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| Preparing for emergencies |
| A reference guide for the social services sector  Version 5.0 |
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| Preparing for emergencies  A reference guide for the social services sector  Version 5.0 |
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# Introduction

## About this reference guide

*Preparing for emergencies: a reference guide for the social services sector* is a resource for service providers in the social services sector to assist them to plan for and respond to emergencies.

The social services sector exists to protect and improve the health and wellbeing of the community – whether that be for the community as a whole or for a targeted cohort. Good planning and preparedness before an emergency help meet this purpose during and after emergencies.

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (the department) supports Victorians to live a safe, respected and valued life. The department works to minimise the impact of emergencies on the health, safety and wellbeing of communities and individuals, especially the most disadvantaged and at risk.[[1]](#footnote-2)

Experience during recent emergencies demonstrates that service providers in the social services sector will seek information, guidance and assistance from the department, regardless of the formal relationship between an organisation and the department.

By encouraging a consistent approach to emergency management and providing guidance around planning and response, the department seeks to improve the sectors’ ability to maximise health, safety and wellbeing outcomes during emergencies.

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| A glossary of key terms and their definitions is at [**Appendix 1**](#_Appendix_1_–)**.** |

### Who should use this guide?

This guide has been written for any organisation that identifies as being part of the broader social services sector, that delivers services to clients.

## About emergencies in Victoria

An [emergency](#_Appendix_1_–) is an incident or event that threatens the health, safety or wellbeing of a service’s clients, staff or visitors. An emergency may also impact the way a service is able to operate by threatening, damaging or destroying property, or by disrupting essential services such as electricity.

Victorian social services may experience a range of emergencies and their impacts. These include, but are not limited to:

* floods, storms, bushfires, grassfires, and earthquakes
* building or industrial fires
* explosions and accidents
* extreme heat and heatwaves
* outbreaks, epidemics and pandemics (e.g., COVID-19, thunderstorm asthma, influenza, emergency animal disease)
* the contamination of food or water supply
* disruption to essential services (such as electricity and/or gas), water, or telecommunications networks)
* cyber incident (such as data breaches and system failures impacting service delivery, client and service data)
* terrorism threats and other acts and violence impacting the public.

An emergency does not need to directly affect a service provider for it to have an impact on its clients, staff or ongoing service delivery. For example, smoke from a bushfire or industrial fire may result in poor air quality leading to potential breathing difficulties.

Similarly, a flood or storm may cause prolonged road closures. This could mean a service is unable to evacuate safely, is inaccessible to emergency services, or cannot receive essential deliveries.

An epidemic or pandemic may not only cause staff or clients to become ill, but it may also impact number of regular staff available to deliver services. A severe epidemic or pandemic may also affect the availability of suitably qualified relief staff from across the sector.

While each emergency is unique, their impact can be similar. The planning undertaken for one type of emergency can be shared across several similar scenarios. For example, a service provider may identify and plan for a prolonged power outage as a potential consequence of a severe storm. This planning could be reused or adapted should a different emergency disrupt the power supply.

Although an emergency’s impact can be similar to other emergencies and can therefore be shared across several scenarios, a client’s person-centred emergency plan should be based on the client’s unique support needs, capabilities and capacity which can vary depending on the emergency.

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# Planning for emergencies

## Overview

Emergency management planning is about preparing, mitigating risk, responding to, and recovering from an emergency. Through emergency management planning, service providers can enhance emergency preparedness and resilience for both the service provider and their clients. During the emergency planning and preparation phase, service providers should consider their clients’ unique support needs and capabilities during and after an emergency. The client - and where relevant the client’s carer - should be an active participant in emergency planning for themselves, identifying what their support needs and strategies are, when possible.

Emergency management plans exist separate to business continuity plans but function together as part of the overall business continuity approach. An emergency management plan provides direction for management, staff, clients and other stakeholders in what to do if there is an emergency.

Good practice emergency management plans:

* reflect the location, physical environment, client and staff profiles, and other relevant factors
* describe the planned responses for different types of emergencies such as altering or ceasing services, relocation, sheltering and evacuation
* have clear triggers for activation and deactivation, including processes for maintaining situational awareness and sourcing accurate, up-to-date information
* are tailored to meet the needs of communities and clients, including First Nations Peoples and multicultural and multifaith communities, to ensure a culturally responsive approach
* include agreed emergency management roles and responsibilities, including clear lines of authority for decision making and communication arrangements
* wherever possible, have input from clients and communities into the emergency plans that are designed to protect them or their service

Emergency management plans must also be reviewed, exercised, and updated regularly. Recent emergencies during the high-risk emergency season highlight the need for service providers to develop and implement an emergency management plan that encompasses all hazards, not just bushfire or grassfire, to effectively respond to emergencies and protect the welfare of all clients.

Good practice emergency preparedness includes:

* communicating emergency management plans to all staff, and key stakeholders such as the client’s carer, family and others.
* undertaking facility site assessments
* completing all identified risk mitigation strategies
* undertaking emergency exercises annually.

Services should take a collaborative approach to emergency planning. Meet with other services in the area or with similar client profiles to discuss how to support each other during emergencies, particularly when alternative accommodation or services are needed. A collaborative approach can increase capacity, enhance effectiveness, and simplify coordination in an emergency.

Services should also discuss plans with local governments and local emergency services to ensure they are comprehensive and align with local and regional emergency management planning.

## Understand emergency management responsibilities

Shared responsibility is a strengths-based approachto emergency management. It means that community organisations, businesses, support services and community members should all identify and take precautions to reduce their own risks from emergencies.

Most service providers will have requirements relating to emergency management planning under their respective legislation, quality and safeguarding frameworks, funding agreements and program management arrangements.

Chief Executives, boards, company directors and managers need to consider how they will respond to a broad range of emergencies to ensure the safety of clients and staff.

A service’s requirements will depend on the type of service provided and the setting in which it is delivered. For example, plans for facility-based services will be different to those delivered in a client’s home.

