

Supplemental Materials for
*Behind the Frontline: Vicarious Trauma Amongst Support
Staff in Victoria's Emergency Management Sector*

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Submitted to:

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A: Agency Manager Interview Questions

| Main Topic | Questions |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Background | <p>Would you be okay with us audio recording this interview?</p> <p>Do you understand the ESF-WPI relationship and why we are here conducting this study?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p>Do you have any clarifying questions?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p>How long have you worked in Victoria's Emergency Management Sector?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p>Have you worked in other emergency agencies in the past?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p>Please tell us briefly about what your agency does.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p>This is our definition of Vicarious Trauma. Is your understanding of Vicarious Trauma different in any way?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p>What would you consider to be support staff within your agency (non-frontline workers)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p>What types of stressors do the support staff working in your agency experience?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p>Has your agency given any consideration to the specific mental health needs of support staff as opposed to first responders/front-line workers?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p>Tell us about any consideration your agency has given to the specific issue of Vicarious Trauma.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p>Have you conducted any surveys or assessments to gauge the mental health needs and concerns of your emergency service support staff?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p>Are you aware of any barriers to reaching support staff with messages about mental health and wellbeing?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • |
| Current Mental Health Programs | <p>Tell us about the most successful mental health initiative your organization has implemented.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • |

| Main Topic | Questions |
|---------------------|---|
| | <p>Why was it a success? What defines success?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • |
| Future Improvements | <p>Tell us about future plans to increase or improve mental health support for support staff.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p>Tell us about ways emergency service support staff can provide feedback or suggestions for improving mental health support within the organization.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • |
| Concluding Thoughts | <p>What would be the best outcome from this project for your organization? (What do you want to get out of our project?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p>What do you think should be done to mitigate the risk of vicarious trauma for support staff?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p>What would make the greatest difference to people in roles like yours?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p>To support staff: Would you be willing to speak with us again about your experiences in a more in depth conversation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p>Would you be interested in participating in a podcast recording with us?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • |

B: Support Staff Interview Questions

| Main Topic | Questions |
|--------------------|--|
| Background | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Can you briefly describe your role in your agency? ● How long have you been a member of the “support staff” to Victoria’s Emergency Management Sector? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Has this been your only membership of a “support staff”? |
| Experiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What drew you to work in the emergency sector or to work in your role in particular? ● What do your day to day tasks usually entail? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What hours do you normally work (9-5, shift work, etc.)? |
| Exposure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Without going into detail, can you share types of stories or events you have learned about on the job, one that has stuck with you emotionally or had a big impact? ● What resources do you know of available within your agency to help support those suffering from vicarious trauma? (Ask about Continuum specifically for VT) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If not, what resources or work modifications do you feel might help? |
| Support/Strategies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In your own personal story, what were your methods of coping and personal support skills and strategies to combat these emotions? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What do you do to decompress after work? ● What support options and training do you wish were available during your journey? See above comment? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Have you thought about Job Design, Organizational Factors, Workplace Support, etc.? |
| Prevention | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Do you take any preventative measures to protect your mental health and minimize any negative impacts that this work can have on you? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What knowledge regarding prevention measures do you wish were available in addition to your current tactics? ● In what ways do you feel supported (or not supported) by your agency's management mental health wise? |
| Suggestions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In your own words, what changes or support programs would you suggest to help support staff cope with work related stressors? ● Ideally, what outcomes do you hope come out of our study within the sector? |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <p>Debrief Script for Interviewer</p> | <p>We know that we covered some heavy topics today and wanted to check in to see how you are feeling. We really appreciate your participation today and want you to know that you are making an impact. We have worked with ESF to find some mental health resources that we can recommend to you if you would like to talk about anything brought up today with a professional.</p> <p>Do you have any remaining questions regarding this interview, or feedback to improve the efficacy and sensitivity of our questions?</p> <p>If you have any questions or concerns about anything we discussed in today's interview, please do not hesitate to reach back out to us.</p> |
|---------------------------------------|--|

