NWSD Emergency Response Plan

Risk/Mitigation

Select staff at all school locations have received Violence Threat Risk Assessment training, and are part of a division-wide VTRA team. Northwest School Division is also working to initiate a signed VTRA protocol for the community of Meadow Lake and broader school division, in partnership with RCMP, Prairie North and other agencies.

The NWSD Maintenance department places a priority on service requests that are related to Occupational Health and Safety concerns to ensure that all buildings meet the necessary safety standards, as outlined by Occupational Health and Safety.

With NWSD spanning such a large geographical area, there are many different potential hazards that could impact communities and schools within the division. From wildfires and severe weather to train derailments and explosions or fires at oil and gas work sites – each school will tailor their School Emergency Response Plan to their circumstances.

Division Emergency Operations Centre (EOC)

The NWSD EOC will be housed in one of two physical locations:
Primary – Meadow Lake Office, or Secondary – Turtleford Office

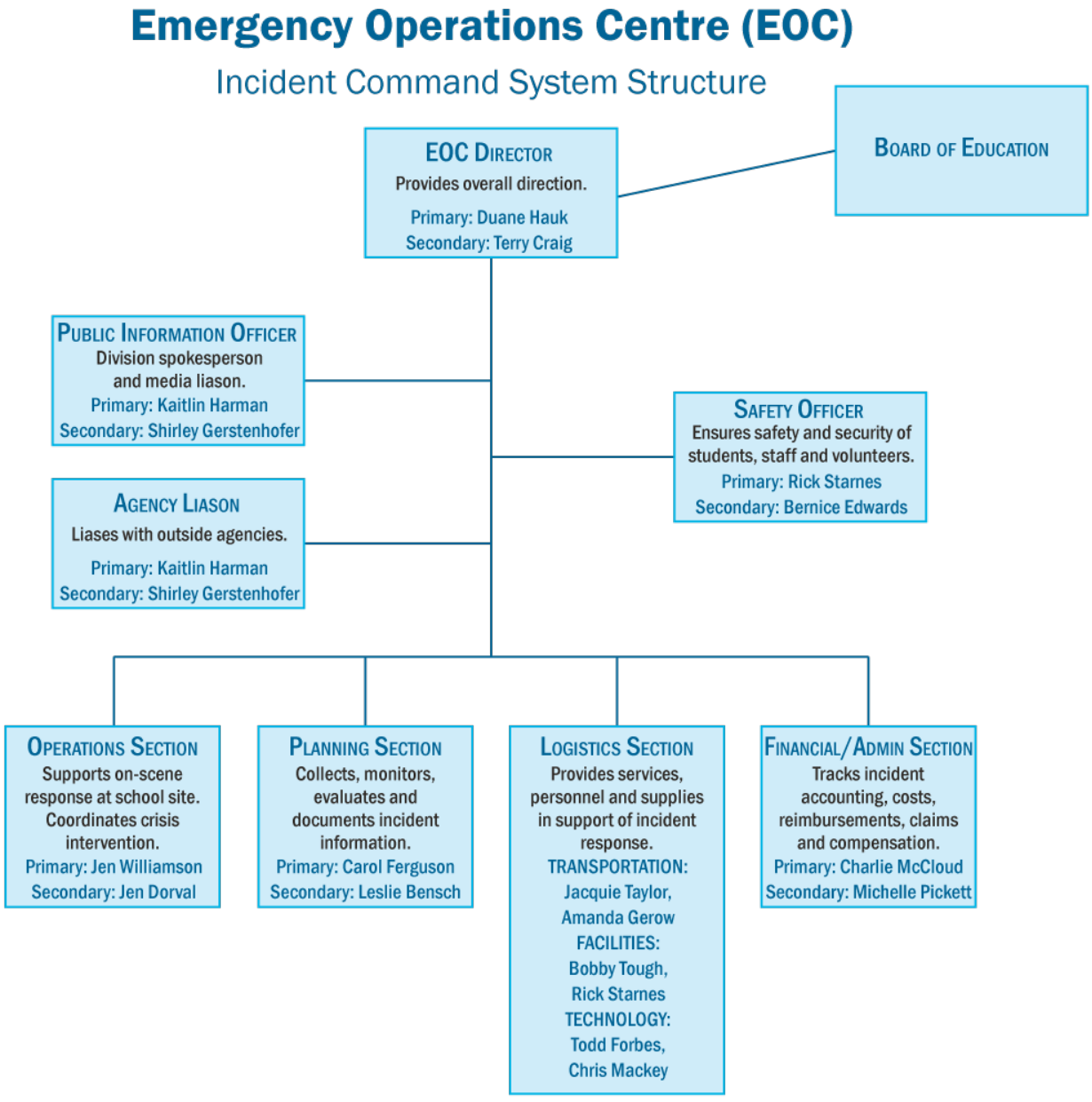
The EOC shall be activated in any of the following situations:

- There is a division-wide emergency involving multiple school sites,
- There is an emergency of such magnitude that resources are required beyond individual school site capacity,
- The emergency is of long duration (for example, lasting more than three days),
- Major policy decisions will or may be needed,
- A state of local emergency is declared,
- Terrorist threats are made to the community or region, or
- A decision is made that activation of an emergency plan is advantageous to the successful management of an emergency or school crisis.

The primary goal of the EOC is to ensure student and staff safety through a coordinated effort, and to restore critical services in a timely manner.

Returning students to the learning environment, whether at their home school or a suitable alternative, is an essential service. It will be the EOCs priority to limit student down time. The EOC will work with appropriate agencies and local authorities to ensure students have a safe environment for their studies.

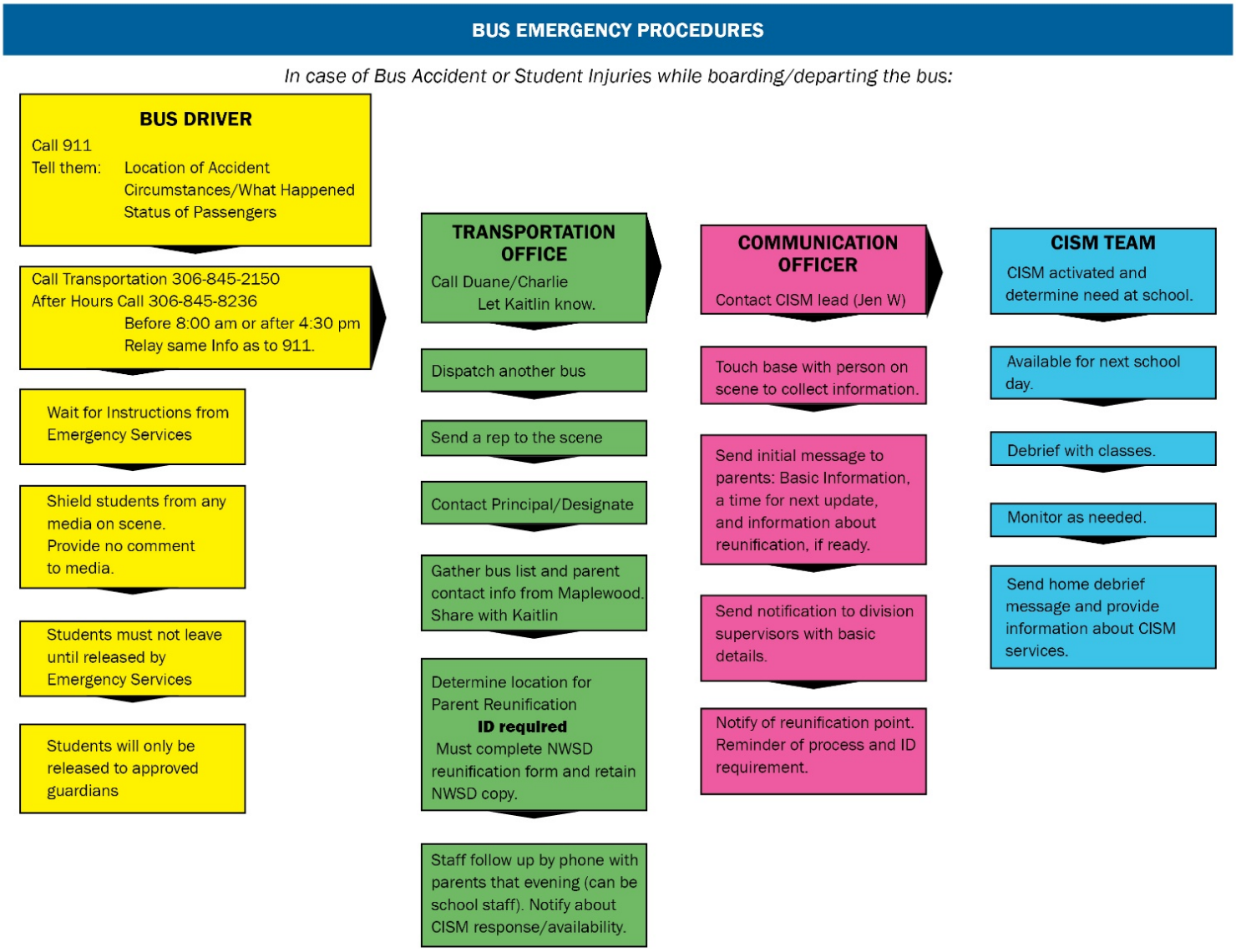
The Logistics and Financial/Admin section of the EOC will ensure critical data infrastructure is backed up to alternate physical locations.



