

A transportation company like Deutsche Bahn has to be prepared for emergency situations. Passengers and the public expect to be taken care of in a professional manner after a train accident, and affected rail employees, too, must not be left alone. After the tragic ICE derailment at Eschede in 1998 in which 101 people were killed and 88 seriously injured, Deutsche Bahn set up a system for psychological crisis management. The aim of the customer-oriented CareNet support programme was to ensure the provision of rapid, professional initial support, further support and follow-up support to those affected. This article provides an insight into CareNet and explains the associated qualification training programme provided by DB Training.

Systematic care - What does psychological crisis management imply?

The psychological crisis management regulates exactly the installation and execution of psychological care after major rail accidents. Therefore processes and interfaces were defined in advance and people, who take over certain functions in the case of an emergency, were trained.

CareNet complements the DB operational emergency management and the work of the rescue and emergency services. CareNet volunteers usually don't render medical first aid but take care of the primary needs of injured passengers such as getting home, relocating lost baggage or getting in contact with relatives.

In case of accidents with national implications, a hotline will be set up and booted within a maximum of two hours through DB Dialog. Trained employees answer calls from relatives of the victims and call back once there is current information. The on-site assistance at the accident scene is usually performed by psychologically trained volunteers like the team of CareNet. In particularly serious accidents psychologists support the on-site assistance. Some passengers suffer mental injuries despite physical integrity. Similar to a physical injury, they must be cured. The team of psychologists of Deutsche Bahn takes charge of the initial psychological care of the affected over the phone. The psychologist are available for long-term or can refer strongly traumatized people to a psychotherapist. If a DB employee was killed, the team of psychologists supports and advises colleagues in the grieving process.

Preparation for an emergency - qualification by DB training

A comprehensive training program is provided for the approximately 1300 CareNet volunteers by DB Training. Basic and advanced training courses prepare for an operation on behalf of CareNet, approximately 25-30 per year. These one to two-day courses are tailored to the specific role within CareNet (e.g. employees of the hotline, executives, CareNet helpers on-site). Learning targets are central tasks and responsibilities within CareNet. Furthermore psychologists give important insights into typical reactions of patients after traumatic events and encourage the reflection of own stress experience. After an emergency all CareNet helpers can talk to a psychologist for professional psychological care.