



Department of  
**Education**

## EMERGENCY AND CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

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## 1 POLICY STATEMENT

The Department of Education (the Department) principals or site managers are responsible for management of on-site and off-site school related emergencies and critical incidents. The intention is to minimise trauma and distress to students and staff and damage to property and to ensure the teaching and learning program is maintained or resumed.

## 2 BACKGROUND

Emergencies and critical incidents can vary significantly in duration. Some will be discrete and short in duration others may be protracted and last for days or weeks.

Effective emergency management involves coordinated actions based on line management principles and designated responsibilities. This will:

- reduce the likelihood of emergencies and critical incidents;
- minimise the impact on students, staff and site activities; and
- facilitate the return of the site to normal operations as soon as possible.

Management of emergencies and critical incidents will involve consideration of:

- prevention and mitigation of;
- preparedness for;
- response to;
- recovery from; and
- review of emergencies and critical incidents.

## 3 SCOPE

This policy applies to all Department employees.

## 4 PROCEDURES

### 4.1 RISK ASSESSMENT

The principal or site manager must:

- identify on-site and off-site situations that have the potential to become emergencies or critical incidents affecting the site's operations;
- determine potential risks associated with particular situations; and
- use the *Risk and Business Continuity Management* policy to assess the potential risks and develop mitigation strategies.

#### **Guidelines**

*Emergencies or critical incidents can include natural disasters (for example, bushfires or floods) or human disasters (for example, arson).*

*The Risk and Business Continuity Management policy is available from the Policies website at [www.det.wa.edu.au/policies/](http://www.det.wa.edu.au/policies/). The Appendices provide Risk Report and Risk Assessment Summary spreadsheets which can be used to select the situations for which emergency or critical incident planning is required.*

*The principal or site manager should consult with relevant school personnel (for example, the school Occupational Safety and Health Representative) and other personnel (for example, local government or WA Police) as part of the risk assessment process.*

## 4.2 PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS

The principal or site manager will implement strategies to eliminate or reduce the likelihood of the occurrence of emergencies or critical incidents.

Principals of schools located in bushfire prone areas must incorporate key bushfire messages in their curriculum.

### **Guidelines**

*Schools with identified significant natural risks or those with causes that are not of natural origin need to consider curriculum approaches for these risks.*

*See Section 7 – ‘Prevention and Preparedness’ of the Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan template, available from the Our Policies website at [www.det.wa.edu.au/policies/](http://www.det.wa.edu.au/policies/) for a table of actions to prevent and mitigate the risk of emergency situations.*

### 4.2.1 EMERGENCY AND CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

The principal or site manager will develop and maintain an Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan.

### **Guidelines**

*An Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan template is available from the Policies website at [www.det.wa.edu.au/policies](http://www.det.wa.edu.au/policies) to support school planning.*

*See Appendix A for Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan Checklist*

*The Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan is based on consideration of:*

- *management of foreseeable risk; and*
- *the Comprehensive/All Hazards Approach to Emergency Management (summarised in Appendix B).*

*Advice and educational materials can be obtained from relevant emergency management agencies such as the Fire and Emergency Services Authority.*

### 4.2.2 COMMUNICATION, TRAINING, TESTING AND REVIEW

The principal or site manager must confirm that the *Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan* of the site is:

- communicated to all staff;
- publicly accessible for both inspection and use in the event of an emergency or critical incident;
- sent to the Regional Executive Director at the regional education office so that important information is immediately accessible to those off-site to enable them to provide appropriate support;
- implemented by staff trained for their roles in managing emergency situations;
- tested and reviewed (for example, evacuation drills, role plays or written scenarios) on at least an annual basis and, where necessary, after an emergency or critical incident;

- modified in accordance with information gained from testing and actual experiences;
- developed in consideration of the services provided by other agencies such as the WA Police, the Fire and Emergency Services Authority, the Department for Child Protection and the Department of Health, including mental health services.