*In any instance where emergency responders are required at a school site, the Site Incident Commander (Principal or designate), should alert the Director or designate who may invoke the EOC.

Response Protocols

School Bus Emergency



Emergency/Crisis Communication Plan

Purpose of the Plan:

This crisis communication plan provides policies and procedures for the coordination of communications within the NWSD, and between our organization and parents, the broader community, media and any applicable outside agencies in the event of an emergency. Emergencies may include fires, bomb threats, natural disasters or major crimes.

The plan not only addresses media relations and communications issues, but also includes procedures for the rapid assessment of potentially harmful situations and the methods for responding to these situations quickly and effectively.

It is the goal of this crisis communications plan to establish guidelines for dealing with a variety of situations, and to ensure that staff and communicators are familiar with those procedures and their roles in the event of a crisis. The plan is designed to be used in conjunction with and within the hierarchy of the EOC, and does not supplant the normal decision-making process.

Plan Objectives:

1. To factually assess the situation and determine what level of communications response is warranted.
2. To assemble a Crisis Communication Team that will make recommendations on appropriate responses.
3. To implement immediate action to:
    a. Identify those parties that should be informed about the situation.
    b. Communicate facts about the crisis.
    c. Minimize rumours.
    d. Restore order and confidence.

Readiness Preparation:

Communication readiness includes the creation of sample emergency messages and template posts, the creation of contact lists in SchoolMessenger, and identifying the support staff to assist in handling of communications.

The development of positive stakeholder relationships with key organizations prior to any emergency is essential. Identifying key contacts at partner organizations will speed in the dissemination of information in an emergency.

Response:

Typically, EOC communications will be triggered by a school contacting the division with a local emergency and the EOC will assess whether division communication support is required.

The Communications Officer will be the spokesperson for the division, in consultation with the Director, when the EOC is activated, and all requests for information from media and other agencies will first be directed to them. The Executive Assistant will assist with this role, and in coordinating with outside agencies. Requests for information will be logged by the Planning Section.

Internal Stakeholders: Board of Education, Staff

NWSD's SchoolMessenger system will be used as the primary notification service for communicating updates to the broader staff group, through pre-established contact lists. Initial notifications will be sent via email, phone and text.

Staff will also be directed to the division's public notifications posted to social media, radio, and the website.

In a persisting emergency, the EOC will meet for team briefings at regular intervals and schedule regular updates for staff, along with the broader public.

External Stakeholders: Parents, Community, Local Authority, Local Agencies
SchoolMessenger will be the primary notification system to contact parents. In the initial notification, the emergency alert will trigger phone, email and text notifications to parents and guardians.

Rumour Control:
We will identify a team member to monitor social media during the event, to identify potential areas that require response and to identify misinformation.

Follow Up:

Sum up with parents/community. What happened, what the response was, what supports are in place, and thank parents/community for cooperation.

Ensure that all the agencies and responders receive thank you notes/acknowledgement from NWSD. Consult with Planning Section to create an accurate list.

Post-mortem: Information collected from the Planning Section, along with general observations, and social media response will be used to evaluate the communication response and update the plan.

Continuity of Operations Plan

Key goals:

1. Limit student down time.
2. Establish a physical location to continue services.
3. Back up school/office data.

The information technology department has created a failsafe to ensure that school division data can be recovered in the event of a critical incident that impacts the main division servers.