



Policy 7

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

(This policy is currently under review)

Policy Purpose

Define what are to be considered critical incidents, and describe the Blackwood Church of Christ inc's response to specific critical incidents.

Policy Statement

Part 1 GENERAL GUIDELINES

1 What is a critical incident ?

A Critical Incident can be described as a physical incident or psychological trauma which interferes with the Church's normal mode of operating, causes disruption to the Church, creates significant danger or risk and traumatically affects individuals in the Church community. Such incidents are often sudden, unexpected, may take many forms and their affects can be immediate and/or long-term.

Critical incidents may broadly include:

- Incidents which involve staff, congregation members, previous members or ministers, or any persons who have a connection with the Church – such incidents may not necessarily occur in the Church
- People-made disasters or emergencies
- Natural disasters or emergencies

Specific examples include:

- Fire
- Bomb threats
- Explosion
- Gas or chemical hazard
- Food

- Industrial or transport accident
- Earthquake or other natural disasters
- Sudden death of a member
- Destruction of the Whole or part of the Church or workplace
- Break-in accompanied by major vandalism
- Attempted or actual abduction
- Youth group members lost or injured on an excursion or trip
- Members being taken hostage
- Members Witnessing serious injury or death
- Violence between members
- Child sexual assault
- Suicide
- Misconduct of minister/s or key leaders — sexual, financial, spiritual
- Natural or other major disaster in the community
- A series of separate incidents, occurring in a short space of time, which collectively, may become a critical incident

2 Rationale

Critical incidents may cause severe emotional and physical impact upon people. It is normal for people to experience a range of reactions to critical incidents.

Some basic principles:

- Each critical incident and the circumstances surrounding it will be unique
- Each person's response will be unique
- A Wide range of reactions and feelings are possible
- The grieving process is important for healing the wound of separation and loss
- Multiple loss and grief events may cause the reaction to be greater or more intense
- Expressing feelings is healthy and normal and will assist people in recovery
- Failure to express feelings may lead to more intense reactions, including physical and/or psychological illness.
- If feelings remain intense and prolonged or appear to be totally absent (eg a person carries on as though nothing has happened), professional help may be required
- It is essential that feelings of helplessness and hopelessness are overcome. People need assistance to take control of their environment and lives
- With support, painful feelings will diminish over time

The Church has a clear responsibility to respond immediately and effectively, and provide ongoing support, when such an incident occurs.

There are a number of vital phases in dealing with critical incidents – preparation, planning, response and recovery.

The aim of Critical Incident Management planning, incorporating disaster and emergency procedures, is to provide a framework within which the Church can best operate during and immediately after a critical incident.

The Church has a legal and industrial duty to provide a safe working environment and to protect the health of its staff and members. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Church's other policies and procedures, in particular the OHS & W policy and Emergency Evacuation procedures, along with any legislation or regulations with respect to such things as: mandatory reporting, fires etc.

3 The Church's role

The Chair of Elders and other key personnel in the Church have the responsibility for emergency management which involves bringing together the necessary and appropriate arrangements for:

- Identifying
- Minimising
- Preventing
- Preparing for
- Responding to and
- Recovering from

an emergency

The Church will have and maintain a Critical Incident Management Plan and Strategies, which will deal with such things as:

- Establishing a Critical Incident Management Team
- Preparation, training, practice drills and procedures for immediate response as well as post-incident/recovery management.
- An emergency contacts list
- Procedures for all excursions outside the immediate vicinity of the Church, including overseas trips
- Media liaison
- Evaluation of the Management Plan

4 Critical Incident Management Team

A Critical Incident Management Team will be established by the Chair of Elders to assist in the prevention and management of critical incidents at The Church. The Team will include, as core members: The Chair of Elders, the Minister and an Elder as required and appropriate in all the circumstances.