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| Emergency management responsibilities for organisations funded and regulated by the department are listed in the *Social services sector emergency management policy,* available on the [**Service Providers’ Emergency Management webpage**](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/emergency-management) <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/emergency-management>. |

## Identify decision makers

Each service provider is responsible for deciding how it will respond to an emergency and is accountable for the consequences arising from those decisions. It’s important to make informed decisions about how to best respond to an emergency based on the circumstances of the event and clients’ specific needs.

A good emergency management plan will outline the incident management team (IMT) in the organisation which has authority to make decisions during an emergency. It should also clearly outline the process for delegating decision-making authority.

IMTs are scalable. For example, in a small facility there may be insufficient staff for a discrete IMT role to be assigned to an individual. In such cases staff members can assume multiple roles.

A service provider’s designated Chief Warden or Commander will take initial charge of an emergency and delegate the other IMT responsibilities until emergency services arrive and take control of the incident. The Chief Warden or Commander will need to advise the relevant emergency service(s) of:

* the current situation
* what actions have been undertaken
* whether there are any injuries
* what continuing risks have been identified
* what actions you intend to take.

Emergency management plans should also clearly outline the processes for delegating decision-making authority.

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| An example of an IMT structure for a small/medium organisation can be found in the *Emergency Management Plan Template*, available on the [**Service Providers’ Emergency Management webpage**](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/emergency-management) <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/emergency-management>. |

## Identify hazards and assess risks

Service providers may be affected by various emergencies, with risks and consequences varying based on factors such as service type, location, and client demographics. A comprehensive risk assessment is essential to effectively identify, assess, and mitigate these risks. This guide outlines the key steps for conducting risk assessments and provides resources to help service providers prepare for emergencies.

### Identifying and Assessing Risks

To effectively manage risks, service providers should:

* **Conduct a Risk Assessment:** Consider the unique factors of your service, such as location, service types, and client demographics, when assessing risks. For instance, services near bushland or grassland must prepare for fire risks and monitor fire danger ratings. Urban-based services may need to focus on extreme heat or power outage preparedness. Similarly, facility-based services will require different preparation compared to home-based services.
* **Identify Specific Risks and Develop Mitigation Strategies:** After identifying potential risks, develop strategies to mitigate their impact.

Examples of hazards that may require planning include:

* + Natural: Bushfires, landslides, extreme heat, floods, storms, earthquakes
  + Biological: Disease outbreaks (e.g., COVID-19, influenza, thunderstorm asthma, animal and plant epidemics)
  + Technological: Chemical and radiological agent releases, explosions, infrastructure failures, cyber incidents
  + Societal: Acts of terrorism, humanitarian emergencies

Mitigation strategies are actions, plans, or measures implemented to reduce the severity, likelihood, or impact of identified risks. These strategies are designed to prevent emergencies from occurring, minimize their effects if they do occur, or facilitate a faster recovery.

Below are some examples of mitigation strategies for different types of risks. Please note: these strategies are examples only and may not be applicable to every agency. Agencies should conduct a risk assessment and implement strategies most relevant to their specific circumstances, including location, service type, and client demographics.

**Natural Hazards**

* + Bushfires:
* Create and maintain defensible space around facilities by clearing vegetation.
* Install fire-resistant materials for buildings.
* Develop and practice bushfire evacuation plans.
* Regularly monitor fire danger ratings and update response plans accordingly.
* Floods:
* Elevate essential infrastructure and utilities above potential flood levels.
* Install flood barriers or levees around critical facilities.
* Develop an evacuation plan specific to flooding scenarios
* Ensure that drainage systems are clear and functioning properly
* Extreme Heat:
* Install air conditioning systems and ensure they are maintained
* Develop a heatwave action plan, including hydration stations and cool-down areas
* Schedule outdoor activities during cooler parts of the day or reschedule them entirely
* Educate staff and clients on the signs of heat-related illnesses

**Biological Hazards**

* Disease Outbreaks (e.g., COVID-19, Influenza):
* Implement hygiene protocols, including regular handwashing and sanitation
* Enforce social distancing measures and use of personal protective equipment (PPE)
* Provide regular training on infection control measures for staff

**Technological Hazards**

* Cybersecurity Threats:
* Implement firewalls, anti-virus software, and regular system updates
* Conduct regular cybersecurity training for staff to prevent phishing attacks
* Back up data regularly and store it securely
* Develop an incident response plan for cyber breaches

**Societal Hazards**

* Acts of Terrorism:
* Conduct regular security assessments and drills
* Install and maintain surveillance systems and physical barriers
* Develop an emergency communication plan for staff and clients
* Coordinate with local law enforcement to stay informed of potential threats
* Humanitarian Emergencies:
* Establish emergency supply kits, including food, water, and medical supplies
* Train staff in emergency response and first aid
* Develop plans to accommodate an influx of people in need, including temporary shelters
* **Review and Update Risk Assessments Regularly:** Risks evolve over time, so it's crucial to regularly review and update your assessments to ensure they remain relevant and effective.

### Finding Out About Local Risks

While emergencies can occur at any time of the year, the Victorian summer is a period of heightened risk for certain hazards such as bushfires, grassfires, extreme heatwaves and severe thunderstorms.

Understanding the specific risks in your area is vital for effective emergency preparedness. Options for gathering this information include:

* Contacting your regional Victoria State Emergency Service office or relevant fire service
* Consulting with local government or departmental management staff
* Attending an emergency preparedness forum organised by the department

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| It is important to consider hazards and potential risk. Please refer to Appendix 2 for further information and relevant links to hazard-specific resources is available in [**Appendix 2**](#_Appendix_2_–)**.**  Sample risk assessment tools and templates are available in [**Appendix 3**](#_Appendix_3_–)**.** |

## Assessing client-risk profiles to strengthen emergency management planning

A service provider’s clients and their care requirements are an essential component of planning for emergencies – particularly for making decisions about whether to relocate a facility-based service or for planning service continuity for in-home services.

During the emergency planning and preparation phase, service providers should consider their clients’ unique support needs and capabilities during and after an emergency, where possible with the client (and where relevant with the client’s carer) to continue to strengthen emergency preparedness and foster a strengths-based approach.

