

Critical Incident and Emergency Management Policy and Procedure

Section 1 - Preamble

(1) Charles Darwin University ('the University', 'CDU') is committed to providing a safe environment for students and employees.

(2) Critical incidents, disasters, crises or threats (collectively referred to as "critical incidents") and other emergencies can occur anywhere and at any time. Incidents may vary in terms of scale, the level of response required and the risk to the University's reputation. Every critical incident or emergency is unique and will need to be dealt with differently, according to the needs of the people affected. In all cases the response will be timely and professional.

Section 2 - Purpose

(3) This policy and procedure ('policy') provides the framework and rationale to plan for, respond to, and manage critical incidents and emergencies as they may occur at CDU. It ensures that critical incidents and emergencies are managed effectively and compassionately and to enable a 'whole-of-University' approach.

(4) This policy enables clear roles, responsibilities and decision-making processes for managing and reporting on critical incidents and emergencies to ensure that each case is managed effectively, consistently, and expeditiously.

(5) This policy fulfils compliance requirements under the:

- a. [Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2000](#) (ESOS);
- b. [Work Health and Safety \(National Uniform Legislation\) Act 2011 NT](#) – section 43 Emergency Plans; and
- c. Australian Standard (AS 3745-2010) – Planning for Emergencies in Facilities.

Section 3 - Scope

(6) This policy applies to employees, students, contractors, volunteers, visitors and clients of the University during and after critical incidents and emergencies occurring at or affecting the University. The general principles outlined in this document apply to all University owned, operated and leased facilities and University activities.

(7) This policy excludes ordinary employee or student welfare concerns and relatively minor incidents for which the University provides routine support through services such as the Student Support Services and the Work, Health and Safety team.

Section 4 - Policy

(8) The University's critical incident and emergency framework relies on infrastructure, people and processes. This policy should be read in conjunction with the following supporting documents:

- a. [Incident Specific Response Plans](#);
- b. [Escape. Hide. Tell. procedure](#) in the event of an active armed offender;
- c. site specific response plans and [key contacts](#);
- d. [SafeZone information](#);
- e. [emergency response plans](#), business continuity plans (BCPs), and disaster recovery plans.

(9) In accordance with the [Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency \(TEQSA\) Act 2011](#) and the [Material Change Procedure](#), the Critical Incident Controller will determine Critical Incidents that require reporting to TEQSA. This should be done no later than 14 calendar days following the University's knowledge of the incident.

(10) Where University owned property is leased to an external organisation, essential services that comply with the Building Code of Australia (BCA) and Australian Standards will be provided and maintained by the University and standard evacuation plans (including summary evacuation procedures) will be installed and provided to the tenants.

Principles

(11) The Critical Incident and Emergency Management framework is based on the emergency lifecycle:

- a. Prevention - take actions to reduce or eliminate the likelihood or effects of an incident;
- b. Preparedness - take steps before an emergency to ensure effective response and recovery such as training and simulations;
- c. Response - contain, control or minimise the impacts of an incident; and
- d. Recovery - take steps to minimise disruption and recovery times.

(12) The framework uses a three-tiered system to define the level of response:

- a. Level 3 - critical incidents;
- b. Level 2 - major emergency events; and
- c. Level 1 - minor or local incidents.

Critical Incident and Emergency Management Framework

(13) The management of critical incidents and emergencies is based around planning and preparedness to guide two key responses following an incident:

- a. Emergency response - managing the immediate issues arising from a critical incident and focusing on the protection of life and property; and
- b. Business continuity - assisting the University to continue to operate its critical business functions and time sensitive resources.

Level 3 - Critical Incident

(14) A critical incident is a traumatic event, or the threat of such, within or outside Australia, which causes extreme stress, fear or injury, or which suddenly and significantly threatens the University's business continuity. Critical incidents may include, but are not limited to:

- a. natural disaster and extreme weather, both within Australia or the home country of international students or employees;
- b. serious injury, illness or death of a student or employee;
- c. active, armed offender;
- d. fire, bomb-threat, explosion, gas or chemical hazard, water leak;

- e. students or employees lost or injured during fieldwork experiences;
- f. a missing student, employee or member of the University community;
- g. severe verbal or psychological aggression;
- h. physical assault;
- i. mental health episode requiring hospitalisation or attempted suicide;
- j. outbreaks of violence or protests which become violent;
- k. a student or employee witnessing a serious accident or incidence of violence;
- l. cyber event – severe loss or compromise of multiple critical IT applications and data;
- m. social issues, such as sexual assault, drug use and alcohol abuse; or
- n. complete loss of University premises or infrastructure.

