

Emergency and Evacuation Management

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY

QUALITY AREA 7: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

Policy Statement

Under the *Education and Care Services National Regulations*, an approved provider must ensure that policies and procedures are in place for emergency and evacuation and take reasonable steps to ensure policies and procedures are followed. (ACECQA, 2021).

Emergency and evacuation situations in early education and care services may arise for a variety of reasons, often suddenly and unexpectedly. It is vital that if an emergency situation arises, staff are confident to manage the situation effectively and efficiently, maintaining the safety and wellbeing of children, families and visitors.

Ensuring that educators and children know what to do in an emergency situation requires vigilant planning and practice. Regularly practicing the drills for emergency situations also provides an opportunity to help support and build on children's coping mechanisms and resilience.

Goals

Our Service has a duty of care to maintain the safety and wellbeing of each child, educator, and all persons using or visiting the Service during an emergency or evacuation situation. We are committed to identifying risks and potential hazards of emergency and evacuation situations by conducting thorough risk assessments on an annual basis and continually plan for further risk minimisation and improvement to our policy and procedures.

We believe that children's safety, rights and best interests are the paramount consideration for all service operations, decisions and functions.

Strategies

We define an emergency as an unplanned, sudden or unexpected event or situation that requires immediate action to prevent harm, injury, or illness to persons, or damage to the Service's premises. Emergency situations may pose a risk to an individual's health and safety. It is important that Services identify potential emergencies that may be specific to their location and environment. Severe heat or heatwaves, also pose an immediate risk to young children and require risk mitigation strategies to be implemented. [See: *Sun Safety Policy*]

An emergency is any event, situation or event where there is an imminent or severe risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of children at the service (Guide to the NQF). Education and care services National Regulations state that emergency evacuation rehearsals are to be practiced and reviewed every three months by the responsible person, all staff members, volunteers, visitors and children present on the day.

Circumstances under which an emergency evacuation will occur may include:

- Fire within the building or playground
- Fire in the surrounding area where the Service may be in danger
- Flood
- Cyclone, severe storm or dust storm or other natural weather event
- dangerous animal, insect or reptile
- Terrorist threat
- Other circumstances may include:
 - o gas explosion, traffic accident, or any event which could render the building unsafe (eg: earthquake).

The approved provider, in conjunction with educators of the Service, will conduct a comprehensive risk assessment in order to identify any risk/s or hazards associated with potential emergencies that may affect the safe evacuation of children from the Service.

The risk assessment will be reviewed at least annually or after being aware of an incident or circumstance that may affect the safe evacuation of children. All risk assessments will be regularly assessed and evaluated as to facilitate continuous improvement in our Service. If a risk concerning the safe evacuation of a child is identified during the risk assessment, the approved provider must update the *Emergency and Evacuation Policy* and procedure as soon as possible. The risk assessment is to be stored safely and securely and kept for a period of 3 years after the last date on which the child was educated and cared for by the service.

The Australian Warning System (AWS)

The Australian Warning System (AWS) is a nationally consistent, three-tiered approach designed to make warnings clearer and lead people to take action during emergencies like bushfire, flood, storm extreme heat and severe weather. The warning system comprises of levels, action statements, hazard icons, colours and shapes.

<https://www.ses.nsw.gov.au/about-us/our-warnings/>

The three warning levels are:

Advice (Yellow): An incident has started. There is no immediate danger. Stay up to date in case the situation changes. Monitor conditions.

Watch and Act (Orange): There is a heightened level of threat. Conditions are changing and you need to start taking action now. Prepare to leave/evacuate. Do not enter flood water.

Emergency Warning (Red) : An Emergency Warning is the highest level of warning. You need to take action immediately. Leave/evacuate (immediately by am/pm/hazard timing).

When there is an Emergency Warning, educators need to prepare for possible emergency evacuation and implement the procedures effectively to ensure the safety of all children, staff, families and visitors in the Service.

The Approved Provider/ Nominated Supervisor/ Management and Educators will ensure:

- obligations under the Education and Care National Law and National Regulations are met and understood by all educators and staff
- emergency and evacuation policies and procedures are available for inspection at the Service's premises at all times
- the Approved Provider will conduct an annual risk assessment to identify potential emergencies that are relevant to the Service
- the approved provider will review the risk assessment after becoming aware of any circumstance that may affect the safe evacuation of children from the Service
- relevant stakeholders/authorities are consulted for advice and guidance to improve risk mitigation strategies as part of our emergency and evacuation plan (police, fire, parents/families)
- an Emergency Management Plan (EMP) is developed and updated
- all staff and educators have a thorough understanding of the Australian Warning System (AWS)
- consideration is made to evacuate non-ambulant children evacuating the premises resulting in enhanced ratios
- emergency evacuation plans and instructions are displayed in prominent positions near each exit at the Service premises including both the indoor and outdoor learning areas
- the emergency and evacuation procedures include instructions for what must be done in the event of an emergency
- emergency evacuation plans include a floor plan for ease of reference with clearly defined assembly points and clearly marked exit routes from all locations within the Service
- all exits have exit signs clearly visible
 - All emergency exit doors must be unlocked and ready to ensure evacuation of children and staff. Exit doors must be accessible from the inside with an emergency push bar or device
- there are no obstructions in hallways, stairways or emergency exits
- all educators, including casual/relief educators and staff members, are familiar with our Emergency and Evacuation Policy, procedures and regulatory requirements
- new staff, volunteers and students are provided with information and training about our Emergency and Evacuation Policy and procedures during induction
- all staff, visitors and students are aware of emergency evacuation points and assembly areas
- Fire warden is trained how to use emergency equipment such as fire extinguishers, fire blankets, hoses etc