A client who exhibits resilience may, under certain circumstances, become most at risk. Some client’s personal circumstances may increase their exposure to certain risks during different types of emergency events. These circumstances may be enduring (for example, limited mobility or cognitive function) or time-limited (for example, location of residence that may be prone to certain hazards) or only in relation to specific types of emergencies (for example, respiratory conditions during a smoke event, thunderstorm asthma). When undertaking emergency management planning, potential risks should be identified, and mitigating strategies and/or measures clearly articulated in emergency management plans and processes.

Using tools such as the University of Sydney’s Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness (P-CEP) toolkit may also be helpful to further support informed, meaningful and engaging emergency management planning preparedness that builds stronger connections and social capital.

The P-CEP toolkit is specifically designed with and for people with a disability. However, the toolkit can also be adjusted to facilitate people without a disability. The P-CEP toolkit resource can be found under section 2.11 Resources to assist planning in emergencies.

## Plan for continuity of care

Planning is critical to ensure continuity of care to clients if services usually delivered in the home are altered or ceased because of an emergency.

Agency emergency management plans should consider the needs of clients and be adaptable for all types of emergencies. Key points include:

* health needs such as medication, prescriptions and equipment (including any equipment substitutions required in the event of power disruption)
* transportation to alternative locations
* location of the home with respect to fire, flood or essential service disruption risks
* ensuring emergency information is readily available and relevant for the client.

### Altering or ceasing services

Agencies providing services in-home, community service centres and/or facility-based must develop emergency management plans for altering or ceasing services.

When developing an emergency management plan that includes a decision to alter or cease services, the following factors could be considered:

* the level of risk in ceasing services or to staff in continuing service during an emergency
* options for providing services in alternative ways, such as changing the timing or location of service delivery, or partnerships with alternative providers
* communication – how clients, families of clients (where appropriate), staff and the community will be provided information about services that may cease or be delivered in different ways, times or locations
* arrangements for informing relevant statutory bodies of any statutory clients who are unable to attend programs due to alteration or cancellation of a service
* triggers for altering or ceasing a service and particular needs of clients and staff.
* Informing the department.

## Planning emergency response options

Service providers should discuss their approach to emergency preparedness and planned responses with their clients. For those receiving services in the home, best practice would see emergency management planning undertaken as part of the process of establishing the in-home services.

### Relocation

Relocation is the early, planned movement of clients with an appropriate number of staff from a service or facility to alternative accommodation with a similar type of care available. Relocation is undertaken in response to a forecast or warning, such as a **forecast Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating Day**, or because of an imminent or actual emergency.

Relocation is initiated by the service prior to an emergency impacting or posing a significant threat, including relocation ahead of a **forecast Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating Day**.

Planning for relocation should be done well in advance of any warning or emergency and should consider:

* any special needs of clients
* staffing requirements
* [transport and accommodation options](#AccommodationTransport)
* the time it would take to relocate the facility, including preparing the clients for transport and
* information sharing requirements.

Preliminary planning for returning to a facility should also be considered.

### Evacuation

Evacuation is the urgent movement of clients and staff to a safer location using best endeavours from a facility or home to a safer place in response to a threat or imminent impact of an emergency. Depending on the emergency, an evacuation may involve a partial, progressive or full evacuation of the facility.

An evacuation without any prior warning is resource intensive and potentially detrimental to the health, safety and wellbeing of clients, staff and emergency services personnel. The main priority when deciding to evacuate is the protection of life.

Effective planning and execution of a facility evacuation without any prior warning or notice is the *least-preferred* emergency response option. Emergency service resources such as ambulances may not be available to assist to relocate all clients.

Given the unpredictable nature of emergencies, the control agency may recommend that a service evacuate. If this occurs, the person with delegated authority must decide whether to implement the control agency’s recommendation to evacuate.

The department strongly encourages services to follow the recommendation to evacuate unless a risk assessment demonstrates that it would not be possible to evacuate clients and staff safely with available resources, within the recommended time frame.

Victoria Police manages the planning and operational aspects of an evacuation during an emergency. Victoria Police will appoint an evacuation manager to perform a range of tasks and functions leading up to and during any evacuation.

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| A relocation and evacuation kit will help your client or service to quickly prepare for relocation of evacuation. [**Appendix 4**](#_Appendix_4_–) provides a suggested list of items to include in a kit. |

### Sheltering

There are times when staying and sheltering during an emergency is safer than relocating or evacuating. Emergency management plans should consider potential scenarios where it might be necessary to shelter in place when it is not possible to leave safely. Services should consider what resources might be required and what steps can be taken to make the facility as safe and resilient as possible.

A decision to stay and shelter will be influenced by factors such as the type of emergency, the predicted timing of impact, property preparedness, capacity to actively defend the location and the safety of relocating or evacuating. Advice should be sought from emergency services and/or the department.

Service providers should consider the risks involved with sheltering compared with relocation or evacuation. Some facilities may have clients who are difficult to move. When deciding to relocate, evacuate or shelter, assess the risks and issues associated with moving clients compared to the risks of staying, especially for clients who may be very frail, or have a serious physical or mental health condition or disability.

There are two terms often used for sheltering:

* shelter in place
* shelter indoors.

#### Shelter in place

To shelter in place is to remain on site, within an existing facility or home, during an emergency.

The decision to shelter in place should be based on information from trusted sources, such as VicEmergency or the control agency. Seek advice to confirm that this option is safer or more appropriate than relocation or evacuation.

Moving clients from one building to a safer one within the same facility is also considered sheltering in place.

Key considerations for sheltering in place include:

* preparation of the property for the type of emergency
* emergency management capability and readiness of the service and staff on site to respond to an emergency threat if necessary
* resources needed to stay on site during an emergency or for the duration of potential isolation, such as staff, equipment, supplies and essential services, and
* potential impact on information and telecommunications infrastructure.

#### Shelter indoors

To shelter indoors is to remain inside a building and limit the exposure to unhealthy conditions in the air outside such as leaking gas, smoke and other air contaminants.