C: Subject Matter Expert Interview Questions

| Main Topic | Questions |
|---------------------|--|
| Background | <p>Would you be okay with us audio recording this interview?</p> <p>Do you understand the ESF-WPI relationship and why we are here conducting this study?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p>Do you have any clarifying questions?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p>Can you describe briefly the type of work you do?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • |
| Vicarious Trauma | <p>Here is our definition of Vicarious Trauma</p> <p>Is your understanding/definition of Vicarious Trauma different in any way?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p>Can you tell us about your interaction with Vicarious Trauma? In work setting and/or personal experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <p>In your experience, what have you seen to be successful in mitigating Vicarious Trauma risk?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • |
| Concluding Thoughts | <p>What do you think the sector can do/put in place to help mitigate the risk and/or impacts of Vicarious Trauma?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • |

D: Management Interview Consent Form

Management Conversation Consent Form

Participant,

We are a team of university student researchers from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) in Massachusetts, USA. We are conducting this study in collaboration with the Emergency Service Foundation (ESF). The purpose of this study is to understand work related experiences and stressors of emergency service support staff in Victoria.

We are conducting conversations with mental health managers in each of the 15 emergency agencies in Victoria to learn about the types of traumatic experiences support staff in the emergency sector may experience and the mental health resources available for these workers within each agency. The information collected from this conversation will be used to raise awareness about work related stress and Vicarious Trauma, and to make recommendations to sector leaders on how to create a more supportive and resilient work environment. Study results will be published on our university website (<https://www.wpi.edu/>) and shared with emergency sector managers in a presentation in mid-December.

If you choose to participate, you may terminate the conversation at any point, and you may choose to not answer any question. In our final report, no identifying information will be used about any participants. In signing below, you acknowledge your willingness to participate in the conversation, which should not continue any longer than the previously agreed upon time period. The audio recorded during this conversation will be available to our research team; however, the recording itself won't be shared with anyone beyond our team.

If you have any further questions about the study, wish to read the final report or receive an invitation to our final presentation, please contact our ESF IQP team at gr-gr-melb23-esf@wpi.edu or our WPI faculty advisor at ldh@wpi.edu.

I understand the purpose of this study and agree to participate in this conversation.

Printed name of participant:

Signature of participant:

Date:

Thank you,

Hunter Daris, Ella Devault, Gavin George, Fredy Lenson

E: Support Staff Interview Consent Form

Support Staff Conversation Consent Form

Participant,

We are a team of university student researchers from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) in Massachusetts, USA. We are conducting this study in collaboration with the Emergency Service Foundation (ESF). The purpose of this study is to understand work related experiences and stressors of emergency service support staff in Victoria.

We are conducting conversations with members of support staff in each of the 15 emergency agencies in Victoria to learn about the types of traumatic experiences you have heard or read about through colleagues or clients and how you feel this exposure may have impacted you or your work in the sector. We would also like to learn about the supports and resources you have called on and your ideas for other types of support that may be helpful for support workers like yourself. The information collected from this conversation will be used to raise awareness about work related stress and Vicarious Trauma, and to make recommendations to sector leaders on how to create a more supportive and resilient work environment. Study results will be published on our university website (<https://www.wpi.edu/>) and shared with emergency sector managers in a presentation in mid-December.

If you choose to participate, you may terminate the conversation at any point, and you may choose to not answer any question. As you may be sharing stressful experiences that you have had, you should be aware that this could bring up unpleasant feelings or memories. We will debrief at the end of the session, and if you would like to discuss these feelings or get support from a sector mental health professional we will provide links to appropriate resources and materials. In our final report, no identifying information will be used about any participants. In signing below, you acknowledge your willingness to participate in the conversation, which should not continue any longer than the previously agreed upon time period. The audio recorded during this conversation will be available to our research team; however, the recording itself won't be shared with anyone beyond our team.