Duties of the Critical Incident Management Team include:

- 4.1: Adequate assessment of hazards and situations which may require emergency action
- 4.2: Analysis of requirements to address these hazards
- 4.3: Establishment of liaison with all relevant emergency and support services
- 4.4: Dissemination of planned procedures
- 4.5: Organisation of any practice drills
- 4.6: Regular review of the management plan
- 4.7: Assist the Board Chairperson with all aspects of the implementation of the management plan

4.8: Arranging for staff professional development and training where necessary

5 Critical Incident Response

There are three aspects of response that should be followed:

5.1: Action immediately taken by the Minister, Board Chairperson, or key personnel

5.1.1: Gather factual information

5.1.2: Ensure appropriate intervention to minimise additional injury, including contacting emergency services and evacuation, if necessary, for specific emergencies

5.1.3: Attend to the injured, Where necessary - it is vital that first aid personnel provide emergency care for those with physical injuries

5.1.4: Assemble the other members of the Critical Incident Management Team as required and brief the team. Contact the State Minister if appropriate.

5.1.5: Assess the need for support and counselling for those directly and indirectly affected

5.1.6: Where appropriate, make immediate contact with injured person's parents or family.

5.1.7: Notify families of members 'at risk' who need additional support and counselling

5.1.8: Manage access of the media to the scene and to staff, members and relatives. The Board Chairperson should normally handle initial media calls and should be absolutely certain of facts before speaking to the media. In some cases it may be appropriate for the Board Chairperson to nominate another member of Staff to handle the media.

5.1.9: Provide Staff and members with accurate and necessary information about the current situation and update this over subsequent days. It may not always be appropriate to inform the Church community of the detail of some incidents for reasons such as - the matter being subjudice, or Where the privacy of members or staff is obviously of paramount importance

5.1.10 Organize assistance, such as transport home, for staff or members who are distressed - try to ensure that they are not alone on the evening after such an incident or, at the very least, provide them with contact details of colleagues or others whom they can contact should they wish to talk.

5.1.11 Act quickly to dispel rumours which can easily spread after incidents - be particularly aware of stories which may question an individual's actions in the incident.

5.1.12: Return the Church to a normal situation in as short a time as is practicable and consistent with the welfare of members and staff.

5.2 Provision of Critical Incident Stress Management (CISJU)

5.2.1: CISM helps people to come to terms with the critical incident and its consequences and to manage these so as to return to a normal level of life and functioning as quickly as possible.

5.2.2: CISM can include debriefing, group crisis management and one-to-one counselling. Usually led by Counsellors/Chaplain, CISM is designed to support staff and members by enabling each person involved to go through the incident and to understand and manage his/her own reactions. This form of counselling can be short term or long term, depending on the circumstances and needs.

5.2.3: It is also necessary to identify any individuals who need further trauma counselling to provide

an opportunity to work through the normal grief processes on a one-to-one basis.

5.2.4: There must be access to appropriately qualified debriefing and counselling personnel. These personnel can be either internal or external providers depending on the circumstances and individual needs.

5.2.5: People involved in the critical incident must not manage the CISM process.

5.3: *Managing the media*

Each critical incident is unique and the appropriate response will have to be determined when it occurs. It is important to have a structured approach to media management. Some guidelines include:

5.3.1: The Chair of Elders or nominated person should handle the initial media calls. Be sure to return calls as soon as possible.

5.3.2: Avoid answering questions with 'no comment.' Enlist the support of the media to report accurate information and avoid being defensive. In a major disaster, the media is often an essential means of communicating information - eg providing hotline phone numbers etc.

5.3.3: Respond to questions accurately. It may be necessary however to explain to the media that you're not able to answer their questions at this time because (i) of the sensitive nature of the issue or (ii) you do not have all the information available.

5.3.4: It may be necessary to check with the police, ambulance or fire brigade etc before making a statement

5.3.5: Emphasis should be placed in media comment on the support available to members and staff.

5.3.6: It is imperative to avoid making public comments to the media or others which imply blame or fault for any part of the incident, as there could be significant legal implications.