The principal of schools in bushfire prone areas must:

- confirm that the *Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan* of the site requires practice evacuation drills prior to October and at least once per term during the bushfire season, October to March; and
- review off-site evacuation plan to confirm at least two suitable options and seek confirmation from the Hazard Management Agency on relocation to these sites.

The principal of schools in cyclone and flood prone areas must establish links with local state emergency services in regards to actions and alert stages.

#### **Guidelines**

*The principal or site manager may find it useful to affiliate with the Local Emergency Management Committee, chaired by the local government.*

*Good practice suggests that staff undertake professional learning programs pertaining to managing identified human and natural emergencies.*

### 4.2.3 OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES

The Deputy Director General, Schools will:

- maintain the Online Incident Notification System and use this to plan improved prevention, preparedness and response strategies; and
- maintain a process for the system level coordination of the prevention, preparedness, response and recovery from significant emergencies or critical incidents which require Central Office support.

#### **Guidelines**

*This can involve acting as or appointing a Central Office Incident Support Coordinator to liaise with the regional education office or school Incident Controller in the event of a significant emergency.*

The Regional Executive Directors will:

- confirm that all sites have an *Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan*;
- obtain and hold copies of school *Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plans*;
- ensure the regional education office has an *Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan*;
- facilitate opportunities for key regional personnel (eg. school psychologists) to develop emergency management and critical incident related knowledge, skills and experience;
- involve regional education office personnel (eg. school psychologists and Coordinators Regional Operations) in providing support to schools, as required; and

- analyse regional data from the Online Incident Notification System and use this to develop improved prevention, preparedness and response strategies.

**Guidelines**

*Regional Executive Directors or their delegates may find it useful to affiliate with the District Emergency Management Committee, chaired by the WA Police.*

The Manager, School Psychology Service will:

- coordinate school psychologist training and maintain a list of personnel with Level 2 and Level 3 competency in Critical Incident Management; and
- maintain membership of the State Welfare Emergency Committee.

The Head of Security and Principal Consultant to the Deputy Director General Schools will maintain State level inter-agency partnerships to enable collaborative support to school communities affected by significant emergencies or critical incidents.

**Guidelines**

*Refer to Critical Incident Management: Key Competencies, A Manual for Student Services Personnel available from the School Psychology Service.*

The Regional Executive Directors will maintain an effective emergency or critical incident response capability in their region, through use of regional personnel and resources.

#### 4.3 RESPONSE

The Regional Executive Director will facilitate appropriate support to a school experiencing an emergency or critical incident, including but not limited to:

- assistance with the selection of the Incident Controller;
- adoption of the role of Incident Controller if appropriate;
- provision of regional education office school psychologist and Coordinator Regional Operations support as required;
- assistance with inter-agency liaison as required; and
- notification or possible request for support from Central Office.

The Incident Controller will respond to a particular emergency or critical incident in accordance with the actions outlined in the Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan.

As well as tailoring the nature and level of responses to the emergency or critical incident, the Incident Controller must also modify the responses as the situation changes and must recognise the varying needs of students and staff.

**Guidelines**

*See Section 9 – ‘Response to Specific Emergencies’ of the Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan template, available from the Policies website at [www.def.wa.edu.au/policies](http://www.def.wa.edu.au/policies) ).*

*The selection of the Incident Controller for each incident should be based on a consideration of the:*

- *complexity of issues to be managed; and*
- *expertise required.*

*Schools and regional education offices are encouraged to work closely with emergency service agencies and provide support where required, particularly in the use of school facilities during times of natural disaster such as fire, cyclone and flooding. Emergency services may require school premises to be used as shelters and disaster coordination points.*

*The Incident Controller should consult with their regional education office or Regional Executive Director on security related matters, including potential use of security guards on school sites.*

The Department provides support services (for example, Coordinators Regional Operations and School Psychologists) to enable principals or site managers to respond appropriately.

All Department employees should be mindful of their responsibility for confidentiality of information related to emergencies and critical incidents.

