

If you discover or witness a sudden death, crime, or traumatic incident

here
for
you

If you discover a person's body after a suspected suicide or homicide death, or witness that death, you can find yourself caught up in circumstances beyond your control. The same can happen if you witness a crime or other traumatic incident. Events like this can have a lasting impact. They can be shocking and distressing and what you saw or heard can be difficult to deal with. This is especially true if you knew or were close to the person or people involved.

We're here for you 24/7

Our support workers are available to help you personally or as a family or whānau. You can call us any time on 0800 842 846 to be connected to a support worker. Our support is free and confidential and available through Aotearoa New Zealand.

Steps you can take

Report what's happened to the Police

- If you discover or witness a death by suicide or homicide, or a crime or traumatic incident is happening or has just happened, or you're concerned for the immediate safety of yourself or others, call the Police on 111.
- Otherwise, call the Police non-emergency number 105 or go online to report what has happened at www.police.govt.nz/105support.
- You can also go to your local Police station and talk with the person at the front counter who will advise you about what to do. You may be able to speak with an officer straight away. Consider taking a support person with you. You can find your closest Police station at www.police.govt.nz.
- You may prefer to report a crime anonymously through Crime Stoppers. Phone 0800 555 111 or send an anonymous report at www.crimestoppers-nz.org/contact.

Give a witness statement

If you report to the Police, they will ask you to provide a witness statement. Your information can help investigators and is important for the justice process later if there is a criminal court case or a formal report written about the incident. Your statement can also help those affected by the event, including the families and whānau of anyone who has died or been harmed, to better understand exactly what happened.

- A Police officer will write down or record what you saw, heard, or know. After a traumatic event, people's memories of what happened can be foggy or uncertain. Take your time and do your best.
- What you say must be true. Giving Police false information is a serious matter.
- You'll be asked to read through your statement to check it's correct and sign it to confirm it's an accurate report of what you witnessed.

If appropriate, you may be interviewed again and asked to give evidence as a witness in a coronial enquiry. Your coronial case manager will explain what this involves. A Victim Support worker is available to help you at the enquiry and can also answer any questions.



It was terrible and frightening to see it. Having support helped me to cope.

CONTACT

Victim Support

Get Help: 0800 VICTIM (0800 842 846)
victimsupport.org.nz


Manaaki Tāngata
Victim Support





The experience can be overwhelming – and the memories are not easily forgotten.



Support the investigation and justice process

Police will investigate the incident if it may be a crime and this can take considerable time. They may interview you more than once to gather as much helpful information as possible. If there is to be a court case, they may talk to you about giving evidence in it. They will explain what giving evidence will involve and what you can expect. The Police will also let you know when and where you would need to be at court. Sometimes there can be delays in a court case, so they will let you know if that happens. You can find further information about being a witness on our website at www.victimsupport.org.nz.

Blessing the site

For some families, whānau, and communities, a ceremonial blessing of the site where a person has died is an important step in helping them come to terms with the loss of life. It is an acknowledgement of the spiritual impact of the tragedy on so many people. It commends the spirit of the person who has died and respects their dignity, and that of their family, whānau, and community.

A blessing usually includes a simple prayer or karakia. For Māori, a blessing can include a clearing of the tapu on the site. Other cultural and faith groups may bring their own approaches.

If you would like to attend a site blessing, or if you are a close family member or friend and want to arrange one, you could contact your local church or faith centre, marae, cultural leaders, the officer in charge of your case, a Police iwi liaison officer, or talk to your support worker.

Seek financial assistance

If you have been asked to be a witness in court, you may be able to claim expenses to cover some of the costs, such as travel and accommodation. Speak to the officer in charge of your case or your support worker about any financial assistance you may be entitled to, depending on the circumstances of the crime or incident.

Find ways to increase confidence in your personal safety and security

Use the tips Police suggest in their booklet *Keep Safe, Feel Safe*. Taking these actions can help to increase your confidence in your personal safety and security and that of your family or whānau. Go to www.police.govt.nz and search for 'keeping safe'.

Give yourself time to recover

Our booklets *Coping with traumatic grief* and *Dealing with flashbacks* give lots of useful advice on ways to cope with your reactions and the emotional impact of what you've experienced. Your support worker can give you copies or you can find them on our website at www.victimsupport.org.nz.

Dealing with media interest

As a discoverer or witness, journalists may want to get comments from you, interview you, and take video or photos of you. Media can be demanding and intrusive. Our brochure *Managing media interest* provides information on dealing with journalists and photographers and has tips for using social media wisely following a traumatic incident. Your support worker can give you a copy or you can find it on our website at www.victimsupport.org.nz.



Our service is free, personal, and confidential

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