6 Recovery Timeline

The successful management of critical incidents depends on the Church taking appropriate action and providing support during and after the incident. The recovery timeline following a critical incident will vary depending on the circumstances and needs of the individuals. The following are general guidelines only:

6.1 *Within 24 hours*

- Remain calm - this helps to give a reassuring sense of control
- In the most effective manner, collect information and clearly establish and verify the facts
- Establish clear lines of communication with emergency and support services.
- Ensure safety and Welfare of members and staff
- Where possible, set up and notify details of debriefing/defusing/one-to-one counselling session for all relevant persons if needed
- Manage the media
- Set up a recovery room if appropriate
- Keep staff, members and parents informed - work through issues such as: briefing the switchboard staff, informing the Church community

6.2 *Within 48 to 72 hours*

- Arrange counselling as required
- Provide opportunities for Staff and members to talk about the incident
- Provide support to staff and helpers
- Restore normal operation of the Church as soon as practicably possible
- Keep people informed

6.3 *Within the first month*

- Arrange a funeral or memorial service, if a death has occurred and if appropriate, in accordance with the wishes of the family.
- Encourage people to participate in meeting to discuss members' Welfare
- Monitor and identify behavioural changes and the possibility of post traumatic stress disorder and refer to professional staff
- Monitor progress of hospitalised staff or members
- Monitor mental and physical health of all helpers and the possibility of secondary traumatic stress disorder (compassion fatigue) and refer to professional staff.
- If appropriate advise relevant Church Associations so they can send condolences.

6.4 *In the longer term*

- Monitor staff and members for signs of delayed stress and the onset of post traumatic stress disorder - refer for professional assistance
- Provide support if needed
- Identify and consider relevant curriculum areas that may be of use, either generally, or which may assist in recovery - eg. grief, loss, change.
- Identify any training and professional development issues that need to be addressed as a result of the incident
- Attend to any administrative, legal or associated matters arising from the incident - eg. inquiries and investigations, legal proceedings, insurance claims and assessments.

7 **Evaluation of Critical Incident Management Plan**

After a critical incident, a meeting of the Critical Incident Management Team and others as appropriate should be held to evaluate the effectiveness of the Management Plan, make any necessary modifications, debrief the particular incident and review the Team's response.

Part 2 MANAGEMENT OF SPECIFIC CRITICAL INCIDENTS

Introduction

Action guidelines for specific critical incidents are provided in this section. They include:

Incidents of violence

- Fire and explosions
- Flood
- Severe windstorms
- Bomb threats and suspect devices
- Criminal or terrorist activity
- Suicide
- Extremes of temperature – heat

Others will be added from time to time as the Critical Incident Management Plan is reviewed and updated.

1 Incidents of Violence

When an incident of violence occurs it is essential that the safety and welfare of staff and members are addressed - this includes providing support and counselling immediately and in the longer term. The following guidelines should be followed by key personnel

1.1 Within 24 hours

- Gather the facts
- Ensure appropriate intervention to minimize additional injury – contact emergency services as required
- Ensure the safety and welfare of members and staff
- Assess the need for support and counselling for those directly and indirectly involved
- Involve the Critical Incident Management team members as required and appropriate
- Manage the media
- Set up a recovery room if required
- Provide factual information to staff, members and the Church community - ensure that the privacy of staff and members is maintained
- Organize assistance - such as transport home

1.2: Within 48 to 72 hours

- Arrange counselling as required
- Provide opportunities for staff and members to talk about the incident.
- Continue to provide staff, members and the Church community with factual information and update over subsequent days. Act to dispel rumours.

- Restore normal operation of the Church as soon as practicably possible - where necessary make arrangements to cover classes, arrange leave and employ casual staff

1.3: Within the first month

- Note any behavioural changes such as: insomnia, uncharacteristic difficulty with work, easily upset. Refer to appropriate support services.
- Maintain Church contact with hospitalised Staff and their families

1.4: In the longer term

- Continue to be aware of how staff members and members are coping and to determine whether earlier signs of stress still exist
- Arrange for the provision of support if needed

1.5: In the long term (eg more than 12 months)

- Plan for and be sensitive to the disturbing influences of things such as anniversaries, inquests and legal proceedings
- Access specialist support if needed

2 FIRE & EXPLOSIONS

2.1: Internal Fires

2.1.1: An outbreak of fire is to be reported immediately to someone in authority who must alert the fire services, giving the following information:

- Name and address of the Church, specifically identifying which sub-Church and campus
- Location and nature of the fire Within the Church

2.1.2: A Staff member will be designated to ensure that fire vehicles have access to the site of the fire - eg gates are opened and vehicles are not blocking access

2.1.3: Approximately 80% of fire fatalities are caused by smoke inhalation or the breathing of superheated air and gases - it is therefore necessary to **EVACUATE WITHOUT DELAY** if an internal fire occurs.

