SECTION 5 - POST DISASTER AND RECOVERY PROCEDURES

5.1 THE FIRST TWENTY-FOUR HOURS

This section is intended to guide principals, teachers and volunteers through the first twenty-four hours following a disaster and is based on the assumption that the school building is not safe for re-entry.

The Incident Command System (ICS) provides a management system that organizes the functions, tasks and staff within the overall emergency response. It transforms the confusion of an emergency into a well-managed response by recognizing "people" as the primary assets and providing them the critical answers to "Who's in Charge?" and "What's My Job?". The ICS promotes communications and coordination. However, for the ICS to work, all responders must understand the system and their role in it. Such an understanding can only be gained through training, experience, and teamwork.

The ICS is a useable, adaptable and well-tested approach to emergency management that is gaining increasing acceptance by government and industry. The success of the ICS rests with its:

- modular organization;
- the use of common terminology;
- unified command structure;
- span-of-control; and
- resource management.

The Justice Institute of BC offers four levels of ICS courses (I-100, I-200, I-300, I-400). All staff members should be familiar with the ICS at a basic level.

Staff members who take on greater responsibilities during a major disaster or emergency need to have a higher level of training and understanding in the ICS.

5.1.1   Basic Organization of School and Staff

a)   Staff and volunteers should immediately establish a Command Centre and begin performing pre-assigned team roles. These include:

(i)   Calming and reassuring frightened persons, and providing first aid to injured persons.

(ii)   Checking and accounting for all those who were in the building, and organizing search and rescue teams to locate missing or seriously injured persons.

(iii)   Assessing structural damage. Each school should have at least two people trained in simple damage assessment techniques.

(iv)   Extinguishing small fires.

(v)   Checking damage to utilities:

- If necessary shut off main power, gas and water. In general natural gas should not be shut off unless made necessary by the smell of leaking gas in the building. Similarly the water and electricity should be shut off only if leaving it on causes endangerment or damage to people or property.

- Principals should establish a place to locate a wrench and keys to the gas enclosure, and the electrical vault, and should determine where the water shut off is located in the building. A maintenance staff member will show Principals how to carry out the shutdowns.

- Since the electrical vault is a life-threatening environment; extreme care must be used in turning off the power. Do not stand directly in front of the main fuse box when shutting off or turning on the power.

(vi)   Sealing off areas wear hazardous materials have been spilled.

(vii)   Establishing first aid centre, search & rescue, food & water, shelter and sanitation areas. For details of the Response Function Teams roles and responsibilities, see **Appendix K**.

b)   Teachers need to:

(i)   Immediately account for all students and report to the Command Centre noting possible whereabouts of any missing student, i.e. washroom etc.

(ii)   Assess the condition of all adults and students in their charge and report status to the Command Centre.

(iii)   Record the name of any student released to first aid centre and be sure that child has their identification card attached. If a child has been released to the first aid centre without identification, the teacher should see that this is done as soon as possible after accounting for other class members.

(iv)   Distribute comfort kits and see that each student wears his identification card. Have each student put on rain gear (orange garbage bag) if weather dictates.

(v)   Record the release of any student whose parent or authorized designate has arrived to pick-up the child, **or in the case of secondary school students**, recording the names of those who have requested a release to go home or to retrieve younger siblings.

5.1.2   Food

The emergency container should have sufficient food rations to feed staff and students expected to be on site for the first seventy-two hours. Portions are 3 food rations per adult/teen per day and 3 food rations per 2 children per day. A good rule of thumb is

to allow for 25% of the student population and 50% of the staff population. Expiry dates need to be checked annually, with expired food rations replaced.

5.1.3   Water

a)   The emergency container should have sufficient water rations for staff and students expected to be on site for the first seventy-two hours. Portions are 3 water rations per person per day. A good rule of thumb is to allow for 25% of the student population and 50% of the staff population. Expiry dates need to be checked annually, with expired water rations replaced.

b)   In case of running out of water rations, a supply of water purification tablets should also be stored in the emergency container

c)   Avoid storage of water in barrels as the moisture given off or potential leaking can damage the emergency container and its contents.

5.1.4   Shelter

Shelter refers to not only emergency housing but also to clothing, light, and in some cases, emergency heat sources. Shelter was examined from three basic levels:

a)   Classroom Level

   (i)   The primary concern here is emergency clothing and prevention of exposure.

