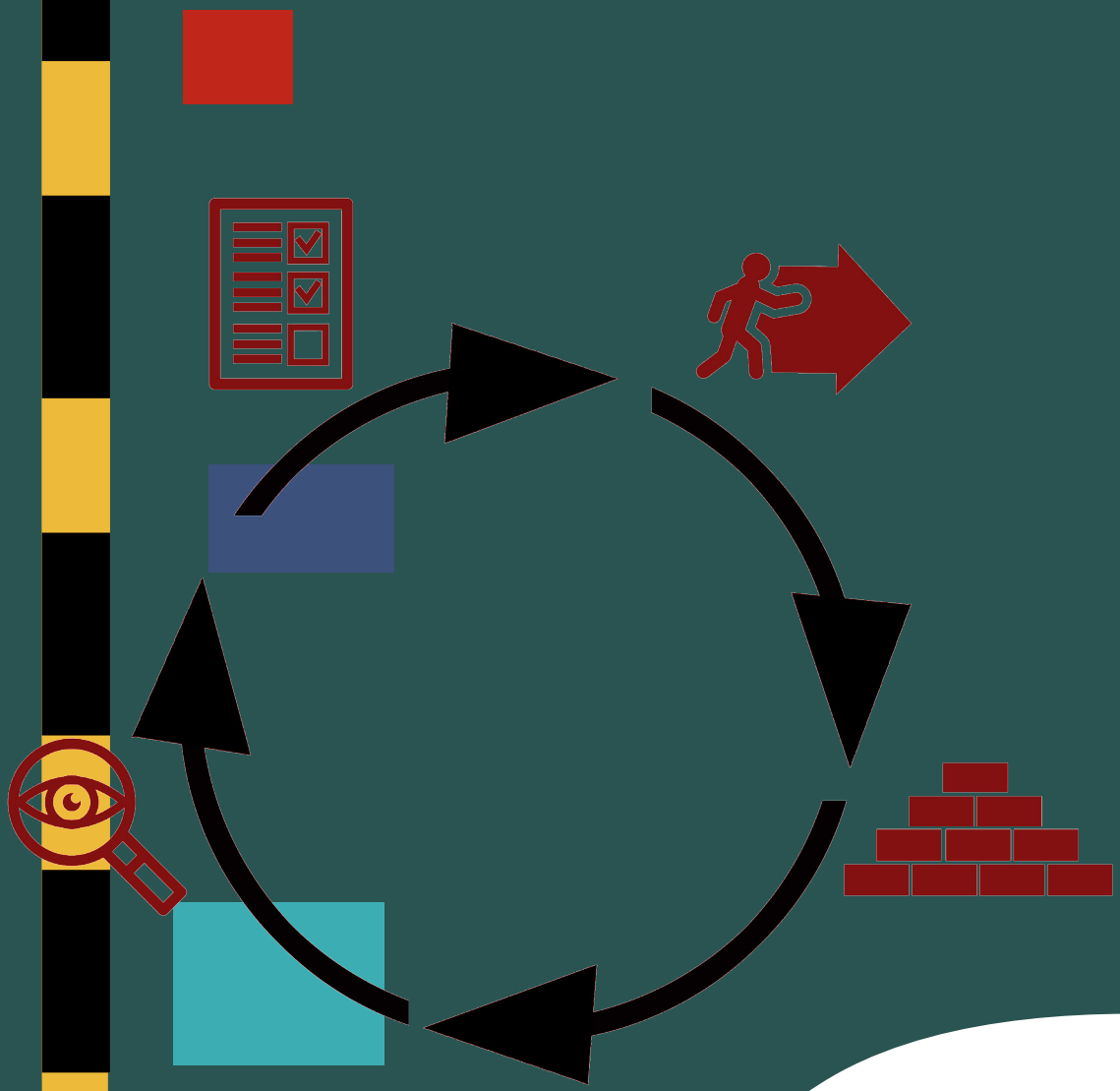
Emergency Management Plan



Manitoba

LAND AND TREATY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We recognize that Manitoba is on Treaty 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 10 Territories and the ancestral lands of the Anishinaabe, Anishininewuk, Dakota Oyate, Denesuline, Ininiwak, and Nehethowuk Peoples. We acknowledge Manitoba is located on the Homeland of the Red River Métis. We acknowledge northern Manitoba includes lands that were and are the ancestral lands of the Inuit.

We respect the spirit and intent of Treaties and Treaty Making and remain committed to working in partnership with First Nations, the Inuit, and the Métis in the spirit of truth, reconciliation, and collaboration.

Emergency Management Plan

2026

Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning

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Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning Emergency Management Plan establishes the foundation for a coordinated, department-wide Emergency Management Program supporting the Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K to 12) and Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) sectors. The plan adopts an all hazards approach to strengthen provincial capacity to mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters that may affect children, students, staff, families, and essential departmental (ELCC and K to 12) services.

The rationale for the Emergency Management Program is grounded in the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) of Manitoba's 2022 Department of Education and Early Childhood Learning's Leadership of the K–12 Pandemic Response. The OAG concluded that, prior to COVID-19, the department lacked a coordinated, system-wide emergency management program, clearly defined roles and responsibilities, and standardized approaches to preparedness, communications, recovery, and continuous improvement. Although the department demonstrated strong leadership and adaptability during the pandemic response, the experience highlighted the risks of relying on ad hoc, reactive structures rather than an established, sustainable emergency management framework.

This plan represents a strategic shift in the departments' approach to emergency management, embedding pandemic lessons learned along with best practices into standard departmental operations and addressing the OAG's recommendations for system readiness, governance, and accountability.

Objectives

Guided by the vision of Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning and the recommendations laid forth by the OAG, the plan aims to:

- Protect the health, safety, and well-being of children, students, staff, and communities during emergencies.
- Reduce disruption to learning and care while maintaining continuity of essential services.
- Establish clear leadership, governance, and accountability across the department, school divisions, schools, and child care facilities.
- Standardize emergency management practices, communications, and decision making across both sectors.
- Strengthen preparedness through risk-based planning, training, exercises, and shared tools.

- Promote collaboration with the ELCC and K to 12 sectors, emergency management partners, public health, and local authorities.
- Support continuous improvement through after action reviews and structured recovery processes.

Emergency Management Framework

The Emergency Management Program is built around four interdependent phases:

1. **Preparedness –** Hazard, Risk, and Vulnerability Analysis (HRVA), emergency and business continuity planning, training, exercises, and resource management
2. **Response –** Scalable, coordinated incident management using recognized systems such as the Incident Command System and Emergency Operations Centres
3. **Recovery –** Actions to restore services, support psychosocial well-being, and integrate lessons learned through after action reviews
4. **Mitigation –** Long term measures to reduce risk, vulnerability, and the impacts of future emergencies

Across all phases, the plan emphasizes communication, coordination, and collaboration as essential pillars of effective emergency management.

Strategic Significance

Developed in collaboration with sector partners, and with leadership support, the Emergency Management Plan fulfills legislative and accountability expectations while also strengthening resilience and response capabilities within the department and across the ELCC and K to 12 sectors. It ensures the department, along with sector partners, are better prepared, more resilient, and able to safeguard learning, care, and public confidence under all conditions.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Emergencies and disasters may occur unexpectedly and without any signs or warnings. Despite extensive mitigation and disaster risk reduction efforts to minimize the impact, Manitoba has experienced several natural and human-caused events including floods, wildfires, severe weather, epidemics, dangerous goods spills, and other hazards. Climate change may contribute to increasing frequency and intensity of hazards.

These events can lead to fatalities, injuries, service interruptions, and restricted access to essential necessities; highlighting the importance of having a comprehensive emergency program in place to ensure that children, students, and staff across schools and early learning centres in Manitoba are safeguarded from as much harm as possible.

