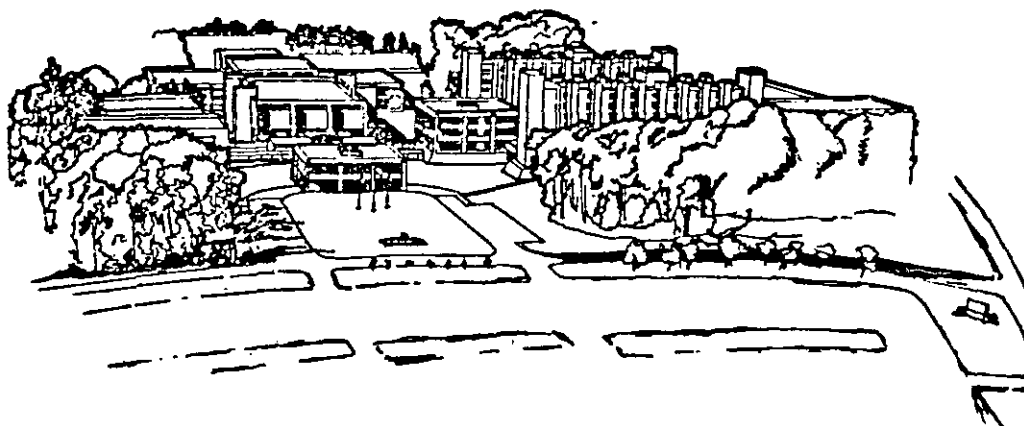


U.S. Department of Justice
Federal Bureau of Investigation



Shooting Incidents: Issues and Explanations For FBI Agents And Managers



Washington, D.C. 20535

Office of the Director

Special Agents with the FBI are charged with the duty of investigating violations of the laws of the United States, collecting evidence in cases in which the United States is or may be a party in interest, and performing other duties imposed by law. In carrying out these responsibilities they are at times confronted by violent members of our society and must use deadly force. Whether the Agent is victimized or forced to harm another, severe physical and/or emotional trauma may result not only for the Agent but also for the Agent's family. This is as true of critical incidents such as motor vehicle and aircraft accidents as it is of confrontations with felons.

The FBI's Psychological Services Program has been designed to meet the needs of our employees, their families, and the FBI as an organizational family. I can assure you we will continue to update and refine this program toward meeting the needs of our employees.

With this as our motivation, we have examined the need to assess and reduce the trauma experienced by Agents involved in critical incidents such as shootings. We recognize that the FBI organization is essentially a second family for all of us and constitutes an excellent support system. Therefore, Special Agents who have been involved in shooting incidents have been trained to assist fellow Agents who, in the course of their duties, also become involved in similar situations.

We want all Special Agents, supervisors, and managers to be aware of the program and to alert them to the availability of this support system.

The pamphlet which you are about to read summarizes the results of the research that the Bureau has conducted into critical incidents in which the Agents have been involved. It takes into consideration not only psychological but also the physiological and legal ramifications of such incidents. The pamphlet was written with emphasis on Agents involved in critical incidents being provided support by their own families and by "The FBI Family."

It is in the true spirit of the FBI Family that Agents involved in critical incidents have contributed so significantly to the procedures outlined in this pamphlet for the benefit of their fellow Agents. I warmly commend each of you and appreciate your sharing of your traumatic experiences for the betterment of our post-critical incident program.

William S. Sessions
Director

Introduction:

Agents of the FBI are trained to use the weapons authorized by the Bureau in response to life-threatening situations, yet every Agent hopes that he/she will not have to use that training. Although, to date, only a small number of Agents have been involved in shooting incidents, such incidents have had an impact on their lives as well as their families' lives. The purpose of this brochure is to prepare Agents for what may follow a shooting incident: the physical and psychological reactions, the administrative and legal aspects, and the help that is available in dealing with these issues.

Shooting incidents can be dramatic and unusual, and Agents often feel isolated and unprepared as they try to cope with such incidents. The information in this brochure is based upon the experiences of many Agents involved in shootings and of those whose job it is to try to help them. If you know what to expect and what the normal reactions are to this abnormal event, then the negative impact will be lessened.

Reactions during the incident:

Although Agents may be physically and mentally prepared for a shooting incident, when it actually occurs there is often a feeling of disbelief that it is really happening to them. Many Agents respond automatically, a reflection of good training which can often be life-saving when seconds count. There is often a rush of adrenalin, along with a feeling of fear. Perceptions may be altered during the actual incident. Agents frequently report that they see the event in slow motion or with a narrowed or tunnel vision, and that they do not hear all the shots, voices, or noises during the incident.