- National Regulations state that emergency evacuation rehearsals (drills) are to be practiced and reviewed every three months by the responsible person, all staff members, volunteers, and children present on the day.
- spontaneous rehearsals also take place during the year to assist in refining risk management procedures and evacuation procedures
- each time a planned or spontaneous emergency evacuation drill is performed it is to be timed and documented in the Emergency Evacuation Rehearsal Record
- after reflection, notes on any areas that need improving or revising are to be documented in the Emergency Evacuation Rehearsal Record. Educators will discuss and implement strategies to make continuous improvement to procedures which will be documented in the Service's Staff Meeting minutes and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).
- in the event of limited educators (e.g., early morning or late afternoon), staff members are to work together to perform the duties as per the evacuation plan (the roster must include a Responsible Person being on the premises at all times to take responsibility and delegate duties). This scenario will be discussed and documented in the Service's Staff Meeting Minutes (WHS).
- children are provided with age-appropriate support and information before, during and after emergency and evacuation rehearsals (drills)
- all staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities in event of an emergency situation
- regular communication with families includes information about emergency and evacuation procedures
- families are informed when a rehearsal or drill has occurred
- each room has an Emergency Evacuation Bag located in a prominent position
- Emergency Evacuation Bags are regularly audited and restocked as required
- an up-to-date register of emergency telephone numbers for children is maintained. A copy of the current list will always be available in the Emergency Evacuation Bag
- portable First Aid Kits are readily available in case of an emergency evacuation
- at least one staff member or one Nominated Supervisor who holds current ACEQCA approved first aid qualifications, approved anaphylaxis management and emergency asthma management training is in attendance at all times
- Medical Management Plans for children are able to be accessed easily
- children's medication is collected during an evacuation
- all fire extinguishers, fire blankets, fire hoses, and other emergency equipment located throughout the Service will be inspected and tested at six monthly intervals by an authorised company as per the Australian Safety Standard AS 1851-2012: Maintenance of Fire Protection Systems and Equipment.
- extinguishers will be emptied, pressure tested, and refilled every five years
- all tests performed on emergency equipment and the date on which it was tested will be recorded on a label or metal tag attached to the unit. Certificates to verify testing will be filed.

- ensure smoke detectors are regularly tested and batteries replaced annually
- staff and educators have access to an operating telephone or other means of communication at all times
- in the event of a telephone not operating or no other means of communication the Service will consider closure of the Service (See Closure of Service below)
- emergency telephone numbers will be displayed prominently throughout the Service in the kitchen, office, staff room and each area where children are educated and cared for.
- our emergency telephone list (located next to the telephone) includes the numbers for:
 - o Police
 - o Local fire station
 - o Rural Fire Service
- following the emergency evacuation or an incident that poses a risk to the health and safety of children attending the Service, an Emergency Evacuation Incident Report and an Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record will be completed
- the approved provider will make a notification of a serious incident to a regulatory authority (within 24 hours) through the NQA IT System when emergency services have attended an education and care service in response to an emergency, rather than as a precaution or for any other reason or following an incident that poses a risk to the health and safety of children attending the Service
- the approved provider will notify the regulatory authority and Department of Education (CCS) if the service is required to close for a period of time as a result of a local emergency (Reg.175 (2)(b))

Emergency and Evacuation Procedure Guidelines

(include who is responsible for the implementation of each step)

As per regulation 97, the emergency and evacuation procedures must set out-

- a. instructions for what must be done in the event of an emergency; and
 - b. an emergency and evacuation floor plan
- the Nominated Supervisor/Approved Provider will make the final call to whether to evacuate the premises due to an emergency situation
 - contact 000 for local emergencies- provide name, address and nearest cross street, reason for evacuation, phone contact number, number of children and adults evacuating
 - guidance will be provided by the relevant emergency service (Fire service, SES, Police)
 - move all children and visitors to identified evacuation/emergency assembly area as indicated on the *Emergency and Evacuation Plan*
 - collect Emergency Evacuation Bag, Medical Management Plans and associated children's medication

- collect First Aid Kit
- check daily attendance record and visitor record to ensure all children, staff and visitors are accounted for
- once children are safely evacuated, administer first aid if required
- remain calm and reassure children
- once emergency services arrive, contact parents/emergency contacts
- await instructions from relevant emergency services for re-entering premises or alternative evacuation procedure

Families will

- ensure contact details are kept up-to-date
- provide emergency contact details on their child's enrolment form and advise the service of any change of name or phone number
- ensure the attendance record for their child is completed each day
- ensure they are aware of the service's *Emergency and Evacuation Policy* and procedures
- follow the directions of the Fire Wardens/Nominated Supervisor in the event of an emergency or evacuation

Closure of the Service

There may be times where the normal operation of the service is disrupted, and the Service is required to close temporarily during a planned or unplanned emergency occurrence. Situations that affect the normal operation include a local emergency which poses a risk to the health and safety of children attending the service, or where the service is inaccessible or is unsafe for children or staff or the emergency services/authority have directed the service to close.

