An EAP Response to JPL’s Losses of the 1999 Mars Missions

Presentation to EAPA
October, 2001
CHALLENGES TO THE RESPONSE

- Length of the Response
- Impacted Team Members at different work sites
- Impact to organization after downsizing
- Media Coverage
Presentation Objectives

- Explore how Critical Incident Management Techniques for emergency responders can be applied to space mission rescue operations or high performance business missions.

- Discuss how utilization of multiple modes of communication, such as, electronic, telephone conferencing, and in person can assist the EAP to respond to employees at different geographic locations.

- Identify how early intervention and collaboration with management can increase the success of the strategies to mitigate workplace trauma.
Mars Polar Lander
Goals of Critical Incident Stress Management

- Mitigate the psychological impact of a traumatic event
- Prevent the development of post-traumatic syndrome and/or disorder
- Identify individuals who may require professional mental health follow-up
Primary Interventions

- Lessen stigma
- Prevent isolation
- Provide professional support
Secondary Interventions

☐ Assessment

☐ Referral

Preventative Interventions

☐ “Stress Inoculation”
Factors Which Compound Trauma

- Unusual attention from the news media
- Prolonged and extraordinary expenditures of physical and emotional energy
- Serious repercussion to individual careers, job status
Communication to Team Leaders

- Services provided by EAP
- Tips for managers during intense and compacted work projects
- Symptoms of a distressed employee
Tips for Managers During Intense & Compacted Work Projects

- Rotation
- Cross training
- Post project "letdown"
- Encouragement of wellness
- Critical incident stress debriefing/meeting
- Intervention of distressed employee
Communication to Team Members & Their Families

- EAP and Occupational Health Services
- Self care reminders
- After the landing
Communication to Team Members and Families

- Rest and recovery
- What is “Post-traumatic Stress Reaction”
- Tools for stress for employee and family
- Reactions individuals may experience
Response from employees, their families, and management indicated that the EAP interventions were beneficial in the following ways:

- provided a safe, supportive, and confidential service for employees to share their experiences

- provided employees and their families with information and practical tools which assisted in mitigating the impact of the stress

- provided a service in which employees and their families expressed an appreciation that they felt the management of the Laboratory truly cared about their well being

- provided consultation to management and made resources available which benefited the entire JPL community