Emergency Management Program vs. Emergency Management Plan

An emergency management plan is a formal written document that outlines how an organization will respond to and recover from an emergency or disaster, whereas an emergency management program is an ongoing system that provides the structure, governance, and resources needed to manage emergencies over time. A program is often an organization-wide responsibility that is long term. The department emergency management plan provides a more high-level, strategic overview of the department's emergency management program, focusing not solely on response and recovery, but more broadly on preparation and mitigation efforts. In comparison, emergency management plans, at the school division, school, or child care facility level, will typically focus on detailed "how to" response and recovery actions.

1.1 Purpose

To provide the framework for which preparedness, response, and recovery activities will be taken to enhance the health and safety of children and staff during emergencies and/or disasters.

1.2 Scope

The Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning Emergency Management Plan is an all-hazards plan to support both the ELCC and K to 12 sectors in Manitoba before, during, and after major emergencies and/or disasters*. The plan does not apply to emergencies when only first response authorities are required.

* The *Emergency Measures Act* defines a major emergency as a non-routine emergency. A disaster is a major emergency that could result in a loss of life, serious harm, or damage to the safety, health, or welfare of people or, widespread damage to property or the environment.

It also highlights the components and functions of a comprehensive emergency management framework, supported by practical guides, tools, and templates to aid implementation.

1.3 Objectives

Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning Vision	Manitoba Emergency Management Organization Vision
From every part of Manitoba, from every background, all children and youth matter, belong, are respected, successful, and safe.	A safe Manitoba that is resilient to all hazards, emergencies, and disasters.

Guided by the Department's and Manitoba EMO's visions, the objectives for the MEECL Emergency Management Program are as follows:

- Prioritize and ensure the safety and well-being of department and sector staff, children, and students within child care facilities and schools in the event of an emergency.
- Reduce disruption and maintain continuity of service in the department and across the sectors.
- Keep department and sector staff, students, children, and parents/caregivers informed about existing and potential threats within their landscape by supporting their hazard, risk, and vulnerability assessments.
- Define clear roles and responsibilities for the department, sector staff, students, children and parents/caregivers in the ELCC and K to 12 sectors during emergencies.
- Provide guides, tools, and templates to support department and sector staff in implementing and adhering to procedures during an emergency or disaster.
- Provide training, exercises, after action reviews, guides, and support to assist the department, and the ELCC and K to 12 sectors, in evaluating and improving their emergency preparedness efforts.
- Establish a standardized communication protocol and notification system aligned and applicable across the sectors.

2.0 EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DEFINED

Emergency Management is an ongoing process to prevent, mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from an incident (CSA, Emergency and Continuity Management Program, 2014). Emergency Management involves not only the actual response to an emergency, but also a continuous process of preparation, testing/practice, and revision. The process can be imagined as an ongoing cycle involving four major aspects, each of which informs the others, known as the four Phases of Emergency Management (Figure 1). These phases are interdependent risk-based functions of Emergency Management and are often described as part of a continuous process.

A comprehensive emergency management program must address all phases. The significance of the emergency management cycle is that all communities or organizations are in at least one phase of emergency management at any time, and all must be accounted for in emergency management best practices.

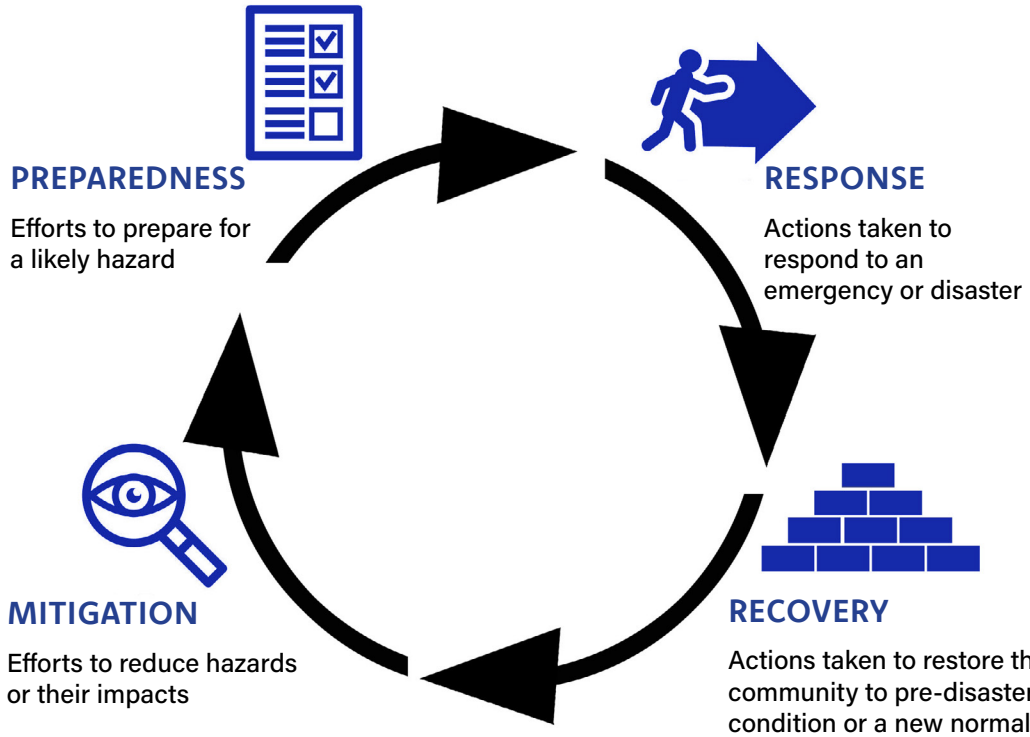


Figure 1: Phases of Emergency Management

More detailed information about the Emergency Management cycle can be found in Section 5, Phases of Emergency Management.

Throughout all phases of the cycle, there are three critical components that form the foundation of effective emergency management:

Communication: Clear, timely, and accurate communication ensures that information flows efficiently among responders, leadership, sector stakeholders, department staff, and the public. Clear communication reduces confusion and duplication of effort and can include both internal and external communication, in turn reducing confusion and promoting coordinated decision making.

Coordination: Successful emergency management depends on coordinated actions from everyone engaged in the emergency response, working together with a common purpose and plan. This helps align resources, roles, and responsibilities and promotes unified command and shared situational awareness. Effective coordination builds trust and strengthens the collective response capability while encouraging support and adaptability in dynamic situations.

Collaboration: Collaboration ensures all engaged staff and stakeholders work collectively before, during, and after an incident. No single organization can manage an emergency alone. Building trust and mutual support between the department and stakeholders can encourage flexibility and problem solving under pressure.

2.1 All Hazards Approach

All Hazards is defined as: natural, technological, or human–caused incidents that warrant action to protect life, property, environment, and public health or safety and to minimize disruptions of school activities. In most cases, emergency managers and Subject Matter Expert's (SME's) apply an All–Hazards approach when developing emergency management plans and programs prioritizing results from the Hazard, Risk, and Vulnerability Analysis.

An All-Hazards Approach includes an integrated approach to emergency preparedness which focuses on identifying hazards and developing emergency preparedness capacities and capabilities that are not just limited to use in a single hazard scenario. For example, many of the common procedures that pre-exist within school and child care facility plans—such as evacuation, lockdown, lockout, and shelter in place—can be used to plan a response for many hazards impacting schools and child care facilities.

Emergency Management using this approach does not mean that a department, school, or child care facility must create a specific plan or an exact response for every hazard. Instead, it focuses on establishing a strong foundation to address a broad range of related emergencies. This approach makes emergency preparedness more effective and scalable, creating a solid foundation of a plan for all emergencies. Regardless, hazards that have unique characteristics, requirements, and procedures may require a hazard-specific plan that will address the specific risks and technical details as a supplement to the All-Hazards approach.