Situations where the Service may consider closure include:

- o A period of local emergency, or emergency event
- o Flooding
- o Health emergency (i.e., pandemic)
- o Bushfire
- o Cyclone
- o Unexpected absence of staff where ratios are unable to be met
- o Severe outbreak of illness or disease
- o Lack of access to operating phone/communication means

- o Damage or vandalism to the service
- o Chemical hazard
- o Earthquake
- The approved provider or nominated supervisor will consult with emergency services/ local authorities regarding the closure of the service
- Our Service will ensure families are informed of emergency closures as soon as practicable to ensure immediate collection of children
- In the event of a planned closure, management will advise families as reasonably practicable through SMS/social media/phone calls/email to provide details of the planned closure including the period of closure
- Our Service will notify the regulatory authority of the service closure within 24 hours of an incident, including if the service is required to close for a period of time due to the emergency via the NQAITs
- Our Service will notify the Department of Education through CCS Software or PEP of the Service closure within 24 hours.

Dealing with Trauma

Emergencies and natural disasters are extremely stressful, and it is normal for children and adults to feel overwhelmed and distressed. People cope with trauma in many different ways. Children look to adults for reassurance, care and opportunities to share their feelings. It is important for educators to understand the impact of disasters and seek help when needed.

The Approved Provider/Nominated Supervisor will support educators to provide information to parents and families following any emergency or natural disaster including:

- o Will the service be open in the days and weeks ahead?
- o How to find alternative care and education
- o How to contact services for support with dealing with trauma

Several organisations offer support for educators in these situations:

- o EAP service
- o Emerging Minds
- o BeYou- Trauma informed practice

Preparing for an emergency

Australian Government Department of Education - Help in an emergency

Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology

Jurisdiction Specifications

NEW SOUTH WALES (NSW)

- NSW Police: www.police.nsw.gov.au
- NSW Rural Fire Service: www.rfs.nsw.gov.au
- NSW State Emergency Services: www.ses.nsw.gov.au

National Quality Standard (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY

2.2	Safety	Each child is protected.
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.
2.2.2	Incident and emergency management	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practiced and implemented.

QUALITY AREA 7: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

7.1.2	Management Systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service.
7.1.3	Roles and responsibilities	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood, and support effective decision-making and operation of the service that is child safe.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL LAW AND REGULATIONS

Sec. 2A	Paramount consideration- safety, rights and best interests of children
Sec. 3A	Paramount consideration
Sec. 165	Offence to inadequately supervise children
Sec. 167	Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazard
Sec 174	Offence to fail to notify certain information Regulatory Authority
Sec 219A	Power of Regulatory Authority to close services because of emergency event
4	Definitions “multi-storey building” and “storey”
12(d)	Meaning of a serious incident- any emergency for which emergency services attended
97	Emergency and evacuation procedures
98	Telephone or other communication equipment
99	Children leaving the education and care service premises
136	First aid qualifications
168	Education and Care Services must have policies and procedures
170	Policies and procedures are to be followed

171	Policies and procedures to be kept available
175	Prescribed information to be notified to Regulatory Authority

Related Resources

Emergency Bag Audit

Emergency Management Plan (EMP)

EMP evacuation diagrams-images

Related References

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2023). Policy and procedure guidelines- *Emergency and evacuation guidelines.*

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2023). *Guide to the National Quality Framework.*

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2023). Multi Storey Buildings: Evacuations and Approvals

Australian Government Department of Education. (2023). Help in an emergency

Australian Government Department of Home Affairs. Emergency Management

Australian Government. National Emergency Management Agency. Australian Warning System.
<https://www.australianwarningsystem.com.au>

Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics. (2016).

Education and Care Services National Regulations. (Amended 2023).

Fire Protection Association Australia: www.fpaa.com.au/

Fire System Services: <http://www.firesys.com.au/Fire-Extinguisher-Service-and-Maintenance-pg14686.html>

NSW Department of Education. (2023). Emergency Planning, Management, Response and Recovery

NSW Rural Fire Service: www.rfs.com.au

Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).

Work Health and Safety Act 2011.

Review

POLICY REVIEWED: July 2026

POLICY REVIEWED BY: Suzi Scott

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MODIFICATIONS: July 2026 – additional information regarding the paramountcy principle and updated Regs and Law details