

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION

ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTION 69

REPORTING OF AND RESPONDING TO EMERGENCIES AND CRITICAL INCIDENTS ON DEC-MANAGED LANDS AND WATERS

1. REPORTING OF EMERGENCIES AND CRITICAL INCIDENTS

It is vital that early reports of emergencies and critical incidents that occur on DEC-managed lands and waters or that involve DEC responsibilities or staff are provided to appropriate senior staff.

Typical emergencies and critical incidents include: searches for missing persons; rescue operations; fatalities involving DEC-managed recreation or tourism activities; fatalities on DEC-managed lands and waters such as road accidents, drownings and aircraft incidents; mass whale strandings and entanglements; crocodile attacks; oil spills or chemical spills; pollution incidents; and natural phenomena – fires, floods, cyclones, land slips, cliff collapses and tsunamis.

The responsibility for reporting such incidents rests with Regional Managers and District Managers, or other staff who first become aware of an incident. Some judgement will be needed in regard to the level or extent of the incident, but if in doubt, managers should report the circumstances to Head Office. This would also be necessary where media attention is likely or where there is likely Ministerial interest or involvement.

During working hours reports must be made to the Director Regional Services (DRS) and the appropriate Divisional Director. Direct personal contact is required. The DRS (or notified Director) will advise other relevant Directors and the Director General as required. The Minister's office will be notified where appropriate. Notification to the Minister's office will be undertaken by the Director General or in his absence the appropriate Director.

After hours reports should be made to one of the following:

- Director General
- Director Regional Services
- Deputy Director General Parks and Conservation
- Deputy Director General Environment
- Director Parks and Visitor Services
- Director Nature Conservation
- Director Sustainable Forest Management
- Director Environmental Regulation
- Director Strategic Development and Corporate Affairs (major media events)

The Office of the Director General will arrange for lists of mobile telephone and home telephone numbers for these senior staff to be available to all managers.

It is not sufficient to leave a telephone message or to send an email advising about a critical incident. Direct personal contact must be made with one of the senior staff listed above. If this list is exhausted without success, there is a requirement to continue attempts to notify Head Office through Directors' Advisors, Personal Assistants, etc.

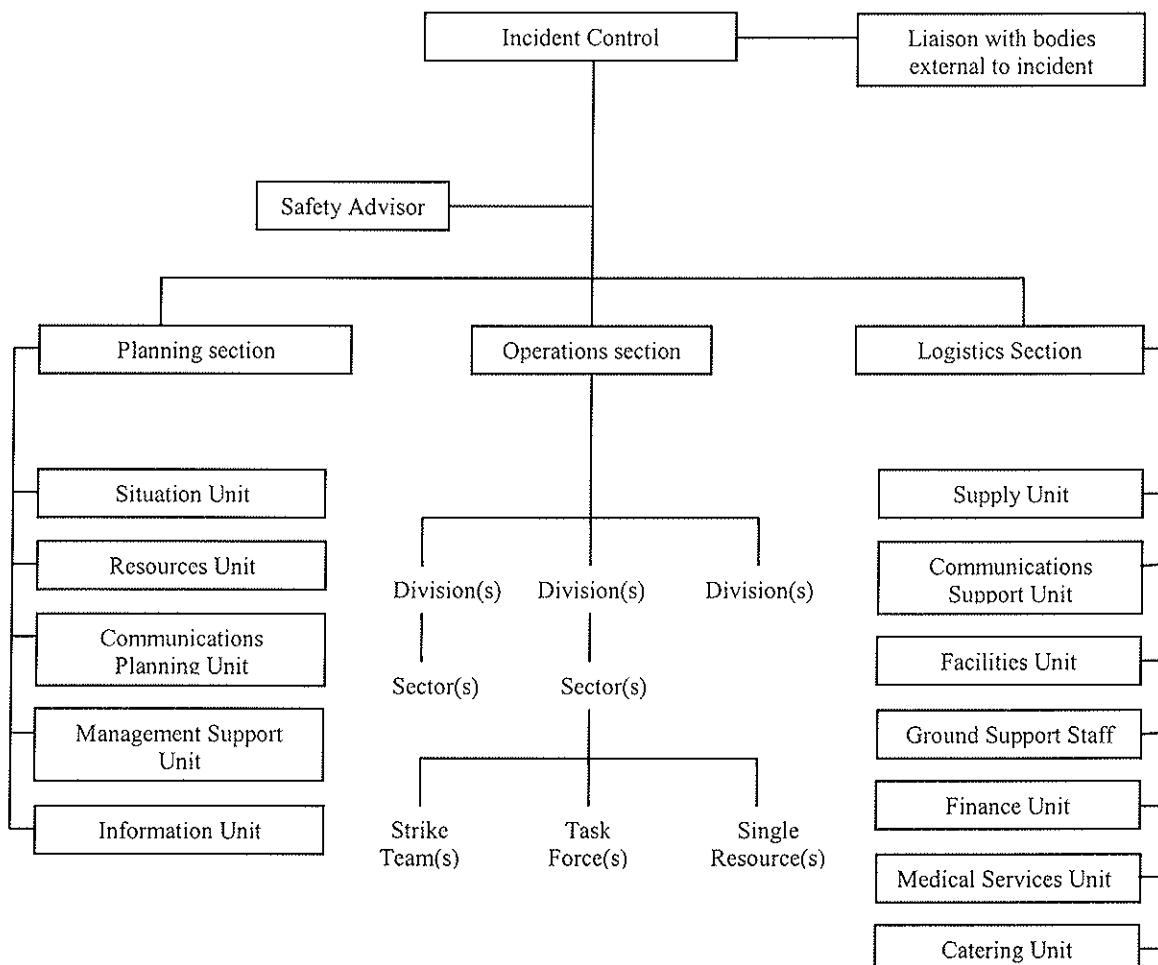
Preliminary reports should include (where known) the following information:

- type of incident;
- location of incident;
- lead agency for incident response;
- number of people involved;
- likely duration of incident and duration of DEC staff involvement;
- whether media contacts have been made or received; and
- any other government agency involvement in the incident.

2. RESPONDING TO EMERGENCIES AND CRITICAL INCIDENTS

The Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS) is the management system used by DEC to manage all emergencies and critical incidents. The basic AIIMS structure (see diagram below) is scalable to all sizes and types of emergencies. District and Regional Managers should promptly establish an Incident Management Team to manage all emergencies and critical incidents. AIIMS information and documents can be accessed from the Fire Management Services' intranet page <https://internal.fms.wa.gov.au/>. During the summer months the Department's rostered pre-formed Incident Management Teams can be deployed in full or in part to manage all types of emergencies.

AIIMS Structure



3. CRISIS MANAGEMENT CHECKLIST

A checklist has been compiled to assist managers to deal with emergency situations and critical incidents. The checklist is an appendix to this Administrative Instruction.

4. STAFF WELFARE FOLLOWING CRITICAL INCIDENTS

It has been well documented that staff who are involved in critical incidents may be at risk from Critical Incident Stress Disorder or (less frequently) Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Incident Controllers need to be aware of the requirement for specialist counselling or intervention to be arranged promptly for staff who are at risk. Critical Incident debriefing should be undertaken before staff leave the incident wherever possible. Risk Management Section can provide advice and arrange for specialist services where required.



Keiran McNamara
DIRECTOR GENERAL

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DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION

Checklist for CRISIS RESPONSE AND MANAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

Crisis management is the process by which an organisation deals with any major unpredictable event that threatens to harm the organisation, its stakeholders or the general public. Crisis management involves dealing with disasters after they have occurred, usually as a surprise event.

This checklist for the development of a Crisis Management Plan is intended to act as a guide in the event of a sudden organisational or operational crisis. The crisis is likely to significantly impact on agency staff. It will also bring out the department's detractors.

Preparedness for the management of critical incidents is vital. Most aspects of the management of such incidents is covered by the Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS). The Department will provide additional training to key staff to enable them to respond effectively to **critical** incidents. Templates for the development of Critical Incident Preparedness and Response Plans (CIPRP), at Regional and Departmental level, will be prepared by the Director of Regional Services. In the interim, the Department's Pre Formed Incident Management Teams could be deployed initially to respond to such incidents depending on the duration and the nature of the incident.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- ☐ In the event of fatalities, compassion and concern for victims and empathy with next of kin must always be a priority.
- ☐ Use senior managers to convey the messages; make sure that senior managers deliver the message personally – do not delegate.
- ☐ The first 24 hours are critical to the effective management of the incident.
- ☐ Stakeholder relations are a high priority.
- ☐ Actively seek out media.
- ☐ Honesty is always the best policy, but it may be appropriate to ask for more time to respond to questions from the media.
- ☐ Expect the unexpected.
- ☐ Plan for the worst possible scenario.
- ☐ Keep records and logs.
- ☐ Next of kin, staff and their families may need immediate and ongoing support.

INITIAL ACTIONS

- ☐ Notify the Director General, Director Regional Services, Deputy Directors General and other senior managers as required in Administrative Instruction 69. **Note that leaving messages for senior managers to inform them of a critical incident is insufficient.**

- ☐ Understand what is happening:
 - o how many incidents, locations?
 - o scale of likely casualties, agency resources involved, other resources involved?
 - o what incident control teams, structures have been established?
 - o what resources have been deployed and are available for deployment?
 - o set up information flows.
- ☐ Appoint a senior manager to direct response, co-ordinate various teams and track progress.
- ☐ Liaise with other services:
 - o ensure some capacity is retained to deal with critical elements of normal work;
 - o remember there may be an initial information vacuum and communication reliability issues;
 - o start considering recovery options;
 - o consider capability to respond to more similar concurrent incidents.