Physical and psychological reactions:

Agents are generally healthier and in better physical condition than the average citizen. Remember: IF YOU ARE SHOT YOU DON'T HAVE TO DIE. A number of surgeons have commented on the remarkable recoveries made by Agents from wounds that would ordinarily have been fatal. Agents who have been shot recover and return to their jobs.

Nevertheless, a shooting incident is one of the most severe occupational stressors that an Agent is likely to experience during his or her career. No one, no matter how healthy, well-trained, and well-adjusted is immune to the normal stress reaction to such an event. The key to a healthy response is to be aware of the normal reactions and to make appropriate adjustments as they occur. It is not unusual for an Agent to take several weeks or even months to adjust to a shooting incident, and some effects may last longer or appear after an initial delay.

If an Agent has been wounded in a shooting, he/she should expect a period of recovery and gradual readjustment; behavior at work and at home may not be the same. A definite amount of time and energy is consumed during the recovery process. Agents should be aware of this and pace themselves accordingly. It is important to have the same attitude toward the stress reaction as a shooting incident. You should pace yourself and budget your time and energy for recovery. The generally high level of physical and mental health in Agents helps this recovery, but it does take time.

The following are reactions commonly experienced by Agents involved in shooting incidents:

Sleeping problems - restless sleep, difficulty falling asleep, vivid dreams or nightmares (often about the incident).

Fatigue.

Anxiety and tension.

Sadness, crying, depression.

Repetitive and intrusive thoughts about the incident.

Hyper-alertness and/or startle responses.

Guilty feelings about what happened and wondering if you did the right thing.

Trouble remembering and/or concentrating.

Anger.

Drinking alcoholic beverages more than usual or to excess.

These reactions are unpleasant, but any or all of them may be normal. They usually begin immediately after the incident, peak during the first few weeks, then gradually subside. Occasionally, they will persist or recur. If this happens, or if the reactions (depression, for example) are severe enough to interfere with functioning, appropriate treatment techniques such as counseling and/or medication are helpful and should be made available.

Family issues:

Spouses of Agents may become upset or worried when a shooting incident occurs. If the Agent has been involved in a similar incident, in the past, painful memories may be revived.

Some Agents react to the stress of a shooting with increased irritability at home. Sometimes, the stress on an Agent and his/her spouse may temporarily strain the marital relationship. Spouses, too, can expect a milder form of stress reaction. Parents, children, brothers or sisters, and other relatives may be affected.

Agents and their spouses may try to protect their young children by not telling them about the incident. If there has been any publicity, as is often the case, this usually does not work. Children frequently receive distorted or inaccurate accounts from friends or acquaintances and are upset both by the nothing. Young children usually sense when something important has happened to one of their parents, and if no explanation is offered they will construct one themselves, often one that involves unrealistic self-blame or responsibility. These can be corrected by giving children a simple age-appropriate explanation. Several Agents have discovered long after a shooting incident that their children knew of it but were afraid to talk to their parents because their parents had clearly not wanted to share it with them.

A good approach is to ask first if the child has heard anything about what happened. Then, let the child respond without interruption so that any unrealistic ideas can emerge, and be corrected gently. Reassure young children that they are safe with their parent(s) and that a "bad guy" is not going to hurt them. Reassurance may be more difficult when an Agent has actually been injured, but it is still appropriate. Children's fears are often different from, and worse than, the reality of the situation. If you decide not to tell your children, a cautious inquiry about whether they have heard anything is still recommended.

Work issues:

A shooting incident may affect your work environment and your feelings about it. You can expect a surge of support and encouragement from other Agents and the Supervisory Staff following a shooting incident. Some of your colleagues may be curious about what happened and how you felt; others may deal with feelings aroused by the incident with attempts at humor. Try to realize that they are wondering and worrying about what they would have done in a similar situation.

There is always an administrative investigation following a shooting incident, and some Agents have found this to be as stressful as the incident itself. Legal issues, including your own potential liability, are often involved. These aspects are described later in this brochure. Agents sometimes experience feelings of being treated like a criminal in the course of such investigations, especially if they perceive Supervisors to be concerned with protecting their own interests. The investigation usually takes longer than an Agent would like and leaves him/her in an uncomfortable state of suspense.

Other sources of frustration during this period are distorted or inaccurate media/press accounts, which often try to "second guess" what might have been done on the basis of inadequate information.

It is recommended that you plan on taking five days of administrative leave during the period following your involvement in a shooting incident. This leave gives you time to allow the normal stress reaction to take its course without you having to do your usual work at the same time. Attempt to pace your return to work.

