

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT AND RECOVERY

PHILOSOPHY

Schools are responsible for planning for, managing and responding to emergency incidents, including medical emergencies. The responsibility of schools continues after the emergency incident by supporting the recovery of the community.

PURPOSE

- To ensure that, as part of the school's Emergency Management Plan, Mount Waverley North Primary School has a process for reporting critical incidents to Emergency and Security Management that complies with DET policy
- To ensure there is a process for supporting the recovery of the school community.

IMPLEMENTATION

- The school's Emergency Management Plan identifies all possible emergency situations that may occur at Mount Waverley North Primary School and gives full details of those that have been identified as the most likely to occur. However, there is only a moderate risk of these emergencies occurring.
- Once the safety and security of students, staff and visitors to the school have been ensured, the school will report the incident to Emergency Management on 9589-6266, 24-hours a day.
- The information to be conveyed to Emergency Management includes:
 - **Who**; the name of the person reporting the emergency/critical incident.
 - **What**; the nature of the emergency/critical incident.
 - **When**; the time when the school became aware of the emergency/critical incident.
 - **Where**; the location of the emergency/critical incident and contact phone numbers if it has occurred away from school.
- It is essential that the emergency services are notified immediately. The appropriate services are:
 - Ambulance for injury and medical assistance.
 - Fire brigade for fires (even when fires have been put out).
 - Police for crime, injury which may not be accidental or assault.
 - SES for floods and wind storms.
- As a priority, in the first instance, Mount Waverley North Primary School will render first aid and ensure the safety and wellbeing of the staff, students or visitors involved.
- Appoint a skilled Critical Incident Recovery Team to assist in the management of the incident. The composition of the Recovery Team will be - 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. The size and composition of the team will be related to the nature of the incident.
- Distribute names of the Critical Incident Recovery Team members, and inform others of the role of the team.
- 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.

- 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 may be sent home if necessary..
- As soon as possible provide information to the community as to what has happened, and what is being done.
- Appoint a skilled Critical Incident Recovery Team member to respond to media enquiries. 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.
- Establish an open line of contact with the family or families directly involved. Continue contact with the family to identify their expectations of the school, e.g. student participation in a funeral or memorial service.
- 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.
- Try to identify those most likely to need help, e.g. classmates, teacher, special friends. Some students not directly affected may become distressed.
- Ensure that counselling help is available for everyone. Contact the Regional Office and/or DET if necessary. 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.
- Continue to keep staff, students and parents informed, especially about what has happened and what the school is doing about it.
- Children wishing to attend funerals should do so in the company of their parents. Provide meaningful participation for those not actually attending the service.
- 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.
- 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.
- Be sensitive to staff and student's needs over a period of time.

APPENDICES

- Appendix A: Critical Incident Recovery Plan (CIRP)
- Appendix B: Critical or Traumatic Incident Plan – First 24 hour Short Term Tasks
- Appendix C: Initial Emergency Record - Template
- Appendix D: Emergency Message Record Form – Template

RELATED POLICIES

- Emergency Management Plan
- Accident and Incident Notification and Reporting Policy

RELATED LINK

[Managing School Emergencies - Minimising the impact of trauma on staff and students](#)

Policy Approved by:	Education Committee – School Council
Effective Date:	November 2016
Review by Date:	November 2019 or after a Critical Incident

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.

2. IMPLEMENTATION

2.1 The Recovery 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 Recovery 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 was not involved in the incident.

3.2.2 The Recovery 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 Recovery 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 Recovery 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 Recovery Team will be:

- 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 Recovery Team once each semester to review planning and strategies for the Critical Incident Recovery Plan.

5. EVALUATION

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

Appendix B

Critical or Traumatic Incident Plan – First 24 hour Short Term Tasks

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 and 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 Recovery Team

The composition of the Recovery Team will be:

- 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 Meeting Room A, Meeting Room B, and if necessary the Staffroom
- 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 hear 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

- notify close friends especially girlfriends and boyfriends prior to making an announcement to other students
- take these students aside when they arrive at school and inform them privately
- consider contacting their parents
- 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
- display instructions

8. Media Coverage

- 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 newsletter

Appendix C

Initial emergency record

Initial emergency record

Date
Time of notification
Name of person taking the call
Position
Name of person reporting the incident
Contact telephone number

DETAILS (describe the incident in as much detail as possible describing who was involved, how, where and when it occurred, who is injured, nature and extent of injuries, where is everyone now, what action is being taken to help)

IMMEDIATE ACTIONS REQUIRED

Principal notified YES NO Time _____
Other school staff YES NO Time _____

Emergency services notified YES NO Time _____
(which services, record names of officers, stations, telephone contacts)

Emergency and Security Management Branch notified YES NO Time _____
by telephone on (03) 9589 6266

Appendix D

Emergency message record

Time Message from

Action required

Completed

Message taken by

Time Message from

Action required

Completed

Message taken by

Time Message from

Action required

Completed

Message taken by

Time Message from

Action required

Completed

Message taken by

Time Message from

Action required

Completed

Message taken by

Emergency message record