Level 2 - Major Emergency Event

(15) A major emergency is an event with serious effects that requires management and coordination to address wider implications, but which does not meet the threshold to be designated a critical incident. Major emergencies may include, but are not limited to:

- a. severe injury or illness to employees, students, and/or members of the public;
- b. trauma to students and/or employees;
- c. severe loss or compromise of IT applications and data; and
- d. extensive damage to University premises or infrastructure.

Level 1 - Local Incident

(16) A local incident can be managed using local resources and may include, but are not limited to:

- a. minor injuries to students, employees, and/or members of the public;
- b. potential trauma to employees or students;
- c. impact to University's IT availability with potential short-term loss; or
- d. minor damage to University premises or infrastructure.

(17) Day-to-day incidents that can be handled by the local area, with support from specialist areas as required, are classified as local incidents. Local incidents do not qualify as critical incidents or emergencies, and this policy does not need to be followed in their management.

(18) Students and employees are encouraged to report all incidents to the University that they consider to be critical, either within or outside of Australia. The University will review all reported incidents and determine their level of seriousness. Incidents found not to be critical will be managed by University student support or the WHS team.

(19) The University will identify risks, implement risk management and preventative measures, and manage critical incidents and emergencies within its sphere of responsibility and influence. This will include:

- a. developing and implementing a timely and effective approach to respond to critical incidents. Critical incidents will be managed with the primary goals of preserving life, protecting the University's property and restoring normal operations as quickly as possible;
- b. providing trauma informed support and counselling services to those affected by critical incidents and emergencies. This includes support to employees and students, and where appropriate, their families;

- c. providing appropriate training and information resources to employees; and
- d. developing appropriate plans, systems and processes to ensure swift, effective and appropriate responses to incidents both on and off campus where the University has a duty of care, including international students for whom CDU has undertaken care responsibilities.

(20) The University will ensure that victims and bystanders of sexual assault are supported in a person centered and trauma informed way in accordance with the [Sexual Violence Prevention Policy](#) and the Sexual Violence Procedure (under development).

Roles and Responsibilities

(21) During a critical incident or emergency (level 3 or level 2 event), University employees, students and visitors have specific roles and responsibilities for managing the safety and welfare of people involved in or affected. In many cases, particularly among senior University employees, this role may be separate from or in addition to their substantive role. The employees required to be involved will depend on nature, scale and complexity of the critical incident or emergency.

- a. Vice-Chancellor: In the event of a critical incident, the Vice-Chancellor or acting Vice-Chancellor is the sole authorised person to declare a campus closed and to initiate the evacuation of all personnel, and to declare a campus reopened and able to recommence work.
- b. [Members of the Emergency Control Organisation \(ECO\)](#). ECOs are responsible for managing the initial response to an emergency. ECOs will typically be required to meet on a six-monthly basis to discuss relevant matters and undertake training as required. The ECO consists of:
 - i. Critical Incident Controller (CIC) – a senior executive of the University appointed to have overall responsibility for overseeing the University’s preparedness and capacity to manage emergencies. During a critical incident, they are responsible for convening the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT). They are also responsible for complying with the reporting and evaluation requirements outlined in this policy.
 - ii. Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) – manage critical incidents under the direction of the CIC. CIMT is a multi-disciplinary, executive level team that manages the critical incident under the direction of the CIC. Membership is tailored according to the incident.
 - iii. Local Incident Controller – an employee nominated to support the CIC, to manage and coordinate emergency response in site specific locations, including all CDU campuses in Australia, under the direction of the CIC, and to maintain documentation and records throughout the critical incident.
 - iv. On scene commander (Security) - assumes immediate operational responsibility for evacuations, coordinate activities and report to the Local Incident Controller and Emergency Services.
 - v. Building, Primary Floor and designated Floor Wardens.
 - vi. First Aid Officers.