2.1.4: If possible, and only if safe to do so, doors and windows should be closed on departure to prevent the spread of fire and smoke

2.1.5: Fire equipment such as extinguishers and hoses should only be used in the case of potential entrapment

2.1.6: The use of fire blankets on small fires in areas such as science laboratories should only occur if the risk of injury to staff and members will not be increased.

2.2: Bush Fires

2.2.1: Under normal circumstances, evacuation should take place only under the direction of the Officer in Charge of the fire fighting service. If, however, it is obvious that the lives of staff and members will be endangered unless they are evacuated immediately, and the Chair of Elders is unable to contact the Officer in Charge, the Chair of Elders should make immediate arrangements to evacuate to a safe place.

2.2.2: In such cases, transport arrangements should be implemented in consultation with the Police. It would be unwise in the extreme to allow members to proceed unsupervised to their homes with possible exposure to the threat of fire - eg. Members who live in or around the bush fire area.

2.2.3: If the organized evacuation of members to a safe place is not possible, the following procedure is recommended:

- Direct members and staff to remain within the building and, in the case of multistorey buildings, to assemble on the lower floor
- If time allows, block gutters, fill with water, hose down building
- All windows and doors should be closed and blinds drawn (if fitted), block under doors to prevent smoke entry
- Members should be assembled away from the part of the building which will be initially exposed to the fire
- When the fire has passed, members and staff should leave the building in an orderly manner by the closest exit and assemble away from the initial exposure area
- Attempts may then be made to extinguish parts of the Church buildings which have been ignited, provided personal safety is not endangered
- A roll call should be conducted in a safe area away from the building

2.3: Explosion, Gas leaks, Chemical Hazard

Internal

2.3.1: When there is a major escape of gas, chemicals or threat of an explosion within the Church buildings, there must be an immediate evacuation from the affected buildings, in accordance with the Church's Emergency Evacuation Plan.

External

2.3.2: When adjoining buildings or facilities are affected, the Chair of Elders should act in accordance with the advice of the fire brigade or police, or order immediate evacuation where deemed necessary.

2.3.3: In some circumstances, it may be necessary to contain members and staff within the Church buildings rather than evacuate them

3 FLOOD

Flood warnings may be issued by appropriate agencies and authorities. The predicted extent of the flood and the amount of time available before it arrives will determine the course of action to be taken. The Board Chairperson may initiate any of the following actions as deemed appropriate:

- Decide whether to send members home early, in consultation with local emergency authorities
- Decide whether to close down all or sections of the Church and where necessary notify members to remain at home
- Implement procedures to safeguard life, plant and equipment - eg. Move equipment and plant to higher ground, turn off power, water and gas services
- Decide when to re-open the Church, in consultation with local emergency authorities
- Implement procedures to resume Church activities

4 SEVERE WINDSTORM

Warnings of impending windstorms may be received in time to allow members and staff to go home before the emergency. If, however, warning time is insufficient to allow this, or if high winds develop during Church hours without warning, the following emergency actions are suggested:

- Direct members and staff to assemble inside buildings
- Stand against interior walls or hallways on the lowest floor possible,
- Stand away from windows
- Avoid auditoriums, gymnasiums and other enclosures that have long roof spans
- Avoid classrooms that will bear the full force of the wind
- Close windows and blinds on the windward side
- Secure loose objects in open areas - eg. garbage bins
- Close down any Church utilities that may cause additional hazards - eg power, gas
- Ensure that all personnel have taken shelter
- Notify utility companies of any break or suspected break in lines
- Keep members and staff at Church until it is safe to return to normal activities or to go home
- Conduct a roll check at first appropriate opportunity

5 BOMB THREATS

5.1: Receipt of Threat - Telephone/Written Note

5.1. 1. Telephone

A bomb threat is usually received by telephone. If such a threat is received, it is important to remain calm as the information given by the caller and replies to questions asked by the person taking the call could be of vital assistance to police. Efforts must be made to keep the caller on the telephone as long as possible to obtain information needed by the police.