Following an emergency or critical incident, the principal or site manager will act promptly to:

- contact WA Police if the particular incident warrants it;
- contact a parent or guardian of any student who has been harmed or threatened with harm;
- report any emergency or critical incident to their Regional Executive Director;
- liaise with their Regional Executive Director and/or the Department's Media Unit for:
  - informing students and staff about any potential danger;
  - preparing communications for parents and the wider school community about any potential danger; and
  - media related matters;
- submit an entry using the Online Incident Notification System, as soon as is reasonably possible.

#### **Guidelines**

*Incidents requiring contact with WA Police include, among other things, attempted abductions of children and approaches to children by strangers. In these situations, it is imperative that parents are contacted as soon as a child reports the incident to the school. If there is a potential danger from a situation or a person, parents and the wider school community should be informed promptly.*

*Notifiable incidents should be recorded in the Online Incident Notification System. A notifiable incident is an event, actual or imminent, which occurs on or off site and involves anti-social or criminal behaviour, an accident, a case of notifiable disease, death or natural disaster. Incidents endanger, or threaten to endanger, life, health and wellbeing, property or the school environment. Notifiable incidents may include events that occur outside of school hours and off-site but directly impact on the health and wellbeing of students and/or staff.*

### 4.3.1 EVACUATION

The principal or site manager will:

- plan for both on-site and off-site evacuation as part of the *Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan*;
- immediately report any evacuation to their Regional Executive Director; and
- liaise with their Regional Executive Director and the Department's Media Unit for media related matters and when preparing communications for parents following an evacuation.

**Guidelines**

*For more information on preparing media communications, see the Media Liaison Guidelines available from the Our Policies website at [www.det.wa.edu.au/policies](http://www.det.wa.edu.au/policies).*

*A Hazard Management Agency can recommend or mandate an evacuation from the school site or a stay on the school site. This would be done in collaboration with the principal or site manager.*

## 4.3.2 CLOSURE

The principal or site manager will notify the Regional Executive Director immediately after any order is made to temporarily close all or a particular part of the school's premises.

**Guidelines**

*School closure may only be done by the principal, site manager or the Department's Head of Security in certain circumstances. More information about this is provided in Appendix C.*

*A Hazard Management Agency, based on weather forecasts, can recommend to the Department that a school not open for the day. The principal or site manager should consult with the Regional Executive Director in any such action.*

*Powers which enable the closure of educational facilities during a public health emergency are exercised in consultation with the State Emergency Coordination Group, Ministers, the Director General, Department of Education and relevant bodies.*

## 4.3.3 LOCKDOWN

The principal or site manager will:

- plan for lockdown as one aspect of the *Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan*;
- initiate lockdown based on an assessment of risks to students and staff;
- make the decision to initiate lockdown informed by advice from other agencies (for example, WA Police or the Fire and Emergency Services Authority), the regional education office or other information available at the site;
- immediately report any lockdown to their Regional Executive Director;
- liaise with their Regional Executive Director and the Department's Media Unit for media related matters and when preparing communications for parents following a lockdown; and
- maintain records and documentation associated with a lockdown.

**Guidelines**

*The Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan template available from the Policies website at [www.det.wa.edu.au/policies](http://www.det.wa.edu.au/policies) provides suggested checklist actions for school lockdown.*

## 4.4 RECOVERY

Following an emergency or critical incident, the principal or site manager will:

- take appropriate actions to return the site infrastructure to normal;
- develop and implement medium to long-term strategies in conjunction with regional education office school psychologist and Coordinator Regional Operations to identify and manage the ongoing social and psychological needs, and (in the case of students) the educational needs, of those affected;

- modify specific procedures of the plan as determined by the operational debriefing; and
- liaise with their Regional Executive Director and the Department's Media Unit for media related matters and when preparing communications for parents.

The Regional Executive Director will facilitate the provision of regional education office support to a school in the process of recovery from an emergency or critical incident.