(22) Other persons who may form part of the ECO, the CIMT or may need to be involved in a critical incident or emergency include:

- a. Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Community Connection;
- b. Provost;
- c. Vice-President Global and External Relations and the CDU Global team;
- d. Director Student Engagement;
- e. Associate Director Student Support;
- f. Director Property and Facilities;
- g. Chief Marketing and Communications Officer;

- h. Senior Manager Work, Health and Safety (WHS) and the broader WHS team;
- i. Heads of organisational units;
- j. Faculty Pro-Vice Chancellors;
- k. Assistant Vice-Chancellors;
- l. Director People and Culture; and
- m. Manager Accommodation Services.

(23) All employees, students and visitors are responsible for maintaining a physically and psychosocially safe work environment, in accordance with the [Work Health and Safety Policy](#). All persons should be familiar with standard emergency response procedures, and follow the instructions of local emergency personnel, campus security services, wardens and emergency services.

Indemnity for Dedicated Emergency Control Organisation

(24) The University indemnifies members of the Critical Incident Management Team (i.e. Critical Incident Controller, planning and response) against civil liability resulting from workplace emergency response assessment, education, training sessions, periodic exercises or emergency evacuation of a building where the personnel act in good faith and during their emergency control duties.

(25) During emergency situations or exercises, pending the arrival of emergency services or On-Scene Commander, ECO personnel have absolute authority to issue instructions to evacuate persons from buildings and/or areas.

(26) Failure to comply with a direction may place lives at greater risk and if no reasonable cause is apparent or established, a failure to comply with a reasonable direction may constitute a breach of the Code of Conduct – Employees or Code of Conduct – Students, as applicable. It may also constitute an offence under WHS law.

Section 5 - Procedure

Critical Incident Management

(27) When a critical incident is reported, the CIC will form a stand up CIMT to assess and manage the response. The nature of the incident will determine the way the Critical Incident is managed. Not all critical incidents will require the formation of a CIMT.

(28) Emergency services personnel such as the Police, Fire and Emergency Services may be called in response to an incident and Campus Security Services will be notified of critical incidents that occur on campus, including those which are not an immediate threat to life or property.

(29) It is the responsibility of the CIC to review the critical incident and assess whether the circumstances warrant any further immediate action.

(30) Where a critical incident has potential to impact on the wellbeing of a student, such as a disclosure of sexual assault, suicidality or domestic violence, Student Support should be contacted. Campus Security Services or Student Support will then notify the CIC or delegate. Where a disclosure of sexual assault is made, the [Sexual Violence Prevention Policy](#) and the Sexual Violence Procedure (under development) should be considered.

International student management

(31) There may be additional considerations where an incident involves or impacts an international student.

(32) The members of the CIMT will be allocated roles and responsibilities as appropriate and actions may include:

- a. establishing the facts relating to the incident;
- b. informing the emergency contact/next of kin;
- c. in the instance of a student death, ensuring that counselling services are made available to the family or next of kin;
- d. verifying student details such as address, email, phone numbers, nationality, primary contact, sponsor, or agent etc;
- e. nominating a member of the CIMT to be the main contact, specifically for the police, hospital, relatives, friends, consulate, and Government agencies; and
- f. consideration of fee refund, intermission, or deferred examinations where appropriate.

(33) The Director CDU Global or nominee may be required to take the following additional actions:

- a. notify the Overseas Student Health Cover provider;
- b. hire independent interpreters (if required);
- c. inform the Department of Home Affairs;
- d. liaise with embassies and consulates to ensure contact with, and support for, the family in the student's home country. In the case of a serious accident, illness, or death, discuss allocation of roles and responsibilities;
- e. if the student is under the age of eighteen, confirm welfare arrangements in place and enact mandatory reporting to the Department of Home Affairs, as per the International Students - Welfare of International Students U18 procedure;
- f. if the student is a Study Abroad or Exchange student, contact their Home University or Agent to confirm if contact has been made with the emergency contact/next of kin;
- g. if the student is an Australia Awards Scholarship (AAS) student, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) must be notified immediately including out of hours, on weekends and on public holidays. Phone +61 2 6261 3888 and email australiaawardsdelivery@dfat.gov.au. Refer to Section 15 of the Australian Awards Scholarships Policy Handbook;
- h. establish the student's religion, if any, and contact relevant group/organisation to inform them of the situation and discuss appropriate support;
- i. where required, make arrangements to access funds which may be available through the Traumatic Event and Accident Management (TEAM) program via the University's agreement with Allianz; and
- j. in the event of a missing international student, determine whether the student is located onshore or offshore on the Provider Registration and International Student Management System (PRISMS).