If you have any further questions about the study, wish to read the final report or receive an invitation to our final presentation, please contact our ESF IQP team at gr-gr-melb23-esf@wpi.edu or our WPI faculty advisor at ldh@wpi.edu.

I understand the purpose of this study and agree to participate in this conversation.

Printed name of participant:

Signature of participant:

Date:

Thank you,
Hunter Daris, Ella Devault, Gavin George, Fredy Lenson

F: Subject Matter Expert Interview Consent Form

Subject Matter Expert Conversation Consent Form

Participant,

We are a team of university student researchers from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) in Massachusetts, USA. We are conducting this study in collaboration with the Emergency Service Foundation (ESF). The purpose of this study is to understand work related experiences and stressors of emergency service support staff in Victoria.

We are conducting conversations with experts of different fields throughout Victoria to learn about the types of traumatic experiences support staff in the emergency sector may experience and their risk for Vicarious Trauma. The information collected from this conversation will be used to raise awareness about work related stress and Vicarious Trauma, and to make recommendations to sector leaders on how to create a more supportive and resilient work environment. Study results will be published on our university website (<https://www.wpi.edu/>) and shared with emergency sector managers in a presentation in mid-December.

If you choose to participate, you may terminate the conversation at any point, and you may choose to not answer any question. In our final report, no identifying information will be used about any participants. In signing below, you acknowledge your willingness to participate in the conversation, which should not continue any longer than the previously agreed upon time period. The audio recorded during this conversation will be available to our research team; however, the recording itself won't be shared with anyone beyond our team.

If you have any further questions about the study, wish to read the final report or receive an invitation to our final presentation, please contact our ESF IQP team at gr-gr-melb23-esf@wpi.edu or our WPI faculty advisor at ldh@wpi.edu.

I understand the purpose of this study and agree to participate in this conversation.

Printed name of participant:

Signature of participant:

Date:

Thank you,

Hunter Daris, Ella Devault, Gavin George, Fredy Lenson

G: Recruitment Flyer



Do you work
in a support
staff role* in
Victoria's
emergency
sector?

We want to
hear your
perspectives
on work-related
stress



What:

An in-person (or online if needed) one-on-one conversation with a student researcher about the mental health effects of common support staff work stressors.

Why:

The focus regarding mental health is often on first-responders but we know support staff are exposed to their own set of stressors in their jobs.

If interested, visit link here or QR code:

<https://forms.gle/JgJ7GyTjrwXryjR48>

* Support roles are those such as emergency dispatchers, communication staff, HR staff, and more



H: Support Staff Study Participant Interest Form

ESF Support Staff Study Participant Interest Form

The Emergency Services Foundation (ESF) wants to understand more about the stressors that support staff may experience in relation to their work in order to raise awareness and build better support systems throughout Victoria.

We are students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) in Massachusetts, USA. We are working with ESF to look into the mental health effects of the experiences and stressors encountered in emergency sector support staff roles.

If you are interested in participating in a 30 minute one-on-one conversation with our team members about this topic, please provide your information below and you will hear back from us shortly. Information on this form will only be seen among our team members and advisors. Research findings will be shared with emergency sector leaders and published on our university's website, but your name and identifying information will be kept anonymous.

Participant name (This information will not be shared)

Short answer text

What emergency sector agency do you work in?

- Ambulance Victoria
- Life Saving Victoria
- Emergency Recovery Victoria
- Forest Fire Management Victoria
- Emergency Services Telecommunication Authority (ESTA) 000
- Inspector-General for Emergency Management (IGEM)
- Australian Red Cross
- Emergency Management Victoria (EMV)
- Fire Rescue Victoria
- St John Ambulance Victoria
- Victoria State Emergency Service (SES)
- Victoria Police
- Victorian Council of Churches Emergencies Ministry (VCC)
- Country Fire Authority (CFA)
- Wildlife Victoria

What is your role within your agency?

Short answer text
.....

Email (This information will not be shared)

Short answer text
.....

