

Addressing Operational Stress Injuries during Infectious Public Health Crises:

Self-Reflection Tool for Paramedic Service Organizations



How to use this tool?

Organizations can positively impact workers' mental health and well-being while reducing the risks and effects of operational stress injuries (OSI). This organizational self-reflection tool is designed to assist paramedic service organizations in identifying their strengths and areas for improvement to address OSI during an infectious public health crisis (e.g., COVID-19, SARS, Ebola, etc.).

This organizational self-reflection tool lists evidence-informed recommendations based on the **Ten Organizational Elements** presented in the *Guideline for Paramedic Service Organizations to Address OSI during Infectious Public Health Crises* (henceforth referred to as the "Guideline"). This self-reflection tool should be used in conjunction with the Guideline.

Addressing OSI in the workplace requires an integrated, coordinated, and continuous approach. To reflect this, each section of this tool asks you to indicate the status and implementation of: 1) the existing organizational policies and infrastructure; 2) ongoing practices; and 3) specific initiatives and programs that were available during an infectious public health crisis. At the end of each section, space is provided for you to document the lessons learned and any additional organizational activities that have not been listed.

This is **NOT** an assessment or compliance tool but rather a reflection tool. Although organizations should strive towards achieving most of the recommended check-list items (presented in green), the degree of how much each of the items, or the combination of items, would impact paramedics' risk for OSI is currently unknown.

COMMIT:

Cultivate a psychologically safe and healthy workplace

Preparation, planning, policy, and infrastructure	Completed	In Progress	Not Started
Establish an organizational policy to foster a supportive workplace and address OSI	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The policy:			
...has been developed in collaboration with workers and worker representatives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...has been reviewed and updated in planned intervals (e.g., every year)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
...has been reviewed at the onset of the infectious public health crisis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
... is supportive, non-punitive, and non-stigmatizing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Establish policies, programs, and processes to ensure confidentiality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



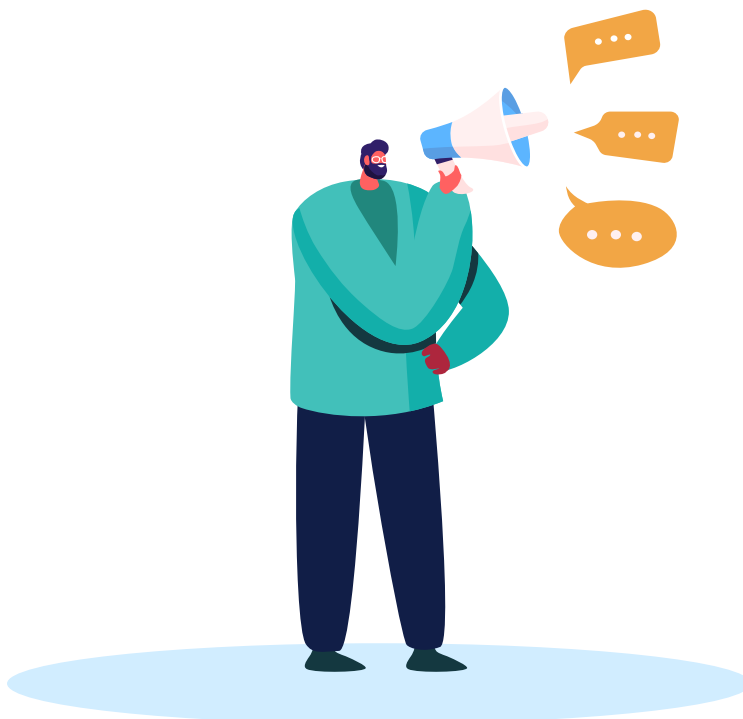
Ongoing organizational practices	Always	Most of the time	Some-times	Rarely	Never
Considerations of organizational policies for OSI are integrated into decision-making	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Updates on the organization’s efforts to reduce stigma and raise awareness are provided	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mental health campaigns and promotional activities are endorsed by the organization and the organization actively participates in these activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Workers are encouraged to proactively use mental health services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Good stress management, empathy, and psychological support are role modeled by organizational leaders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
OSI-related reports are taken seriously	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stigmatizing remarks are discouraged, and individual differences in stress response are acknowledged	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Workers are supported in engaging in daily practices that promote mental health and well-being	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Policies surrounding confidentiality breaches are reinforced (unless imminent risk of harm to self or others)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Workers’ request to release their personal health information are respected, and their personal health information is only used for its intended purposes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Initiatives and programs available during infectious public health crises	
<input type="checkbox"/> Laundry service	<input type="checkbox"/> Quarantine pay (does not count against sick days)
<input type="checkbox"/> Lodging and accommodations	<input type="checkbox"/> On-site vaccination
<input type="checkbox"/> Quarantine support program	<input type="checkbox"/> Support in locating services to support personal obligations (e.g., dependent/child/pet care)
<input type="checkbox"/> PPE fit-testing	<input type="checkbox"/> Include families/support systems in communications about mental health initiatives
<input type="checkbox"/> PPE for workers’ family members	

