

CRITICAL AND TRAUMATIC INCIDENT POLICY



PURPOSE

This policy is to ensure expert response by Eltham Primary School to all school emergencies and incidents including incidents that occur during:

- camps, excursions or outdoor adventure activities
- weekends and holidays
- travel to or from school
- non-school hours

SCOPE

This policy applies to all critical and/or traumatic incidents that occur at our school, and at any offsite locations (such as camps, excursions, productions) involving Eltham Primary School students.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

RESPONDING TO A TRAUMATIC OR CRITICAL INCIDENT IN WHICH THE SCHOOL IS INVOLVED

Note: The School may become directly or indirectly involved in a tragic or traumatic event. (Please refer to the school's Emergency Management Plan for additional information)

A critical incident may involve loss of life, serious injury or emotional disturbance. The incident may occur in the school environment or outside. It may involve staff, students or those close to them. The network of those involved in a traumatic event can be wide, especially if it directly involves the school. Feelings of grief and loss can continue over long periods of time.

Counselling should be provided for all those who need it. This may include many who do not seem to be closely connected to the event or the individuals involved. The school may be in a position to help grieving families at difficult times, e.g. through the school's participation in the funeral service.

While school should operate as normally as possible, some degree of flexibility should exist.

It is essential that people be given clear, accurate information at all times. It is essential that a Emergency Management Team be formed to manage the short and long term effects.

Note: Prompt incident notification enables Security Services Unit staff at the coordination

centre to provide support and advice to schools. This helps to resolve emergencies quickly while minimising the risk to personal safety.

Reportable incidents:

As a general rule, a serious incident is one that requires medical attention or a police investigation.

Examples of reportable incidents involving schools include:

- motor vehicle collision and/or all WorkCover incidents
- impact by machinery, equipment, aircraft
- fatalities
- [fire on school grounds, bush or grass fire](#)
- incidents of death or serious injury (injury requiring medical attention)
- incidents resulting in:
 - closure or significant damage to parts of a building or its contents and/or a threat to health and safety
- [bomb threat](#)
- outbreak or incidence of disease
- presence of toxic fumes or explosive conditions
- finding hazardous material on school site including explosives, fog signals, detonators, gun powder, cords and fuses, blasting cartridges, incendiary devices, marine distress signals, propellant powders etc
- fumes, spill, leak or contamination by hazardous material
- flood, windstorm, earthquake or other natural disasters
- criminal activity such as suspicious person/s and/or vehicles, vandalism, burglary, graffiti, theft, fraud, property damage
- neighbourhood complaint
- missing/disappearance/removal of student/s including:
 - unauthorised/unexplained absenteeism from school
 - unauthorised absenteeism resulting in a missing persons report
- firearms, weapons or bomb threat
- behaviour of a student, visitor or staff member that could lead to potential risk to someone else
- serious threats made against a person
- siege or hostage situation
- need for evacuation or lockdown
- unethical staff behaviour particularly if it involves taking advantage of a student, visitor or staff member
- issues of negligence or legal liability
- near misses: incidents that very nearly lead to injury or death
- **Example:** Hazardous condition observed/near misses.
- an event with a major impact on school operations or the potential to:
 - involve the relevant Minister
 - subject the Department to high levels of public or legal scrutiny.

Critical incidents vary in complexity. These guidelines provide a framework for action and would not necessarily be followed in all cases.

The following 4 principles must be followed:

1. **provide clear, accurate information**
2. **describe the actions to be followed**
3. **provide help for all affected**
4. **maintain a normal school program as close as possible**

Further guidelines:

1. Obtain accurate information. Deal only with substantiated facts.
2. As soon as possible inform staff, especially those most directly involved. Inform close friends and family individually. Allow questions and discussion as they arise. Dispel rumours.
3. The Emergency Management Team assist in the management of the incident. The team may include staff members, psychologists, counsellors, external DET personnel, support agencies etc. The size and composition of the team will be related to the nature of the incident. Distribute names of the Emergency Management Team members, and inform others of the role of the team.
4. As soon as possible provide information to the community as to what has happened, and what is being done.
5. Appoint an Emergency Management Team member to respond to media enquiries (where applicable). A written press release may be useful. If necessary, protect others from contact with the media. Advice regarding this may be obtained from the DET Emergency Communications Centre and the DET Media Unit.
6. Establish an open line of contact with the family or families directly involved.
7. Provide out of school hours contact if necessary. This could be as simple as circulating the Principal's telephone number. In more complex situations it may mean maintaining telephone contact at the school.
8. Continue contact with the family to identify their expectations of the school, e.g. student participation in funeral or memorial service.
9. Try to identify those most likely to need help, e.g. classmates, teacher, special friends. Some students not directly affected may become distressed.
10. Ensure that counselling help is available. Contact the Regional Office and/or DET if necessary. All emergency or criminal activity, in which the safety or well-being of staff or students is at risk, or where there is a threat to property, must be reported immediately to the Department's 24 hour Emergency and Security Management Branch on **(03) 9589 6266**.
11. Continue to keep staff, students and parents informed, especially about what has happened and what the school is doing about it.
12. As soon as possible call students together and provide information about what has happened and what the school is doing about it. A follow up letter home may be important.
13. Provide counselling services for all. Ensure that there are suitable places in which this can take place. Be prepared to modify the timetable and other arrangements so that people are free to make use of available help.

