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| Home-based care emergency preparedness factsheet |
| *Social services sector emergency management policy*  *Version 2.0* |
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# Introduction

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (department) *Social services sector emergency management policy* (the policy) outlines the emergency management planning and preparedness obligations for services that the department delivers, funds or regulates.

The policy requires home-based carers to plan specific steps to keep children and young people in their care safe and well, in the event of an emergency.

This factsheet outlines what you must do as a home-based carer under the policy. It also provides you with practical guidance, tools and tips to help you plan ahead and respond confidently to different types of emergencies.

# Home-based care emergency management responsibilities

If you are a home-based carer, you have important responsibilities in an emergency. You must:

* think about changing your normal routine, plans or behaviour if there is an emergency warning in place, for example, a flood warning
* take action immediately to move a child or young person in your care to a safer location if there is a danger to health, life, safety, and/or wellbeing
* evacuate your home with the child or young person in your care if police or emergency services suggest or tell you to
* contact your home-based care service contact as soon as possible after leaving your home.

These responsibilities apply in any emergency, whether it is a bushfire, storm, power outage, heatwave, or other event.

# About emergencies in Victoria

An emergency is a serious event that can affect your health, safety or wellbeing and that of the children or young people in your care. It might also mean you cannot look after them for a brief time.

Emergencies can include:

* floods, storms, bushfires, grassfires, and earthquakes
* fires or explosions in the home
* extreme heat or heatwaves
* accidents or sickness
* problems with power, gas, water, or phone services.

Every emergency is different, but planning ahead can help you:

* stay safe
* act quickly
* know where to get the right information.

# Planning for all hazards, all emergencies

The policy takes an ‘**all hazards, all emergencies’** approach to emergency management planning. This means you should think about and plan for a range of emergencies that could affect:

* your home
* your ability to provide care
* the health and safety of the children or young people in your care.

This includes thinking about the specific risks in your local area and the individual needs, strengths and abilities of the children or young people you care for.

All home-based carers should develop an emergency management plan and plan for a range of emergencies. A clear, written emergency plan:

* helps you act quickly, and reduce stress in a real emergency
* protects the safety and wellbeing of the children and young people in your care
* supports communication with your service provider or case worker
* meets your responsibilities under the department’s policy.

Work with your agency or child protection caseworker/contact to develop or update your emergency plan. It should be practical, tailored to your home and local risks, and easy to follow. Your plan should think about how an emergency could change your daily life. It should include:

* safe places to go if you need to leave your home for example a relative’s house. Friend’s home or community centre
* how you will get there, including what transport you will use and alternate routes if needed
* emergency contacts, including:
  + your service provider, agency or child protection caseworker
  + emergency services
  + support services
* what you will take with you, including:
  + pets
  + chargers
  + medications and prescriptions
  + medical and disability aids
  + ID and other important documents
  + clothing
  + food and water
  + wool blankets
* information about the children or young people in your care, such as:
  + medical needs or allergies
  + communication or behavioural supports
  + cultural or community needs
  + items that provide comfort or routine (toys, books, devices).

If you support a child or young person with disability, your plan should include any extra equipment instructions or supports they need.

## Getting started with your emergency planning

Speak with your home-based care agency or child protection caseworker about your emergency planning needs. Keep your emergency plan up to date and review it:

* at the start of summer (before 1 November)
* when your household changes
* if your location, contact details or circumstances change.

### Emergency planning information

* [**Australian Red Cross**](https://www.redcross.org.au/prepare) https://www.redcross.org.au/prepare has an emergency management plan template, a survival kit checklist, and a mobile app available on their website. These step-by-step guides can help you make a personal emergency management plan.
* [**Victorian State Emergency Service**](https://www.ses.vic.gov.au/) https://www.ses.vic.gov.au has information on how to get ready for storms and floods. The website also explains emergency warnings and when to act.
* [[**Fire Rescue Victoria**](https://www.frv.vic.gov.au/)](https://www.frv.vic.gov.au/) https://www.frv.vic.gov.au has a home fire safety booklet to help you stop fires from starting and keep you and the children in your care safe if a fire does happen.

