Emergency Management and Critical Incident Planning

POLICY

This policy outlines the school planning required to effectively respond to emergencies and incidents. This planning is documented in the school's Emergency Management Plan.

SUMMARY

Schools must:

- have a current Emergency Management Plan (EMP) that addresses site specific hazards and threats which have the potential to result in emergencies and critical incidents which include:
    - circumstances that pose a critical risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of one or more students or staff
    - incidents requiring school closure, lockdown, or affecting the school's ability to operate fully
- develop and maintain their plans using the Online EMP Portal
- inform their school community how they will communicate with parents and carers in an emergency, and of any relocation/closure arrangements (for schools at bushfire risk) contained in their EMP
- test emergency response procedures by conducting drills at regular intervals, at least quarterly per annum
- review the EMP at least annually by 1 September, and/or following an emergency or critical incident.

DETAILS

Schools must have a current Emergency Management Plan (EMP) signed off by the principal that is reviewed at least annually by 1 September and following an emergency or critical incident.
The Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) under the Guidelines to the Minimum Standards and Requirements for School Registration requires schools to have an EMP that addresses emergency and critical incidents.

The EMP must:

- be completed by government schools using the Online EMP Portal
- be informed by a site-specific comprehensive risk assessment relating to:
    - circumstances that pose a critical risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of one or more students or staff
    - incidents affecting the school's ability to operate fully and which require responses such as adjustments to the school program, lockdown, evacuation, sheltering in place or school closure
- describe actions to take before, during and after an emergency or critical incident to ensure the ongoing safety of staff, students and others, and for restoring school operations/continuity of education.

A comprehensive site-specific risk assessment and corresponding response procedures are essential components of an EMP.

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Schools are encouraged to seek advice from their regional manager operations and emergency management or emergency management support officers, local municipal councils and emergency service providers where possible, to inform the content of their EMP and their risk assessment.

Schools must:
- ensure that staff who have a nominated role in the EMP have a clear understanding of, and have practiced their role in the EMP
- ensure that all staff, students and regular users of the school site, such as out of school hours care, have an understanding of the EMPs response procedures
- inform their school community how they will communicate with parents and carers in an emergency situation, or any other information that the school considers essential to prepare the school community for action during an emergency
- inform their school community of any relocation/closure and other pre-emptive arrangements if their site is at bushfire or grassfire risk – refer to the Bushfire and Grassfire Preparedness policy
- take all preparatory steps identified in the EMP to prevent negative consequences from an emergency or critical incident, including any staff training
- test emergency arrangements for core emergency response procedures (as listed in your EMP) for a variety of emergency scenarios such as fire in the neighbourhood, intruder, or loss of an essential service, at least quarterly per annum.

The Minimum Standards for school registration require schools to update their EMP as required and review it at least annually and immediately after any significant incident.

EMERGENCY DRILLS
Practicing emergency response procedures through drills:
- ensures widespread familiarity with emergency response procedures and the capacity to efficiently and effectively implement them in a live emergency
- promotes more effective emergency response procedures, by ensuring that evacuation locations and pathways are practical and workable in different emergency scenarios and that safety will be maintained throughout the response procedure.

Fire services and police may be willing to assist schools with emergency testing by acting as observers or by reviewing school emergency procedures.

Emergency drills should be followed by a debriefing of all staff and the school's incident management team (IMT).

Schools must document outcomes and lessons from the drill, with any required changes to response arrangements, incorporated into their EMP.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLANNING FOR EXCURSIONS AND CAMPS
Schools are required to undertake emergency management planning for certain excursions, overseas tours or camps – refer to Excursions for guidance.

STUDENT ACTIVITY LOCATOR

Victorian government and non-government schools are expected to use the Student Activity Locator (staff login required) to record student activities and excursions that occur outside the school, or are in school but outside normal school hours.

By centrally recording offsite activities in the SAL, emergency services can quickly be notified of student locations in the event of an emergency or critical incident, at those locations.

DEFINITIONS

Emergency

As defined in section 3 of the Emergency Management Act 2013 (Vic.):

'The actual or imminent occurrence of an event which in any way endangers or threatens to endanger the safety or health of any person in Victoria or which destroys or damages, or threatens to destroy or damage, any property in Victoria or endangers or threatens to endanger the environment or an element of the environment in Victoria including, without limiting the generality of the foregoing:

- an earthquake, flood, wind-storm or other natural event
- a fire
- an explosion
- a road accident or any other accident
- a plague or an epidemic or contamination
- a security threat
- a hi-jack, siege or riot
- a disruption to an essential service.

These events ordinarily require a coordinated whole of school response.

Incident

An incident is an actual or alleged event or situation that:

- causes harm or creates a risk of causing harm to a student's health, safety or wellbeing either directly or indirectly while under the care or supervision of the school, including international students
- impacts a student and is brought to the attention of the school, regardless of when or where it occurred, provided it is impacting on the student or other students within the school environment
- causes harm or creates a risk of causing harm to an employee's health, safety or wellbeing either directly or indirectly in the work setting
- affects or risks affecting the continuity of school operations, including matters of security (including cyber security), property damage and emergencies
- requires police notification or involves matters of serious conduct
- is a WorkSafe notifiable incident.

Critical incidents requiring planning include, but are not limited to:

- child abuse
- medical emergency
- mental stress
- data or privacy breach
- missing student/person.

RELATED POLICIES

- Bushfire and Grassfire Preparedness
- Crime Prevention in Schools

- Excursions
- PROTECT Child Safe Standards
- Reporting and Managing School Incidents (including emergencies)
- Supervision of Students

RELATED LEGISLATION
- Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (Vic)
- Emergency Management Act 1986 (Vic)
- Emergency Management Act 2013 (Vic)
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)

CONTACTS
Incidents assessed as Low or Medium can be reported directly into eduSafe Plus (staff login required) by the principal (or delegate). The principal (or delegate) is to contact the Incident Support and Operations Centre (ISOC) on 1800 126 126 to report 'High' or 'Extreme' severity incidents for support (report for support).

Date Implemented	June 2020
Author	DET
Approved By	DET
Approval Authority (Signature & Date)	
Date Reviewed	June 2022
Responsible for Review	Assistant Principal
Review Date	June 2024
References	