3.0 LEGISLATION AND AUTHORITY

This section highlights the various pieces of legislation that outline the requirements related to emergency management in Manitoba, at the provincial, department, school, and child care levels.

3.1 Manitoba Emergency Management Organization

In Manitoba, the foundational provincial legislation for general emergency management is the Emergency Measures Act. It is a broad legislation that gives provincial authorities the legal capacity to lead the province through any type of emergency. It also directs provincial departments to develop and regularly review emergency management and continuity programs.

Legislation	Relevant Section
The Emergency Measures Act	Section 8.1(2) Emergency management programs - departments The Minister may require a department to prepare an emergency management program and provide the department directions with respect to program's preparation. Section 8.1(3) A department must review and revise any continuity plan or emergency management program it is required to prepare under subsection (1) or (2) on a regular basis and when directed to do so by the minister. Section 8.1(4) A department must give the co-ordinator the most recent version of its continuity plan or emergency management program.

3.2 Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning

The Education Administration Act, The Public Schools Act, and The Community Child Care Standards Act are the main pieces of legislation that govern education and early childhood learning in Manitoba. These acts set out the rights and responsibilities of Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning, school boards, principals, teachers, child care providers, child care board of directors, parents, and students.

Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning provides the overall guidance for the ELCC and K to 12 sectors through governance, policy, and legislation and standards.

Legislation	Relevant Section
The Public Schools Act	SAFE SCHOOLS Codes of conduct and emergency response plans 47.1(1) The principal of each school must, in consultation with the school's advisory committee prescribed under clause 4(1) (p.1) of The Education Administration Act, (a) establish a code of conduct for pupils and staff and an emergency response plan for the school; and (b) review that code of conduct and emergency response plan at least annually.
The Education Administration Act	Regulations Section 4.1 (p.1) respecting the establishment of a committee at each school to advise the principal in developing policies and practices respecting a code of conduct and emergency response plan for the school and respecting the composition of those committees. (p.2) respecting the conduct of pupils and staff in schools including requirements to be contained in a school's code of conduct and emergency response plan in addition to those mentioned in section 47.1 of the Public Schools Act.
The Community Child Care Standards Act	Codes of conduct and safety plans 15.1 In accordance with the regulations, every licence holder must (a) establish for the facility a code of conduct and a safety plan, which are subject to approval by the provincial director; (b) review the code of conduct and safety plan at least annually; and (c) ensure that each facility staff member is instructed about the code of conduct and safety plan when first employed and annually after that.

4.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

To ensure preparedness, prompt response, and early recovery during emergencies, it is vital to establish clear roles and responsibilities for all parties involved. Defining these roles ensures the delegation of authority, fosters accountability, and answers the questions, "*Who is doing what*" and *"Who is taking action on the required measures*". It is important to note that even the most well-crafted plan can fail without defined roles and responsibilities.

The following roles and responsibilities serve as a guide. Additional roles and responsibilities may be included based on the specific organizational structure of each facility/school/unit.

4.1 Early Learning and Child Care Sector

4.1.1 Executive Director/License Holder

The executive director, in consultation with the board of directors and the license holder(s) in a home or group home child care, is responsible for the safety and management of their program including the safety of the children in the event of an emergency. Each child care facility is responsible for developing policies and procedures that ensure the safety of the children, families, and staff in an emergency. This includes having a complete understanding of up-to-date emergency procedures and protocols and ensuring timely communication and decision making to mitigate risk and coordinate emergency responses effectively. The Executive Director and/or the License Holder also work(s) closely with local authorities and first responders to manage an emergency situation and facilitate the recovery process by providing emotional and mental health supports to staff and children.

4.1.2 Child Care Facility Staff

Child care facility staff play an important role during emergencies, ensuring children stay calm, providing first aid, and assisting those with additional support needs. Staff should have knowledge of all emergency procedures and be able to relay critical information to children and first responders. Child care facility staff also provide emotional support and guidance to children during emergencies and practice emergency procedures regularly.

4.2 Kindergarten to Grade 12 Sector

4.2.1 Superintendent

The role of the superintendent is that of a leader and CEO within public school divisions in Manitoba who works closely with, and reports directly to, the elected school board. The superintendent ensures each school within their division completes emergency planning procedures. The superintendent develops effective communication strategies and relationship skills with all members of the community. During an emergency event, the superintendent communicates with Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning Emergency Management staff and other partners (community agencies and local authorities) to ensure effective collaboration and communication for the safety of staff and students.

4.2.2 Principal

The school principal provides day-to-day leadership in their school. During emergencies or disasters, the principal ensures the safety of students, staff, and the broader school community. This includes having a complete understanding of up-to-date emergency procedures and protocols and ensuring timely communication and decision making to mitigate risk and coordinate emergency responses effectively. The school principal also works closely with local authorities and first responders to manage an emergency situation and facilitate the recovery process by providing emotional and mental health supports to staff and students.

4.2.3 Staff

School staff play an important role during emergencies, ensuring students stay calm, providing first aid, and assisting those with additional support needs. Staff should have knowledge of all emergency procedures and be able to relay critical information to students and first responders. School staff also provide emotional support and guidance to students during emergencies and practice emergency procedures regularly.

4.3 Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning

4.3.1 Corporate Services Division, Emergency Management Unit

Under Corporate Services Division, Emergency Management Unit (EMU) develops and maintains the Emergency Management program for the department and the ELCC and K to 12 sectors. This includes:

- Liaising between the department and provincial and local Emergency Management (EM) partners through the Emergency Management Partner Network coordinated by Manitoba EMO.
- Maintaining situational awareness to potential emergencies and disasters.
- Providing guidance, planning, and technical support to the department, schools, and child care facilities in developing and implementing emergency plans and programs.
- Delivering after-hours support to the ELCC and K to 12 sectors in case of an emergency.
- Communicating potential threats and hazards and assisting in the conduct of the Hazard, Risk, and Vulnerability Analysis within the sectors.
- Providing response and operational guidance when the response capability of affected schools and/or child care facilities exceeds their capacities.
- Providing the sector and partners with a clear and well-structured communication plan and emergency notification system.
- Chairing internal and external stakeholder working groups that assist in the development and maintenance of the emergency management program.
- Supporting policy changes and enhancement of standards, and establishing common definitions for key emergency management activities.

4.3.2 System Performance and Accountability

System Performance and Accountability Division is responsible for the governance structures, policies, and planning for the K to 12 education system, along with the stewardship of education funding and resources, including the design of sustainable funding structures. Governance and Policy Branch within System Performance and Accountability Division leads administrative policy for the public school system and provides regulatory oversight of the independent, international, and home school systems.

4.3.3 Student Achievement and Inclusion

Student Achievement and Inclusion Division is responsible for system accountability by monitoring and reporting on student achievement and the well-being of all students, including those with diverse learning needs, through the development and oversight of school division planning and reporting guidelines in the K to 12 Framework for Continuous Improvement. Within Student Achievement and Inclusion Division, Inclusion Support Branch is responsible for all department matters related to students with diverse learning needs. The branch supports the Philosophy of Inclusion as a fundamental principle of the education system in Manitoba for children with diverse learning needs and works collaboratively with other government departments with a mandate that includes children and youth. The branch develops policy and supports divisions in the provision of remote learning and utilization of online learning tools.

4.3.4 Indigenous Excellence in Education

Indigenous Excellence in Education is responsible for providing leadership and direction to address systemic barriers and inequities that currently and historically have impacted Indigenous student achievement. The division leads the development, review, and implementation of policies and initiatives related to Indigenous education and system-wide change, and assesses provincial programming, standards, and reporting requirements for alignment with Manitoba's Indigenous Education Policy Framework. Key initiatives include Indigenous student achievement; Anti-racism and equity; Indigenous languages programming; Northern, Indigenous, and Indigenous language teacher recruitment and retention; and Indigenous and Treaty Education in Manitoba's K to 12 education system.