14. The class teacher may be the person to whom students first turn for help.
15. Children wishing to attend funerals should do so in the company of their parents. Provide meaningful participation for those not actually attending the service.
16. Continue normal routines at school but acknowledge the effect of tragedy on the school community. Be flexible with those in need of help. Be aware that many people may be deeply affected, e.g. an event may cause a person to recall some traumatic event involving them in the past. The anniversary may also be a difficult time.
17. Maintain links with the family. The school and family may wish to develop a memorial garden, erect a memorial plaque, or display a photo in a prominent position in the school.
18. Be sensitive to staff and student's needs over a period of time.

Important: Schools shouldn't handle any explosives found at school. However if it's necessary to remove explosives from a student's possession avoid bumping, striking or dropping the object. Place the object gently in an isolated position, ensure it is not exposed to any form of heat/ignition and wait for the police.

Note: Schools should also report any nuisance activity which may not have led to damage, but could lead to crime at a future time. This information is used to implement pro-active security measures such as targeted security patrols, temporary surveillance and intruder detection systems to prevent criminal activity.

Bomb Threats

1. call police on 000
2. notify the Security Services Unit on 03 9589 6266
3. implement the school's emergency management plan
4. do not search for the bomb
5. do not allow a search by students or staff
6. do not impede an explosives inspector from entering school premises

Note: an inspector of explosives may interview students at school on the same basis as a police interview.

Reporting fires

All fires, including those that have been extinguished and regardless of their size, must be reported to the relevant fire service for the particular locality by contacting 000 and the Security Services Unit.

Helicopter landings in schools in an emergency

The Department has given a general authorisation for the use of school grounds as helicopter landing sites during emergencies for the: air ambulance, fire reconnaissance or crime prevention.

The urgent nature of an emergency may preclude advance notification. The pilot is responsible for ensuring that the:

- area chosen for landing is suitable
- safety of those on the ground is not compromised.

If a landing occurs during school time, students must remain at a safe distance, clear of the departure, and approach paths.

The Department has not given approval for media, commercially or privately operated helicopters to use school grounds. They must obtain permission from the principal before landing.

Note: If the principal or school council consider helicopter arrivals or departures from the school grounds for non-emergency purposes there are stringent requirements for the safety of spectators and protection of the environment. Schools must contact the Aviation Branch of the Commonwealth Department of Infrastructure and Transport and the State Environment Protection Authority. See: [Commonwealth Department of Infrastructure and Transport](#) and [Environment Protection Authority](#).

Criminal offence and insurance reporting

In the case of a loss arising from a criminal offence, the principal should:

- report the matter to the President of the school council
- take steps to determine the extent of the crime i.e. burglary, theft, fire/arson, vandalism, significant graffiti and details of make, model and serial numbers of any missing equipment
- complete a Criminal Offence and Insurance Report and email it to the [Infrastructure Division](#)
- take steps to avoid the possibility of further loss strengthening internal control procedures and security measures.

Regional Office and the Student Critical Incident Advisory Unit will be contacted as per the requirements of the response to the specific critical incident.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Related School Policies

- Duty of Care Policy
- First Aid Policy
- Anaphylaxis Policy
- Emergency Management Plan

Related DET Resources

- [DET Emergency Management Planning](#)
- [Emergency and Critical Incident](#)

REVIEW CYCLE

THIS VERSION FIRST ISSUED	LAST UPDATED	STATUS	DUE FOR REVIEW
2017	2019	This policy will be reviewed annually or as necessary due to changes in regulations or circumstances	2020

Appendix A

Critical Incident Recovery Plan (CIRP)

Responsibilities and Procedures

1. PLAN STATEMENT

This Plan is an integral part of the Emergency Management processes of the school. (See separate document)

2. IMPLEMENTATION

- 2.1 The Emergency Management Team will be responsible for coordinating and implementing the Plan (refer to 4.3 for the composition of the team).

