

Sample Emergency and Critical Incident Policy and Procedure

1. Purpose and Scope

Emergencies and critical incidents in the workplace can affect people physically and psychologically, and affect program continuity of **[insert organisation name]**.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure **[insert organisation name]** prepares for and effectively responds to emergency situations and critical incidents through the appropriate use of resources. The prevention and effective management of emergency situations and critical incidents can assist to minimise the negative impact of an unexpected event.

This policy applies to all staff, consumers, volunteers, Board members and students.

2. Definitions

An emergency is an unplanned or imminent event that affects or threatens the health, safety or welfare of people, property and infrastructure, and which requires a significant and coordinated response. The defining characteristic of an emergency event or situation is that usual resources are overwhelmed or have the potential to be overwhelmed.

Emergencies may be a specific event with a clear beginning, end and recovery process, or a situation that develops over time and where the implications are gradual rather than immediate.

Emergency management is the coordination of an emergency response and management of recovery. The aim of emergency management is to minimise physical and psychological impacts on all parties and to minimise damage to assets, operations, reputation and staff productivity.

A critical incident is an unexpected traumatic event, involving personal or professional threat, which evokes extreme stress, fear or injury. Providing appropriate supports following a critical incident is part of emergency management.

A traumatic event is one in which a person experiences, witnesses or is confronted by experiences that involve actual, threatened or perceived death or serious injury and/ or threat to own or others physical and emotional integrity. The person's response may then include intense fear, feelings of helplessness and horror, which impact on their sense of 'self'.

Complex trauma refers to a condition resulting from multiple exposures to one or more traumas. When repeatedly exposed to traumatic stress, disruptions can occur in brain structure and function, central and autonomic nervous system arousal, endocrinological and immunological function. These biological disruptions interact with psychological, emotional, cognitive and spiritual processes

Critical Incident Debriefing (CID) is a preventative health measure to minimise the impact of traumatic events and the development of major psychological health problems such as Post Traumatic Stress (PTS) Disorder.

3. Principles

Emergency management planning is being prepared for events or incidents that stretch our ability to cope beyond normal day-to-day capacity.

The organisation is committed to the protection of consumers, staff, volunteers, Board members, students and visitors during emergencies.

[insert organisation name] swiftly and effectively responds to emergency situations, with the foremost goals of preserving life, protecting the organisation's property, and restoring operations as quickly as possible.

Critical incidents can be a threatening experience and appropriate supports are required to minimise long term effects arising from exposure to the trauma.

4. Outcomes

Emergency situations are prevented as far as practical.

The negative impacts of emergency situations and critical incidents are minimised through effective management.

5. Functions and Delegations

Position	Delegation/Task
Board of Directors	Develop and Review Emergency and Critical Incident Policy. Compliance with Emergency and Critical Incident Policy.
Management	<p>Compliance with Emergency and Critical Incident Policy.</p> <p><u>CEO/Manager</u> Ensures development and implementation of Emergency and Critical Incident Policy.</p> <p>Ensures potential disaster and emergency situations are identified, and appropriate emergency management plans are in place.</p> <p>[insert position] Lead responsibility for implementation of emergency and critical incident procedures, including identification of potential situations, developing, documenting and communicating response plans, reporting on actual situations, and reviewing policy and procedures following a disaster or emergency situation.</p>

	Coordinate staff training in emergency and critical incident, such as fire response, building evacuation, etc.
Staff	<p>Compliance with Emergency and Critical Incident Policy.</p> <p>Contribute to the development of Emergency and Critical Incident Policy.</p> <p>[Insert relevant positions and delegations, for example: <u>Administration Officer</u> Coordinate emergency evacuation drills.]</p>

6. Risk Management

All Board members, staff and volunteers are trained in disaster and emergency response procedures at induction and **[insert frequency]** by **[insert position]**.

Emergency evacuation drills are undertaken in all sites **[insert frequency]** under the instruction of **[insert position]**.

Disaster and emergency management plans are reviewed annually and/or following the event of a disaster or emergency situation.

As far as possible, traumatic events are prevented, and the impacts of trauma are minimised following traumatic events.

7. Policy Implementation

All staff have access to and are familiar with policies and procedures relating to disaster emergency management.

All staff have information which outlines actions to follow for various disaster and emergency situations, and are supported to undertake training for specific roles in emergency and critical incident.

8. Policy Detail

[insert organisation name] identifies, prevents and manages disaster and emergency situations within its sphere of responsibility and influence, until the arrival of appropriate emergency services.

A range of emergency situations may occur on the premises with the potential to impact on the safety of staff, Board members, volunteers, students, visitors and consumers, including:

- fire
- gas or water leak
- vehicle and other accidents

- chemical, radiation or biological spill
- bushfire
- storm
- earthquake
- bomb threat
- civil disorder or illegal occupancy
- hostage or terrorist situation
- death
- robbery
- physical (including sexual) assaults.

8.1 Risk Assessment

[insert organisation name] uses risk assessment processes to identify and control barriers to effective emergency management.

Staff, Board members, students, volunteers and consumers are expected to behave in a way which minimises the risk of emergencies occurring.