Use the following checklist in relation to telephone bomb threats:

- Ascertain the exact time of the call, voice characteristics, estimate of approximate age, boy or girl, man or woman
- Assess background noises, music, traffic, laughter or other persons present
- Endeavour to find out where the bomb is located
- Question the caller as to his or her knowledge of the premises
- Ascertain why the call has been made - what caused the caller to make the threat or place a bomb on the Church premises

5.1.2. Typed or Written Note

Such notes should be handled by a minimal number of people to preserve fingerprints.

The note should not be altered in any way (eg. not stapled or written on) but picked up by the fingertips and placed inside an envelope large enough to accommodate the note without folding.

The following details should be written on the envelope **PRIOR** to placing the note in it:

- Contents (eg - bomb threat note)
- Time received
- Date received
- Person receiving the note
- The place where the note was received
- Mode of delivery
- Church's name
- Board Chairperson's name
- Church address and telephone number

5.2: Bomb Threats – Procedures

5.2.1: If a bomb threat is received, evacuation procedures should be implemented immediately and the Police notified.

5.2.2: Staff and members should take personal belongings in their immediate possession - eg. bags, coats etc., and proceed to the evacuation assembly area. Staff and members should not delay evacuation procedures by collecting personal belongings.

5.2.3: The person receiving the threat should, as soon as possible after safely evacuating, fill out a bomb threat report. This form should be kept close to the switchboard area. The form should be submitted to the Chair of Elders for perusal and then to the Police.

5.2.4: Re-occupation of the Church will only occur when approved by the Senior Police officer at the scene, in consultation with the Chair of Elders.

6 RESPONSE TO A SUSPECTED DEVICE

6.1: This may take the form of a suspected article either being found in a building, grounds or the delivery of such an article by messenger or mail.

6.2: The Chair of Elders must evaluate the threat and make a decision about evacuation. Staff and members, if required to do so, should evacuate the area or building to a safe area.

6.3: The designated area should be one that affords safety in respect to a possible detonation of the device. This designated area may be a different location to the usual evacuation assembly area(s).

6.4: The Chair of Elders or delegated person should contact the Police at the first available opportunity and be in a position to inform them of the following:

- Exact location of the device
- Description of the device, if known, and
- Exact location of Chair of Elders or person who can assist investigating Police on their arrival

6.5: The Chair of Elders and other key personnel, where time allows, should ensure that classified documents or valuables are secured immediately after evacuation of all personnel. Door and windows should be opened to vent possible explosion. Gas and electricity should, if possible, be isolated.

6.6: Ensure that all personnel reach and remain in the designated safe area.

6.7: Place responsible persons at all entry points to the grounds to prevent visitors approaching the suspected danger until the arrival of Police.

6.8: Where required, the Chair of Elders should accompany Police to ensure the exact location of the device is quickly found by Police so that safety measures already implemented can be assessed.

6.9: The Chair of Elders should be prepared to assist Police, if required, to make a full search of the building(s) and grounds for the location of any further devices

SUSPECTED DEVICES SHOULD NOT BE TOUCHED, TILTED OR TAMPERED WITH !

7 CRIMINAL OR TERRORIST ACTIVITY

If criminal or terrorist activity occurs:

- Staff and members not involved should be evacuated to a safe area if possible
- Notify the Police if possible
- Instruct staff and members to remain calm and obey the demands of the terrorist or criminal

- Avoid any action which may provoke an incident resulting in death or injury to staff or members.

8 SUICIDE

In the event of a suicide of any member of the Church community the Church's Critical Incidents Management Plan should be implemented.

Suicide is a major cause of death among 15-19 year olds. It can be prevented in many cases. Danger signs that someone may be considering suicide include:

- A previous suicide attempt
- Verbal threats
- Changes in behaviour (eg. withdrawal)
- Unusual purchases (eg. weapon or rope)
- Giving away personal possessions
- Signs of depression (anxiety, restlessness)
- Problems at Church (drop in grades, emotional outbursts)
- Themes of death (in artwork, essays)

A person who is considering suicide needs to know that others care.