You should not immediately be assigned to duties that would be highly likely to involve another armed confrontation. This will avoid accumulating additional stress of this nature. This is of paramount importance if you have been previously involved in another shooting incident. If you are in a period of high personal or family stress or health problems, you should ask to be excused from particular assignments that are likely to lead to a shooting incident.

Successful coping:

Up to this point the problems and stresses associated with a shooting incident have been emphasized, but Agents are not powerless in the face of traumatic events. Agents can and do cope with these happenings, and often are stronger and wiser for their experience. Many Agents have experienced shooting incidents and have had the chance to evaluate what was most helpful in coping. The suggestions that follow are based on the experiences of these Agents.

Sharing your experience with others is the most important technique of successful coping. The two resources for sharing identified as the most helpful were: (1) fellow Agents and (2) a spouse or close friend. We can be even more specific about fellow Agents: almost every Agent involved in a shooting was substantially helped by talking and listening to other Agents who have had a similar experience. A major reason for this is the perception of the involved Agent that someone who has not been personally involved in a shooting incident cannot really

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May Shooting

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understand what it is like. The high value of this kind of mutual sharing and help may be a reason for postponing your administrative leave during the crucial first days after the incident, so that you can be with Agents who have been involved in similar incidents. If you were alone in the incident, or if you and/or the other Agent(s) involved need some outside perspective, the Bureau, your SAC, ASAC or Supervisor can make available to you Agents from your area who have been involved in a shooting incident and have had special training in the area of possible effects and how they might assist fellow Agents. The more Agents that you can contact who have successfully coped with this type of experience, the better.

The value of sharing with a spouse or close friend ranks nearly as high for Agents as sharing with their colleagues. You don't have to put up a front for a spouse or a close friend or pretend to be tough. You can, and should, unburden yourself in this confidential relationship. Agents and their spouses have described intense "marathons" in the period after a shooting where the Agent "lets it all out" and feels better afterward. The important thing is to keep the lines of communication open.

If you are a spouse, try to be available and ready to devote the time and energy that this sharing requires. The most important thing is to be there and to listen as long as the Agent needs to talk; this is more important than reassurance or sympathy, although these are also helpful. A marriage does not have to be perfect in order to offer this helping and healing effect. Clearly, a spouse can also use this same technique to cope successfully with the stresses of a shooting incident; that is - talking to, sharing with, and helping other spouses.

Several other factors have been identified by Agents as helpful in their coping. These are more individual - what works for one person may not be helpful to another:

- A sense of humor.
- Return to the normal work routine.
- Physical activity.
- Religious beliefs and/or practices.
- Feelings of anger.
- Keeping one's mind off the incident.

Positive aspects:

There is no question that a shooting incident can be traumatic. Yet Agents have also been able to identify some positive effects associated with such incidents. Most important, and in spite of the problems associated with post-shooting incident investigations, Agents felt that they had learned that they could trust people and count on them in a crisis. For some, the experience helped them grow and mature. Having met the test

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SHOOTING INCIDENT CHECKLIST

This checklist is intended to provide basic REMINDERS for an SAC, ASAC or Supervisor at the scene of an Agent-involved shooting incident..

Request medical assistance, if necessary, and contact local authorities.

Personally coordinate investigation if Inspector is not dispatched to the scene.

Secure the scene - establish crime/shooting scene perimeter, protect evidence. Collect weapon(s) and ammunition from involved Agent(s).

Request additional personnel as warranted. Arrange for replacement weapon(s) for involved Agent(s).

Broadcast critical information to backup/responding units.

Notify SAC/ASAC and FBIHQ.

Avoid having involved Agent(s) conduct any investigation and/or interviews relevant to the shooting. [Do not, however, delay substantive investigation to accomplish this.] Separate and remove involved Agent(s) from the scene.

Assign informed Supervisor, Primary Relief Supervisor or close friend to involved Agent(s). This Agent should act as liaison between the involved Agent and family and the Administrative Services Division, to resolve difficulties arising concerning salary, insurance benefits, leave, unemployment compensation, etc. Caution assigned personnel not to become involved in routine family affairs.

Ensure that involved Agent's family is personally briefed as soon as practical, by Agent himself or herself, if circumstances permit. If Agent is injured, the Agent's family should be personally contacted and provided transportation with an informed Agent to the treatment facility.

Identify, locate and interview all personnel and witnesses at the scene.
Secure evidence - meet with local authorities to clarify jurisdiction and investigative responsibilities.

Discuss the legal ramifications for involved Agent(s) with the Principal Legal Advisor prior to any interviews.