On receiving advice to shelter indoors, actions to take are:

* go indoors immediately
* close all doors and windows
* turn off heaters, air conditioners and exhaust fans
* listen to the radio or television or monitor VicEmergency for the all-clear advice.

## Plan alternative accommodation and transport options

Service providers should determine safe and suitable accommodation options during an emergency, ensuring that the selected locations are not situated in high-risk areas prone to hazards such as bushfires, floods, etc. It is also strongly recommended that services engage with other local providers to limit the risk of overwhelming the capacity of one service or business during and after an emergency. For example, one local motel may be identified as the alternative accommodation option by multiple agencies, so it is essential to have contingency plans in place.

Meeting day-to-day pre-hospital care needs of Victorians during actual or potential emergencies requires considered use of both emergency ambulance services and non-emergency patient transport resources.

Think broadly and consider a range of options when planning client and staff transport. All facility emergency management plans should include a detailed section on how clients and staff could be transported. It may not be possible for ambulances to relocate all clients. Where ambulance transport is not required, alternative transport to relocate clients should be planned.

When planning these transport routes, careful consideration should be given to potential and likely hazards, such as road blockages or routes passing through high-risk areas. These factors should be assessed regularly, and contingency routes identified to ensure safe and efficient relocation of clients and staff.

## Plan for prolonged power disruption

Some emergencies may result prolonged disruption to power supply. Without battery-operated support and back-up generator power, systems and electronic equipment may not function including lifting equipment, air conditioners and life supports. Food safety may also be compromised.

Power-dependent clients may need to have a planned relocation as soon as external conditions are unfavourable. Even in the absence of any direct threat, conditions within surrounding areas could have hazardous effects or limit ability to relocate.

## Property preparedness

Service providers should ensure that the properties they use for delivering services, including facilities and offices, are prepared for emergencies.

Specific preparedness activities prior to summer, such as risk assessments, necessary property maintenance, staff training and drills should form part emergency preparedness to mitigate potential risks.

## Resources to assist planning for emergencies

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| * **[VicEmergency](http://emergency.vic.gov.au/)** <http://emergency.vic.gov.au> is a centralised website for Victorians to find emergency information and warnings. It also provides preparedness and recovery information related to emergencies. * [**Victorian State Emergency Service**](https://www.ses.vic.gov.au/)<https://www.ses.vic.gov.au> has information on how to plan for storm and flood emergencies on their website. This includes a handy section on how to understand emergency warnings and know when to act. * [**Australian Red Cross**](https://www.redcross.org.au/prepare)<https://www.redcross.org.au/prepare> has a template emergency management plan, a survival kit checklist and a handy mobile app available on their website. These step-by-step guides will help you create a personal emergency management plan. * [**Local Councils**](https://knowyourcouncil.vic.gov.au/councils) <https://knowyourcouncil.vic.gov.au/councils> have local information on emergencies including Municipal Emergency Management Plans. * **Australian standards**   + AS 3745-2010: Planning for Emergencies in facilities |

Additional resources to assist property preparedness

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| * [**Country Fire Authority**](https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/how-to-prepare-your-property) <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/how-to-prepare-your-property> has information on property preparation before the fire season. * [**Victorian State Emergency Service**](https://www.ses.vic.gov.au/plan-and-stay-safe/flood-guides) <https://www.ses.vic.gov.au/plan-and-stay-safe/flood-guides> provides a local flood guide and a guide on sandbagging to protect your property. * [**Vic Emergency**](https://www.emergency.vic.gov.au/prepare/#where-do-i-get-information-in-an-emergency) <<https://www.emergency.vic.gov.au/prepare/#where-do-i-get-information-in-an-emergency>> provides information on how to prepare property for a range of emergencies. |

Additional resources to assist people with disabilities to plan for emergencies

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| * [**Collaborating 4 Inclusion**](https://collaborating4inclusion.org/) <https://collaborating4inclusion.org> have developed a Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness (P-CEP) toolkit and workbook to help people with disability to tailor emergency preparedness to their individual support needs. * [**The Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience**](https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/media/1762/handbook-5-communicating-with-people-with-a-disability-kh-final.pdf) published [*Communicating with people with a Disability: National Guidelines for Emergency Managers*](http://www.daru.org.au/resource/communicating-with-people-with-disability-national-guidelines-for-emergency-managers) <https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/media/1762/handbook-5-communicating-with-people-with-a-disability-kh-final.pdf> * [**I’m Okay**](https://imokay.org.au/)<https://imokay.org.au> Has emergency readiness resources for people with disabilities. *Please note these have been developed in New South Wales.* |

Resources for multicultural and multifaith communities

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| * **Australian Red Cross** has several resources to assist multicultural and multifaith communities prepare for emergencies:   + [**Emergency preparedness information flyers in multiple languages**](https://www.redcross.org.au/get-help/emergencies/resources-about-disasters/help-for-agencies) can be found on their [*Resources for agencies webpage*](https://www.redcross.org.au/get-help/emergencies/resources-about-disasters/help-for-agencies) <https://www.redcross.org.au/get-help/emergencies/resources-about-disasters/help-for-agencies>   + **An** [**Easy English Rediplan**](https://www.redcross.org.au/get-help/emergencies/resources-about-disasters) is available from their Resources to help you <https://www.redcross.org.au/get-help/emergencies/resources-about-disasters>. |

# Readiness for an imminent emergency

Emergency readiness activities are undertaken when situational awareness indicates there is high probability of an imminent emergency event, such as a bushfire or flood.

## Monitoring local conditions

VicEmergency is the platform for information about all emergencies in Victoria. VicEmergency displays a real-time map with incidents from across Victoria including fires, floods, storms, power outages, hazardous materials and significant traffic incidents. The site also includes information from the Environment Protection Authority and the Chief Health Officer. Information about current and forecast conditions is also available from a variety of media sources, including radio, television and the internet. Agencies such as the Bureau of Meteorology, Victoria State Emergency Service, fire services and Victoria Police monitor forecast hazards and provide advice and warnings.