It will need to consider:

- establishing the facts as soon as possible
- developing an action plan of short, medium and long term tasks
- contact with the Department of Education and Training (DET)
- liaising with external bodies including the media
- communicating with the whole staff as soon as possible
- meeting with staff both as a whole and with individuals or groups for debriefing
- communicating with the student body
- meeting with students in groups or individually for debriefing
- contacting parents/guardians
- short term and long term counselling requirements for groups or individuals

The relevance of each of the above will depend on factors such as the nature and magnitude of the incident, the intensity of the impact on the School community and the number of people affected.

3. DEBRIEFING

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing has three components:

1. initial discussion about feelings and an assessment of the intensity of the stress responses
2. detailed discussion of signs and symptoms of stress responses
3. closing stage - provides overview and information with referral to an outside agency if required

- 3.1 The Emergency Management Team will assist the Principal to facilitate the recovery of staff and students and those of the School community affected by the critical incident.

- 3.2.1 The debriefing meeting of the Recovery Team should include a mental health

professional and one peer who were not involved in the incident.

3.2.2 The Emergency Management Team will decide the structure and composition of debriefing meetings; such meetings should be held within **eight hours** of the critical incident. These meetings will review the impressions and reactions of the persons involved during or following the incident.

3.3 Counselling support and referrals for students and their families will be provided initially by the Principal or their nominee and a Regional Guidance Officer.

4. REVIEW

4.1 The Emergency Management Team will meet to review the implementation of the Critical Incident Recovery Plan within **seventy two (72) hours** of the critical incident.

4.2 As part of the Critical Incident Recovery Plan, the Principal will set up a Emergency Management Team at the beginning of each year.

4.3 Following a critical incident, the Principal will convene the Recovery Team as soon as possible.

The composition of the Emergency Management Team may include:

- the Principal
- the Assistant Principal
- a member of the teaching staff
- a member of the Educational Support staff (first aid trained)
- other support staff as appropriate
- as necessary, psychologists, counsellors and DET personnel.

4.4 The Principal will convene the Emergency Management Team once each semester to review planning and strategies for the Critical Incident Recovery Plan.

5. EVALUATION

Evaluation of the Plans will follow any critical incident at the school.

Responsibilities and Procedures

1. Emergency Record

Record Information

- nature of the incident
- location of the incident, number and names of persons involved
- name of the person reporting the incident
- time incident reported
- contact telephone number if away from school

Verify all Details

- confirm that the information given about the event is accurate

Record the Incident

- notify principal workplace coordinator
- ensure emergency services have been called notify the Department's 24 hour Emergency Communications Centre on **(03) 9589 6266**

2. Ensure students and staff are safe from harm or injury

- student Managers and Year Level Coordinators cordon off any 'crisis' area and keep students away from there
- manage the grounds while staff are briefed and ensure media do not intrude
- check corridors, toilets etc for stray students - try to prevent students leaving on their own particularly if distressed
- send all very stressed students to the Recovery area in the Library
- ensure that students do not make hysterical calls out of school
- ensure the school continues as normally as possible

3. Establish Critical Incident Emergency Management Team

The composition of the Emergency Management Team may include:

- the Principal
- the Assistant Principal
- a member of the teaching staff
- a member of the Educational Support staff (first aid trained)
- other support staff as appropriate
- as necessary, psychologists, counsellors and DET personnel.

4. Allocate responsibilities

- emergency message register
- emergency contact list
- evacuation and assembly of staff and students
- cordon off area of 'crisis'
- establish a Support Team and Communications Centre to:

- manage information and phone calls
- coordinate media requests for information
- provide information to parents arriving at school
- coordinate routine school activities – maintain where practical
- notify students, staff and ancillary about the emergency
- notify parents first, and then siblings in the school
- establish a recovery room and supervisor for affected students
- establish a waiting room for parents
- inform students
- inform School Council
- inform School Community by newsletter
- monitor School Community's reactions
- liaise with outside agencies and emergency services
- brief key personnel and review responses

4.1 Recovery Room(s)

Set Up Recovery Room

- set up additional space such as Library, and if necessary the Staffroom
- empty adjoining rooms if possible and relocate to other rooms
- screen windows
- have available pens, textas, paper, scissors, envelopes, tissues