Consider interview of involved Agent(s) by someone sensitized in the area of Post-Critical Incident Trauma. The handling of such shooting investigations/inquiries by local police will vary greatly. SAC's reactions should adapt accordingly. Support for the Agent(s) and cooperation with the local inquiry must both be considered. In order to minimize the effects of post-shooting trauma, the SAC should personally assure that, if possible, involved Agent(s) are expeditiously removed from the shooting scene. Every effort should be made to insure that any statements required to be made by an Agent involved in a shooting are given after the Agent has been afforded reasonable time to regain composure and is capable of understanding his or her rights. Coordinate any problems with FBIHQ (Criminal Investigative Division, Legal Counsel, etc.).

In those situations where an Agent is injured, locate a secluded area of the hospital where a liaison telephone can be set up and coordinated with hospital authorities. Insure office personnel receive this number. Assign an Agent to this location to coordinate the following:

- Security and privacy of injured Agent.
- Media contacts through hospital Public Information Office.
- Interviews with Bureau Agents and local authorities, if necessary.
- Visiting hours with office personnel to avoid overcrowding and uncomfortable conditions.
- Inquiries from Field Office or FBIHQ.

Insure additional items of evidence are properly secured at the hospital (eg., clothing).

Arrange for a daily briefing of injured Agent, if necessary.

Brief media personnel, being careful not to release Agent's name. [Consideration should be given as to which agency should make press releases, whether or not the subject's identity should be released and whether the identity of the subject's next of kin should be released.]

Keep office personnel apprised of the investigation and the condition of any injured Agent(s).

Screen all phone calls at the office to involved Agent(s). The same precaution may be necessary at the Agent's residence. Provide appropriate security for Agent and family. A telephone answering machine at the Agent's home may provide needed periods of respite for the Agent and his/her family.

Insure that contact has been initiated between involved Agent(s) and Dr. David Soskis. Receive briefing concerning Post-Critical Incident Trauma.

SAC, ASAC, and Supervisor coordinate availability of peer support through Behavioral Science Unit, FBI Academy.

Review booklet entitled "Your Workers Compensation Benefits" prepared by Employee Benefits Unit, Administrative Services Division for questions relating to work related illnesses and injuries.

In those situations where an Agent(s) have sustained damage to personal property, consult Section 19, pp. 221 - 221.07 of the Manual of Administrative Operations and Procedures. Complete Form DOJ 110A - "Employee Claim for Loss or Damage to Personal Property".

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/PRIVACY ACTS SECTION
COVER SHEET

SUBJECT: SHOOTING INCIDENTS: ISSUES
FOR AGENTS

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U.S. Department of Justice

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Washington, D.C. 20535

ROBERT G WRIGHT JR
610 JOLIET STREEET, WEST
CROWN POINT, IN 46307

AUGUST 20, 2001

Subject: SHOOTING INCIDENTS/ISSUES FOR
AGENTS

FOIPA No. 0942776- 000 /190-

Dear Requester:

The enclosed documents were reviewed under the Freedom of Information/Privacy Acts (FOIPA), Title 5, United States Code, Section 552/552a. Deletions have been made to protect information which is exempt from disclosure, with the appropriate exemptions noted on the page next to the excision. In addition, a deleted page information sheet was inserted in the file to indicate where pages were withheld entirely. The exemptions used to withhold information are marked below and explained on the enclosed Form OPCA-16a:

Section 552

☐ (b)(1)	☐ (b)(7)(A)
☐ (b)(2)	☐ (b)(7)(B)
☐ (b)(3) _____	☐ (b)(7)(C)
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Section 552a

☐ (d)(5)
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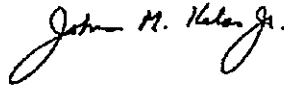
22 preprocessed pages are enclosed. To expedite requests, preprocessed packages are released the same way they were originally processed. Documents or information originating with other Government agencies were not referred to those agencies as part of this release.

☑ You have the right to appeal any denials. Appeals should be directed in writing to the Co-Director, Office of Information and Privacy, U.S. Department of Justice, Flag Building, Suite 570, Washington, D.C. 20530-0001 within sixty days from receipt of this letter. The envelope and the letter should be clearly marked "Freedom of Information Appeal" or "Information Appeal." Please cite the FOIPA number assigned to your request that it may be easily identified.

☒ See additional information which follows.

Enclose is a copy of the pamphlet Shooting Incidents / Issues and Explanation For Agents and Managers by William H. Webster. Your request for the pamphlet sign by William S. Session was started by INSD (Inspection Division) but was never completed. We have contacted numerous sections within the FBI but can not locate a copy of the requested pamphlet by William S. Session.

Sincerely yours,



John M. Kelso Jr.
Section Chief,
Freedom of Information-
Privacy Acts Section
Office of Public and
Congressional Affairs.

— — — Enclosure (2).