Emergency Warnings and Public Information resources

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| Current warnings and locations of emergencies:   * [**VicEmergency**](http://emergency.vic.gov.au) <http://emergency.vic.gov.au> is Victoria’s primary website for information about emergencies. VicEmergency displays a real-time map with incidents across Victoria including fires, floods, storms, power outages, hazardous material and traffic incidents. * **The VicEmergency hotline**: 1800 226 226. * **The VicEmergency app** also allows service providers to receive official warnings and information based upon where facilities are located. * [**Bureau of Meteorology**](http://www.bom.gov.au) <http://www.bom.gov.au> has up-to-date information on local weather conditions, including fire weather warnings and public fire danger rating tables that forecast four days of fire danger ratings. * [**Australian Broadcasting Corporation**](https://www.abc.net.au/emergency/) **(ABC)** <https://www.abc.net.au/emergency/> and other local media are also important sources of information during emergencies. * [**Official emergency broadcasters**](https://www.emv.vic.gov.au/responsibilities/victorias-warning-system/emergency-broadcasters/list) <https://www.emv.vic.gov.au/responsibilities/victorias-warning-system/emergency-broadcasters/list> broadcast emergency warnings and alerts relevant to local areas on a range of radio frequencies and television stations in Victoria. * [**The Country Fire Authority**](https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au) <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au> website has up-to-date information on local fire danger ratings, warnings, total fire bans and Catastrophic fire danger days.   Information about public health risks, including epidemic thunderstorm asthma, is found at:   * [**The Chief Health Officer’s webpage page**](https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/chief-health-officer) <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/chief-health-officer>. Subscribe to the Chief Health Officer Alerts via this page to maintain situational awareness of public health issues. * [**Environment Protection Agency**](https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/for-community/airwatch) <https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/for-community/airwatch> displays information about Victoria’s air quality. * [**National Terrorism Threat Level**](https://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au/national-threat-level/current-national-terrorism-threat-level)<https://ww.nationalsecurity.gov.au/national-threat-level/current-national-terrorism-threat-level> provides current information on Australia’s terrorism threat level. |

## Service Readiness

Where situational awareness indicates an emerging threat, emergency management plans should be reviewed to ensure they are up to date and appropriate for the emerging threat. Readiness activities identified in emergency management plans should then be carried out so that services are ready to undertake necessary action when required.

Communicating planned activities with partner agencies, relevant emergency services, or other emergency contacts of clients, patients and participants should form part of readiness planning.

# During an emergency

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| **Always call 000 (triple zero) if there is an immediate danger to life** |

## Activating your emergency management plan

Services need to be prepared and ready to activate their emergency response plan. Emergencies can impact quickly with little time to prepare and gather resources.

The person with delegated authority needs to make decisions as soon as practicable.

Facilities such as forensic, disability and residential services must be ready for the potential need to relocate, shelter or evacuate in response to an emergency. The decision to relocate, shelter, or evacuate during an emergency is not optional in situations where Leave Early or Bushfire Survival Plans mandate such actions, particularly in high-risk areas or during a Catastrophic and/or Extreme fire danger rating days.

* The decision for agencies to relocate, shelter or evacuate is complex and requires careful consideration of multiple factors to ensure the safety and well-being of clients and staff. The assessment process includes evaluating the following critical factors: the current client profile and care needs – mobility, health status and medical needs
* the ability to reduce client numbers during periods of heightened risk, for example some clients may be able to go home or stay with family
* availability of staff – consider the possibility that staff and resources may be unavailable due to the emergency
* outcomes of risk assessments undertaken earlier or during the emergencies
* level of facility preparedness and the resources needed to defend it
* level of support available from emergency service organisations
* availability of supplies, including essential services such as electricity, a safe drinking water supply and telecommunications
* availability of safe transport and road access
* availability of suitable and safe alternative accommodation.

## Deciding to relocate, shelter or evacuate

Best practice: be ready and able to receive advice, notifications, alerts or warnings from an ABC emergency broadcast, VicEmergency or other source of emergency information, and prepared to activate an emergency management plan.

It is the service provider’s responsibility to maintain situational awareness, monitor emergency services for information and be prepared to act in a timely and effective manner.

If there is an emergency in the area that may necessitate evacuation, sheltering or a combination of both, to protect life, each service must activate its emergency management plan.

The diagram in Figure 1 shows the timing and triggers that influence the decision to relocate, shelter or evacuate. Decision making authority rests with the Chief Executive Officer (Chief Warden/Commander) or delegate of the service.

When deciding to relocate, ensure that there is enough time to relocate safely. For example, relocation for a **Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating Day** should be complete the day before the **forecasted** **Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating Day**.



*Figure 1- Timing of decisions to relocate, shelter or evacuate*

Suggested decision-making process for relocation, evacuation or sheltering

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| * Activate your emergency management plan / bushfire plan. * Be ready to make decisions – any decision to relocate, shelter or evacuate must be made on behalf of the service by a person with appropriate authority. * Assess the situation – find out about the emergency and predicted conditions. It is important to seek information from trusted sources, preferably VicEmergency. * Review client profiles – numbers of clients, mobility, medicines and resources required to move clients, client records and essential information that will need to accompany a client. * Review staff availability - staff may be personally affected by the emergency and may not be able to support the emergency response. * Seek advice from key stakeholders to assess available resources. * Consider how you will manage if emergency services are unable to access the facility or have limited resources available. * Develop flexible plans for client transport – do not rely on one source of transport. *Do not use triple zero (000) to discuss transport assistance with Ambulance Victoria.* * Review options for alternative accommodation. * Maintain situational awareness and continue to revise risk assessments - be prepared to change plans if circumstances alter. * Communicate with clients’ next-of kin to keep them informed. |

The diagram at Figure 2 summarises the range of factors that should be considered when planning a response to an emergency.

decision making criteria for responding to external hazards

External factors, internal factors and the phase of the emergency influence the response deicsion.
External factors include hazards (bushfire, heat, flood etc), the nature of the event (time and scope) and the location of the factility (rural, regional metropolitan)
Internal factors: resident/patient/client care needs, alternative accommodation, transport, supplies, equipment and services, staff and the physical enviornment
Before an amergency the response is a precautionary relocation. During an emergency situation, the response is an emergency evacuation.