The division facilitates and maintains relationships with Indigenous rights holders, organizations, and the education sector to support Indigenous students, families, and communities throughout the K to 12 education system and to ensure equitable contributions to the success of Indigenous students in Manitoba.

4.3.5 Early Learning and Child Care

Before, during, and after an emergency, the Early Learning and Child Care Division provides expertise and policy direction regarding early learning and child care system requirements, accountabilities, and continuity of services. The Division plays a critical role in ensuring regulatory oversight and maintaining compliance with established standards for licensed child care providers. It also provides stewardship of public funding, including the design and implementation of sustainable funding structures to support the stability and resilience of the early learning and child care system.

In addition, the Division offers guidance and resources to executive directors, boards of directors, and license holders in home-based and group child care settings to interpret policy and guidelines and address the immediate needs of children and/or staff throughout an emergency. This includes ensuring access

to inclusion supports for children with diverse needs, so that equitable and responsive care continues during times of disruption.

4.3.6 Finance and Administration

Provides executive planning, management, and administrative support to the department, including policy and program direction, central comptrollership, and financial support.

4.4 Manitoba Emergency Management Organization

The Manitoba Emergency Management Organization (EMO) coordinates and manages emergencies and disasters on behalf of the provincial government. This includes:

- overseeing emergency preparedness
- managing, directing, and coordinating the response of all Manitoba government departments to a major emergency or disaster
- supporting recovery efforts following an emergency or disaster
- implementing mitigation strategies to reduce the impacts over time

Manitoba EMO leads and coordinates the Emergency Management Partners Network (EMPN) and includes partners/stakeholders from municipal, provincial (including Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning), and federal governments, as well as utilities and non-governmental organizations. EMPN brings together individuals from different organizations who are dedicated to strengthening emergency management and public safety throughout the province to ensure effective collaboration, coordination, and communication.

4.5 Shared Health/Public Health

Public Health Emergency Management (PHEM) provides leadership and coordination for the provincial public health and health system response during emergencies and crises. The team ensures timely situational awareness across the health sector, enabling informed decision-making and effective response actions. Serving as the primary liaison between Public Health and external partners such as Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning, PHEM facilitates collaboration and access to subject matter experts in health and public health disciplines. Additionally, PHEM represents Manitoba as the health emergency management link to the federal Public Health Emergency Management Working Group and the National Public Health Network Council, which includes Canada's Chief Medical Officers of Health.

4.6 Local Authorities

During an emergency or disaster, Local Authorities have the primary responsibility for:

- managing an emergency that occurs within its boundaries
- communicating potential threats and hazards to communities and partners, including schools and child care facilities
- providing immediate response support to affected schools or facilities by sending local fire, police, EMS, community workers, etc.
- assisting (where possible) and providing feedback and recommendations during the conduct of school or child care facility emergency drills and exercises

4.7 First Responders

First Responders immediately respond to an incident upon receipt of a call to 911 that may jeopardize the safety and security of students and staff. When invited by the department, school, or child care facility, first responders participate in emergency planning, exercises, and drills in the sectors. First responders can provide recommendations to department, schools, and child care facilities on how to enhance initial response capabilities.

4.8 Parents/Caregivers

Parents/Caregivers play an integral role in emergency preparedness within schools and child care facilities. They must ensure all contact, medical, and authorized release information for their children is accurate and up to date. Parents and caregivers are encouraged to support emergency procedures by reinforcing safety practices at home and helping their children understand the importance of following instructions during drills and real emergencies. They should also respond promptly to alerts and instructions from the school or child care facility during emergencies and encourage their children to report any potential threats or hazards to teachers and/or support staff.

4.9 Children and Students

Children and students play an important role in emergency preparedness within schools and child care facilities. They should actively participate in all emergency drills and practice calm, orderly behaviour. Children are encouraged to report any potential threats or hazards to a teacher or support staff. They should remain calm while listening carefully and follow all emergency procedures and health and safety instructions before, during, and after an emergency.

5.0 PHASES OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Recall that Emergency Management (EM) is defined as an ongoing process to prevent, mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from an incident. (Canadian Standards Association (CSA), Emergency and Continuity Management Program, 2014). Within the Emergency Management process are four phases that are not only connected (Figure 2), but can also occur simultaneously. Each phase is described in more detail on the following page.

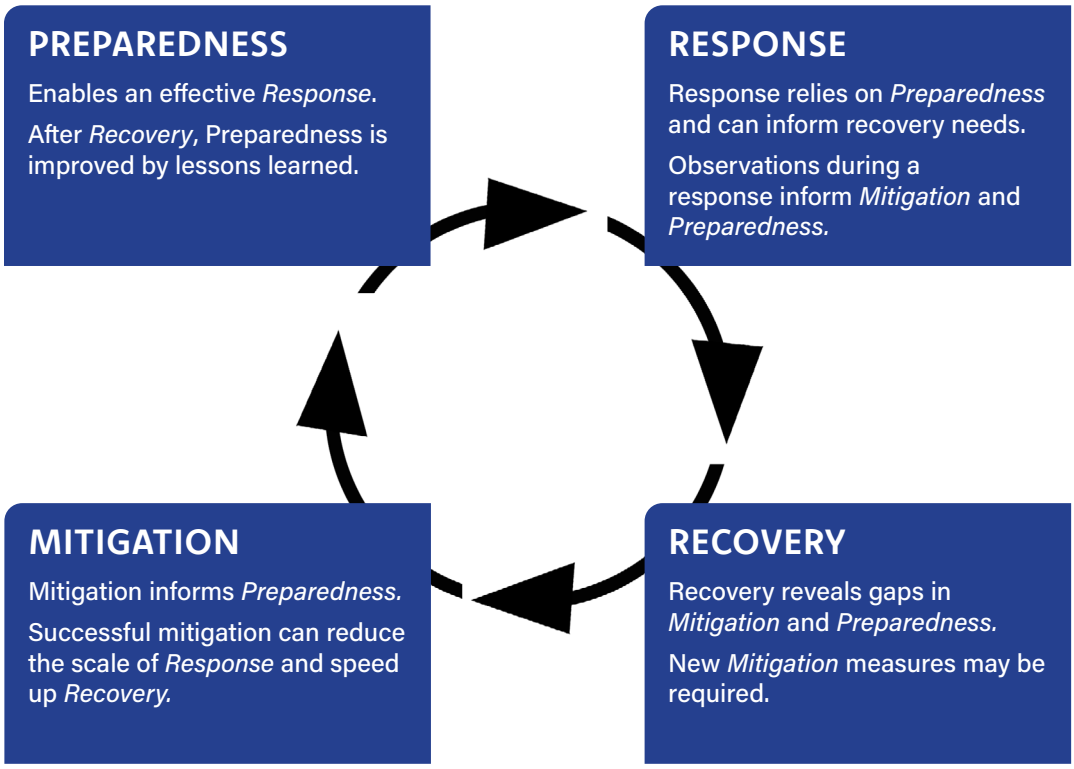


Figure 2: The Interconnectivity of the Emergency Management Cycle

5.1 Preparedness

Children can be particularly vulnerable to both the threat and actual occurrences of emergencies. Preparing children for certain hazards and empowering them through engagement in school safety should be a key component of school preparedness.

Preparedness activities increase the ability to respond when a disaster occurs and includes a continuous cycle of planning, organizing, training, equipping, exercising, evaluating, and taking corrective action to ensure effective coordination when an incident occurs. All activities during the Preparedness phase ensure the highest level of readiness. Even with the best possible planning, a disaster or emergency often results in loss of property, threat to safety, or loss of life. One of the keys of emergency preparedness is to ensure losses are not catastrophic and to resume a level of normalcy as soon as possible.



Preparedness can overlap with the other phases of Emergency management which is why comprehensive emergency management requires ongoing effort to plan for OR to implement actions across all phases.