Appoint Recovery Room Supervisors

- First Aid staff

Recovery Room Supervisors' Responsibilities

- keep calm
- monitor students for shock reactions, provide first aid if necessary
- encourage students to gather in small friendship groups rather than bigger ones
- keep a list of students attending the recovery room
- give the students a task to undertake such as making a card or writing a letter
- contact parents of students who remain in the recovery room and alert them to possible concerns

5. Informing Staff

- provide teachers and ancillary staff with a brief outline of the incident
- Restate to ensure that staff understand and it sinks in
- outline recovery management arrangements
- discuss procedures to be followed by staff during the day
- discuss the general procedures that Critical Incident Team will be following
- discuss guidelines for informing students and ways of answering questions from them
- give staff time to discuss this among themselves
- provide a brief factual outline to others in the community on a need to know basis
- inform staff as soon as possible about a serious emergency involving death or injury which occurs after hours, on the weekend or during the school holidays
- inform staff as soon as possible about arrangements for holding a brief meeting before informing students at the start of the next school day
- review with staff afterwards any issues and needs
- provide staff with contact numbers for counselling or support services for themselves

6. Informing Students

Principal or senior staff

- contact the bereaved family or police to ascertain what information may be released within the school
- prepare a written factual statement, without graphic detail, for use as a reference by teachers when discussing the incident with students
- determine whether to tell students about the incident at a whole school assembly, by year levels or individual classes, depending on the nature of the incident
- discuss with teachers who feel uncomfortable raising the event with students and arrange for support from another teacher or a member of the recovery team
- identify staff who may be too distraught to take classes and arrange replacements
- inform students soon after briefing staff
- ask teachers to mark a roll to identify who has been informed and who has not

Teachers

- provide a factual account of the incident at the beginning of the first class in a way that ensures all students hears the same information
- limit speculation and rumours
- inform students about arrangements of counselling and recovery rooms
- inform students about arrangements for services, and appropriate ways to express condolences
- outline the arrangements for the day

Notifying close friends

- take these students aside when they arrive at school and inform them privately
- consider contacting their parents
- prior to the start of the day
- ensure individual attention is given to intimate friends who are likely to have special needs beyond those of other students

7. Communication Centre

Organise the following to be on hand:

- telephone - dedicated line in case of jamming by incoming calls
- telephone message if necessary
- message records
- phone lists
- rolls
- excursion list
- timetable
- maps
- computer and printer
- photocopier
- displan instructions

8. Media Coverage (where applicable)

- nominate a media coordinator, prepare the School Council President and Principal to provide on camera interviews
- contact DET Media Unit on 9637 2871 or 9264 5821
- prepare a three paragraph report:
 - briefly outline the facts
 - outline what the school has done to assist those affected

- outline support and recovery arrangements
- include a name and contact number for the school media coordinator
- liaise with the family about any statements made to media
- exclude discussion of policy matters, limit comment to the emergency and the school response
- set rules for persistent media
- keep a record of media enquiries
- offer scheduled interviews in return for media commitment not to seek uninvited access to staff, students, parents
- negotiate accepted areas for filming e.g. school/church boundary and not within
- check that information provided does not conflict with court requirements or police proceedings
- anticipate renewed interest arising from anniversaries, court proceedings

9. Long Term Actions

- monitor and support members of the school community, particularly on significant dates such as anniversaries
- consider longer term intervention activities such as counselling or specialist support
- consider establishing an area within the school as a place of remembrance
- reconvene key people at regular intervals to review the school response and effectiveness of planning arrangements
- review the school emergency management plan in light of experience gained
- consider a ritual of marking significant dates
- prepare for legal proceedings if necessary
- remove students name from the roll if deceased
- consider article in school magazine

10. Reference

- DET's *Managing School Emergencies - Minimising the impact of trauma on staff and students*

Emergency Contact Telephone Numbers

POLICE	000
AMBULANCE	000
FIRE BRIGADE	000
STATE EMERGENCY SERVICES (SES)	132 500
LOCAL HOSPITAL – Box Hill Hospital	1300 342 255
ASSISTANT REGIONAL DIRECTOR	(03) 9265 2400
EMERGENCY SECURITY MANAGEMENT	(03) 9589 6266

Appendix C

Emergency Record Form – Template

Emergency Message Record Form

Time: ____ : ____ am/pm

Message from _____

Action required? Yes No

If 'YES', please detail:

Completed

Message taken by _____

Emergency Message Record

Time: ____ : ____ am/pm

Message from _____

Action required? Yes No

If 'YES', please detail:

Completed

1. Message taken by