*Figure 2: Decision making criteria for responding to external hazards*

## Notifying the department

Residential and home-based care services must implement their relocation, Leave Early or Bushfire Survival Plans when:

* they are located in an area of heightened bushfire risk (i.e. a Victorian Fire Risk Register – Bushfire (VFRR-B) area of ‘Extreme’ bushfire risk, and/or Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO), and/or Bushfire Prone Area (BPA), and
* the fire weather district is subject to a Catastrophic fire danger rating day.

Relocation must be completed **the day** **before** a forecast Catastrophic fire danger rating day.

**The department or home-based care service contact must be notified of client relocations before 9:00 am on the Catastrophic fire danger rating day.**

Service providers must notify the department by phone if an emergency results in changes to service delivery, and again when normal services have resumed. Notification is required:

* when there is a change to the way services are delivered, including a decision to stop providing services
* when a service is required to relocate to a different address, including a relocation required under this policy’s Catastrophic fire danger rating day provisions
* within five days of services returning to normal operations following an emergency or Catastrophic fire danger day relocation.

If the service or placement has not or is not expected to return to normal within five days of the emergency or Catastrophic fire danger rating day, the department must be notified by the fifth day, indicating when the service expects to return to normal.

When you notify the department, provide the following information:

**The day** **before** **a forecast Catastrophic fire danger rating day**

* Organisation’s name and address
* Number of clients planned for relocation

**Before 9:00 am on the Catastrophic fire danger rating day**

* Number of planned relocations/cessations completed (according to the plan/different from the plan)
* Number of planned relocations/cessations that did not occur
* Any staff/agency/client issues associated or
* What alternate actions were taken in place of the Plan

**Within 5 days after the Catastrophic fire danger rating day**

* Date of the service resumed
* Date the clients returned
* Any direct costs incurred by the department to complete relocations or cessations.

# After emergencies

It is challenging to develop a customised recovery plan before an emergency happens, but it is useful to start planning ahead of time to help guide the recovery process. For most service providers, recovery will be focused on the health and wellbeing of clients and staff and return to business as usual.

It is also important to build in processes to enable services to learn from the emergency experience and to improve preparedness for any future emergencies.

## Health and wellbeing of clients and staff

A service provider’s priority should be to check the health and wellbeing of clients and staff affected by the emergency. They should also make sure appropriate support, including psychosocial support, is provided as soon as possible. The recovery process may take a long time if the emergency was significant, and people may need support months or even years after the emergency has passed.

Public Information resources

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| * [**Australian Red Cross – Emergency Resources**](https://www.redcross.org.au/)< https://www.redcross.org.au/>The Australian Red Cross offers various resources for both immediate and long-term support, including psychological first aid, tips for coping after a crisis, and advice on how to assist others. These resources can be critical in supporting the mental health and wellbeing of clients and staff after an emergency. * [**Beyond Blue – Mental Health Support**](https://www.beyondblue.org.au/)<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/> Beyond Blue provides information and resources for managing mental health issues, such as anxiety and depression, that may arise after a traumatic event. Their resources include helplines, online forums, and advice on seeking professional support. * [**Lifeline – Crisis Support and Suicide Prevention**](https://www.lifeline.org.au/)<https://www.lifeline.org.au/> Lifeline offers 24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention services. Their resources include phone counselling, online chat, and community resources, which can be invaluable for clients and staff experiencing severe distress. * [**Headspace – Support for Young People**](https://headspace.org.au/)<https://headspace.org.au/> Headspace provides tailored mental health support for young people aged 12-25. They offer services including counselling, group therapy, and resources for managing stress, anxiety, and other mental health challenges. * [**National Mental Health Commission – Recovery-Oriented Mental Health Practice**](https://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/)<<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.gov.au/>>  The National Mental Health Commission offers guidelines and practices for a recovery-oriented approach, emphasising the importance of long-term support and empowerment of individuals affected by emergencies. * [**Safe Work Australia – Work-Related Psychological Health and Safety**](https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au)<https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/> Safe Work Australia provides guidance on creating psychologically safe workplaces, including how to manage work-related stress and support employees after critical incidents. This resource is especially relevant for ensuring the ongoing wellbeing of staff. |

## Return to business as usual

The return to business as usual will depend on the nature of the emergency, the availability and capacity of staff, the type and extent of damage to buildings and infrastructure, and the availability of essential services after the emergency has passed.

Facilities that were required to shelter during the emergency may need to consider relocating if there has been damage to the building or if essential services such as power, water and telecommunications have been disrupted.

Facilities that have relocated or evacuated will need to assess the nature and extent of any damage incurred at the facility or in the surrounding area. After an emergency, it is important to conduct a site assessment to determine if there are any safety issues that have occurred and to assess requirements for the clean-up. If work is required to restore the facility it will be necessary to make interim arrangements for clients and staff.

Services that provide care in the home should plan to resume services as soon as possible and plan for the immediate needs of clients who are without support. It may take some time before all areas affected by an emergency are accessible and safe to enter.

A communication plan will be required to ensure clients, families of clients (where appropriate), staff, the department and other stakeholders are kept informed.

