

POLICY

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT - SCHOOL PREPAREDNESS

Responsibility of:	School Support Services	FILE2015/313
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Target Audience:	All principals, parents and community	

This document should be read in conjunction with the [Emergency Management - Plans for schools guidelines](#) and the [Temporary School Closure guidelines](#).

1. POLICY

The department has system-wide responsibility for emergency management planning. At a local level, all Northern Territory (NT) Government schools are required to have a current Emergency Management Plan that outlines the school's response to an emergency situation or critical incident, and considers each of the four elements of emergency management.

1. Prevention
2. Preparedness
3. Response
4. Recovery

Plans must include:

- actions to be undertaken before, during and following an event to ensure the safety of students, staff and visitors, including contractors and volunteers, and minimise trauma, distress or damage
- coverage of all circumstances when the school is responsible for student safety (e.g. excursions)
- recovery planning to assist to restore school routines.

Schools must also develop specialist plans that outline responses to specific emergencies such as severe weather events (e.g. cyclone, flood) affecting their region. Refer to the [Emergency Management Plans for schools guidelines](#) for further details.

2. BUSINESS NEED

The department takes the safety of students, staff and visitors, including contractors and volunteers at school locations, very seriously and strives to ensure that all school related activity is conducted in safe conditions. Effective emergency management can reduce the likelihood of an emergency occurring, reduce the impact on the wellbeing of everyone on school premises, reduce the impact on the operation of the school, and facilitate the return of the site to normal operation as soon as possible.

3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all NT Government schools including Independent Public Schools and any supported educational sites (e.g. Homeland Learning Centres, annexes).

The department's [Emergency Management Framework](#) provides detailed guidance for emergency management and includes consideration of regulatory requirements for preschools under the [National Quality Framework](#) in regards to emergency and evacuations.

4. DEFINITIONS

Contingency planning is defined as procedures that minimise disruption to normal school operations when supply of services such as air-conditioning, power or water is interrupted and the possible downtime cannot be forecast with accuracy.

Critical incident includes any event which causes disruption to the school, creates significant danger, risk or likelihood of traumatic effects and creates a situation where staff, students and parents experience trauma, feel unsafe, vulnerable and/or under stress. Critical incidents may:

- be extremely dangerous or distressing
- be sudden and unexpected
- be disruptive to one's sense of control, security and safety of the situation around them
- include high levels of risk
- include elements of physical or emotional loss or risk of loss.

Emergency encompasses a range of events which could otherwise be described as incidents, accidents, catastrophes, disasters or crises. An emergency embraces the range of terms frequently used to describe an event, actual or imminent, which endangers or threatens to endanger life, property or the environment, and which requires a significant and coordinated response.

In the context of schools in the NT, an emergency includes, but is not restricted to:

- bomb threat
- collapse/major damage to building or equipment
- disappearance or removal of student or staff
- fatality/serious injury/serious assault/sexual assault of student or staff
- fire in school building or grounds/arson or bushfire
- flood/wind storm or other natural event (e.g. cyclone, earthquake)
- fumes/spill/leak/contamination by hazardous material
- outbreak of disease/pandemic
- siege/hostage/firearms
- civil or political events (e.g. acts of terrorism, large scale riots)
- air-conditioning or air quality failure.

Emergency Management Committee is comprised of key department business areas responsible for reviewing risk and improving and promoting preparedness and recovery from a major emergency or disaster and is chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive Organisational Services.

Emergency Management Plans detail assigned responsibilities and procedures required in the event of an emergency or critical incident.

Emergency preparedness includes the planning and preparation of processes to be undertaken to prevent or manage an emergency or critical incident. These procedures assist schools to organise themselves in order to continue functioning during an emergency or critical incident.

Independent Public Schools are schools that remain part of the public education system while operating with increased autonomy in relation to staff selection, financial management, governance, and their teaching and learning programs.

National Quality Framework is a regulatory system agreed to by all Australian governments, through the Council of Australian Governments, to raise quality and drive continuous improvement in early childhood education and care services, including preschools.

Newsflashes are succinct briefings that provide critical information to the department's Chief Executive and the Minister's office. The department's Corporate Communications unit and Deputy Chief Executives are also notified of information through this process.