Most often we are in the preparedness phase of the emergency management cycle. While an emergency can occur at anytime with little or no notice, it is important that during the preparedness phase there are continuous improvement activities being undertaken. The Emergency Management Unit in Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning has trained emergency management staff to support preparedness activities within the department including:

- Collaborating, supporting, and consulting with the ELCC and K to 12 sectors

- Developing plans, procedures, and templates for the department and the ELCC and K to 12 sectors, including:
  - Development of a hazard, risk, and vulnerability analysis (HRVA) tool and process guide
  - Emergency plan templates and guidance
- Working with department staff for training and Emergency Management program awareness
- Developing training protocols and recommendations
- Developing exercises for the department and the sectors
- Collaborating with Emergency Management partners across the province

5.1.1 Hazard, Risk, and Vulnerability Analysis (HRVA)

Preparedness involves several aspects of planning and coordination to be ready from an all-hazards approach. It is important to plan for the most significant hazards: this is done through the Hazard, Risk, and Vulnerability Analysis (HRVA) process. An HRVA is a critical part of every emergency management program and aids in developing a responsive emergency plan.

HRVA is an assessment of the following:

HAZARD: a potentially damaging physical event, phenomenon, or human activity that may cause loss of life, injury, property, damage, social, and economic disruption, or environmental degradation.

RISK: a potential hazard that can cause harm is a measure of the probability and severity of an adverse effect to health, property, or the environment.

VULNERABILITY: conditions determined by physical, social, economic, and environmental factors or processes which increase the susceptibility of an individual, a community, assets, or systems to the impacts of hazards.

The purpose of an HRVA is to help make risk-based choices to address vulnerabilities, mitigate hazards, and prepare for, respond to, and recover from a range of hazard events that often differ across the province and even within organizations. The HRVA process is the most important stage in developing an emergency plan. It is recommended to maintain an updated HRVA, completing the process every three to five years to ensure the assessment remains accurate and relevant to evolving risks and climate change conditions. HRVAs completed at the department, school, child care facility, or school division levels will differ in scale and content; however, the process is completed in the same fashion.

HRVA Process

During the HRVA process, risks are assessed based on hazards, exposure, vulnerability, capacity, and resilience. With the assistance of pilot project working

groups from the ELCC and K to 12 sectors, the department designed an HRVA tool and guide to support early learning and school facilities throughout every stage of the assessment process. It features a clear, step-by-step process (Figure 3) accompanied by user-friendly tools and templates applicable within the sectors. It is designed to:

- Enhance understanding and preparation for hazards and risks
- Save time and resources by identifying potential scenarios
- Facilitate the development of emergency or enhanced safety plans, exercises, and training tailored to significant events
- Shift emergency management programs from being reactive to proactive

The HRVA process is not intended to forecast the next hazard that may lead to an emergency but to act as a forward-thinking tool through risk assessment to support preparedness planning.

Questions that are often answered during the HRVA process include:

- What hazards are likely to occur within a school premise or child care facility?
- How prepared and resilient is our sector?
- How is climate change impacting the likelihood of a hazard?
- How severe will the consequences be on the population, infrastructure, property, and environment of a school or child care facility?
- What risk-reduction strategies can be implemented at the school or child care facility level?

Step	Action
0	Form HRVA Committee
1	Identify Hazards
2	Determine Likelihood of Hazards
3	Assess Risk and Rank Consequence
4	Build Risk Profile
5	Identify Vulnerabilities
6	Identify Risk Reduction Measures
7	Create HRVA Report

Figure 3: Step-by-Step HRVA Process

5.1.2 Emergency Plan Development

Emergency plans* are one of the most effective means of Preparedness and may be made on various scales: department, school division, school, child care facility, community, etc. Part of planning is to learn about other entities that share in the responsibility of managing an incident for which planning is occurring.

> **The Plan accompanies and does not replace other activities, including training, assessing hazards and risks, and collaborating with stakeholders and partners.**

The department plan provides high-level guidance whereas a school division, school, or child care facility plan focuses on the details or instructions of how to complete required tasks to respond to an emergency or disaster.

The planning process assists in developing meaningful relationships with partners and stakeholders before an emergency or disaster occurs. Emergency Management Plans are the result of important planning activities and include operational decisions made in anticipation of an emergency. Aside from the general benefits of planning, the process can satisfy regulatory and statutory requirements, or the priorities and objectives of senior leadership or elected officials. Emergency Management plans are evidence that an organization has done the necessary work to prepare or respond to a crisis or risk.

Most schools, school divisions, and child care facilities have established emergency management plans. The department, with feedback from the ELCC and K to 12 sectors and emergency management partners, has strengthened emergency planning resources by revising safety planning guidance for child care facilities** and developing an Emergency Response Plan Guide for the K–12 sector. While some facilities have robust emergency management plans already in place, providing guidance for all facilities assists them to prepare for a variety of hazards while ensuring consistency and standardization across the sectors. Plans should be developed collaboratively and collectively among all partners involved in keeping children, students, and staff safe.

Emergency Management in the ELCC and K to 12 sectors is supported by the Emergency Management Unit within the department. This Unit has emergency management staff to support the range of Emergency Management actions within the sectors, including plan development, training, exercising, and plan review. The Emergency Management Unit acts in a more supportive role, while operational decisions are made typically at the most local level, such as the division, school, or child care facility.

The Emergency Management Unit supports policy changes, enhancement of standards for sector planning processes, guidance, and hazard-specific plans. It also supports planning by establishing common definitions for key Emergency Management activities and outputs, approved processes for emergency

* In the ELCC sector, emergency management plans are referred to as 'safety plans.'

** Details regarding the revised safety planning guidance for the ELCC sector are expected to be released in early 2027.

management planning at the local level, and the development of training exercises. A departmental plan and a local school plan differ in nature and level of detail.

To minimize the time and resources required for plan development, the department has created various tools including an emergency response plan guide for the K to 12 sector and an HRVA process, guide, and tool.

5.1.3 Business Continuity

Identification of critical functions falls most directly under the Business Continuity Planning (BCP) component of EM. Preparedness requires continuity of critical functions—or their timely restoration—within organizations/sectors in the event of an emergency or disaster.

Within Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning, the Emergency Management Unit is responsible for:

- Coordinating responses to disruptions that impact multiple divisions, branches, and units
- Standing up a response team to act as a central hub, thus ensuring seamless communication and collaboration amongst the department, organizations, and outside agencies
- Leading the department's BCP Committee
- Maintaining the Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning Business Continuity Program, including:
    - Facilitating reviews of Department, Division, and Branch BCPs every two years
    - Developing and delivering training and exercises for BCP Committee representatives and Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning staff that may be engaged in a BCP disruption
- Maintaining situational awareness and monitoring emerging issues that may impact critical service delivery within the department and assessing potential mitigation measures
- Assessing the disruption and consulting as required with BCP Committee representatives to develop recommendations for EMC decision (e.g., BCP activation, resource allocation, etc.)

For the ELCC and K to 12 sectors, the impacts of the department's BCP include:

- Minimizing the disruption to critical functions that support the health and safety of children, students, and staff while also ensuring that critical services continue, or have limited disruption

5.1.4 Training

Emergencies require quick, effective response and resource management, timely execution of prepared plans and procedures, collaborative problem solving, and prompt decision making under duress. The skills to manage an emergency must be developed through training and experience. Training needs and options must be identified to ensure that the proper skills are developed. Not all staff require specialized training such as exercise design or emergency plan development; however, staff that participate in an emergency operations centre should receive training in basic incident command systems and emergency operations centres (see Section 5.2).

Training is intended to help individuals and organizations to manage an emergency and to help others. Training may be done by many agencies and government entities to facilitate the management of an emergency; some of the most common types of training include exercises and drills that allow people to practice depending upon their roles and responsibilities in an emergency.

