

**South Carolina FAST
First Responder's Assistance Support Team
Suggestions for Managing Peer Contacts**

1. Do you know the crew/personnel? (If not, start all peer support contacts by doing so.)
 - a. What really happened? Was it the call itself; was it something else that was brought up or rather was it cumulative?
 - b. Think about **both** the logic and emotion involved.
 - c. **Do they need anything at all?** The answer may be “no” as events are “**potentially traumatic,**” not “**automatically traumatic.**”
2. Think about and provide the opportunity for the person, crew, department, etc. to be in a place to voice their opinion with **each other**. If this is not right away, that is ok.
3. Take appropriate measures to get individuals, crew, etc. in a place of emotional safety **if needed** (for example, horrific EMS call- re-assign the person to the truck/engine, etc.). Use your best judgment based on the individual situation with the people involved. Again, know the crew and be open to listening.
4. Do they need something? A sandwich, shower, food, water, sleep, etc. make sure their basic needs are at least offered, if not met.
5. Do they want to or need to call home? Can they call to tell loved ones that they love them and want to talk? Or that they are ok? Does not need to be a long or forced conversation, just offer and encourage. If they do not need or want to do this, again **events are “potentially traumatic,” not “automatically traumatic.”**
6. Do they want to talk to someone or are they in a place to talk to someone? Give individual, crew, etc. a **choice. Trauma occurs when choice is taken away, give choice back.**
 - a. Do they have local Peer Support Counselor(s), Chaplain(s), trusted individual(s) available in their area or their department?
 - b. Many people may not want to talk to someone on the department, while others will.

Allow them to make that decision. If they request or are open to Peer Support

1. Have conversation at that time
2. Schedule time and place for conversation
3. Fill our Peer Contact Form
4. Check back with them soon after via. Visit, phone call, text, etc.
5. Fill out Peer Contact Form every time contact is made.

7. If they do not want Peer Support, discuss what they would like to do instead. Listen to what they say, assess this. Does it seem reasonable?

a. Do they need something more or are they still just trying to process?

b. Are they scared that they were “shook-up” or is it something more?

c. Do they have a grounded plan?

i. Giving them time to go home at the end of shift, hugging their family, getting some sleep, touching base with their friends and coming back next shift to talk more.

ii. Providing opportunities to speak with Chaplain or trusted individuals.

iii. Let them know someone will be available when they get ready to talk.

8. Ask and offer if they would like to check in with someone they trust on the Department. The first few calls after an incident it is ok for the individual, crew, etc. to feel “shaky,” do not threaten their confidence, most likely their ability to do their job will quickly return.

a. If it does not return, suggest they initiate contact with SCFAST or a mental health professional such as a First Responder Friendly/Approved Therapist.

b. Have list of trusted therapists available for your area.

9. For initiation and processing of health care claims under SCFAST

Overall, make it safe for individuals to talk by creating an open and supportive environment that can allow that person, crew, etc. to feel supported, understood and that they have the ability to make some choices. **Choice has significant power post event.** If they are struggling with making decisions, help by facilitating things down into smaller pieces until they find a choice they can make. From there, use that as a foundation to build from. If they are not struggling, allow them the space to be “ok” as **not everyone is going to experience the same event in the same way.**

*If you at any time have serious concerns about the physical or emotional welfare of an individual please contact a Mental Health Professional or take appropriate precautions (i.e. hospitalization, contact law enforcement for all threats against self, others, etc.) to ensure their safety.

10. Fill out Peer Contact Form