**Actions for service providers to undertake after an emergency**

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| * Prioritise the needs of clients and staff following an emergency and ensure they have adequate care and support while they wait for services to return to normal. * Notify the department by phone if an emergency results in changes to service delivery, and again when normal services have resumed. * Conduct site assessments and consider factors such as safe access and egress, communications, electrical safety, water sanitation and other health and safety issues. * Communicate regularly with clients, families and staff to keep them informed while waiting for a return to business as usual. * Conduct a debrief with staff and relevant stakeholders as soon as possible to discuss the emergency, what worked well and what could be done differently next time. * Review and update emergency management plans to reflect lessons learned. During this phase, it is essential to engage with clients – and clients’ carers where relevant – who have unique support needs and listen to their perspectives on the strengths, areas for improvement, and necessary changes to the plan. |

# 

# Appendix 1 - Glossary

In the context of this reference guide, certain terms have specific meanings as follows:

* **Client** – individuals or families who are receiving a service, including children and young people in out-of-home care arrangements and residents of residential services.
* **Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating Day** – is the highest fire danger rating in Victoria. These are the most dangerous conditions for a fire. If a fire starts and takes hold, lives are likely to be lost. If a Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating Day is forecast, leave bushfire risk areas. Your life and the lives of the clients and staff within your facility may depend on decisions you make, even before there is a fire. Buildings cannot withstand fires in these conditions. You may not be able to leave, and help may not be available.
* **Control agency** – the primary or lead organisation responsible for responding to the emergency. For example, the Victorian State Emergency Service (VICSES) is the control agency for storm or flood events.
* **Emergency** – an emergency due to the actual or imminent occurrence of an event which in any way endangers or threatens to endanger the safety or health of any person in Victoria, or which destroys or damages, or threatens to destroy or damage, any property in Victoria, or endangers or threatens to endanger the environment or an element of the environment in Victoria. Emergencies may include those listed in the policy (floods, storms, bushfires, earthquakes, grassfires, building or industrial fires, explosions and accidents, extreme heat and heatwaves, outbreaks, epidemics and pandemics (e.g., COVID-19, thunderstorm asthma, influenza, emergency animal disease), the contamination of food or water supplies, disruption to essential services (such as electricity and/or gas, water, or telecommunications networks), cyber incidents (such as data breaches and system failures impacting service delivery, clients and service data), terrorism threats and other acts of violence impacting the public), as well as:
* windstorm, or another natural event
* a road accident or any other accident
* a plague
* a terrorist attack
* a warlike act
* a hi-jack, siege, or riot.
* **Epidemic** - is a sudden outbreak of a disease periodically over a widespread area in a devastatingly severe form causing severe losses or complete destruction. This is constantly present in a locality, but it assumes severe form only on occasions. This is because of the occurrence of favourable environment responsible for the rapid development of disease
* **Forecast Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating Day** – a Catastrophic fire danger rating day forecast by the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM). The BOM may forecast a Catastrophic fire danger rating day up to four days in advance of one occurring. Catastrophic fire danger day forecasts may be communicated via regular channels, such as on mainstream media outlets, during weather forecasts and via VicEmergency and by the Country Fire Authority (CFA).
* **Funded agency** – an organisation that has a formal service agreement with the department for the delivery of health and/or human services.
* **Heightened bushfire risk** – a service or facility may be in an area of heightened bushfire risk when any or all of the following apply:
  + it is located within a Bushfire Prone Area (BPA)
  + it is located within a Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO)
  + it is located within a Victorian Fire Risk Register – Bushfire (VFRR-B) area of ‘Extreme’ bushfire risk.
* **Home-based care** – foster care and kinship care for children and young people.
* **Home-based care service contact** – means the funded agency or department area office with whom a foster carer or kinship carer regularly engages.
* **In-home and community-based services** – services provided in the home or in community settings such as personal care, day services, community-based respite, or information and referral services.
* **Pandemic** – is a global outbreak of a disease, affecting a significantly larger geographic area, typically spanning multiple countries or even continents. Pandemics are generally associated with more severe diseases (than epidemics) an have the potential to cause significant illness, mortality, and socioeconomic disruption.
* **Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness (P-CEP) -** enables people to self-assess their preparedness, capabilities and support needs and develop a personal emergency plan for how they will: (a) manage their support needs in emergencies; and (b) act together with their support network before, during, and after a disaster
* **Residential services** – overnight accommodation services provided in a facility-based setting. For example, residential and lead tenant out-of-home care arrangements, supported independent living (including respite), youth foyers and the Forensic Disability Residential Services.
* **Shared responsibility** - means that emergency management is everyone’s business. All Victorians have some role in planning for, responding to and recovering from emergencies. It does not, however, mean that everyone has equal responsibility, nor does it mean a shifting of responsibility.
* **Service continuity** – a client continues to receive a service during and after an emergency and could include the service being delivered from an alternative setting or by an alternative provider.
* **Service provider** – an agency that provides services within the social services sector. A service provider may or may not have a formal service agreement with the department.
* **Social housing** – means public housing and community housing, including transitional housing and crisis accommodation.

# Appendix 2 - Hazard-specific information and resources

#### Australian Fire Danger Rating System (AFDRS)

Fire Danger Ratings tell you how dangerous a fire could be if one started. The higher the rating the more dangerous the conditions.

Fire Danger Ratings feature in weather forecasts during the fire season.

Service providers should:

* monitor conditions and official sources for warnings
* if a fire starts nearby, act immediately to protect lives
* do not wait for a warning
* adhere to local regulations governing fire activity.

Refer to the ‘*Know your fire danger rating’* table below for details on the new AFDRS fire danger ratings, effective nationally from 1 September 2022. 

#### Know your fire danger rating

| FIRE DANGER RATING | MODERATE  **Plan and prepare** | HIGH  **Be ready to act** | EXTREME  **Act 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 |
| * Monitor conditions and official sources for warnings. * Adhere to local regulations governing fire activity. * Ensure any industrial or agricultural activities adhere to relevant industry guidelines. * If a fire starts near you, act immediately to protect your life. * Do not wait for a warning. | | | | |

#### Catastrophic fire danger rating day

A Catastrophic fire danger rating day is the highest fire danger rating in Victoria. These are the most dangerous conditions for a fire. If a fire starts and takes hold, lives are likely to be lost.

If a Catastrophic fire danger rating day is forecast, leave bushfire risk areas. Your life and the lives of the clients and staff within your facility may depend on decisions you make, even before there is a fire. Buildings cannot withstand fires in these conditions. You may not be able to leave, and help may not be available.

