Normal Feelings and Emotions You May Experience:

Fear
- Of damage to oneself and those we love.
- Of being left alone, of having to leave loved ones.
- Of “breaking down” or “losing control”.
- Of a similar event happening again – helplessness.
- Crises show up human weakness, as well as strength.

Sadness
- For deaths, injuries and losses of every kind.
- Feelings of hopelessness and despair.

Longing
- For all that has gone.

Guilt
- For being better off than others, i.e. for surviving, for not being injured, for still having material things.
- Regrets for things not done.

Memories
- Of feelings of loss or of love for other people in your life who have been injured or died at other times.

Disappointment
- For all the plans that can now never be fulfilled.

Shame
- For having been exposed as helpless, emotional and needing others.
- For not having reacted as one would have wished – anger.
- At what happened, at whoever caused it or allowed it to happen.
- At the injustice and senselessness of it all.
- At the shame and indignities.
- At the lack of proper understanding by others and their inefficiencies.
- Why us, why our community.

Hope
- For the future and better times.

Everyone may have these feelings. Experience has shown that they may vary in intensity according to circumstance. Nature heals through allowing these feelings to come out. This will not lead to loss of control, but stopping these feelings may lead to other and possibly more complicated problems.

Do remember, crying can give relief.

Physical and Mental Sensations

Some common sensations are tiredness, sleeplessness, bad dreams, fuzziness of the mind including loss of memory and concentration, dizziness, palpitations, shakes, difficulty in breathing, nausea, diarrhoea, muscular tension which may lead to pain, e.g. headaches, neck and backaches, abdominal pain etc.

Remember if you are feeling unwell you should always go to your local G.P.

Numbness

Your mind may allow the event to be felt only slowly. At first you may feel numb. The event may seem unreal, like a dream, something that has not really happened. People often see this wrongly, either as ‘being strong’ or ‘uncaring’.

Activity

Helping others may give you some relief but remember looking after yourself is a priority.

Reality

Facing the reality, by attending funerals, inspecting losses, returning to the scene, will help you to come to terms with the event.

Support

It can be a relief to receive other people’s physical and emotional support. Sharing with others who have had similar experiences can help.

Privacy

In order to deal with feelings, you may find it necessary at times to be alone, or just with family and a close friend.

Family and Social Relationships

New friendships and relationships may develop. On the other hand, strains in existing relationships may appear. The good feelings in giving and receiving may be replaced by conflict. You may feel that too much of the wrong things are offered, or that you cannot give as much as expected. Accidents are more frequent after severe stress. Alcohol and drug intake may increase due to the extra tension.
SOME DO’S AND DON’TS FOLLOWING A CRITICAL INCIDENT

DON’T
- don’t bottle up feelings.
- don’t avoid talking about what happened.
- don’t expect the memories to go away – the feelings will stay with you for a long time to come.
- don’t forget that children experience similar feelings.

DO
- do express your emotions and let children share in the grief.
- do take every opportunity to review the experience.
- do allow yourself to be part of a group of people who care.
- do take time out to sleep, rest, think and be with those important to you.
- do express your needs clearly and honestly.
- do try to keep your life as normal as possible after the acute grief.
- do send your children back to school, GAA club and let them keep up with their activities.
- do take care while driving.

REMEMBER: accidents are more common after severe stress

WHERE CAN I GET FURTHER HELP?
If you feel you need further help as a consequence of being involved in a critical incident, you are advised to contact your G.P.

CONCLUSION
In this advice leaflet you have read about common reactions to critical incidents and you will have had an opportunity to identify those which particularly fit to how you have been feeling.

The main message is this: the feelings, thoughts and body sensations you have been experiencing are entirely normal. They are a natural, human reaction to extreme stress associated with critical incidents.