A critical incident is defined as an incident in which there is a high likelihood of traumatic effects. A critical incident evokes unusual or unexpectedly strong emotional reactions, which have the potential to interfere with the ability of the individual, group or system to function either at the time or later.

Examples of critical incidents are: an on-site accident causing death or serious injury; student or staff suicide; serious illness or death of a student teacher or parent; major vandalism; sexual assault at school; students lost or injured on an excursion; intruders on site who cause (or threaten to cause) harm to people or damage to property.
Prevention and Preparedness for an Emergency or Critical Incident
Treetops will take action to prepare for and prevent emergencies and critical incidents. This would include:

- identifying on-site and off-site situations that have the potential to become emergencies or critical incidents that would affect school operations;
- determining, with other agencies (e.g. Hazard Management Agencies), potential risks associated with particular situations;
- using risk management practices to assess the potential risks and develop mitigation strategies;
- developing an *Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan* that considers the management of foreseeable risks;
- communicating the plan to all staff;
- training key staff;
- testing and modifying the plan annually;
- practicing evacuation drills prior to October and at least once per term during bushfire season, October to March; and
- incorporating key bushfire messages in the curriculum.

Response and Recovery from an Emergency or Critical Incident
In emergencies, Treetops will have at hand practical information (see *Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan*) about actions that guide response and aid recovery in order to:

- ensure a supportive, caring response that considers the mental health needs of all members of the school community;
- return to normality as soon as possible;
- enable continuation of school routine and an optimal learning environment; and
- minimise the adverse effects of such an event on the school community.

Reporting
The Principal shall ensure that *Department of Education Services* is informed of any Emergency or Critical Incident.

Required processes are:

- The Principal will develop an *Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan* with the relevant stakeholders, including other staff considered vital to the plan.
- A *Bushfire Response Plan* will be developed in conjunction with *The Principal’s Guide to Bushfire* and liaise with the Fire and Emergency Services Authority and local Government.
- The *Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan* and the *Bushfire Response Plan* will be communicated to school personnel to ensure a level of familiarity with what the Plan is for, what it involves and where it is stored.
- The plans will be routinely tested with a schedule developed each year for drills.
- The plans will be reviewed annually and following any emergencies or critical incidents.

The Principal is responsible for management of on-site and off-site school related emergencies and critical incidents, in order to minimise trauma and distress to students and staff and damage to property and to ensure the teaching and learning program is maintained or resumed.
Principles:
Planning and all actions taken to prevent, prepare for, respond to, or recover from emergencies and critical incidents will be consistent with the following principles:

- **Leadership.** The Principal retains responsibility for emergency and critical incident management.
- **Safety.** The safety and wellbeing of all individuals is paramount.
- **Support.** Support may be within and/or external to the school and is coordinated, integrated, timely, equitable, culturally appropriate, enhances resilience and empowers school leadership.
- **Communication.** Communication is based on verified information, timely and appropriate to the audience.
- **Ongoing assessment of needs.** The ongoing assessment of the needs of, and impact on, individuals, groups (including supporters), and the entire school community will guide interventions in the short, medium and long term.
- **Other agencies.** The roles and responsibilities of other agencies are understood and respected.
- **Confidentiality.** All interventions respect the confidentiality rights of members of the school community.

The Principal will document the demographic, geographic and specific risk variables associated with the school which will be informed by the Risk Assessment performed in the school. This will include:

- **Demographic factors:**
  - size of the student population;
  - staff numbers;
  - cultural factors; and
  - student disability/health factors.

- **Geographic factors:**
  - roads into and away from the school;
  - access to public transport;
  - distance from the school to parent homes; and
  - distance from the school to other community facilities.

- **Specific risk factors**
  - natural emergency risks (e.g. bushfire, earthquake);
  - other identified risks for the school.

The Principal will:
- identify on-site and off-site situations that have the potential to become emergencies or critical incidents affecting the school’s operations;
- determine potential risks associated with particular situations;
- use the relevant Risk Management Policies, Procedures and Guidelines to assess the potential risks and develop mitigation strategies; and,
- implement strategies to eliminate or reduce the likelihood of the occurrence of emergencies or critical incidents.