Emergency preparedness

(34) Work, Health and Safety are responsible for the review and implementation of the Emergency Management Plan which includes:

- a. Identifying events that could produce emergencies.
- b. Ensuring resources are provided to enable the development and implementation of the plan.
- c. Nominating the validity period for the emergency plan and evacuation diagrams.
- d. Ensuring the emergency management plan is readily identifiable and available to appropriate persons.
- e. Authorising the release of the Emergency Management Plan.
- f. Ensuring that the emergency response procedures remain viable and effective by reviewing/testing annually.
- g. Ensuring the emergency plan at the end of the validity period, after an emergency, an exercise or any changes that affect the emergency plan.
- h. Ensuring a record of events for each emergency is compiled and retained.
- i. Identifying deficiencies and opportunities for improvement in the emergency plan and emergency response

procedures.

Business Continuity Plans

(35) Preparation for business continuity during a critical incident or emergency is governed by a range of Business Continuity Plans (BCPs). These will be established and maintained by individual business units to outline how those areas will ensure continuity of critical functions and business processes, including planning for specific and unforeseen incidents, identifying key areas of risk, and recovering as quickly as possible.

Emergency Response Exercises

(36) Emergency Response Exercises rehearse emergency management of the building, increase procedural awareness of occupants, monitor performance of the ECO and identify improvement opportunities. Exercises are arranged and scheduled by the Work, Health and Safety team in conjunction with Campus Security Services and managed by the area ECO.

ECO Exercises and drills

(37) A minimum of one building drill per year must be conducted. A genuine emergency can count towards the number of required drills provided that the ECO are present and respond to the event.

(38) Various forms of drills are permissible, including scenarios involving fires, gas leaks, chemical spills, power failures, bomb threats, lone shooter etc. Drills must be conducted at peak building occupancy, as determined by the ECO. All ECO drills to be accompanied by a post drill debrief session.

(39) Joint drills involving two or more ECOs should be considered where emergencies from one building can have a substantial impact on adjoining or neighbouring buildings.

Debrief Requirements

(40) Exercise debriefs will be undertaken to evaluate the quality of the response during the drill and highlight any tasks that need to be addressed. A verbal debrief will be held immediately after the evacuation exercise and a written report generated and disseminated to all relevant parties. The report shall be stored in the University's relevant document management system. The report will document:

- a. attending members of the ECO;
- b. overall performance of the evacuation;
- c. identified evacuation equipment malfunction; and
- d. identified improvement opportunities.

Building Evacuation Diagrams

(41) Property and Facilities provide building evacuation diagrams to all University buildings, as per the Building Code of Australia (BCA). All evacuation diagrams are to be installed in hard plastic display frames. Evacuation diagrams will generally be displayed in entrance or foyer areas. Where this is not achievable, diagrams are to be positioned as close as possible to the foyer areas upon entries to each floor. Property and Facilities liaise with Work, Health and Safety to manage and ensure ongoing compliance.

(42) A validity date of not more than five years applies to evacuation diagrams. These must be reviewed within this timeframe to ensure accuracy and relevance to the building. Diagrams should be reviewed when any changes to the building's interior could result in a change to egress from the building, and should be updated when:

- a. emergency information is no longer current;

- b. internal paths of travel are changed or impeded;
- c. external path to the designated assembly area is changed or impeded;
- d. the assembly area has been changed;
- e. location and or orientation of diagram has changed; or
- f. fixed fire and emergency equipment is changed significantly.

