



Critical Incident Policy

Lambert School have developed the Critical Incident Management Policy because:

- Staff and students require a safe environment to take part in effective teaching or learning.
- Individuals and groups react differently to critical incidents.
- Clearly defined procedures improve response time.
- Critical incidents may have long-term effects on some individuals.

The Aims of the Critical Incident Management Policy are to:

- Ensure that any damage done by Critical Incidents is minimised.
- Create a safe environment for staff and students.
- Ensure as rapid a return to normal as possible after the incident.
- Improve the response time of critical incident management.
- Ensure the school is as prepared as it can be for critical incidents.

An emergency or critical incident occurs when there is an actual or imminent event which endangers or threatens the safety or health of a person or persons or which destroys or damages, or threatens to destroy or damage, any property. They can range from small scale localised incidents through to large scale events requiring state coordination and assistance from external agencies.

A critical event can cause normally stable and healthy people to experience strong emotional or psychological distress, and interfere with their ability to function normally, either at the time of the event or later.

This disruption may result from experiencing or witnessing any shocking, horrifying or violent circumstance such as a natural or man-made disaster, a serious accident, physical violence, an acute personal threat or a significant loss.

With appropriate support, most people can deal with these situations and soon return to normal function. For a few people, referral to specialist professional help may be necessary to aid recovery.

Lambert School's response to any critical incident will be calculated to ensure as rapid a return to normal as possible after the incident, the physical and emotional well being of staff and students being of utmost priority.

Our goals are:

- An effective response at a time of instability.
- Recovery from any trauma or dysfunction due to the incident.
- Return to normal routines.
- A sense of cohesiveness and support within the school community.
- A sense of responsibility and control over situations which may arise.
- A demonstration of caring and support at a time of need.
- A minimisation of short term and long term disruption.

Emergencies that may affect the school community:

- Fire
- Damage to buildings
- Attempted or actual abductions
- Bomb or firearms threats
- Disappearance of students
- Fatalities of students or staff
- Serious injuries/assaults/sexual assaults
- Fumes or spills of hazardous materials
- The destruction of the whole or part, of the school
- Major vandalism
- The murder of a student or teacher
- Death or misadventure on a school excursion
- Students witnessing serious injury or death
- Student or teacher suicide
- Flooding or other natural disasters
- Terminal illness of a member of the school community
- Use of violent weapons in the school
- Outsiders coming into school and being aggressive to students and staff
- Disappearance of a student or staff member
- Social abuse of students or teachers
- Media coverage of issues in a way which creates concerns in the school community

Preparation

While it is impossible to anticipate and prepare for a specific incident, the school can make general preparations. These include:

- Marking all escape routes with diagrams
- Familiarising teachers with evacuation procedures
- Holding emergency evacuation drills at intervals throughout the school year – at least once per term
- Identifying a network of support people to be called upon in case of trauma
- Ensuring the emergency equipment is in proper working order
- Maintaining an up-to-date list of phone numbers of resource/support people
- Developing and maintaining a Critical Incident Plan
- Establishing a Critical Incident Management Team.

Response to an Incident

Responsibility for dealing with any incident that affects the school and its community rests with the Principal, who should delegate as many tasks as possible to make themselves available for making decisions necessary in any crisis situation. The Deputy Principal will assume responsibility should the Principal be a victim or be personally involved in any incident to the extent that may render him/her unable to function normally. Frequently administration and staff do not realise how debilitating the situation has become. It is crucial that even the most effective administrator or staff member acknowledge that he/she may be affected to the point where there is a need to take a 'time out', seek counselling, or temporarily hand over their responsibilities.

In the event of an incident in the school the Principal (or delegate) will:

- Assess the nature of the emergency
- Decide the appropriate action
- Delegate tasks to appropriate persons
- Make the necessary calls for help, or send an appropriate person for help
- Ensure that appropriate safety precautions are taken, e.g., evacuation of the premises
- Confirm information prior to briefing staff
- Ensure that information is correct and given in such a manner as to minimise distortions and rumours
- Maintain control of the student/staff body and attempt to reassure them and support them
- Brief emergency crews when they arrive
- If the event is small scale and outside help is not called, determine when it is safe/appropriate to return to normal operation
- Determine the need/advisability of informing parents or guardians
- Function as the authorised spokesperson to the media
- Inform the Chair of the Board via telephone.
- Log the incident in the [Critical Incident Register](#), which is also available via QR code in the school office.

Critical incident response flow chart



In the event of an incident experienced by students or staff outside the school or outside school hours, the Principal (or delegate) will:

- Contact appropriate staff and, before classes begin, brief staff and prepare strategies for dealing with student reactions
- Confirm information prior to briefing staff
- Ensure that information is correct and given in such a manner as to minimise distortions and rumours
- Determine, in consultation with the school board and staff, whether a Critical Incident Management team should be called in.

Moving from Response to Recovery

It is important to recognise the existence of the recovery aspect associated with incidents. The initial incident and the immediate response are clearly identifiable as part of emergency management planning and procedures. But it is the recovery activity that will determine the extent to which members of the school community will cope with the long-term effects of a critical incident. While the immediate physical safety and well-being of staff and students is the initial concern, the recovery process addresses the long term physical and emotional wellbeing of individuals. A number of emergency services in Tasmania will respond to calls for immediate assistance, e.g., police, fire brigade, etc. During the emergency they will assume legal responsibility for control and coordination at the incident site. As the immediate crisis passes, it is important that effective recovery activities follow. This will often involve advice from other agencies as may be appropriate.

Victims of critical incidents often deny that the event has had any significant impact on them, and they tend to overlook the value of external support.

Distress and trauma may be minimised by:

- Speed of response
- Appropriateness of response
- The opportunity to talk about the event and personal reactions to it
- Ongoing support
- Defusing and Debriefing

Defusing and Debriefing are techniques that aim to:

- Mitigate the impact of the Critical Incident
- Accelerate recovery
- Facilitate the provision of support to those affected

Defusing and Debriefing provide the opportunity to ventilate pent-up feelings. They provide opportunities for stress reduction, education, emotional reassurance and forewarning, for those involved, of what signs and symptoms of distress may materialise later. They enhance group cohesiveness and cooperation and serve as an opportunity for checking for those requiring further assistance and referral.

Dealing with the Media

- Any contact by the media or statements made to the media must be through the school Principal (or delegate)
- Media are not allowed onto school premises unless the Principal (or delegate) has granted permission
- Staff and student privacy must be respected
- Ensure that information is correct and given in such a manner as to minimise distortions and rumours
- Do not release the names of any deceased to the media (it is normal practice for police to inform next of kin)
- It is important to be honest and as open as is prudent with the media to forestall the possibility of negative reports regarding the school
- Notification of the School's Governing Body
- Chairperson of the school board is to be informed of the critical incident immediately. In the first instance this notification must be given by telephone and then followed up with written advice including actions taken in response to the incident.

A formal report of the incident should be tabled with the board within 48 hours of the incident including copies of all formal reports such as insurance forms, media releases and statements to the police and/or emergency services.

Evacuation Plan

Individuals are to evacuate and assemble at the assembly point outside 30 Church Street as per the evacuation plan (see 8.14 *Emergency Evacuation Procedure*). Assembly points and important building features are illustrated below.

