



SERVICE STANDARD 3.1.8

CRITICAL INCIDENTS

ITEM	DESCRIPTION
Version Number	2.0
Related Protocol	➤ Critical Incidents Protocol
Owner	Executive Director, Operations
Contact	Director, Response and Coordination
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1 Purpose

- 1.1 A critical incident is any incident or revelation that might have a serious, adverse effect on the interests of the community, the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS), its stakeholders or members.
- 1.2 If mishandled, such events can create unnecessary anxiety, threaten public confidence and possibly lead to loss of members or further crises. If well handled, however, their adverse effects can be minimised, and the opportunity can be taken for people to be helped and for the organisation to learn and improve.
- 1.3 One of the major problems during any critical incident is misinformation. A critical incident will often generate confusion that can result in announcements or actions that are insensitive, inappropriate or even dangerous.
- 1.4 Resolving a critical incident in the best way possible involves making sure supervisors and managers are given good factual information as quickly as possible, so that they can make appropriate decisions and provide the needed support expeditiously.
- 1.5 This Service Standard and the related Critical Incident Protocol, details a systematic approach to dealing with critical incidents.

2 Definitions

- 2.1 For the purposes of this service standard, the following definition applies:
 - a. **Critical Incident:** is defined as any event, which causes significant disruption to effective operations, creates significant danger or serious injury, or fatality to a member of the NSW RFS. A Critical Incident may also include any event that has, or may reasonably cause the public to lose its confidence in the NSW RFS and its members.

Such events include but are not limited to:

 - The death¹ or critical injury² of a NSW RFS member while undertaking NSW RFS official duties.
 - The death or critical injury of a NSW RFS member or immediate family³ not undertaking official duties but by nature of the circumstances may have significant impact on the NSW RFS operations or business.

- A motor vehicle, marine, or aviation incident during a response to, or operating at, an incident where the following has occurred:
 - Death or critical injury⁴ of any persons (non NSW RFS) involved in the incident.
 - Where any vehicle involved in the incident requires tow due as a result of the extent of the damage.
 - Significant damage to object other than motor vehicle, as result of incident with NSW RFS vehicle, vessel or aircraft.
- The death or critical injury of a non NSW RFS member (including member of the public) as a direct result of actions taken by the NSW RFS in the management or suppression of a fire or operational incident.
- As directed by the Commissioner/Deputy Commissioner.

Note:

¹ Death includes confirmed and unconfirmed.

² Critical Injury is any injury sustained where life expectancy is unlikely

³ Immediate Family is any Mother, Father, Son or Daughter

⁴ Injury is any injury requiring treatment by a health professional such as an ambulance officer, nurse, doctor (includes needle-stick/sharps injuries and/or any contamination by human blood or body fluid)

Note: Generally, a critical incident will arise from a Notifiable Incident as defined in *OMP 4.03.01 Notifiable Incidents*. If in doubt advice, should be sought from the State Duty Operations Officer (SDOO) in the first instance.

3 Policy

- 3.1 The Director Response and Coordination is responsible for the development, review and currency of a Critical Incident Protocol for the NSW RFS.
- 3.2 The Critical Incident Protocol will be endorsed by the Executive Director, Operations, and approved by the Commissioner.
- 3.3 All On Call / Duty Officers or Managers upon becoming aware of an incident that may be a Critical Incident must notify the Operational Communication Centre immediately, and make a notifiable incident.
- 3.4 The SDOO shall be responsible for activation of the Critical Incident Protocol.
- 3.5 Following each activation of the Critical Incident Protocol, the Manager, Emergency Management Coordination, shall be responsible for reviewing the actual events against the protocol and provide a report to the Director including any recommendations for protocol change.
- 3.6 If required actions shall be taken to ensure that the Critical Incident is investigated in an appropriate manner and that all appropriate recommendations from that investigation are reviewed and if appropriate promptly implemented.

4 Related Documents

- [Rural Fires Act 1997](#) - Section 13(2)(l)
- [Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#)
- [Critical Incident Protocol](#)

5 Amendments

AMENDMENT DATE	VERSION NO	DESCRIPTION
17 October 2001	1.0	Initial release
26 February 2019	2.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Repeals and remakes SS 3.1.8 v1.0➤ Change of title to 'Critical Incidents'➤ Updated to align with current processes and to provide for a Critical Incident Protocol