Quality Education and Care NT (QECNT) refers to the NT regulatory authority responsible for administering the [Education and Care Services \(National Uniform Legislation\) Act 2011 and Education and Care National Regulations](#).

School includes preschool and the land area up to the school boundaries.

School staff includes any person responsible for the operations or education services at a school. This can include contractors, visitors or volunteers.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Emergency Management Committee will:

- develop and review the department's emergency management practices to ensure an appropriate level of preparedness in order to effectively manage an emergency event
- coordinate advice within the department regarding emergency events
- respond during events that require greater coordination than a single manager or principal
e.g. cyclone.

Regional Directors will:

- ensure that principals adhere to the requirements of this policy
- approve their schools' Emergency Management Plan at the beginning of every school year or following changes to the school that impact any area of the Plan
- ensure that all school Emergency Management Plans are recorded on the [Emergency Management](#) site
- maintain effective emergency or critical incident response capability in their region, through use of regional personnel and resources if required

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- ensure appropriate and timely reporting of all relevant emergencies or critical incidents in schools (e.g. newsflashes)
- where a critical incident has occurred, including an assault on a teacher and/or there has been involvement from the Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services (NTPFES), ensure that appropriate notification to executive has been undertaken and that human resource services are notified.

Principals will:

- develop and implement their school's Emergency Management Plan including contingency plans to manage disruptions to normal schooling in line with the [Emergency Management - Plans for schools guidelines](#)
- ensure consultation has occurred with local Police, Fire or Emergency Services when creating their plans and during an emergency situation
- submit the school's Emergency Management Plan to the Regional Director for endorsement at the beginning of every school year or following changes to the school that impact any area of the plan
- ensure that staff (including new and temporary staff), students and the school community know what the Emergency Management Plan contains and its location, and are trained appropriately in preparation for an emergency
- make decisions regarding the welfare of the school and relating to the management of an emergency or critical incident, which may include the closure of school facilities. School closures must be in accordance with the [Temporary School Closure guidelines](#)
- provide leadership for the response and recovery that is relevant to the emergency or critical incident
- notify the relevant Regional Director, and for preschools, notify the NT regulatory authority, Quality Education and Care NT
- ensure that when an incident occurs, an electronic [WHS Incident Report Form \(staff access only\)](#) is completed within 24 hours, including injuries, hazards and near misses involving staff.

During an emergency event or critical incident, principals will:

- Notify their Regional Director or other senior departmental staff member (where Regional Director is unavailable) as soon as practicable after the incident occurring

Principals of schools designated as public shelters will:

- act as the shelter manager as described in [Emergency Management - Public Shelter Responsibilities policy](#), unless alternative arrangements have been made in consultation with the department's nominated Shelter Group Leader.

All staff will:

- Ensure that their own personal safety and the safety of others is paramount and not place themselves in a situation likely to cause injury or harm.
- Ensure that they are familiar with their school's Emergency Management Plan, including their responsibilities during an emergency or critical incident.
- In the event of an emergency or critical incident, follow all directions of the officer nominated in the school's Emergency Management Plan

6. RELATED POLICY, LEGISLATION AND DOCUMENTS

Legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emergency Management Act 2013 (NT) and the Territory Emergency Plan• Education Act (NT)• Education and Care Services (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011• Education and Care Services National Regulations• Fire and Emergency Act (NT) and Regulations• Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation Act and Regulations)
Departmental policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emergency Management - Plans for schools guidelines• Emergency Management - Public Shelter Responsibilities policy• Temporary School Closure guidelines• Cyclone Action List (staff access only)• Excursions policy
Departmental policy (internal only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Newsflash guidelines and procedures (staff access only)• Media Liaison policy (staff access only)
Relevant resources and links	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Australian Emergency Management Institute, Disaster Resilience Education for Schools• Emergency Management• Northern Territory Emergency Service publications and forms (includes link to the Bureau of Meteorology's cyclone track and threat map)

7. EVALUATION

School Support Services will, in collaboration with School Operations and Planning and Infrastructure, evaluate the application and effectiveness of the policy on a three yearly basis using information and feedback from principal reference groups, Regional Directors and the Emergency Management Committee.

8. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Additional resources can be found internally on the department's [Work Health and Safety](#) site (staff access only).