I: Podcast Participants and Podcast Questions

| Participant | Questions |
|--|---|
| <p>Sue Driver (Team Leader at ESTA)</p> | <p>Q1 - What's your role in the emergency services, and how has that exposed you to potential VT?</p> <p>Q2. - As a previous call taker and now a team leader, what are common physiological signs and symptoms of Vicarious Trauma you look for in your call takers and dispatchers?</p> <p>Q3. - On a personal level, how important do you feel workplace culture is as a coping mechanism in dealing with VT in your own experience?</p> <p>Q4. - Within your agency, we noticed an excellent example of training internal staff to be peers. Would you mind talking about the benefits of this peer support program?</p> <p>Q5. - To round things out, emphasizing that you have seen both sides of the agency and now as a team leader, how critical is it for your call takers and dispatchers to have trust and faith in their leader in regards to combatting VT?</p> |
| <p>Lauren Kew (Team Leader at DECCA)</p> | <p>Q1. What's your role in the emergency services, and how has that exposed you to potential VT?</p> <p>Q2. What would you say if you could go back and speak to yourself when you were at your worst emotionally during that time?</p> <p>Q3. One of the topics we researched during our time here was the concept of posttraumatic growth, which describes a level of positive transformation in people following a traumatic experience. This could be in the form of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased acknowledgements of personal strengths ● An increased sense of connection with others ● Increased compassion ● Enhanced spiritual development <p>Would you say that you've experienced posttraumatic growth to any capacity from your perspective, or maybe from the observations of others?</p> <p>Q4. How do you find balance between being passionate about the work that you do, while simultaneously making sure that you're taking care of yourself?</p> |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Erin Smith (CEO of Dart Center and former Ambulance dispatcher)</p> | <p>Q1. What’s your role in the emergency services, and how has that exposed you to potential VT?</p> <p>Q2. When we spoke last time you talked a lot about the physiological impacts of vicarious trauma. Would you mind sharing how this presented itself for you?</p> <p>Q3. Was there any point in the thick of the impacts that your colleagues or your friends noticed a change in your behavior? Was there any wakeup call that you experienced that informed you that something was heavily impacting you?</p> <p>Q4. What coping mechanisms, mindsets, or practices have helped you mitigate or overcome these physiological symptoms you have experienced?</p> <p>Q5. What advice would you provide to someone who is currently in a place of suffering with vicarious trauma?</p> |
| <p>Marianne Messer (Emergency Chaplain at VCCEM)</p> | <p>Q1. What’s your role in the emergency services, and how has that exposed you to potential VT?</p> <p>Q2. In your own personal story, you mentioned the importance of having a sacred space, and you talked about what that looked like for you. What advice would you give to people looking to figure out what their sacred space looks like for them?</p> <p>Q3. When we met, you mentioned a book that you found helpful called “Finding Solace in Dark Times”, can you tell us about how that helped you?</p> <p>Q4. Do you have any rituals that you use at the end of the workday that help prevent you from overidentifying with a specific event or case from the day?</p> <p>Q5. During our last conversation you mentioned the concept of posttraumatic growth. Would you say you’ve experienced that in any capacity, and if so, how has it manifested?</p> |
| <p>Dale Bower (call-taker from the Major Collisions Unit at Victoria Police)</p> | <p>Q1. What’s your role in the emergency services, and how has that exposed you to potential VT?</p> <p>Q2. You have mentioned before the importance of isolating yourself from work and “not looking at too much you don’t have to look at”, would you mind elaborating on the potential danger of not following this?</p> |

Q3. Another key point you have made is that in the emergency sector in particular, “knowing the things that are out of one’s controls and being able to rationalize things is critical in helping oneself cope”, for individuals out there listening could you touch upon how important it is to possess this mentality in emergency services work?

Q4. Lastly, from your experience at VicPol, you seem to be one of many in a close knit environment, would you mind touching upon the benefits of informal debriefing and conversations within the workplace to help one cope?

J: ESF Podcast Consent Form



CONSENT FORM PHOTOGRAPHS AND FILMING BY ESF

The Emergency Services Foundation (ESF) is seeking your consent to photograph you, film you and/or record your voice.