Reflection

Document any other initiatives that your organization has implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic to cultivate a psychologically safe and healthy workplace.

Document any lessons learned from COVID-19 that could be adapted for the next infectious public health crisis to further support a psychologically safe and healthy work culture.



COMMUNICATE:

Provide clear and consistent communication

Preparation, planning, policy, and infrastructure	Completed	In Progress	Not Started
Review the guidance for Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication in an Infectious Disease Outbreak from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communicate mental health-related policies and procedures to all workers, including their roles and responsibilities in addressing OSI	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Establish mechanisms for bidirectional/two-way communication for Q&A, suggestions, feedback, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Ongoing organizational practices	Always	Most of the time	Some-times	Rarely	Never
Consistent expectations are set for coping with the changing, ambiguous circumstances	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Considerations of workers' mental and physical health and safety in decision-making are communicated to workers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communications are coordinated with workers and worker representatives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Families and support systems are included in communications, when relevant	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Initiatives and programs available during infectious public health crises	
<input type="checkbox"/> Host Question & Answer sessions (e.g., online forums, social media, townhalls)	<input type="checkbox"/> Bring in experts to answer any workplace safety questions
<input type="checkbox"/> Centralize source of information dissemination	<input type="checkbox"/> Information bulletins
	<input type="checkbox"/> Daily briefings at the start of the shift

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication in an Infectious Disease Outbreak](#). (2019).

Reflection

Document any other communication strategies that your organization has implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic.

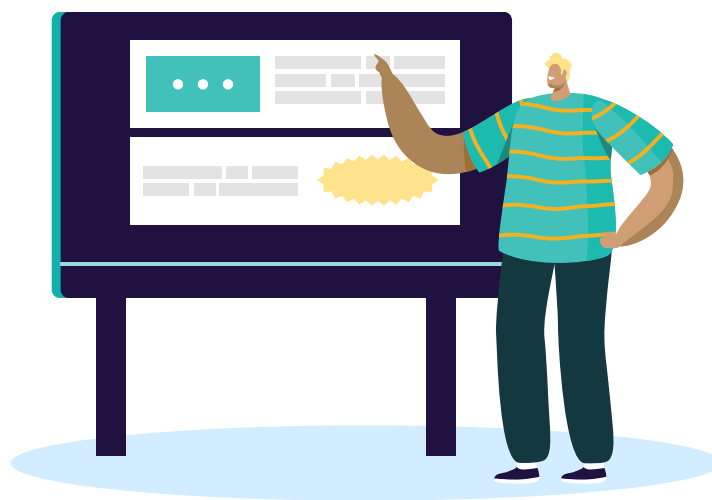
Document any communications-related lessons learned from this experience that could be adapted for the next infectious public health crisis.



EDUCATE:

Provide mental health and infection prevention and control training

Preparation, planning, policy, and infrastructure	Completed	In Progress	Not Started
Review the Overview of Workplace Training Programs document developed by the B.C. First Responders Mental Health Committee [†]	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The mental health training:			
Supports workers in developing a personal resilience plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Psychologically prepares workers on the unique stressors that they may face during infectious public health crises	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provides workers with specific training on coping strategies for non-critical stressors such as shiftwork	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Establish a process to select training programs that are interactive, tailored to the needs of target audience, and based on current evidence and best practices	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Establish a system to document completed training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop train-the-trainer program or informational packages for mental health professionals to build occupational awareness on the complexity of paramedic work and culture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



