

Critical Incident Policy



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Emergency Management Plan, WHS Policy, WHS Risk & Opportunity Management
Procedure, Incident Reporting & Investigation Procedure, WHS Consultation &
Communication Procedure

Catholic Education Diocese of Wagga Wagga:

Critical Incidents Policy

1.0 Rationale

CEDWW commits to supporting the safety and wellbeing of those who work across the diocese in schools and the office. This Policy provides a framework for leaders to manage and minimise any risk, during any critical incident.

The Critical Incident Policy provides a framework for the approach CEDWW (schools and office) adopts to respond and manage Critical Incidents (CI). This Policy forms part of the risk management framework for CEDWW, along with other local school policies and procedures, site emergency plans, lockdown plans and/or evacuation plans. This policy, along with the Critical Incident Procedure provides a framework to access and mobilise the specialist skills required for the effective management of a critical incident.

2.0 Purpose / Guiding Principles

The purpose of this Critical Incident Policy is to;

- 2.1.** Minimise the injury and distress to people impacted upon by a CI.
- 2.2.** Manage appropriately the damage to property, the environment and the community standing of CEDWW.
- 2.3.** Ensure normal operations of CEDWW (schools and office) are continued and minimise any interruption to the delivery of teaching and learning.
- 2.4.** Coordinate the activities associated with the CI in accordance with delegated responsibilities.
- 2.5.** Facilitate the communication of appropriate information to affected stakeholders in a timely fashion.
- 2.6.** Build capacity of CEDWW schools and office staff to successfully manage a CI.

3.0 Policy Statement

In this policy, a **Critical Incident** (CI) is defined as an occurrence that is a 'traumatic event, or the threat of an event which causes extreme stress, fear or injury'.

- 3.1.** Critical incidents may include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Serious injury (including psychological harm), illness, or death of any person known to the school community as known as a 'Notifiable Incident' (Refer to Incident Reporting and Investigation Procedure)
 - b. Significant disruption to the normal operations of a CEDWW school or office
 - c. Other property or environmental damage that will result in significant cost to CEDWW
 - d. Damage to the reputation of or adverse media coverage of CEDWW.
 - e. Students or staff lost or injured on an excursion;
 - f. Violent assault of a member of the school community;
 - g. Violent events in the community;
 - h. Witnessing a serious accident or an act of violence;

- i. Student facing arrest or criminal charges
- j. Natural disasters; terrorism, bomb threat, explosion, gas or chemical hazard;
- k. Outsiders coming into school and being aggressive towards students and/or staff;

The most senior staff member at the site of the occurrence determines whether the school or office requires the support of CEDWW office specialist staff to manage the incident.

3.2. Scope of Policy

This policy:

- a. Applies to all Critical Incidents (defined above)
- b. Is applicable to all CEDWW staff (schools and office)
- c. Describes the roles and responsibilities for the management of a Critical Incident during the first 24 hours, or for as long as there is potential for further injury or damage arising from the incident; and
- d. Describes the roles and responsibilities to apply in the management of a Critical Incident after the initial 24 hours is over or, if longer, once there is no further potential for injury or damage arising from the incident.

3.3. Personnel Involved in a Critical Incident

Personnel who are typically involved in CI teams (during or immediately after an incident) may include:

- a. Senior members of the school's leadership team
- b. Senior System Leaders
- c. Manager Work Health and Safety (WHS)
- d. Media & Communications personnel
- e. CEDWW Facilities Manager
- f. Leader Student Wellbeing & Diverse Learning
- g. Counsellors

3.4. Personnel involved in a Critical Incident - delegations

- 3.4.1. If an incident occurs in a school, the Principal will be the CI Leader. In the event that the Principal is absent from the school or unable to perform the role of CI Leader (e.g. due to injury), the next person with delegated authority (i.e. the Assistant Principal/Senior Leader) who is present on site and able to perform the role will be the CI Leader.
- 3.4.2. If an incident occurs at CEDWW office, the Director or delegate will be the CI Leader.
- 3.4.3. If an incident occurs off-site but involves members of the CEDWW community (e.g. student excursion or staff off-site), the most senior staff member present will be the CI Leader. In the event that the most senior staff member is unable to perform the role of CI Leader (e.g. due to injury), the next person in seniority able to perform the role will be the CI Leader.