8.2 Preparedness

The Emergency Situation Checklist supports the organisation to prepare for potential disaster and emergency situations, and is reviewed on **[insert frequency]** basis. Disaster and emergency management plans are reviewed **[insert frequency]** basis.

All staff, Board members, students and volunteers are provided with training to ensure they are familiar with implementation of disaster and emergency management plans.

All staff, Board members, students and volunteers familiarise themselves with emergency evacuation procedures, including their responsibilities and the emergency evacuation assembly point.

All fire safety activities undertaken by the organisation are recorded and reviewed to identify gaps in training, knowledge, equipment or processes. Fire activities include, but are not limited to, fire safety training, drills and exercises, records of maintenance and inventories of equipment kept.

Where relevant, all staff, students and volunteers familiarise themselves with techniques to minimise physical and emotional harm from other people.

8.3 Response

When a disaster or emergency situation arises, the primary aim of the response is to ensure the safety of all people on the premises, preserve life and protect property.

[insert organisation name] initiates recovery and aims to restore operations as quickly as possible.

The availability of critical incident debriefing is an essential component of the organisation's approach to emergency management.

When required, supportive counselling is provided to consumers, staff, volunteers, students and board members who are affected by an emergency or critical incident within two hours of the event (for defusing and mobilisation) and then within 48 to 72 hours (for critical incident debriefing).

9. Emergency and Critical Incident Procedures

Staff, board members, volunteers, students and consumers who experience a critical incident related to their involvement with **[insert organisation name]** should immediately inform where possible **[insert position]**. If this is not possible they should immediately inform **[insert position]**.

A Critical Incident Report:

- is to be completed by the staff member involved in the incident or notification of the incident.
- is to contain as much information as possible and indicate the people directly involved in the incident.

The staff member who receives the report will ensure that the person(s) identified in the critical incident receives all appropriate support. They are to contact emergency services where required and must contact the **[insert position]** immediately.

The **[insert position]** in conjunction with **[insert position]** will assess the Critical Incident and implement a plan of action to follow up the Critical Incident.

Where required, a meeting will be organised to determine issues and responsibilities relating to:

- Assessing risks and response actions
- Liaison with emergency and other services
- Contact with the affected person's relatives and other supports
- Liaison with other organisations
- Counselling and supporting staff, board members, volunteers, students and consumers not directly involved in, but affected by, the incident.
- Media management (if required)
- Where appropriate **[insert organisation name]** may be required to provide support to the family in the form of:
 - o hiring interpreters
 - o making arrangements for hospital/funeral/memorial service/repatriation
 - o obtaining a death certificate
 - o assisting with personal items and affairs including insurance issues

[insert organisation name] will conduct a review of actions arising from the above meeting to ensure:

- Follow up such as de-briefing, counselling and prevention strategies have been completed.
- Relevant people have been informed of all outcomes from the incident

- A recommendation as to the response to the critical incident is documented and included in the quality improvement cycle
- Further follow up required is documented and responsibilities allocated to appropriate staff.

9.1 Critical Incident Debriefing (CID)

Critical Incident Debriefing (CID) will occur within 48 - 72 hours after the incident.

Debriefing may include individual and group counselling, where the aim is to:

- Decrease feelings of isolation
- Provide people affected by the incident with a facilitated session to assist them to normalise their thoughts and feelings. Groups assist people to explore their differing perspectives of the incident and share their similar thoughts and feelings.

There will usually be an initial counselling session, followed up with one or more debriefing sessions.

Initial counselling will occur as soon as possible after the incident, preferably immediately or within a few hours. Depending on the type or severity of the critical incident, initial defusing may include:

- A short factual statement about what is known about the incident, the possible effects on those involved, what is being done for them and what is going to happen in the future, eg.; planned debriefing sessions.
- Information on acute stress response (what is happening to people now) and how people can care for themselves. See Information Handout – Traumatic Events
- An arrangement for a structured debriefing session within 48-72 hours.
- The provision of different levels of service for those differently affected
- Referrals to various resources including counsellors

[insert organisation name] will maintain confidentiality to ensure that:

- Only a record of when and where a debriefing took place will be kept; and
- No information will be released without the agreement of the individual or group.

9.2 Evacuation

In the event of an alert to evacuate - either verbal, automatic alarm or manual alarm – and the threat is not immediate, all consumers, staff, Board members, students, volunteers and visitors:

- Proceed along designated routes to the designated assembly area(s)
- Ensure assistance is provided to people with disabilities and/or special needs
- **[insert position]** to collect visitor sign-in and staff attendance registers and direct people to assembly point
- Check attendance at assembly area against the attendance registers.

- Remain at the assembly area until advised by the [insert position] and/or emergency personnel that it is safe to return to premises.

In the event of an alert to evacuate - either verbal, automatic alarm or manual alarm – and the threat is immediate, all consumers, staff, Board members, students, volunteers and visitors:

- Proceed along designated routes to the designated assembly area(s)
- Ensure assistance is provided to people with disabilities and/or special needs
- **[insert position]** to collect visitor sign-in and staff attendance registers and direct people to the assembly point.
- **[insert position]** to check attendance at assembly area against the attendance registers.
- Remain at the assembly area until advised by the [insert position] and/or emergency personnel that it is safe to return to premises.