[†]B.C. First Responders Mental Health Committee. [Supporting Mental Health in First Responders: Overview of Workplace Training Programs](#). 2017

Ongoing organizational practices	Always	Most of the time	Some-times	Rarely	Never
Training is provided during work hours	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Workers are provided mental health training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Workers are provided infection prevention and control training/refresher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Volunteers are provided infection prevention and control training/refresher	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Loved ones are provided information packages or training to build occupational awareness on supporting workers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mental health training is readily accessible	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Initiatives and programs available during infectious public health crises	
Mental health training provided: <div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; height: 150px; width: 100%;"></div>	Infection prevention and control training provided: <div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; height: 150px; width: 100%;"></div>

Reflection
Document any knowledge gaps and lessons learned from this experience that could be adapted into training programs for the next infectious public health crisis. <div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; height: 150px; width: 100%;"></div>

RELIEVE:

Provide opportunities for recovery and maintaining resiliency

Preparation, planning, policy, and infrastructure	Completed	In Progress	Not Started
Designate a quiet room or area for workers to rest during breaks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Designate a kitchenette with fridge and microwave	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Ongoing organizational practices	Always	Most of the time	Some-times	Rarely	Never
Shifts are sufficiently staffed to allow for downtime	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Downtime is granted when requested during a shift	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sufficient recovery time is provided between shifts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Breaks are scheduled and adhered to throughout the shift for healthy meals, water, refreshments, personal hygiene, and rest	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Initiatives and programs available during infectious public health crises	
<input type="checkbox"/> Promote the appropriate use of paramedic services during the public health crisis	<input type="checkbox"/> Partner with other food services for discounts
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide free healthy food options at work	<input type="checkbox"/> Partner with (virtual) fitness organizations for discounted subscriptions or memberships



Reflection

Document any other initiatives that your organization has implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure that workers had opportunities to recover and maintain resiliency.

Document the challenges and barriers that have prevented workers from recovery and maintaining resiliency. Is there anything else that the organization can/should do to address those barriers?



IDENTIFY:

Identify and recognize the common and diverse risk factors of OSI

Preparation, planning, policy, and infrastructure	Completed	In Progress	Not Started
Create a list of organizationally recognized potentially psychologically traumatic events (PPTe) that would initiate proactive support and communicate it to all workers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Establish a system to track and monitor cumulative stressors that may lead to OSI	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Ongoing organizational practices	Always	Most of the time	Some-times	Rarely	Never
Workers exposed to an organizationally recognized PPTe are proactively offered support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Root-causes to early signs and symptoms of OSI are identified	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chronic and cumulative stressors are also recognized and acknowledged (see IDENTIFY in Guideline for common stressors associated with infectious public health crises)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Reflection
<p>Document any other initiatives that your organization has implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic to identify and recognize the common and diverse risk factors of OSI.</p> <div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; height: 100px; margin-top: 10px;"></div>
<p>Document any reoccurring psychosocial stressors that have led to OSI-related absenteeism and presenteeism that should/can be proactively addressed for the next infectious public health crisis. Include any lessons learned as well.</p> <div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; height: 100px; margin-top: 10px;"></div>

MONITOR:

Detect early signs and symptoms of OSI

Preparation, planning, policy, and infrastructure	Completed	In Progress	Not Started
Establish a reporting process that is straightforward and respects workers' privacy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Ongoing organizational practices	Always	Most of the time	Some-times	Rarely	Never
Workers are encouraged to report early signs and symptoms of OSI	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Changes in workers' behaviours/performance are monitored to ensure timely intervention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Workers are reminded that there are no punitive measures or negative consequences for reporting an injury	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Initiatives and programs available during infectious public health crises
<input type="checkbox"/> Share success stories of those who have engaged with mental health support services

Reflection
<p>Document any other initiatives that your organization has implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic to support self-reporting and detecting early signs and symptoms of OSI.</p> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; height: 80px; width: 100%;"></div>
<p>Document lessons learned from this experience that could be adapted for the next infectious public health crisis to improve self-reporting and the detection of OSI-related signs and symptoms.</p> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; height: 80px; width: 100%;"></div>

SUPPORT:

Provide various types of mental health support services

Preparation, planning, policy, and infrastructure	Completed	In Progress	Not Started
Various types of mental health support services are available to:			
Workers (paramedics)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dispatch workers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Volunteers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Contract and part-time workers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Senior management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Supervisors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mental health support services are available to workers' support systems (i.e., family and loved ones)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Establish mechanisms to allow organizationally provided mental health support services to be accessed remotely during an infectious public health crisis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Ongoing organizational practices	Always	Most of the time	Some-times	Rarely	Never
Workers and management are informed of the available mental health support services, and are encouraged and reminded to access these services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is follow-up with workers who have been suggested to seek support from mental health support services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Initiatives and programs available during infectious public health crises [†]		
<input type="checkbox"/> Wellness checks <input type="checkbox"/> Downtime/stress leave <input type="checkbox"/> Peer support	<input type="checkbox"/> Employee (and family) assistance program <input type="checkbox"/> Mental health referral network	<input type="checkbox"/> Post-incident intervention <input type="checkbox"/> In-house mental health professional <input type="checkbox"/> Extended health plan

[†]Refer to **Table 3** of the Guideline for more information on the benefits, recommended practices, and barriers to implementation for each of the initiatives and programs identified.

Reflection

Document any other mental health-specific support services or initiatives that your organization has implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Document any lessons learned related to the provision of mental health support services that could be adapted for the next infectious public health crisis.



ACCOMMODATE:

Provide meaningful work accommodations

Preparation, planning, policy, and infrastructure	Completed	In Progress	Not Started
Establish a list of potential work accommodations or modified/alternative duties	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Ongoing organizational practices	Always	Most of the time	Some-times	Rarely	Never
Temporary modified/alternative duties are offered to vulnerable workers who are unable to provide frontline service during infectious public health crisis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work limitations and appropriate and meaningful modified/alternative work are identified in collaboration with the worker and workers representative and, where applicable, healthcare providers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Workers are monitored for worsening signs and symptoms of OSI, and accommodations are adjusted as necessary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is regular follow-up with workers, even if they have returned to their full work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Reflection
<p>Document any other initiatives that your organization has implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic and the meaningful work accommodations that have been provided.</p> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; height: 100px; margin-top: 10px;"></div>
<p>Document any accommodations-related lessons learned from this experience that could be adapted for the next infectious public health crisis.</p> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; height: 100px; margin-top: 10px;"></div>

EVALUATE:

Collect relevant data to inform program development and continuous improvement

Preparation, planning, policy, and infrastructure	Completed	In Progress	Not Started
Establish a data-driven decision-making process to inform selection, development, and implementation of OSI-related programs and policies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Ongoing organizational practices	Always	Most of the time	Some-times	Rarely	Never
Relevant data is collected to evaluate the initiatives to address OSI (refer to Table 4 of Guideline for potential metrics for process and outcome evaluation)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programs, policies, processes, and services are continually improved	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Initiatives and programs available during infectious public health crises	
<input type="checkbox"/> Management and worker feedback <input type="checkbox"/> Worker surveys/interviews/focus <input type="checkbox"/> Human resources reports	<input type="checkbox"/> Data from E(F)AP service provider <input type="checkbox"/> Suggestions box or email

Reflection
<p>Document the data and data collection strategies that have been effective in improving organizational support for workers' mental health and well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic. Are there any other data that should be collected going forwards? How should the data be collected?</p> <div style="background-color: #f0f0f0; height: 150px; margin-top: 20px;"></div>

ANTICIPATE:

Plan for future infectious public health crises

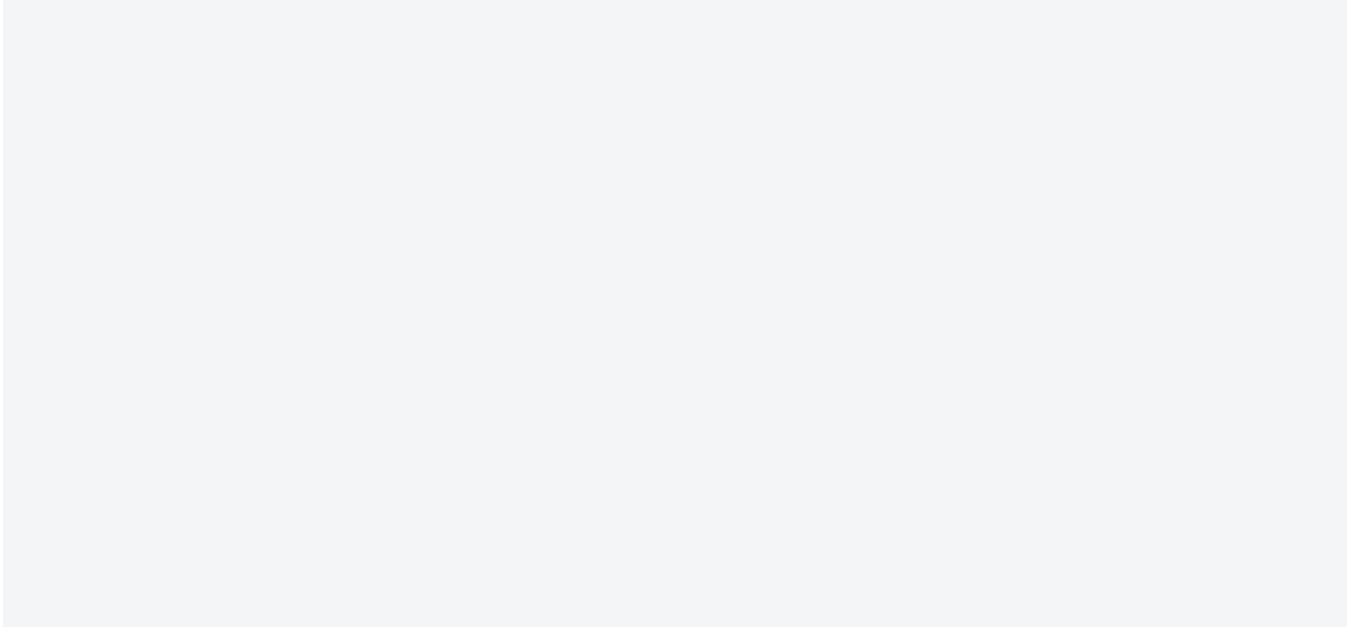
Preparation, planning, policy, and infrastructure	Completed	In Progress	Not Started
Establish an emergency response plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The emergency response plan has been reviewed and updated in planned intervals (e.g., every year)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Establish policies for quarantine and return-to-work after quarantine	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Align infection prevention and control protocols with best practices	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Establish working relationships with the local health departments (i.e., public health, healthcare, emergency management) and elected officials to coordinate emergency response plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Establish a multi-stakeholder team for emergency response planning that consists of a designated officer, a health and safety personnel, a public health expert, and workers and worker representatives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Budget for emergency response planning prior to a public health crisis and ensure the budget has funds for supporting workers' basic needs and mental health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prepare to operate without any assistance from agencies outside of the local community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Ongoing organizational practices	Always	Most of the time	Some-times	Rarely	Never
The organization's response plan is readily available to stakeholders and is up to date	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Initiatives and programs available during infectious public health crises
<input type="checkbox"/> Training sessions, drills, and simulated exercises to disseminate and discuss the written emergency response plans

Reflection

Document how the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic can be applied into the emergency response plan to better address OSI during future infectious public health crises.



Authors:

Bronson Du,¹ MSc,
Marcus Yung,¹ PhD, CPE,
Sara Rezvani, BMSc,
Amy Hackney,¹ PhD,
Amin Yazdani,¹ PhD, CSP

Affiliations:

¹Canadian Institute for Safety, Wellness, and Performance, School of Business, Conestoga College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning, Kitchener, ON, Canada

Graphic design:

Hannah Bryan

Citation:

Du B., Yung M., Rezvani S., Hackney A., Yazdani A. (2021). Addressing Operational Stress Injuries during Infectious Public Health Crises: Self-Reflection Tool for Paramedic Service Organizations. Canadian Institute for Safety, Wellness, and Performance (CISWP). Kitchener, ON.

Illustrations modified by Freepik

Questions?

Get in Touch with CISWP:

299 Doon Valley Drive, Kitchener ON, N2G 4M4

ciswp@conestogac.on.ca

519-748-5220, ext. 2338

www.conestogac.on.ca/ciswp

 YouTube @CISWP

 in @CISWP_Conestoga