(43) An interim diagram can be placed over the existing diagram for temporary changes due to works or events. The Facilities Project Manager reporting to Director Property and Facilities will:

- a. determine the legitimacy of any temporary changes;
- b. organise interim diagrams; and
- c. communicate these changes to the ECO and the building occupants.

Incident Support to Students and Visitors

(44) In teaching environments, the employee who is responsible for all students being present is responsible for making sure the appropriate response is followed by all students in the room. In the event of an emergency, visitors to University sites and within University buildings, are the responsibility of the person they are visiting (University Escort), who should direct and help the visitor to follow the appropriate emergency response.

(45) University employees must make sure that students working within a laboratory or workshop environment are inducted in emergency procedures for that area before commencing activities. Additionally, an appropriately trained warden or employee must be available to ensure responses are followed as necessary, anytime that a laboratory or workshop is in use.

Injury / Illness Emergency Contact Notification

(46) It is preferred that the affected individual notifies their nominated emergency contact in the event of injury or illness, where possible. The relevant LIC will guide casualties in this process and report on their status to the CIC and CIMT. In some instances, the casualty may request that their emergency contact is not notified, and the University must respect such requests.

All Students

(47) If the severity of the injury / illness warrants immediate medical treatment and the student is not able to notify their emergency contact then the CIMT will coordinate emergency contact notification on behalf of the University in consultation with CIC. The severity of the injury / illness and the location of the emergency contact will be key considerations in determining the mode of notification. When notifying the emergency contact, the LIC shall:

- a. through liaison with medical professionals, ensure the casualty's condition is accurately understood prior to contacting the emergency contact.
- b. Verify (as much as practical) the accuracy of the casualty's emergency contact information.
- c. Deliver the news in a factual but sympathetic manner whilst offering appropriate support and assistance.
- d. Provide releasable information about the incident as soon as practically and reasonably possible.
- e. Provide an ongoing channel for communication between the University and the emergency contact to facilitate updates and requests for assistance.

International Students

(48) International students may contact their emergency contacts directly or request that their consulate coordinate the emergency contact notification via the student's home country's government arrangements. In such cases the

Director CDU Global shall ensure the University's point of contact details are provided by the respective consulate personnel to the emergency contact to facilitate subsequent liaison with the University.

Fatality Management

Within Australia

(49) The relevant Local Incident Controller, under the direction of the Critical Incident Controller, will assume control of all on-scene emergency response activities. Where a person(s) has been pronounced deceased on campus, Police will coordinate transportation of the deceased to coroner or mortuary facility dependent on the incident circumstances and advice from Coronial Investigation Unit. If person(s) are declared deceased at or en-route to a medical facility, the attending paramedics or hospital employees will coordinate transportation of the deceased to an appropriate facility.

Outside Australia

(50) Fatality management practices in University transnational locations will be subject to the laws and customs of the host country. The Director CDU Global will engage with local police authorities to ensure fulfilment of these regulations and customs whilst also balancing the expressed desires of the deceased person's next of kin.

International Students

(51) In the event of an international student fatality, the Director CDU Global or delegate determines if additional supports are required. This includes:

- a. liaison with the next of kin to determine repatriation requirements. The TEAM program may be accessed to assist;
- b. where necessary, assist with funeral or memorial service arrangements;
- c. preparing a letter of condolence from the University to the student's family;
- d. assist with packing of personal effects and delivering them to the next of kin, if necessary; and
- e. request to obtain the death certificate and related documents.

International Travellers

(52) The University will work with Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade (DFAT) to repatriate a deceased University member. Further information on fatality management and notification overseas is provided on the DFAT website.

Post-Fatality Management

(53) Post a student fatality the administrative processes arising from the death must be considered, this includes records management and communication protocols (for notifying employees and students of the death).

(54) Employee fatality administrative processes will be managed by the Director People and Culture as required by the situation. In accordance with advice from NT WorkSafe, the University shall be required to contact the deceased employee's next of kin to provide relevant information.

(55) The University will provide initial and ongoing trauma informed psychological support for employees and students effected by involvement in or exposure to a critical workplace incident resulting in a fatality.