MANAGEMENT

- ☐ Establish primacy (whose crisis is it), who is in charge?
- ☐ Form a Crisis Management Team. A senior officer will direct the response as the Crisis Manager.
- ☐ Structure based on AIIMS [+ media; + investigations] and located in an appropriate Control Centre.
- ☐ Involve Manager Risk, Manager People Services Branch, and Director SDCA in the establishment of the Crisis Management Team.
- ☐ Consider including representational and union bodies on the Crisis Management Team or as key stakeholders
- ☐ Regular team meetings (use AIIMS Team Meeting Agenda).
- ☐ Confirm facts by initiating a preliminary investigation of the incident by an experienced investigator or senior officer assigned by the Director General.
- ☐ Evaluate the adequacy of the initial response.
- ☐ Identify threats, corporate risk, political risk, think widely and strategically.
- ☐ Develop a Crisis Management Plan. Include strategy options, risk assessment and incident objectives.
- ☐ Consider implementing Business Continuity Plans within the agency as required.
- ☐ Plan the recovery actions required following the incident.
- ☐ Establish feedback loops and undertake post-incident review and follow-ups.
- ☐ Document everything you say, do, see and hear. Keep good logs, personal diaries and records. Retain and catalogue all records

COMMUNICATION

- ☐ Perceptions of how well any crisis was managed will ultimately be based on how well the department communicated.
- ☐ Success or failure of crisis management will hinge on the timeliness and accuracy of messages and communications.
- ☐ Ensure that the Minister for the Environment and other key Ministers and Members of Parliament are briefed regularly. Develop a list of relevant stakeholders. Brief them regularly.
- ☐ Ensure that staff are regularly kept informed.
- ☐ Special consideration for communicating with staff from affected work locations.
- ☐ Consider activating a "hotline" (to the department response centre) or an internet site for public communications.
- ☐ Develop a dedicated Intranet web page devoted to information about the incident.

MEDIA

- ☐ Respond to media requests quickly.
- ☐ Establish media centre at or near the incident site.
- ☐ Ensure all media contacts are directed through a single contact point (avoid media being able to contact other staff on mobiles).
- ☐ One spokesperson – Crisis Manager or designate.
- ☐ Director General or the relevant Deputy Director General or Director to be available.
- ☐ Brief the media or issue a statement promptly.
- ☐ Give regular briefings and updates to the media.
- ☐ Establish a key message agenda.
- ☐ Consider a media tour of the site.
- ☐ What will the story be tomorrow? Anticipate and prepare
- ☐ If criticism: prepare an agency or "whole of government" position.
- ☐ Attend any press conferences/media briefings that are held by third parties.
- ☐ Principles of response to media:
 - o Be honest. Stick to the facts.
 - o Find out what information they want.
 - o If necessary, ask for more time to investigate, then get back to them.
 - o Do not say "no comment". If you don't know the answer, say so.
 - o Do not speculate.
 - o Be open and frank.
 - o Explain what happened.
 - o Compassion and concern for victims, empathy with families.
 - o Do not shift blame.

- Record what you are saying.
- Do not deny the obvious.
- Do not reveal the name of an injured, dead or missing employee until the next of kin have been notified and Police clearance has been given.
- Remember all information is provided "on the record".

VICTIMS

- ☐ Consult with external support agency (EAP provider) to assess how appropriate emotional support is made available to victims and their families.
- ☐ Make contact with victims as soon as possible.
- ☐ If fatalities, meet with next of kin as soon as possible after they have been notified.
 - Allocate resources to provide support to families. This should be a senior manager and perhaps a small team.
- ☐ Offer bereavement counselling services through the relevant agency.
- ☐ Director General / Deputy Director General / Director to meet with families of victims (may be several family groups for each victim).
- ☐ Recognise expectations and respond quickly.
- ☐ Listen to their concerns, and manage their wishes and expectations.
- ☐ Be prepared for post incident stress reactions from colleagues.
- ☐ Who else are the affected stakeholders?

LEGAL

- ☐ If there are fatalities, consult with the WA Police and the State Coroner about the investigation process.
- ☐ If there is a possibility of litigation, consult at an early stage with the State Solicitor's Office.
- ☐ If a fatality involving a DEC employee, advise Worksafe.
- ☐ Consult with RiskCover and the Insurance Commission as soon as possible

INVESTIGATION / REVIEW

- ☐ Crisis Management Team. Assign staff to gather initial evidence and data asap.
- ☐ Adopt a "Lessons Learned" and "No Blame" approach. Identify root causes.
- ☐ Debriefing of incident personnel.
- ☐ Ensure records are maintained, collected and filed on a daily basis.
- ☐ Arrange for an After Action Review to commence immediately after the incident :
 - What did we intend to happen?
 - What actually happened?
 - Why?
 - What can be done to prevent a re-occurrence?

☐ Post incident analysis:

- Review of incident management system for the duration of the incident.
- Collate team debriefs into a single review document.

☐ Independent inquiry/review:

- In addition to any Police/Coronial investigation the agency may decide to conduct an independent review of particular aspects of the incident.

STAFF WELFARE☐ Be prepared for post incident stress reactions from colleagues.☐ Activate staff support processes - peer support, management support, counselling and/or other managed intervention by specialist providers.☐ Support key staff with access to legal advice if required.