



# Incident Debrief Process

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# Introduction

Incidents are almost inevitable. At every property, eventually, some sort of security incident will take place. The seriousness of the incident will vary. Some may have little impact on operations while others might compromise life safety, impact operations, and potentially negatively affect your brand and reputation.

While you can't control if an incident happens, you can take appropriate steps to mitigate them. In addition to a well-planned and appropriate incident response, it is important to conduct a thorough debrief to understand what happened, what the impact was, why it happened, and how we can prevent a recurrence or mitigate the likelihood or the size of the impact in future. This is where an incident debrief comes in.

**The incident debrief is a formalized process in which we review the incident and answer the above questions and document the process in a written report.**

This may seem somewhat daunting the first time. Paladin has compiled our guide on what the Incident Debrief Report should include and the rough format it should follow to be most effective for future use.

# Section 1: Incident Narrative & Timeline

This is where you will review what happened. This section should include the incident narrative; a first-hand account from the security personnel on the scene. This narrative should be objective and address the **WHO**, **WHAT**, **WHERE**, **WHEN**, and **HOW** of the event.



**WHO**



**WHAT**



**WHERE**



**WHEN**



**HOW**

In addition to the narrative, a timeline should be created that places the critical moments of the incident in chronological order with timestamps. This will significantly assist in displaying a clear picture of when things happened so the response priorities can be reviewed.



1

2

3

4


5

## Section 2: Impact

This section will analyze the impact of the incident. When looking at impact, consider three factors:

1.  **Impact on life and safety**

- What was the impact on people?
- Did the incident create an unsafe condition?
- Was anyone injured?

2.  **Impact on operations**

- Did the building have to be closed?
- Was there an impact on the services offered?
- Was any building system affected?

3.  **Impact on brand/reputation**

- Was there media coverage?
- Has this incident tarnished your brand?
- Have we lost the trust of our customers?

## Section 3: Identifying the Root Cause

This stage is where we determine why the incident occurred. Generally, we need to ask the question “**why?**” five times to understand all the factors that contributed to an incident. Doing so will help us find the root cause.

### Example of the 5 Whys:

Example: There is a vehicle accident on the property.

- 1. Why?** Because the driver was confused.
- 2. Why?** Because they had trouble seeing and determining where their lane was.
- 3. Why?** Because it was dark and wayfinding in the parking lot was challenging.
- 4. Why?** Because the parking lot lighting is outdated, and the lot needs re-painting and new signage.
- 5. Why?** Because the parking structure is 30 years old and highly used so painted surfaces have wear and tear.

As we see above, by asking “**why?**” five times we identify all the factors that contributed to the outcome including the root cause. In this case, the age of the parking structure and outdated lighting combined with the high use of the lot wearing away painted driveway demarcation were the root causes that ultimately led to a confused driver having an accident. Had we stopped after the first two or three questions we would have understood what happened, but not enough to address the root cause.

## Section 4: Mitigation & Prevention

Sometimes identifying the causes behind an incident will allow us to take action that prevents it from reoccurring. While this is the ideal outcome, it is not always possible. When it is not possible to prevent an incident from occurring, we need to accept it and focus on mitigating the likelihood or the impact of the incident.

If we consider the previous example, true incident prevention is nearly impossible. It would likely require closing off the parking lot to vehicle traffic, which in most cases would be impractical, significantly impact accessibility, and negatively impact property operations. Instead, we should focus on mitigating the likelihood of reoccurrence by addressing the root causes.

In the example above that might include replacing outdated lighting with modern, efficient, lighting with high color rendition index to help drivers see and improve wayfinding by re-painting drive lanes and installing modern signage. This would address the identified root causes, thereby reducing the likelihood of reoccurrence.

## Section 5: Action Plan

Understanding what happened and why it happened is critical, but in order to properly prevent or mitigate recurrence, we need to take action. Once we have identified what needs to be done, we need to identify who will do it and when.

Using the example above, the final section of our Incident Debrief might look like this:

Action Item	Assignee	Target Date	Completed Date
Review parkade lighting	Operations Manager	June 1, 2023	
Install upgraded LED lighting	ACME Lighting	June 30, 2023	
Repaint parking lot drive lanes	ABC Painting Co.	June 10, 2023	
Install new wayfinding signage	Maintenance Team	June 15, 2023	

The purpose of the Action Plan is to ensure that the identified root causes are assigned to specific people or contractors, tracked for progress, and ultimately addressed in a timely manner. As such, it is critical to share the Incident Debrief with all relevant stakeholders to ensure the right people in your organization are involved.



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# Conclusion

An incident debrief is a valuable exercise that helps property and security managers understand what happened, what the impact was, and why it happened. Following the direction and format above will result in a comprehensive and meaningful debrief report that can be easily and effectively actioned. A formalized and well-executed incident debrief is an important part of preventing the reoccurrence of incidents and mitigating their likelihood and impact.