4.0 Responsibilities

4.1. Responsibilities of CI Leaders

- 4.1.1. The CI Leader will determine whether an incident is a CI under this policy.
- 4.1.2. The CI Leader will take immediate action as appropriate to mitigate or remedy the occurrence or consequences of a CI.
- 4.1.3. The CI Leader will ensure that emergency services (police, fire and ambulance) are called for assistance where appropriate.
- 4.1.4. The CI Leader will ensure the Critical Incident Alert Service is activated.
- 4.1.5. The CI Leader will ensure their supervisor is contacted regarding the incident unless otherwise alerted via the CI Alert Service.
- 4.1.6. People and Culture, Lead and WHS Manager will evaluate the CI and, if required, attend the site to ensure that personnel are safe from further injury. Only where a site is declared safe, may other personnel attend.
- 4.1.7. The CI Leader will (as appropriate to address the nature of the CI) select and contact specialist CEDWW office staff to act as the CI Team, and allocate to them specific responsibilities in relation to mitigating and resolving the CI.
- 4.1.8. The CI Leader is responsible for deciding on actions to be taken or not taken; unless and until given a direction by more senior personnel from CEDWW.
- 4.1.9. After a CI is over (i.e. the potential for further injury or damage has ended) the CI Leader will (as appropriate to address the nature of the consequences of the CI) with the support of specialist staff from CEDWW.
- 4.1.10. CI Leaders will log an incident using the appropriate WHS Incident and Injury Reporting Form on the WHS Management System. This incident reporting will be completed, when appropriate, following an incident.

4.2. Responsibilities of Principals

- 4.2.1. The Principal will ensure that the school has an appropriate emergency management procedure and that relevant safety drills are held on a regular basis.
- 4.2.2. The Principal will ensure that all existing and new staff, including casuals are aware of the emergency management procedure as part of their induction onto the school site.

4.3. Responsibilities of People and Culture Team

- 4.3.1. The People and Culture Team will publish to all staff this policy Critical Incident Alert Service phone number and flowchart for CI.
- 4.3.2. The People and Culture Team will notify the CI Alert Service as to whom CI Alerts are to be relayed.
- 4.3.3. For the duration of a CI, the People and Culture Team will report regularly to the Director of Catholic Education and Assistant Directors who will determine and make, or will delegate, further communications regarding the identification and mitigation of safety aspects of the CI and any regulatory compliance actions to be undertaken in relation to the CI.

4.4. Responsibilities of Employees

Unless specifically allocated a responsibility under this policy, no staff member will;

- 4.4.1. disturb the site of the incident or any other evidence or material (physical or electronic), or talk to any witnesses about the incident, until and unless:
 - a. They have been authorised to do so by the CI Leader; or
 - b. They have been asked to do so by the police or another regulator
i.e. Safework NSW, with the power to compel such action, in which case staff will seek the prior advice, where appropriate.
- 4.4.2. speak to or release information to the media.

5.0 Bases of Discretion

The CI Leader determines whether the incident is a CI in accordance with this policy.

6.0 Explanatory Notes and Definitions

- 6.1.** Critical Incident (CI) means a Critical Incident as defined at 3.0.
- 6.2. CI Alert** means information about the existence of and information collected about the CI.
- 6.3. CI Alert Service** means the phone service engaged by the People and Culture Team and published to all CEDWW staff to perform the services described in this policy.
- 6.4. CI Team** means the response team at the location as well as CEDWW office staff contacted to provide advice and support to the CI Leader in the first 24 hours after the CI occurs, as long as there is potential for further injury or damage arising from the incident.
- 6.5. CI Leader** means the person who is described in clause 3.4 for the location of the incident.