#### 4.5 REVIEW OF PROCESSES

The principal or site manager will:

- organise an operational debriefing, as appropriate, to evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of the *Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan*; and
- maintain documentation associated with management of the emergency or critical incident.

### 5 RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

#### 5.1 RELEVANT LEGISLATION OR AUTHORITY

*Australian Standard 3745: Emergency Control Organisation and Procedures for Buildings, 2002*

*Australian Standard 4360: Risk Management, 2008*

*Disability Discrimination Act, 1992*

*Emergency Management Act, 2005*

*Emergency Management Regulations, 2006*

*Industrial Relations Act, 1979*

*Occupational Safety and Health Act, 1984*

*Occupational Safety & Health Regulations, 1996*

*Public Sector Management Act, 1994*

*School Education Act, 1999*

*School Education Regulations, 2000*

*Western Australian Management Plan for Influenza Pandemic, 2008*

*Westplan Welfare, 2009*

#### 5.2 RELATED DEPARTMENT POLICIES

*Behaviour Management in Schools*

*Child Protection*

*Community Use of School Facilities and Resources*

*Duty of Care for Students*

*Excursions: Off School Sites*

*First Aid for Sickness and Accidents in Schools*

*Occupational Safety and Health*

*Risk and Business Continuity Management*

*School Security*

*Student Health Care*  
*Visitors and Intruders on School Premises*

### 5.3 OTHER DOCUMENTS

*Critical Incident Management: Student Services Competencies. A Manual for Student Services Personnel, Office of Government Schools, Western Australia*  
*Department of Education Pandemic Management Plan*  
*Keeping Our Workplace Safe*  
*The Principal's Guide to Bushfires*

## 6 DEFINITIONS

### **COMMAND AND CONTROL**

The overall direction of emergency management activities, including the coordination of human and physical resources.

### **COMPREHENSIVE/ALL HAZARDS APPROACH**

The development of emergency arrangements related to prevention, preparedness, response and recovery (PPRR). The PPRR are not necessarily sequential phases.

### **CRITICAL INCIDENT**

An incident in which there is a high likelihood of traumatic effects. A critical incident evokes unusual or unexpectedly strong emotional reactions which have the potential to interfere with the ability of the individual, group or system to function either at the time or later. For example, an on-site accident causing death or serious injury, student or staff suicide, major vandalism, sexual assault at school, students lost or injured on an excursion or intruders on a school site who cause harm to people or damage property.

### **EMERGENCY**

An event, actual or imminent, which:

- occurs on or off site;
- endangers or threatens to endanger life, property or the environment; and
- requires a significant and coordinated response.

For example, fire or bomb threats, hazardous materials spillage, prolonged loss of a utility (for example, water or power), cyclone and floods.

### **EMERGENCY CONTROL POST (ECP)**

The specific, safe location at which the Incident Controller is positioned and from which the response to the emergency or critical incident will be coordinated.

The Emergency Control Post is usually the administration area. An alternative post should also be identified in case the original area is not suitable.

### **EVACUATION**

The movement of people from a threatened area to a place of safety.

**HAZARD MANAGEMENT AGENCY (HMA)**

A public authority which, because of legislative responsibility or specialised knowledge, expertise and resources, is responsible for emergency management.

Such organisations are either designated by legislation or detailed in State-level emergency management plans, for example, WA Police and the Fire and Emergency Services Authority.

**INCIDENT CONTROLLER**

The person responsible for the overall management of an emergency or critical incident. This is normally the principal or site manager unless they are incapacitated, unavailable, or have delegated the role. For some incidents, the Incident Controller will be subordinate to a regional level or Central Office Incident Controller or another agency which has legislative authority for management of that hazard.

**INCIDENT SUPPORT COORDINATOR**

The person from Central Office appointed to liaise with the regional education office or school Incident Controller when an emergency or critical incident is deemed to require Central Office support.

**INTRUDER**

A person entering school premises without permission and who does not have good cause to be on the premises.

