

MANAGEMENT OF CRITICAL INCIDENTS

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This document is intended to outline processes for the management of critical incidents within the sport of orienteeing. It should be read in conjunction with procedures at state level for event safety, and search and rescue (in the event of missing competitors), and is not intended to duplicate those procedures.

The purposes of having a process for handling critical incidents include:

- To ensure that Orienteeing Australia and other relevant bodies have accurate information as soon as possible following any critical incident;
- To establish clear lines of internal and external communication relating to the incident;
- To assist in providing support to those affected by the incident should that be appropriate;
- To support the effective management of any legal or reputational risks to the sport of orienteeing, or to Orienteeing Australia and/or its member organisations.

What is a critical incident?

It is difficult to have a hard-and-fast definition of a critical incident – some will be obvious but some less so. Examples of the types of incident that this policy is intended to cover include incidents which involve:

- Death.
- Life-threatening or permanently-disabling injury. (Less serious injuries – e.g. broken limbs – would not normally fall within the scope of this policy, unless the circumstances in which they occur would fall under the points below).
- Incidents which may expose the sport, its constituent bodies or individuals within the sport to significant legal or reputational risk.
- Incidents which are likely to attract media coverage (other than purely as coverage of a sporting event) in which orienteeing, or an individual's status as an orienteer, is likely to be mentioned. (A competitor being missing overnight is likely to fall into this category).

In some circumstances, this may include incidents which are not directly related to a specific event or team (e.g. if Australian orienteers travelling to an event are involved in a serious accident), or it may involve activity not under the auspices of Orienteeing Australia (e.g. if a serious accident takes place in the course of something called "orienteering", it poses a potential reputational risk to the sport even if it had nothing to do with any official orienteeing organisation or if what was taking place was not what we would understand as "orienteering").

While a doping offence by an Australian orienteer would likely fall under one or more of the definitions above, doping offences, and protocols on communication relating to them, are covered under Orienteeing Australia's Anti-Doping Policy and do not fall under this document.

Reporting of critical incidents

Any individual in a relevant position of responsibility should report a critical incident to Orienteeing Australia as soon as possible. (In some circumstances, this might even be while the incident is still in progress – e.g. a search for a missing competitor). If there is no-one in a specific relevant position of responsibility, any person who becomes aware of a critical incident is encouraged to make a report.

Initial reports should normally be made by phone to the President (currently 0413 849 309) or, if he cannot be reached, to the Executive Officer (02 6162 1200)¹. (In some circumstances, e.g. if the incident takes place overseas, it may be simpler to report by e-mail, but if this is done there should still be a follow-up call or text to ensure that the e-mail has been read).

Depending on the nature of the incident and whether it is already covered by incident reporting procedures at the state level, a more formal written report may be requested at some point in time.

Handling of critical incidents within Orienteering Australia

The President and the Executive Officer will make an initial assessment of the incident and determine who else needs to be involved in the process of handling the incident, and what needs to be done. (For example, for an incident at an event, likely people to involve would be the President and/or Executive Officer of the host state association, and one or more people involved with the organisation of the event; for an incident involving an Australian team overseas, likely people to involve would be the coach/manager of the team concerned, the Head Coach and the Director (High Performance)).

Every case will be different – in some cases, no immediate action will be required other than to keep OA informed of any new developments, in other cases, extensive incident management will be required at OA level.

Communication relating to critical incidents

Many critical incidents are of potential interest to local or, in some circumstances, national media. Even if there is not external media attention, internal communications are important, if only to ensure that the known facts of the incident are accurately known within the Australian orienteering community (with sensitivity, as required, to the privacy of any individuals involved and/or their families) and to limit the spread of inaccurate information.

As part of the handling of the incident (see above), one or more individuals will be delegated the authority to make comment on behalf of Orienteering Australia (and, depending on the nature of the incident, other relevant orienteering organisations such as a state association). This may include issuing an official statement (through the OA website and any other appropriate channels) and undertaking media interviews. It should be ensured that any person delegated this authority is fully aware of all relevant known facts relating to the incident, and any sensitivities that may apply (e.g. police or coronial investigations).

No person who is not specifically delegated the authority to do so should make comment on behalf of Orienteering Australia with respect to a critical incident. While Orienteering Australia does not prohibit other people making comment as individuals, it strongly discourages anyone without suitable experience from engaging with the media with respect to a critical incident.

Adopted
March 2016

¹ Note that these are the numbers of the incumbents as of March 2016, and may change in the future.