   (ii)   Comfort/survival kits (**Appendix H-5**) should contain 1 large orange plastic bag for coat and one plastic grocery bag for hat.

   (iii)   Utilize "Lost and Found" as an emergency supply of clothing. Keep it stored in a box on wheels in an accessible location. Utilize sports teams' uniforms.

b)   School Level

The primary concern here is providing tools and materials for emergency shelter, light and heat (see **Appendix H-4** for minimum list of supplies in the Emergency Container).

c)   Community Level

Planning at this level is covered under Section 4.2 – 24 to 72 Hour Plans.

5.1.5   Sanitation

a)   A system should be in place right from the beginning to minimize the spread of disease.

b)   Schools should pre-establish one or two "safe houses" in close proximity of the school where toilet services may be available during and following a disaster.

c)   A latrine area can also be established using stored equipment and supplies (see **Appendix H-4** for minimum list of supplies in the Emergency Container).

The simplest version is an area surrounded by black polyethylene and using the sturdy plastic containers (used as storage for comfort kits) lined with plastic bags.

5.1.6   Communications

a)   Communications both on and off site should be established on two levels:

(i)   On-site communications are handled by the use of bullhorns, walkie-talkies and aided by runners.

(ii)   Off-site communications handled by the use of District-supplied trunking two-way radio system, cellular phones, ham operators in the vicinity (including fixed radio sites at the neighbourhood fire hall, bus and taxi radios, pay phones at the school and carefully kept staff records. It is up to the school to maintain careful records and to transmit this information to emergency officials as soon as possible after any emergency.

b)   A system using colour coded signs and flags may also be adopted to aid in identifying classes and/or schools needing immediate emergency help. The Delta Emergency Program Office continues to work with the Delta Amateur Radio Society in setting up fixed radio sites at each of the fire halls in Delta. The fire halls should be used as operational sites during any major disaster or emergency, able to communicate with the Delta Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), so that information can be collected, and resources dispatched to the areas of highest priority.

c)   It is important for schools to be able to communicate with the District Emergency Operations Centre. This may be accomplished by telephone, cell phone, or by sending a "runner" to the nearest firehall (for ham radio communication to the EOC).

5.2 TWENTY-FOUR TO SEVENTY-TWO HOUR PLANS

5.2.1   Alternatives to Keeping Children at the School

Should the first twenty-four hours pass without all children being picked up by parents or their designate, and there has not yet been a community reception centre established, the following alternatives may be examined:

a)   Billeting to "safe houses" (neighbouring residents or other community members) raises some concerns regarding legal responsibilities of the school and those who offer to billet; it is recommended that anyone volunteering to billet be pre-screened (including criminal record check).

b)   Parents can be requested to give extra emergency alternates on the school emergency cards to ensure a designate is available for their child.

c)   Once community reception centres are established, children may be transferred to these centres.

d) School staff must remain with students transferred to safe houses or reception centres until the parent, legal guardian or a parent-approved adult(s) listed on the Student Emergency Release Form (**Appendix J-2**).

5.2.2 <u>Continued Care at the School with Help from Community Volunteers</u>

If there is widespread damage in the area, and provided the community has done some pre-planning, then the school may well be the best place for everyone to remain until community reception centres are established. This will necessitate community involvement:

a) Neighbourhood plans and volunteers must be developed and solicited in advance. These plans must ensure enough people are available to assist in caring for children still at the school and other community members forced from their homes. Compiling lists and assigning people specific duties in advance would be done on an annual basis at the beginning of each school year.

b) Extra supplies of food and water will need to be stored off-site by members of the immediate neighbourhood:

(i) Volunteers who agree to store these supplies should also be responsible for their delivery to the school following a disaster.

(ii) Lists of these volunteers and their supplies should be kept at the school with other school plans.

c) More extensive emergency supplies for shelter and sanitation will also need to be stored off-site and brought to the school by volunteers. These should include: tents, motorhomes, barbeques, etc., as well as extra supplies of toilet paper, plastic bags, sanitary pads, etc.

d) Medical supplies stored at the school should be available under proper supervision for use by community members.

e) Emergency equipment and supplies stored at the school should be available for use by community volunteers.

f) Use walkie-talkies, bullhorns and whistles for communicating within the group and cellular phones for communicating with the outside area. Pay phone services will be restored first, so have twenty-five cents available.

g) It should be reminded that reception centre occupants have not been pre-screened, so students must be kept in groups with school staff or family members when staying at the reception centre.