# Bushfire and grassfire

Victoria is one of the most fire-prone areas in the world. If you are a home-based carer living in an area at risk of bushfires or grassfires, it’s important to include fire safety in your emergency plan. This helps you act quickly and safely if a fire starts or if it becomes too dangerous to stay at home.

Your bushfire-specific planning should include:

* learning what Australian fire danger ratings mean and how they affect you. Visit [Australian Fire Danger System](https://afdrs.com.au/) https://afdrs.com.au/ for more information
* finding out which fire district you live in and checking the fire danger rating every day during the fire season. Visit
  + [CFA Local – Find local area information](CFA%20Local%20–%20Find%20local%20area%20information%20) https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/your-local-area-info-and-advice/cfa-local-find-local-area-information
  + [Bureau of Meteorology](http://www.bom.gov.au/vic/forecasts/fire-danger-ratings.shtml) http://www.bom.gov.au/vic/forecasts/fire-danger-ratings.shtml
* making a bushfire survival plan with clear steps on when to leave, where to go, and how you will get there
* checking your home before bushfire season starts and doing any cleaning or repairs to make it safer
* planning and preparing to relocate early the day before a forecast Catastrophic fire danger rating day.

## Australian Fire Danger Rating System

The Australian Fire Danger Rating System shows you how risky the fire conditions are each day. The higher the rating, the more dangerous it is. These ratings appear in weather forecasts during fire season. They include clear advice on what actions to take.

Every day during fire season you should:

* check the fire danger rating and any emergency warnings from official sources such as the VicEmergency App or [website](https://emergency.vic.gov.au/respond/?=&bbox=137.230224609375%2C-40.00237193587647%2C153.709716796875%2C-33.08233672856374&tm=1752628132745) https://emergency.vic.gov.au/respond
* if a fire starts nearby, act straight away to stay safe
* not wait for an official warning before leaving
* follow local fire rules and restrictions.

### Know your fire danger rating

A know your fire danger rating table is below: **[Appendix 1 – Australian Fire Danger Rating System](#_Appendix_1_-)**[.](#_Appendix_1_-)

You can also visit https://afdrs.com.au/ for more information on the Australian Fire Danger Rating System.

### Bushfire planning information and training

* [**Country Fire Authority**](https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au) https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au has information on how to prepare your property for fires, including fires within your home. It also has a map to help you find your fire district and up-to-date information on local fire danger ratings, warnings, total fire bans and Catastrophic fire danger days.
* The [Country Fire Authority’s](https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/search?q=Fire%20ready%20guide%20for%20community%20workers#gsc.tab=0&gsc.q=Fire%20ready%20guide%20for%20community%20workers&gsc.page=1) [**Fire ready guide for community workers**](https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/search?q=Fire%20ready%20guide%20for%20community%20workers#gsc.tab=0&gsc.q=Fire%20ready%20guide%20for%20community%20workers&gsc.page=1) https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/search?q=Fire%20ready%20guide%20for%20community%20workers#gsc.tab=0&gsc.q=Fire%20ready%20guide%20for%20community%20workers&gsc.page=1 helps people who visit clients and patients in their home support their fire safety planning.
* The [**Country Fire Authority’s e-learning website**](https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/workers) https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/workers has online learning modules for people who work, travel or care for people in high bushfire areas

## Areas of heightened bushfire risk

Working out if a home is at risk of bushfire or grassfire can be tricky. Luckily, there are tools to help you. You can read more about these tools in the sections below.

A home may be in an area of increased bushfire risk if it is in:

* a Bushfire Prone Area (BPA)
* a Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO)
* an area marked as ‘Extreme’ risk on the Victorian Fire Risk Register – Bushfire (VFRR-B).

### The difference between BPA and BMO and why should you check both

BPA and BMO show different types of bushfire risk:

* BPA is about where bushfires are likely to start
* BMO is about where bushfires are likely to impact land and buildings
* Your property might be in one, both or neither. Knowing this helps you plan ahead, make your property safer and follow any building, planning or emergency rules.

