

School preparedness – policy

This document should be read in conjunction with the Emergency management plans for school's guidelines and the Temporary school closure guidelines.

Policy

The Department of Education (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 4 elements of emergency management:

- prevention
- preparedness
- response
- 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, for example, 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, for example, cyclone and flood, affecting their region. Refer to the Emergency management plans for schools guidelines for further details.

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.

Scope

This policy applies to all NT Government schools including Independent public schools and any supported educational sites, such as Homeland learning centres and 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 emergencies and evacuations.

Evaluation

School Operations will, in collaboration with Infrastructure, Planning and Investment, evaluate the application and effectiveness of the policy on a 3 yearly basis using information and feedback from principal reference groups, Senior Directors Education and the Emergency Management Committee.

Roles and responsibilities

Emergency Management Committee

The Emergency Management Committee will:

- develop and review the departments 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 for example, cyclone.

Senior Directors Education

Senior Directors Education will:

- ensure that principals adhere to the requirements of this policy
- approve their schools' emergency management plans 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
- ensure appropriate and timely reporting of all relevant emergencies or critical incidents in schools, for example, newsflashes
- where a critical incident has occurred, including an assault on a teacher 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

Principals will:

- develop and implement their schools Emergency management plan including contingency plans to manage disruptions to normal schooling in line with the Emergency management plan for schools guidelines
- ensure consultation has occurred with local NTPFES when creating their plans and during an emergency situation
- submit the schools Emergency management plan to the Senior Director Education 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 closures guidelines
- provide leadership for the response and recovery that is relevant to the emergency or critical incident
- notify the relevant Senior Director Education, and for preschools, notify the NT regulatory authority, Quality Education and Care Northern Territory (QECNT)
- ensure that when an incident occurs, an electronic WHS Incident Report Form is completed within 24 hours, including injuries, hazards and near misses involving staff.

During an emergency event or critical incident, principals will:

- notify their Senior Director Education or other senior department staff member where Senior Director Education 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 emergency shelter policy, unless alternative arrangements have been made in consultation with the departments nominated shelter group leader.

Staff

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 schools 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 schools Emergency management plan.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Contingency planning	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	<p>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 or under stress. Critical incidents may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	<p>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.</p> <p>In the context of schools in the NT, an emergency includes, but is not restricted to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bomb threat • collapse or major damage to building or equipment • disappearance or removal of student or staff • fatality, serious injury, serious assault or sexual assault of student or staff • fire in school building or grounds, arson or bushfire • flood or wind storm or other natural event, for example, cyclone and earthquake • fumes, spill, leak or contamination by hazardous material • outbreak of disease or pandemic • siege, hostage or firearms • civil or political events such as acts of terrorism and large scale riots • air-conditioning or air quality failure.
Emergency Management Committee	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 Agency Services.
Emergency management plans	Assigned responsibilities and procedures required in the event of an emergency or critical incident.
Emergency preparedness	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	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	The 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	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)	The NT regulatory authority responsible for administering the <i>Education and Care Services (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011</i> and Education and Care National Regulations 2011.
School	Includes preschool and the land area up to the school boundaries.
School staff	Any person responsible for the operations or education services at a school. This can include contractors, visitors or volunteers.

Related legislation, policy and documents

Additional resources can be found internally on the department's Work Health and Safety site – staff access only.

Legislation

Education Act 2015 - <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/en/Legislation/EDUCATION-ACT-2015>

Education and Care Services (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011 - <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/en/Legislation/EDUCATION-AND-CARE-SERVICES-NATIONAL-UNIFORM-LEGISLATION-ACT-2011>

Education and Care National Regulations - <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/national-law-regulations/national-regulations>

Emergency Management Act 2013 - <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/EMERGENCY-MANAGEMENT-ACT-2013>

Fire and Emergency Act 1996 - <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/FIRE-AND-EMERGENCY-ACT-1996>

Fire and Emergency Regulations 1996 - <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/FIRE-AND-EMERGENCY-REGULATIONS-1996>

Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011 - <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/en/Legislation/WORK-HEALTH-AND-SAFETY-NATIONAL-UNIFORM-LEGISLATION-ACT-2011>

Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulations 2011 - <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/WORK-HEALTH-AND-SAFETY-NATIONAL-UNIFORM-LEGISLATION-REGULATIONS-2011>

Policy

Emergency management framework - <http://ed.ntschoools.net/documentcentre/Pages/home.aspx?category=School%20operations&subcategory=Emergency%20management>

Emergency management plans for schools guidelines - https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/school-operations#emergency_management

Emergency management public shelter responsibilities policy - https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/school-operations#emergency_management

Temporary school closures guidelines - https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/school-operations#emergency_management

Excursions policy - <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies/school-operations#excursions>

National Quality Framework - <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/national-quality-framework>

Documents

Department of Home Affairs – Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management - <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/help-and-support/how-to-engage-us/committees-and-fora/ministerial-council-police-emergency-management>

Media liaison policy – <http://ed.ntschoools.net/documentcentre/Pages/home.aspx?category=Corporate%20communications&subcategory=Media>

Northern Territory Emergency Service publications and forms - <https://pfes.nt.gov.au/emergency-service/publications>

Work Health and Safety Incident Report Form - <http://ed.ntschoools.net/audit/team/incidents/SitePages/onlineform.aspx>

Acronyms	Full form
NT	Northern Territory
NTPFES	Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services
QECNT	Quality Education and Care Northern Territory
WHS	Work Health and Safety

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