5.1.5 Resource Management

In preparedness it is important to consider what materials are needed during an emergency. It should not be assumed that technologies such as mobile phones may be available. Equipment and supplies will vary per facility, therefore a resource inventory during the preparedness phase is important in conjunction with developing a list of resources that will be required. During the preparedness phase it is important to consider what processes might be needed to access certain specialized resources (example, class lists).

5.1.6 Exercises

Exercises are the foundation of Preparedness. They assist in developing capacity and identifying weaknesses in planning better than any other activity, aside from real-world responses. Exercises can:

- Validate plans and procedures
- Identify gaps or weaknesses in plans and procedures (leading to subsequent improvements)
- Give staff practice in their roles laid out in an emergency plan and assess and improve performance
- Test well-established procedures and reveal gaps that may exist

The Emergency Management Unit can deliver seminar and tabletop-based exercises for department staff and the ELCC and K to 12 sectors. For larger operations and functional exercises, Emergency Management Unit staff would rely on the Emergency Management Partner Network for support. Workshops and Tabletop exercises are the most cost-effective way to validate plans and capabilities, whereas larger scale exercises may involve additional facility and personnel costs and as such are conducted less often.

Table 1: Types of Exercises in Emergency Management

Workshops	Basic training designed to familiarize staff with basic concepts in emergency preparedness and response and review their roles and responsibilities as defined in an emergency plan.
Tabletop Exercises	The most common type of exercise, Tabletops involve key personnel discussing simulated scenarios in an informal setting. Tabletops can be used to assess plans, policies, and procedures.
Operations Based	Validate plans, policies, agreements and procedures, clarify roles and responsibilities, and identify resource gaps in an operational environment. Drills (fire drills, lockdown drills) are common operations exercises.
Functional/Full Scale	Functional and full-scale exercises are scenario-based simulated exercises in an operational environment. Full scale exercises require a large budget and extensive planning and take place on a location using equipment and personnel that would be called upon in a real event.

5.1.7 Preparedness Communications

Communication in Emergency management is a critical component during all phases; however, how communication is delivered can be determined during the preparedness phase.

Timely, accurate communication is critical during emergencies. Without clear, concise, and accurate information, speculation, rumours, and misinformation can quickly escalate a situation during an emergency. Information sharing follows established approval processes to ensure accuracy and consistency. Therefore, quick communication is often necessary during emergencies and regular updates help establish credibility and build trust.

A communication response should include a collaborative plan that outlines the contributions, roles, and responsibilities of all parties involved to ensure coordination and minimize confusion.

Emergency communications can differ from routine communications. To ensure information is being shared in an accurate and timely fashion, the department and ELCC and K to 12 sectors each have a role. Communications at the school and child care facility level are detailed in their emergency plans. The following demonstrates how information is shared to and from the department during a large emergency response.

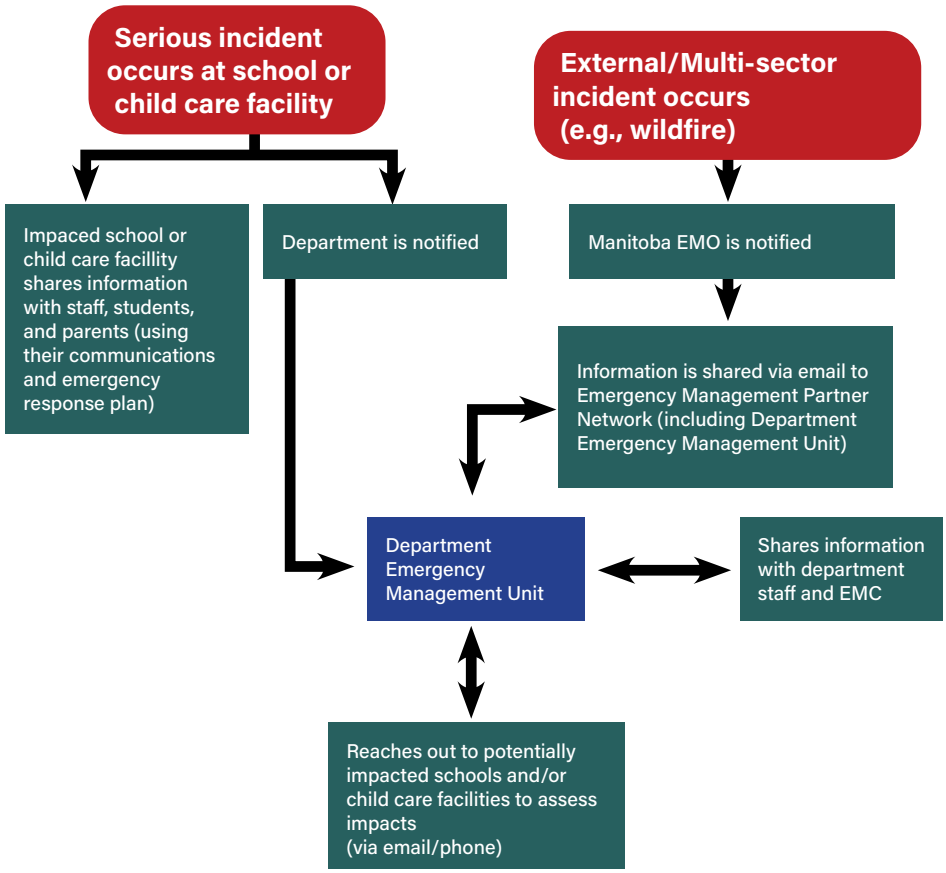


Figure 4: Communication Flow during an Emergency

5.2 Response

Response actions are carried out immediately before, during, and after an emergency event/disaster and are aimed at saving lives, reducing economic losses, and alleviating suffering. Response actions may include activating an emergency operations centre, evacuating threatened populations, opening shelters, and/or providing emergency social services to impacted individuals and communities, and can involve both short- and long-term responses (such as a building fire or months-long wildfire event). During a response, the Emergency Management Unit supports and coordinates the departmental use of resources (including personnel, supplies, and equipment) to help restore personal and environmental safety, as well as to minimize the risk of any additional property damage or other harms.

Within the department, collaboration, communication, and coordination are essential during a disaster or emergency event to ensure the safety of those impacted. While the Emergency Management Unit staff are trained in emergency management and are capable of dealing with smaller emergencies, when more specialized resources are required to support a broader response, there is a need for an organizational structure that includes additional staff to maintain an efficient response. Resource access can be challenging, particularly when multiple response agencies and local groups are present on site. Without effective coordination, these resources may become fragments, resulting in delays and operational inefficiencies.

The solution and international standard for larger scale responses is the use of Incident Management Structures, most notably, the Incident Command System (ICS). ICS is a standardized, All-Hazard, incident management system that can grow or shrink to meet different needs. It allows personnel across the response system to organize and plan effectively by identifying major tasks and assigning staff to ensure each task is completed. It is built on organizational best practices (FEMA, ICS Training) and decades of lessons learned about organizational weaknesses and is a standard approach used in emergency management programs.

An ICS structure deliberately does not correlate to any normal administrative structure employed in an organization or department. For example, a director in a department may not have the skill set to undertake leading a Command unit within an ICS structure during an emergency. Command should be assigned to the most experienced and trained person. The Emergency Management Unit is responsible for identifying key personnel throughout the department through consultation with senior staff, along with providing additional training and support, to ensure these staff are prepared to support an effective ICS structure.

5.2.1 Incident Command System (ICS)

An ICS manages by objective. Every emergency has different requirements, and the Incident Command Structure should be organized to reflect only what is required to meet and support those planned incident objectives. Each activated element of an ICS structure must have at least one person in charge; however, not all elements are activated in every response, as this is dependent on the incident objectives and the functions that are required.