If you consent, ESF may use the photographs, film, voice recording or other pictorial images of you, your presentation, other visual aids that accompany your presentation (e.g. PowerPoint slides) or any other resource you contribute to the event in any medium in the following ways:

- to create any audio or visual recording of your presentation and any comments you make before or during the event (together, the **Material**)
- to use, reproduce, publish, communicate, or broadcast the Material in any form (including in a CD/DVD, website, publication, poster, presentation) for advertising, marketing, informational or promotional purposes relating to the event
- on ESF's publicly available website and social media accounts
- in promotional material for ESF and its programs and events

Please read this form carefully. If you do not understand any aspect, please contact Naomi Watt, Administration Officer, on 0421 118 656.

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Ownership and Reproduction

Copyright in the images and recordings will be wholly owned by the ESF. This means that the ESF may use the images and recordings in the ways described in this form without notifying, acknowledging, or compensating you.

Your Authority and Consent

I have read this form and I consent to the ESF or any person acting on behalf of ESF photographing, filming and/or recording me and I acknowledge that:

- I must notify ESF if I wish to withdraw my consent, but I may not be able to withdraw my consent if the images or recordings have already been published and are in the public domain.

ORGANISATION:

NAME:

PHONE:

EMAIL:

K: Full List Study Participants

| Types of Roles | Organizations |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Wellbeing and General Managers | Ambulance Victoria (AV) Life Saving Victoria (LSV) Emergency Recovery Victoria (ERV) Forest Fire Management Victoria (DECCA) Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA 000) Inspector-General for Emergency Management (IGEM) Australian Red Cross Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) St John Ambulance Australia Victoria State Emergency Services (SES) Victoria Police VCC Emergency Ministry (VCCEM) Country Fire Authority (CFA) Wildlife Victoria |
| Subject Matter Experts | Phoenix Australia Monash University WorkSafe Victoria Dart Center Asia Pacific Converge International Maddocks Emergency Services Foundation (ESF) Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) Victoria Police Legacy |
| Support Staff | Ambulance Victoria (AV) Emergency Recovery Victoria (ERV) Forest Fire Management Victoria (DECCA) Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA 000) Inspector-General for Emergency Management (IGEM) Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) Victoria State Emergency Services (SES) Victoria Police VCC Emergency Ministry (VCCEM) Country Fire Authority (CFA) Wildlife Victoria |

L: Support Staff Interview Participants Separated by Agency

| | |
|----------|--|
| 4 |  |
| 3 |  |
| 2 |  |
| 1 |          |
| 0 |     |

M: Additional Mental Health Continuum Examples

| | I'm doing what I need, and want, to do | I'm mainly doing what I need to do | It's harder, and taking me longer, to do what I need to do | I'm unable to do what I need to do |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| Moods and Emotions | Sense of Purpose | Sometimes Irritable | Regularly Angry | Depressed |
| Attitudes & Thinking | Positive Outlook | Repetitive Thoughts | Worrying Constantly | Potential Suicidal Thoughts |
| Behavior & Performance | Usual Levels of Activity | Less Social | Lacking Motivation | Avoiding People |
| Health & Wellbeing | Practicing Self-Care | Appetite Changes | Sleeping Challenges | Unable to Manage Daily Tasks |
| Habits & Impulses | Usual Patterns Of Coping and Behavior | Increased Alcohol Usage | More Risk Taking | Disregard for Consequences |

| | I want to maintain balance, work routines and connection with family and friends | I want to take some time to focus on things that help me get back into the green | I want extra support. I'm open to doing things differently to support my wellbeing | I need extra support, to focus on my wellbeing and improve my ability to function |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Different Support Options to Choose From | Keep your wellbeing in balance and use resources available when stress increases | Put your wellbeing plan into action or get support to create one | Activate your wellbeing plan, if you have one | Tell someone you trust you're in the red. Engage with your personal, and professional, and support networks |