(56) The University will provide practical support which may include but is not limited to:

- a. Encouraging individuals to seek professional help if symptoms endure and ensure they are aware of support available through the CDU Employee Assistance Program;
- b. encouraging individuals to avoid monitoring media coverage of the relevant event; and

- c. making the individual/s who are employees aware of leave and flexible work options available.

Critical Incident and Emergency Recovery Strategy

(57) Post an emergency or critical incident, the goal is to restore the University's physical infrastructure and its emotional, environmental and economic wellbeing. A site recovery strategy must be set up by the CIMT in line with any local emergency services plan so the University and its communities can return to a proper level of functioning.

(58) Normal business operations may be affected and require activation of the University's Business Continuity Plans (BCPs) so essential functions can be carried out or restored according to their Maximum Acceptable Outages (MAOs) in the BCP's.

(59) Where structural or mechanical damage to equipment has occurred, normal operations cannot resume until the CIC (or their delegate) has initiated a thorough inspection by a qualified person and the incident area has been declared safe and ready to resume Business as Usual (BAU) by this person. The CIMT will establish a recovery plan that includes:

- a. employee rehabilitation, rostering and welfare;
- b. student rehabilitation and welfare;
- c. reference to relevant Business Continuity Plans;
- d. repair of damaged facilities;
- e. environmental remediation in consultation with the relevant authority; and
- f. replenishment of emergency facilities, such as fire extinguishers, first aid and spill response kits and documentation.

Reporting and Investigation

(60) Following restoration of normal activities, the CIC must ensure all internal incident reports and necessary external statutory reports are completed. A preliminary report detailing the circumstances and activation will be sent to Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellors and Directors. The Director Property and Facilities will conduct debriefs in conjunction with the Emergency Services and the Senior Manager Work, Health and Safety and will submit a comprehensive report to the CIC.

(61) All reports should be completed within 28 days or the timeframe specified by external authorities. A formal investigation will consider:

- a. cause of the emergency and the contributing factors;
- b. mitigating actions taken;
- c. effectiveness of response procedures; and
- d. preventive actions and/or procedural changes required.

(62) Any recommendation for action or procedural change must be reviewed for approval/action at the subsequent meeting of the CIMT. An incident report to be prepared in readiness of potential requirement by regulatory agencies.

Evaluation

(63) The CIMT will conduct an evaluation session to ensure allocated tasks have been actioned and that any new or outstanding issues are documented and resolved.

(64) Procedures and responses will be evaluated to determine any changes for improvement.

Records Management

(65) All documentation relating to the critical incident will be retained, maintained, and disposed of in line with the University's [Records and Information Management Policy and Procedure](#) and [Privacy and Confidentiality Policy](#).

Support Services

(66) Other relevant crisis response services may include:

- a. NT Mental Health Line - 1800 682 288
- b. Sexual assault referral centres Darwin - 08 8922 6472
- c. 1800 RESPECT (sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service) 1800 737 732
- d. Department of Home Affairs - 131 881
- e. Lifeline - 131 114
- f. Beyond Blue - 1300224 636
- g. CDU Wellbeing Support Line - 1300 933 393 and SMS 0488 884 144

(67) Non-compliance with Governance Documents is considered a breach of the [Code of Conduct - Employees](#) or the [Code of Conduct - Students](#), as applicable, and is treated seriously by the University. Reports of concerns about non-compliance will be managed in accordance with the applicable disciplinary procedures outlined in the [Charles Darwin University and Union Enterprise Agreement 2025](#) and the [Code of Conduct - Students](#).

(68) Complaints may be raised in accordance with the [Complaints and Grievance Policy and Procedure - Employees](#) and [Complaints Policy - Students](#).

(69) All employees have an individual responsibility to raise any suspicion, allegation or report of fraud or corruption in accordance with the [Fraud and Corruption Control Policy](#) and [Whistleblower Reporting \(Improper Conduct\) Procedure](#).

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	8th April 2025
Review Date	8th April 2026
Approval Authority	University Council
Approval Date	27th March 2025
Expiry Date	Not Applicable
Responsible Executive	Steve Rogers Critical Incident Coordinator +61 8 89466890
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Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Critical Incident Controller" - Critical Incident Controller (CIC) is a University employee appointed and responsible for the overall management of a critical or serious/dangerous emergency incident.