There are five major ICS functions:

5. Command
6. Planning
7. Operations
8. Logistics
9. Finance and Administration

Outside of these functions is the **Executive Group**, within the department this consists of the Executive Management Committee (EMC), which provides the Incident Commander/EOC Director with high-level strategic support and direction on behalf of the department, sets expenditure limits, approves higher level requests for assistance, and provides direction on public information activities. When an Incident Command System is activated, it is fully accountable to the Executive Group.

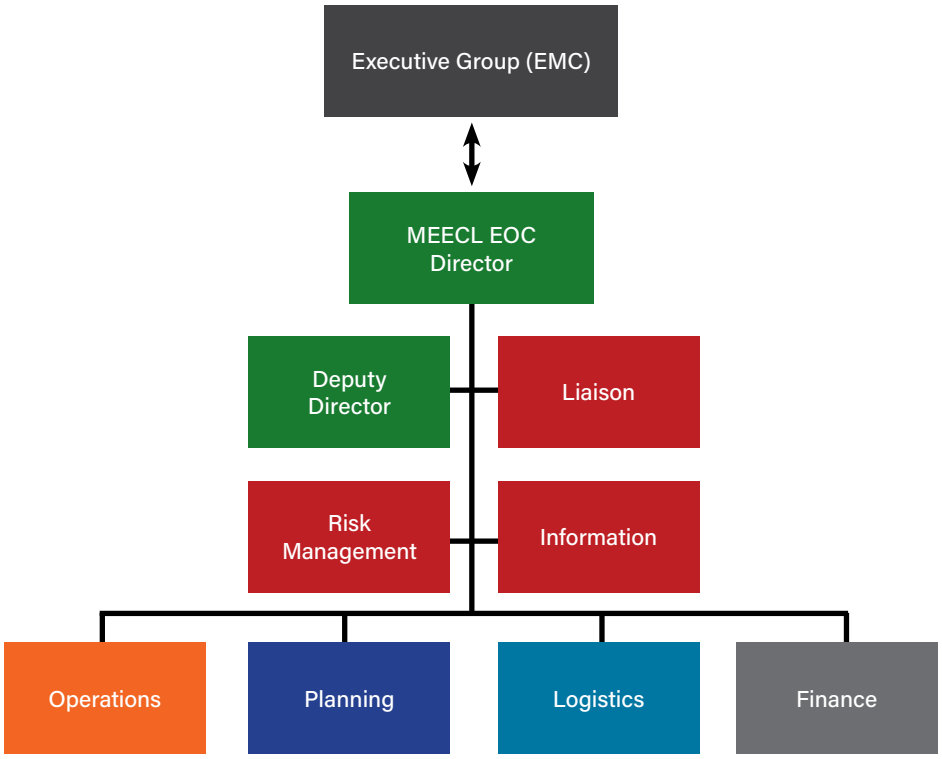


Figure 5: Basic Incident Command Structure

Command Functions

Incident Commander (EOC Director)

Sets incident objectives and priorities and has overall responsibility for managing the incident or emergency event. Until other ICS units are place, the Incident Commander directly supervises assignment of resources and supervises

operations until staff are in the other needed ICS positions. Key responsibilities include incident safety, providing information to department staff and the sectors as well as external stakeholders (Manitoba EMO and the Emergency Management Partner Network), and maintaining liaison with other participating entities. During larger emergency events, Deputy Incident Commanders may be used. The Incident Commander also has ICS staff develop and maintain an Incident Action Plan*, an invaluable aspect of ICS.

During larger emergency events, the Incident Commander will be supported by a Command Unit, which may also include:

- **Public Information Officer:** Conduit for information for the media and others seeking information. This position deals with communications related issues in consultation with the Incident Commander.
- **Safety Officer** (Risk Management): Monitors the safety conditions and develops measures needed to ensure the safety and mental well-being of all assigned staff in the ICS.
- **Liaison Officer:** Serves as the primary contact for supporting agencies assigned to the incident. They facilitate cooperation (not tactical, but high level), brief other agency representatives, address their concerns and questions, and generally assist agencies not represented on Command. They assist in setting up and coordinating interagency contacts and monitor incident operations to identify current or potential issues.

Planning Section

The Planning section is responsible for efficient planning, collecting, evaluating, and disseminating incident information and intelligence (e.g. situation reports), that are critical to maintaining shared situational awareness particularly during a response. They prepare and document the Incident Action Plan to accomplish the incident objectives, maintain resource status, and maintain documentation for incident records and future auditing as required.

The Incident Action Plan (IAP) provides all incident section Chiefs with direction for actions to be taken during a predetermined Operational Period (timeframe). IAP's indicate what is to be done, who is responsible for seeing it is done, and communication related to the accomplishment of the activities. IAP's are defined by the Incident Commander, through effective communication and collaboration with all the sections of the ICS.

Technical Planning groups often sit in the Planning Section, consisting of subject matter experts that provide technical information, analysis, and recommendations to support the Incident Command Structure. Technical Planning groups are activated when a deeper understanding of technical expertise is required. Public Health experts, weather specialists, engineers, GIS mapping specialists, and

* An Incident Action Plan outlines the objectives, strategies, and tactics that an Incident Command team will use to manage an incident during a specific operational period (usually 12 to 24 hours). This can be in written or verbal format.

damage assessment experts are examples of technical expertise that could comprise a technical planning group.

The Planning Section can be further broken down if needed into other Units (e.g., Situation Unit, Resources Unit, Documentation Unit, etc.).

Operations Section

The Operations section develops and implements strategies and tactics to carry out Incident Objectives, doing the hands-on work that is needed to meet the needs of the emergency. If an IAP is implemented, the Operations Section is responsible for implementing it by coordinating all required resources, managing field operations, assigning tasks, and directing personnel while ensuring all operations are completed as safely and efficiently as possible. The Operations Section maintains communication with Command and other Sections.

The Operations Chief leads the activities in the Operations Section and usually has technical and tactical experience to deal with organization and facilitation. The Operations section can also be broken down into other units.

Logistics Section

The Logistics Section provides support, resources, and all other services needed to meet the Incident Objectives. The Logistics Section obtains what is needed in the response. Resource management is required to maintain an accurate and up-to-date picture of the use of personnel, teams, equipment, supplies, and facilities available or potentially available for assignment. Logistics is the section that gets and provides everything required for the response, handling supplies, equipment, facilities, communications, food, and medical support.

The Logistics and Operations Sections work closely together, with Operations requesting resources from Logistics, and Logistics providing the support to make Operations possible.

Finance/Administration Section

The Finance/Administration Section manages all financial aspects of an incident including monitoring costs related to the incident, providing accounting, procurement, recording personnel time and cost analyses, gathering information from briefings with responsible agencies, and ensuring personnel time records are completed accurately.

5.2.2 Emergency Operations Centre

An Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) is a pre-designated location to provide a space for teams to collaborate and communicate with each other. Many EOC’s use an ICS-like structure and are scalable depending on the emergency. The EOC is established around incident command functions and principles based on modular design that allows expansion and contraction to meet the needs of the emergency. Placing key personnel in a physical EOC is considered best practice, given it has significant benefits for efficient response and problem solving.

In Manitoba, a large-scale provincial emergency is coordinated by the Manitoba Emergency Management Organization, which operates the Manitoba Emergency Coordination Centre (MECC), a designated space for use by multiple staff and representatives/liaisons from other provincial and federal departments and critical infrastructure partners.

Other departments, such as Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning, may set up their own EOC to complete sector-specific objectives, and report into the larger MECC as an Emergency Management Partner. During the 2025 Wildfire season, Manitoba Education and Early Childhood Learning stood up a virtual EOC to coordinate child care and youth programming for evacuees across the province. Emergency Management Unit staff also participated in a virtual MECC, where all engaged partners were able to share their impacts and resources, and collaborate with other partners.

