

Psychosocial support can be provided within an individual or group setting and it aims at preserving one's mental and psychosocial well-being as well as their personal dignity thus improving the overall health of the affected person following a critical incident.

Psychosocial support systems are an integral part of traumatic event action plans and are executed with a strict observance of the scientific rules of good practice.

The purpose of psychosocial support is to facilitate the process of coping for all affected by stabilizing their psychoemotional and physical condition, decreasing the negative symptoms of acute stress, mobilizing their personal adaptation resources, facilitating the access to prolonged care and an overall quick recovery.

Psychosocial support within the organization aims at dealing with the personal and organizational consequences of critical incident stress thus improving safety and the employees' fitness for work.

Psychosocial Support (PSP) is guided by several principles:

- **PSP is not psychotherapy, but a voluntary act** – the person in need of support voluntarily seeks it out and the person providing support does so voluntarily.
- **PSP is confidential**, i.e. all information shared during interventions is not to be disclosed to third persons under any circumstances, except when the life of the affected person is in danger or the life and health of third persons is in danger.
- **PSP is in no way connected to accident/incident investigation** and has nothing to do with assigning blame.
- The supporting colleague (peer) is one of the main elements of psychosocial support. When trained ATCOs support each other, the process runs more smoothly because they speak the same professional language and understand each other better as both are familiar with job specifics and potential problems.

The timely provision of psychosocial support to individuals affected by a traumatic event helps greatly reduce the risk of developing anxiety disorders, psychosomatic diseases, alcohol abuse, alcohol and medication dependence, depression and post-traumatic stress symptoms as compared to those that received no support.

Every ATCO that has experienced a traumatic event can contact a supporting colleague (peer) or any of the program coordinators.