**LOCKDOWN**

Isolating students, staff and visitors from a perceived threat of physical harm at the school site by confining people to classrooms or other school buildings.

Lockdown is sometimes referred to as Protect in Place or Shelter in Place.

**ONLINE INCIDENT NOTIFICATION SYSTEM**

The system for enabling schools and regional education offices to formally record and advise the Department of emergencies, critical incidents and other specific incidents.

The Online Incident Notification System can be found on the Department's Intranet homepage and <http://intranet/home/Default.asp>.

**OPERATIONAL DEBRIEFING**

A review of the management of an emergency or critical incident in order to affirm and reinforce what worked well, and refine and improve future processes and practice.

**PREVENTION**

Measures to eliminate or reduce incidence or severity of emergencies and critical incidents.

**PREPAREDNESS**

Measures to ensure that, should an emergency or critical incident occur, resources and services are capable of coping with the effects. Measures can include planning, staff training, and acquisition of specific safety equipment, infrastructure and maintaining the safety of the school grounds.

**RESPONSE**

Actions taken immediately prior to, during and immediately after an emergency or critical incident to ensure that its effects are minimised.

**RECOVERY**

Measures which support emergency or critical incident -affected individuals and school communities in reconstruction of the physical infrastructure and restoration of emotional, economic, environmental and physical wellbeing.

**SCHOOL SITE PLAN**

The plan of the school site showing the general layout of buildings. The site plan may include Emergency Exits/Evacuation Escape Routes, location of any fire fighting equipment and the direction/location of the Evacuation Assembly Area. It may also identify the location of Fire Hydrant/s, gas storage and control valves, and the electrical system Main Isolating Switch.

**SITE MANAGER**

Officers who have executive responsibility for overall management of any Department site.

**7 CONTACT INFORMATION**

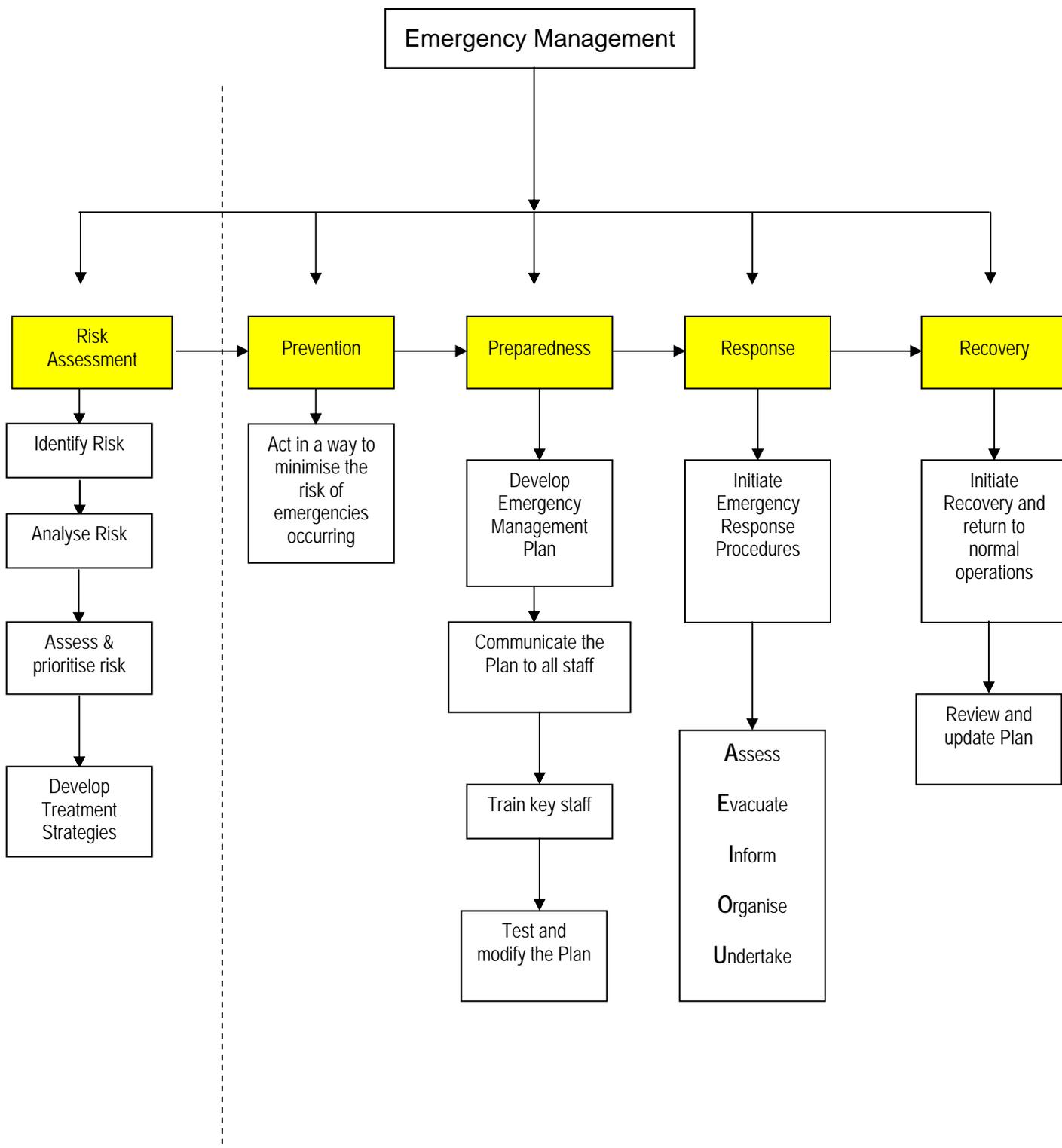
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## APPENDIX A EMERGENCY AND CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLAN CHECKLIST