If you are not sure whether your home is at risk, speak with your home-based care service contact or a child protection practitioner.

### Bushfire risk assessment tools

* A [**Bushfire Prone Area**](https://mapshare.vic.gov.au/vicplan) **(BPA)** https://mapshare.vic.gov.au/vicplan allows you to make a free property report that shows whether your property is within a BPA.
* A [**Bushfire Management** [**Overlay**](https://mapshare.vic.gov.au/vicplan)](https://mapshare.vic.gov.au/vicplan) **(BMO)** https://mapshare.vic.gov.au/vicplan may apply to land in Victoria that is at risk from bushfire. To find out if your property is within a BMO use the Vic Plan tool’s overlay function.
* The [[**Victorian Fire Risk Register - Bushfire**](https://www.vfrr.vic.gov.au) **(VFRR-B)**](https://www.vfrr.vic.gov.au) https://www.vfrr.vic.gov.au is a tool that shows areas where bushfires are more likely. It helps fire services plan, but it does not show the risk to individual homes or people.

# Home-based carers living in areas of heightened bushfire risk

## Bushfire Leave Early Plans

If you are a home-based carer living in an area of heightened risk of bushfire, you must also have a Bushfire Leave Early Plan (BLEP) in place. The BLEP is part of your bushfire-specific emergency planning.

You should develop a BLEP with your agency or child protection caseworker. This plan outlines how you will safely relocate with the children or young people in your care.

Your plan must include:

* suitable leaving early arrangements for forecast Catastrophic fire danger rating days or when advised to relocate by emergency services
* safe destinations that are not in an area of heightened bushfire risk\* and can be safely accessed
* a way to contact you or the children or young people in your care if you are not at home.

To find out if your home is in a heightened bushfire risk area, please refer to [Areas of heightened bushfire risk](#_Areas_of_heightened) above.

### Emergency relocation – bushfire leave early plan template

An *Emergency relocation - bushfire leave early plan* template is available on the department’s Service Provider’s [Emergency Management](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/emergency-management) webpage https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/emergency-management

## Reviewing your Bushfire Leave Early Plan

As a home-based carer, you must work with your agency or child protection caseworker to check and update your BLEP at key times during the year.

Your BLEP must be reviewed and endorsed:

* every year by 1 November, before the start of the high-risk bushfire season summer
* as required between 1 November and 30 April if the carer or supervisor BLEP changes
* when a new child or young person comes into your care between 1 November and 30 April.

You should not make changes to your BLEP on your own. All updates must be reviewed and agreed upon by your agency/child protection caseworker.

## Catastrophic fire danger rating day

A Catastrophic fire danger rating day is the most dangerous fire weather we can have in Victoria. If a fire starts on this day, it can be fast, out of control and deadly. Homes cannot protect you in these conditions. You may not be able to leave, and help may not be available. The safest choice is to leave early.

### Enacting your Bushfire Leave Early Plan

If you are a home-based carer living in an area of heightened bushfire risk and a Catastrophic fire danger rating is forecast for your fire weather district **at 9:00 am the day before,** you must enact your Bushfire Leave Early Plan.

You must complete relocation **the day before** the Catastrophic fire danger rating day and notify the department **before 9:00 am** of the forecast Catastrophic fire danger rating day.

If you need to change your plans, you must notify the department **as soon as possible** after you have safely relocated.

Once you have begun to enact your Leave Early Plan, you must continue to relocate even if there is a change in weather or fire danger forecasts.

# Getting emergency information

Home-based carers should stay up to date with emergency warnings and information for the area where they live. You can find out about current and upcoming conditions from many places, like the radio, tv and the internet.

The VicEmergency website and app give warnings, advice, and other information about emergencies across Victoria. Carers are encouraged to download the VicEmergency app on their phone. The app sends official warning based on your location.

Organisations like the Bureau of Meteorology, Country Fire Authority (CFA), Victoria Police, or the Victoria State Emergency Services (SES) also keep track of forecast hazards, weather risks, and give important safety advice.