5.3 RECOVERY

5.3.1   General

A return to normalcy is not only important for the school community, but also for the broader community as it encourages the re-establishment of routine (e.g. families taking children to school, going to work etc.). It is important that schools have recovery plans in place prior to a catastrophic event taking place. These plans need to consider how the school will bring the system back to normalcy and address the following five areas of recovery.

5.3.2   Emotional and Psychological Recovery: Responding to Trauma

a)   Emotional and psychological recovery involves caring for the mental health of those individuals in the system who experienced or witnessed trauma, whether as a result of an emergency, disaster or critical incident. A crisis response may be contained within the system where it occurs and there may be adequate resources within the system to respond to it, as there is a high level of predictability concerning who will most likely be impacted.

On the other hand, a traumatic event is often not contained within the system where it occurs and affects multiple systems. There may be inadequate resources within the system to respond and it must rely upon outside to respond to the magnitude of the event.

Regardless of the type of emergency, the people involved will inevitably experience distress. In the field of crisis response, multiple terms are used, often interchangeably, to describe events that are traumatic. Terms such as crisis, tragic event, critical incident, traumatic event and trauma are just a few of the common expressions. These expressions indicate that something has happened that would cause a state of mental, emotional and physical stress to individuals exposed to the situation.

b)   The Delta School District has established a School Critical Incident Response Protocol which is to be followed if and when a traumatic event occurs. Refer to **Appendix O**.

5.3.3   Physical and Structural Recovery

Following a disaster, it may be necessary to repair or rebuild various structures in the district. For many this can extend the trauma as the return to normalcy is delayed. While the technical details of repair or rebuilding are generally the responsibility of staff at the district level, staff at the school level need to ensure, to the fullest extent possible, that student and school life is as normal as can be and that students are supported through the construction transition.

5.3.4 Continuity of Operations

A Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) is implemented when schools are closed temporarily or inaccessible. The intent of the plan is to ensure the continuation of critical school district services for an extended duration of time following the initial emergency or threat. This duration of time may range from a few hours to many days or even months. The COOP outlines steps and actions necessary to resume essential academic, business and physical services after an incident as quickly as possible.

The District Business Continuity Plan is contained in **Appendix M**.

5.3.5 Restoration of Academic Learning

The primary purpose of schools is the education of our students. The restoration of academic learning may involve temporary arrangements and special accommodations depending on the nature of the emergency. If schools cannot be opened in a timely manner, arrangements should be made to have students attend school at alternative sites or to meet with teachers once or twice a week to pick up and drop off homework. The intent is that learning will be disrupted for the least amount of time. This must be tempered, however, with a need to care for and attend to the emotional well-being of students and staff and this may delay a full return to routine.

5.3.6 Debriefing Session

Debriefing after an actual emergency is on a very different scale than debriefing after a drill. Not only will the debriefing session provide vital information to the planners, it will also be an opportunity for those involved to talk about their experience. This means that emotions will be very close to the surface and care must be taken in how the debriefing sessions are characterized and facilitated. Employ the services of professionals if necessary.

Also recognize that a serious emergency such as is contemplated in this guide does not affect just the school. Trauma can be felt far beyond the school, creating ripples throughout an entire community. Debriefing with all those persons who were impacted by, or instrumental in carrying out the response, is critical and, while the school or district is not solely responsible, they can play an important role in helping to heal the community. When planning for debriefing, consider:

- balancing the amount of time between the event and the debriefing session by caring for the emotional needs of the participants. While there is a need to ensure good, accurate recall, debriefing, especially when an event has been particularly traumatic, should not displace the need to ensure that the individuals who have been affected as victims or responders, have had sufficient time to begin to heal. In these cases, do not rush to debrief;

- including all those who were involved in or impacted by the situation – students, staff, first responders, volunteers, community members – in the debriefing/ feedback process; and

- using the feedback to improve mitigation, planning, response and recovery efforts and to communicate with community.