In the department, the Emergency Management Unit will provide guidance and situational awareness to EMC and make the recommendation to stand up an EOC. EMC will formally activate the EOC, whereas the Emergency Management Unit will request department staff to support the EOC activities.

5.3 Recovery

The Recovery phase in the Emergency Management cycle is often the most overlooked phase. It involves actions taken to return to normal or near normal conditions including the restoration of basic services and the repair of physical, social, and economic damage. Typical recovery actions include financial assistance, rebuilding of critical infrastructure and facilities, and the resumption of social activities (e.g. school). The time it takes to recover is dependent on the emergency event and can often take months, years, and even decades. Recovery requires prioritization – first, essential services like food, clean water, utilities, transportation, and health care must be restored, followed by other social services, and child care and education facilities.

Recovery can overlap with other phases in the Emergency Management cycle. For example, there may be response efforts occurring in one geographic region while other areas begin recovery through clean up and damage evaluation. Recovery efforts can also occur while new mitigation activities are being started to prevent a similar event from occurring.

Training in the preparedness phase can include recovery activities, such as establishing the social, emotional, economic, and physical well-being of individuals and communities following an emergency.

Short Term	Intermediate	Long Term
(up to six months post event)	(months post event)	(months - years post event)
Financial assistance Management of shelters Social support services After action reviews	Transition from response to recovery Restoration Rebuilding Psychosocial supports	Re-establishing a level of normalcy to the community

Table 2: Examples of Recovery activities

5.3.1 After Action Review

Manitoba EMO defines an After Action Review (AAR) as a structured process used to review the response of emergency management professionals, partners, and other stakeholders after a disaster response or training exercise. Organizations can capture what worked well and what challenges were encountered during emergency operations or exercises.

AARs are essential tools in building resilience and ensuring continuous improvement across emergency management. The insights gained are valuable for informing future planning, training, exercises, and response efforts.

The purpose of an AAR is to:

- Identify operational opportunities for future events.
- Improve coordination and communication with stakeholders.
- Contribute to more effective operations and activities.
- Capture lessons learned and develop recommendations to enhance future responses.
- Spot areas for improvement and document gaps and challenges.

An AAR should be done as soon as possible after an emergency event, so important information is not lost. Emergency Management Unit staff are trained in developing, facilitating, and completing After Action Reviews for the department and can also provide support to the ELCC and K to 12 sectors in completing their respective AAR's. The Emergency Management Unit has developed an AAR template and guide, following the processes recommended by Manitoba EMO.

The After Action Report is where the outcomes of all the AAR discussions are captured formally on paper. After Action Reports adopt a more analytical approach in reviewing the information, comparing what occurred to what should have occurred. The After Action Report is the main outcome of the AAR process and consists of observations and makes recommendations for improvement, along with identifying specific corrective actions, assigning them to responsible parties, and establishing targets for completion.

The **After-Action Review happens during the Recovery Phase**, but its lessons directly feed back into the **Preparedness, Response, and Mitigation Phases**, creating a continuous improvement cycle in emergency management (see Figure 2).

5.4 Mitigation

Mitigation refers to measures that prevent an emergency, reduce the chance of an emergency happening, or reduce the damaging effects of unavoidable emergencies. Examples of mitigation measures include establishing building codes, public education, and emergency preparedness in schools.

The best way to address a disaster is by being proactive. This means identifying potential hazards and devising safeguards to mitigate their impact. Although undertaking prevention-based mitigation sometimes involves putting permanent measures into place that can help minimize disaster risk, emergencies can not always be prevented. At a high level, mitigation aims to minimize the loss of human life and social and economic impacts that could result from an emergency/disaster.

Both structural and non-structural mitigation measures may be taken (table 3). Structural measures mean changing the physical characteristics of a building or an environment to curb the effects of an emergency/disaster with a goal of protecting lives and infrastructure. Non structural measures reduce vulnerability, improve response capability, and involve such actions as adopting or amending building codes, adding warning systems, and increasing public awareness of precautionary measures to name a few.

Structural Mitigation Measures	Non Structural Mitigation Measures
Physicial	Policies, plans, procedures, training
Fire resistant building materials	Evacuation planning and maps
Storm proof roofing and windows	Lockdown procedures
Security fencing	Communication plans
Safe playground equipment	Safety codes
Secure stairways and emergency exits	Weather alert systems
Elevated foundations in flood prone areas	Security cameras or monitoring systems

Table 3: Examples of Structural and Non-Structural Mitigation Measures

Mitigation encompasses activities needed to eliminate or reduce the incidences or severity of emergencies and the minimization of their effects. During the HRVA process in the Preparedness phase, it is possible to identify opportunities that can either eliminate vulnerabilities to a hazard or greatly reduce the impact of a hazard. These mitigation measures are generally long-term measures focused on the impacts of a hazard opposed to enhancing the capacity to respond. Therefore, Mitigation is being more proactive by eliminating or reducing damages and reducing the costs of a response.

Preparedness and Mitigation are closely related as they both seek to reduce the severity of an emergency. Preparedness looks more at preparing for and reducing the effects of emergencies by having plans, capability, and capacity for response and recovery. The main difference between Mitigation and Preparedness is that Preparedness is action taken to improve emergency response of operational readiness, whereas Mitigation looks at structural and non-structural approaches to minimize, and in some instances eliminate, the impacts of emergencies and disasters.

Child care facility and school preparedness is strengthened by mitigation, response, and recovery activities. Ideally, schools and child care facilities can work to prevent emergencies such as fires through the implementation of strict building safety standards and regular fire drills. However, some incidents can not be prevented such as a tornado that impacts an entire community. Therefore, the Emergency Management planning team needs to identify how to reduce the impact of the tornado using mitigation measures.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Emergency management is a continuous process. Regular training, exercises, plan reviews, and updates are essential to maintaining readiness and strengthening overall resilience. Through ongoing commitment from leadership, staff, and partners, we can protect the safety of individuals, minimize operational impacts, and ensure the continuity of essential services in any emergency.

This plan reinforces the department's dedication to building a prepared, informed, and resilient organization capable of adapting to challenges and sustaining critical functions under all conditions.

APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS

After Action Review (AAR): A structured process used to review the response of emergency management professionals, partners, and other stakeholders after a disaster response or training exercise.

All Hazards (approach): Natural, technological, or human – caused incidents that warrant action to protect life, property, environment, and public health or safety and to minimize disruptions of school activities. It includes an integrated approach to emergency preparedness which focuses on identifying hazards and developing emergency preparedness capacities and capabilities that are not just limited to use in a single-hazard scenario.

Business Continuity Plan: A plan for responding to an event that affects the delivery of services, including an emergency or a disaster, which details measures to ensure the continuation or restoration of those services during and after the event (Emergency Measures Act).

Emergency Management Plan: A formal written document that outlines how an organization will respond to and recover from an emergency or disaster. Typically focuses on the response and recovery phases of the Emergency Management Cycle.

Emergency Management Program: An ongoing system that provides the structure, governance, and resources needed to manage emergencies over time. It incorporates all phases of the Emergency Management cycle: preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation.

Emergency Operations Centre (EOC): A pre-designated location to provide a space for teams to collaborate and communicate with each other.

Hazard, Risk, and Vulnerability Analysis (HRVA): A systematic process to identify potential hazards, assess their likelihood and severity, and understand community/organizational vulnerabilities to create effective and responsive emergency plans, mitigate risks, and build disaster resilience.

Incident Action Plan (IAP): Outlines the objectives, strategies, and tactics, in written or verbal format, that an Incident Command team will use to manage an incident during a specific operational period (usually 12 to 24 hours).

Incident Command Structure (ICS): A standardized, all-hazard, incident management system that can grow or shrink to meet different needs. It provides clarity, common terminology, and scalability to manage responses efficiently and safely, using organized sections like Command, Operations, Planning, Logistics, and Finance/Administration.