## Sources of emergency information

* [**VicEmergency**](http://emergency.vic.gov.au/) http://emergency.vic.gov.au is Victoria’s main website for emergency information. It shows a real-time map with incidents across Victoria, such as fires, floods, storms, power outages, hazardous material incidents and traffic incidents.
* You can also download the VicEmergency app to your mobile device. The app gives you official warnings and information based on where you live, work or are staying.
* The [**Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC)**](https://www.abc.net.au/emergency/) https://www.abc.net.au/emergency and other local media are also important sources of information during emergencies.
* [**Official emergency broadcasters**](https://dhhsvicgovau.sharepoint.com/sites/PolicyPrograms-EmergencyManagementBranch/Shared%20Documents/EM%20policy%20and%20reporting/7.%202025%20policy%20and%20reporting%20cycle/2025%20Policy%20Documents%20for%20distribution%20in%20mid-September/Policy%20supporting%20documents%202025%20for%20approval/Official%20emergency%20broadcasters) https://www.emv.vic.gov.au/responsibilities/victorias-warning-system/emergency-broadcasters/list share emergency warnings and alerts on local radio stations and TV across Victoria.
* [The **Bureau of Meteorology**](http://www.bom.gov.au) http://www.bom.gov.au has current weather updates, including fire weather warnings and fire danger rating tables that forecast four days of fire danger ratings.
* The [**Country Fire Authority**](https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au) https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au shows up-to-date local fire danger ratings, warnings, total fire bans and Catastrophic fire danger days.

# More information

Home-based carers may also find these Department of Families, Fairness and Housing resources helpful:

* [***Social services sector emergency management policy***](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/emergency-management) https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/emergency-management - available on the department’s [Emergency Management webpage](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/emergency-management)
* [***Preparing for emergencies: a reference guide for the social services sector***](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/emergency-management) https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/emergency-management - available on the department’s [Emergency management webpage](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/emergency-management)
* [***Emergency management plan template***](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/emergency-management), available on the department’s [Emergency management webpage](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/emergency-management) https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/emergency-management
* [***Victorian handbook for foster carers***](https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/foster-care) https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/foster-care - available on the department’s [Foster care webpage](https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/foster-care)
* [***Manual for kinship carers***](https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/kinship-care) https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/kinship-care - available on the department’s [Kinship care webpage](https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/kinship-care).

# Appendix 1 - Australian Fire Danger Rating System

Know your fire danger rating:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Fire danger rating | MODERATE  **Plan and prepare** | HIGH  **Be ready to act** | EXTREME  **Take action now** to protect your life and property | CATASTROPHIC  For your survival, **leave bushfire risk areas** |
| Fire behaviour | Most fires can be controlled. | Fires can be dangerous. | Fires will spread quickly and be extremely dangerous. | If a fire starts and takes hold, lives are likely to be lost. |
| Actions | * Stay up to date and be ready to act if there is a fire. | * There is a heightened risk. Be alert for fires in your area. * Decide what you will do if a fire starts. * If a fire starts, your life and property may be at risk. The safest option is to avoid bushfire risk areas. | * These are dangerous fire conditions. * Check your bushfire plan and that your property is fire ready. * If a fire starts, take immediate action. If you and your property are not prepared to the highest level, go to a safer location well before the fire impacts. * Reconsider travel through bushfire risk areas. * Expect hot, dry, and windy conditions. * Leaving bushfire risk areas early in the day is your safest option. | * These are the most dangerous conditions for a fire. * Your life may depend on the decisions on you make, even before there is a fire. * For your survival, do not be in bushfire risk areas. * Stay safe by going to a safer location early in the morning or the night before. * If a fire starts and takes hold, lives and properties are likely to be lost. * Homes cannot withstand fires in these conditions. You may not be able to leave, and help may not be available |

**Always:**

* Monitor conditions and official sources for warnings and advice.
* If a fire starts near you, act immediately to protect your life, and follow the instructions of the emergency services when available.

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