An *Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan* template is available from the Our Policies website at <http://policies.det.wa.edu.au/> to support school planning.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purpose of the plan, clarifying the school context and risks.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency or critical incident response and recovery action checklists (for on and off school site emergencies).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency or critical incident contact lists (school personnel, district education office and inter-agency).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evacuation action checklists (for both on and off school site evacuation). The school site plan and evacuation routes need to also be displayed around the school.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lockdown action checklists.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emergency or critical incident prevention and preparedness considerations and actions.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guidelines/checklists for managing specific emergencies or critical incidents.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reference documents (e.g. incident diary, sample letters to parents, staff briefing outline, operational debriefing outline and parent re-unification guide).</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrangements for the: communication of; training in; and testing and review of the Emergency Management Plan at least annually and, where necessary, after an emergency or critical incident.</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX B THE COMPREHENSIVE/ALL HAZARDS APPROACH TO EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT



## APPENDIX C TEMPORARY SCHOOL CLOSURE

Under Section 56(1) (b) of the *School Education Act 1999* and related delegations, the Director General or the Deputy Director General, Schools may, on such terms or conditions as they think fit, close any government school temporarily.

Under Regulation 82 of the *School Education Act Regulations 2000*, the principal or the Department's Head of Security may order the temporary closure of the whole or a particular part of the school's premises:

- to protect the health or safety of persons in the vicinity of the school's premises or the part of the premises to be closed; or
- to protect or secure the school premises or the part of the premises to be closed from damage or despoliation or further damage or despoliation.

The order may be for such period as is necessary for the purposes set out above but is of no effect if it purports to permanently close the school premises or part of the school premises.

Under Regulation 83 of the *School Education Act Regulations 2000*, the principal is to notify the Executive Director, Metropolitan Schools or Executive Director, Regional and Remote Schools immediately after an order to temporarily close the school or part of the school has been made.

Under Regulation 85 of the *School Education Act Regulations 2000* and related delegations, the Director General, Executive Director Metropolitan Schools or Executive Director Regional and Remote Schools may vary or revoke an order made under Regulation 82.