Additional guidelines for threat of fire

In the event of a fire threat and if it is safe to do so, close all doors and windows and turn off power supply before leaving the premises.

Additional guidelines for bomb threat

In the event of a bomb threat and the threat is not immediate, open all doors and windows before leaving the premises.

9.3 Fire

In the event of a fire:

- Trigger the fire alarm
- Contact fire emergency services.
- Alert the nominated fire warden and/or a senior staff member
- Evacuate people from the immediate area of the fire behind a rated fire door or outside the building
- Fight the fire with existing equipment if safe to do so

9.4 Bomb Threat

In the event of a bomb threat via phone call:

- Remain calm
- Record as much information as possible from the caller using questions and observations including:

- *What type of bomb is it?*
 - *How will it go off?*
 - *What does it look like?*
 - *When it set to go off?*
 - *Where is it?*
 - *When was it put there?*
 - *Who put it there?*
 - *Why was it put there?*
 - *Will it explode or will something be released?*
 - *If a substance is released, what is it? How much is there? How will it be released?*
 - *Observations about the caller: gender, age, accent?*
 - *Any background noise?*
- Contact police who can assist in determining if evacuation is required
 - If instructed, evacuate consumers, staff, Board members, students, volunteers and visitors as for the above evacuation procedures
 - Notify CEO/Manager and/or other senior staff

In the event of a letter bomb (threat via postal mail):

- Do not disturb, move or touch the package if possible
- Contact police who can assist in determining if evacuation is required
- If instructed, evacuate consumers, staff, Board members, students, volunteers and visitors as for the above evacuation procedures
- Notify CEO/Manager and/or other senior staff

9.5 Suspicious Mail

In the event of a suspicious item of postal mail arriving to the premises:

- Do not disturb, move or touch the package if possible
- If you have touched the article wash your hands if it is possible, within the work area
- Contact police who can assist in determining if evacuation is required
- Inform others present of what has occurred and advise them to stay in their work area
- Prevent others from entering the work area
- Do not attempt to clean up spilt material or brush it off your clothing
- If instructed, evacuate consumers, staff, Board members, students, volunteers and visitors as for the above evacuation procedures
- Notify CEO/Manager and/or other senior staff

9.6 Hold-up

In the event of a hold-up situation:

- Assume the offender is armed and that any firearms are loaded
- Comply with instructions given by the offender, doing no more or less than what you are told to do, and answer all questions asked
- Do not attempt to disarm or apprehend the offender

- Take mental notes of details about the offender and any items that are touched by the offender
- If it is safe to do so, raise the alarm by **[insert method of raising alarm, eg duress button]**.

Immediately after the incident:

- Lock access doors to secure the area and prevent people from approaching
- Notify the police immediately
- Notify CEO/Manager and/or other senior staff
- Attend to the post-incident needs of consumers, staff, Board members, volunteers, students and visitors affected by the incident.

9.7 Earthquake

In the event of an earthquake:

If you are indoors:

- Remain indoors and seek shelter under strongly constructed tables, desks or door frames
- Keep away from windows, fixtures, furniture, and items that may become unstable
- Evacuate the premises if it is safe to do so.

If you are outdoors:

- Move quickly away from buildings, electrical structures and flammable products
- Proceed to designated assembly area if safe to do so.

After the earthquake:

- Check attendance at assembly area against the attendance registers
- Respond to injured people
- Check for gas leaks, power failure and any other hazard
- Turn off electricity, gas and water if it is safe to do so
- Prevent entry to premises if unsafe
- Contact and liaise with emergency services if required
- Notify CEO/Manager and/or other senior staff.

9.8 Flood

In the event of a flood:

- Do not enter the flood waters
- Eliminate potential electrical hazards
- Place high value equipment and records away from impending floodwaters if it is safe to do so
- Stay in a safe location while it continues to offer protection
- Evacuate consumers, staff, Board members, students, volunteers and visitors as for the above evacuation procedures.
- Contact and liaise with emergency services if required
- Notify CEO/Manager and/or other senior staff.

10. Emergency Contact Numbers

Organisation	Phone / Address
Police	000
Local Police	
Fire Brigade	000
Ambulance	000
Local Hospital	
State Emergency Centre	
Drug Rehabilitation Counselling	
National Association of Loss & Grief	
Centrelink	
CEO	

11. References + Resources

11.1 Internal

Critical Incident report Form
Emergency Situation Checklist
Work Health and Safety Policy
Risk Management Policy

11.2 External

Legislation

Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Commonwealth)
Model Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011 (Cth)
Workers Compensation Act 1987 (NSW)
Workplace Injury Management and Workers Compensation Act 1998 (NSW)
Workers Compensation Regulation 2010 (NSW)

Resources

WorkCover NSW 2004, *The Community Services Safety Pack: A Guide to Occupational Health & Safety*. Gosford, NSW.

WorkCover Authority of NSW website:

www.workcover.nsw.gov.au

This policy is based on the NADA Disaster and Emergency Management Policy.

http://www.nada.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=236&Itemid=44