DO

- Be direct (talk openly)
- Be a good listener (don't make judgements)
- Make time available
- Get help (act quickly)

DON'T

- Sidestep the issue
- Keep what you know a secret
- Leave the person alone
- Feel; responsible for saving the person (you cannot control the other's decisions)

9 EXTREMES OF TEMPERATURE – HEAT

9.1: Transient periods of high temperatures will often occur during the summer months. The Church will continue to operate as usual without disruption to normal routines and members will not be sent home. It is possible however to adopt a few simple principles to ensure that consideration is given to the difficulties caused by heatwaves so that the Church can continue to operate as normally and as effectively as possible.

9.2: Staff working outdoors and members and teachers involved in outdoor activities are the most vulnerable to problems that can result from exposure to sun or heat stress in extreme conditions. Heat stress symptoms will vary from person to person and include - tiredness, weakness, visual

disturbances, headaches, nausea, muscle cramps, breathlessness, giddiness and palpitations. Recovery from heat stress will generally be quite fast if the individual is removed from the heat, rests in a shaded or cool area and given a cool drink of water.

9.3: Precautions

The Church has adopted the following precautions to assist all members and staff to deal with transient heatwave conditions and to prevent problems from occurring:

- 9.3.1 Where appropriate, members and staff are encouraged to drink at least two litres of water a day to avoid dehydration
- 9.3.2 Members and Staff are encouraged to wear hats, 30+ broad spectrum sunscreen and protective clothing - lightweight, cotton, closely woven clothing will be cooler and will protect the wearer from the sun
- 9.3.3 Outside activities, such as assemblies, outdoor lessons, PE etc, can be rescheduled to a cooler part of the day or until another time
- 9.3.4 Members are encouraged to remain in shaded areas during recess and lunch times - the Church will assist by planting trees in Church grounds to provide additional shade areas in future years
- 9.3.5 If members are removed from classrooms, staff are to ensure they are taken to the coolest locations available, preferably those with flow-through ventilation. Overcrowding is to be avoided
- 9.3.6 The Church actively and vigorously enforces any 'not hat - no play' policies whilst encouraging strenuous, physical activity to be kept to an absolute minimum
- 9.3.7 As part of a regular maintenance programme, the Church will ensure that blinds, fans, cooling and heating devices are Working efficiently and, where appropriate, professionally inspected and serviced on a regular -basis.

Practical Checklist

- Establish a Critical Incident Management Team
- Ensure members of the Church community understand and appreciate the necessity for the preparation of emergency plans
- Telephone, fax and other communications numbers, especially for Emergency contacts, regularly reviewed, updated and disseminated
- Ensure there is backup, in terms of personnel and communication equipment, if needed.
- All administrative paperwork and records are kept up to date and can be accessed if reference to them is needed.
- Lists and other essential Church records are up to date and hard copies or back up disks are accessible for emergency evacuation purposes
- Pro-fomas, such as Bomb Threat documentation, are up to date and readily accessible near switchboards
- Alarm systems are operating properly and audible in all appropriate areas - regularly inspected
- Safety audits are regularly conducted in the Church
- Fire systems and equipment are regularly inspected and certified by the relevant Fire Authority.
- Ongoing training and professional development takes place for all appropriate Staff and is monitored - eg. crisis management, First Aid, OHS&W representatives - training and practice are vital to check and ensure readiness to deal with a Critical Incident.
- Regular evacuation and incursion drills are carried out, reviewed and procedures updated in the light of those drills.
- Regular assessment and review of risks and potential hazards in the Church to ensure that appropriate and adequate crisis management plans are in place.
- Critical Incident Management Plan is regularly reviewed and updated by the OHS & W Committee and Church Executive. Such review should also take place after each Critical Incident to ensure any immediate and necessary improvements are made.
- Ensure all documentation is readily available to and understood by members of the Church community.

Policy References

Policy 2 – Bushfire Protection

Review of Policy

This policy shall be reviewed annually

Further Information

If you require further information, contact the Church Office

Authorised by:

(Chair of Elders)

Signature: Date: