workplace, home and family

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## Psycho-Social Emergency Preparedness & Response Services

### Part 2: Preparing a Response

•A national network of psycho-social responders:

- **PSERT:**
- **The Psycho-social Emergency Response Team**

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## The Psycho-social Emergency Response Team (PSERT)

### What is it?

- 21 experienced trauma responders
- trained in large scale disaster event management,
- located three per each Health Canada region across Canada,
- ready on short notice to respond to traumatic events affecting federal employees and facilities

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## PSERT: Psycho-social Emergency Response Team

Why is it?

- Lessons Learned: Swissair 11 & 9-11
- Swissair 111: Last major large scale trauma intervention in Canada where federal government was lead responder
- Local trauma response resources rapidly exhausted, necessitating large scale call-up of trauma response counsellors from across Canada

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## PSERT

Lessons Learned: Swissair 111

- Not all paper qualified responders have capacity to maintain effectiveness of response in large scale events
- Few responders had experience, endurance, adaptability to maintain effectiveness in the face of the scale of the event.
- Those few who did survive and maintained effectiveness learned new lessons about burn-out, self-discipline and self-care.

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## PSERT

Lessons Learned: Swissair 111

- Importance of preserving local counselling resources for long term follow-up of small number of victims needing ongoing intervention by sheltering resources from over-exposure to trauma & to avoid burnout
- Wisdom of identifying and maintaining standing team of trauma responders with proven track record of capacity to respond to large scale events to avoid last minute panic of recruitment
- Characteristics of successful Swissair trauma responders (the survivors) beyond paper qualifications: capacity for cooperation

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## PSERT

### Lessons Learned: 9-11

- In aftermath of 9/11 the Canadian federal government recognized that federal government, its facilities and employees were at increased risk of being targeted for a terrorist event
- Parliament of Canada passed legislation PSAT II (Public Security and Anti-Terrorism) establishing National Health Security and Counter-Terrorism Measures fund.
- Through the Treasury Board, the Employee Assistance Bureau funded for employee preparedness & response initiatives & mandate as first responder to federal employees affected by terrorist events.

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## PSERT

### What will it do?

- The Model & its assumptions:
- A synthesis of disaster mental health and disaster psycho-social response models informed of previous federal trauma response experience & assumptions about impact of terrorist events upon federal facilities, their employees and their families.
- Most people are resilient & given attention to their basic psycho-social needs for accurate information and support will recover through participation in and through the support of their normal social networks

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## PSERT

### Model & Assumptions

- Work is a normal psycho-social support for employees; timely return to the normal routine of work can be an important support for recovery
- Only a minority of persons, many with known profiles or characteristics, will require specialized intervention and will need to be triaged for intervention appropriate to their particular needs.

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## PSERT

What will it do?

- A response team will be mobilized to large scale traumatic event from pre-established, geographically dispersed, specially trained and security vetted team of psychologists & social workers
- It will liaise with local disaster response & assess local response for its specificity to psycho-social needs of employees & to federal business continuity plans
- Using protocol and structured assessment forms focussing on incident, organization and individuals, it will collect information from key informants &
- Propose intervention plan using structured checklist, identifying anticipated resources needed to ensure federal employees have basic psycho-social needs met

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## PSERT

What will it do?

- Implement approved plan & manage implementation according to SOP of identified incident priorities
- Coordinate local federal resources where needed, orienting, training & monitoring tasks assigned
- Respond to emergencies, triage referred employees for appropriate intervention
- Liaise with employers in implementation of business continuity

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## PSERT

How will it do it?

- Team of experienced trauma counsellors about 1/2 psychologists & 1/2 social workers about 1/2 of whom were recruited from Swissair "survivors" group on contract to Health Canada EAS.
- Team operates under protocol, Standard Operating Procedures, that governs mobilization & demobilization, incident assessment & intervention & conditions of employment.
- Each counsellor has pre-prepared Self-Care Plan, & each incident has a Self-Care Coordinator to monitor counsellor well-being.
- Team has pre-positioned equipment in each Health Canada region to access in the case of deployment.

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## PSERT

What it has done:

- PSERT and its companion preparedness and mitigation project is beginning its sixth year.
- The team meets on an approximately yearly basis in either a national or regional configuration for briefings and training.
- Team members have access to a secure website for ongoing briefings and continuing education.

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## PSERT

What it has done:

- Response teams mobilized to stand-by for the Kyoto COP11 Meeting in Montreal, for the North American leaders conference in Montebello, Quebec, and for the evacuation of Canadian citizens from Lebanon in response to the Hezbollah-Israeli conflict.
- Team members participate in preparation of the Project's educational materials & in providing workshops to employees and managers.
- Team members recently completed training in the Incident Command System disaster management system.
- Team members just completed training nearly 100 EAS trauma

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## PSERT

- Questions?

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