#### Service cessation and relocation triggers

Many services (including residential and home-based care services) located in areas of heightened bushfire risk are required to relocate before a forecast Extreme or Catastrophic fire danger rating day. These requirements are outlined in the [**Service-specific policy requirements**](#_Service-specific_policy_requirement_1) section below.

Other service providers may choose to include relocation, changes to the way they deliver services or other Extreme or Catastrophic fire danger rating day provisions within their emergency management plans.

**Service providers whose emergency management and Bushfire Survival Plans include ceasing or relocating on an Extreme or Catastrophic fire danger rating day must enact these plans at 9:00 am the day before the Extreme or Catastrophic fire danger rating day.**

Service providers should **independently monitor fire weather forecasts and fire danger ratings** and prepare to enact their emergency management and Bushfire Survival Plans as necessary.

Once service providers have begun to enact the service closure or relocation provisions in their emergency management and Bushfire Survival Plans, they must continue to close or relocate regardless of any change in weather or fire danger forecasts.

#### Bushfire and grassfire

Information to help plan and prepare for bushfires is available on:

* The [Country Fire Authority website](https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/) <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au> has information on how to plan and prepare for fires and advice on leaving early and when it’s safe to return. 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 [Fire ready guide for community workers](https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/534/Fire%20Ready%20Guide%20for%20Community%20Workers%202020%20web.pdf.aspx?Embed=Y) < 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> aims to help people who visit clients and patients in their home support their fire safety planning.
* The State Bushfire Plan is available on the [Emergency Management Victoria website](https://www.emv.vic.gov.au/responsibilities/semp-sub-plans/state-bushfire-plan) <https://www.emv.vic.gov.au/responsibilities/semp-sub-plans/state-bushfire-plan>.

Fire training for community service workers:

* The Country Fire Authority’s e-learning website <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/workers> has a range of online learning modules are available for people who work, travel or care for people in high bushfire areas.

These include:

* Prevent detect escape – home fire safety for people at higher risk
* Bushfire safety for workers
* Bushfire planning – how to support your clients
* Bushfire planning – you and the person you care for.

#### Heightened bushfire risk

A client, service or facility may be in an area of heightened bushfire risk when it is located within a:

* **Bushfire Prone Area (PBA)**
* **Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO)**
* **Victorian Fire Risk Register - Bushfire (VFRR-B) area of ‘Extreme’ bushfire risk.**

The VFRR-B is the current process in which representatives from Local Government, fire services, public land managers, utilities, and community groups map assets at risk from bushfire and assess the level of risk to the assets.

Properties within an area of heightened bushfire risk may be required to have a Bushfire Survival Plan or a Leave Early Plan as outlined in the [Service-specific policy requirements](#_Service-specific_policy_requirement_1) section below.

Bushfire survival plans prepared by Homes Victoria’s Fire Services Team nominate the relevant triggers for relocation (including relocation the night before a forecast Catastrophic or Extreme fire danger day), through a risk assessment process.

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| Properties within in an area of heightened bushfire risk may be required to undertake additional emergency management planning. These are outlined in the Social services sector emergency management policy, available on the [**Service Providers’ Emergency Management webpage**](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/emergency-management) <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/emergency-management>. |

#### Bushfire risk assessment tools

A Bushfire Prone Area (BPA) is subject to or are likely to be subject to bushfires. They make up most of the State of Victoria. Create a free planning property report in **Department of Transport and Planning’s** [**Vic Plan tool**](../Vic%20Plan%20tool) **<https://mapshare.vic.gov.au/vicplan/>** to find out whether your site is located within a designated BPA.

The Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO) is a planning overly that applies to land in Victoria that may be at risk from bushfire. Use the **Department of Transport and Planning’s** [**Vic Plan tool**](../Vic%20Plan%20tool) **<https://mapshare.vic.gov.au/vicplan/>** to find out whether your site is located within a BMO.

The CFA classifies areas within Victoria according to the [**Victorian Fire Risk Register (VFRR)**](https://www.vfrr.vic.gov.au/) **<https://www.vfrr.vic.gov.au/>.** The register allocates levels of risk according to broad firefighting objectives and the relative importance of infrastructure. It does not include a detailed consideration of the risk to housing and its occupants.

Assessing bushfire and grassfire risk can be complex. Service providers may wish to engage a bushfire planning consultant to help prepare a bushfire hazard assessment. A list of accredited bushfire planning practitioners is available on the [**Fire Protection Association Australia website**](http://www.fpaa.com.au/) **<http://www.fpaa.com.au/>.**

#### Electricity supply disruptions

Information about keeping safe during power outages and using generators is available on:

* [The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action’s Power outages webpage](https://www.energy.vic.gov.au/safety-and-emergencies/power-outages) <https://www.energy.vic.gov.au/safety-and-emergencies/power-outages>
* [The Better Health Channel Coping without gas or electricity webpage](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/servicesandsupport/emergencies--coping-without-gas-or-electricity) <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/servicesandsupport/emergencies--coping-without-gas-or-electricity>
* [The Health.Vic Power blackouts webpage](https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/environmental-health/environmental-health-in-the-home/power-blackouts-generators-carbon-monoxide) <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/environmental-health/environmental-health-in-the-home/power-blackouts-generators-carbon-monoxide>.

#### Extreme heat and heatwaves

**Extreme heat** occurs when the forecast average temperature on any day exceeds the predetermined heat health temperature threshold in a Victorian weather forecast district.

A **heatwave** involves three or more consecutive days of extreme heat.

Isolated days of extreme heat typically affect the health and wellbeing of Victorians who are most at risk, commonly due to age, illness, medication or social isolation.

In heatwaves, these impacts are compounded and occur alongside significant health impacts across broad sections of the community. Heatwaves also affect Victoria’s natural, built and economic environments, often through the compromised operation of critical infrastructure, facilities and services.

The department's heat health alert system notifies registered subscribers (including local governments, program areas, hospitals, statewide and major metropolitan health and community service providers, and the general community) of forecast extreme heat and heatwave conditions which have the potential to impact on human health.

More information about extreme heat and heatwaves is available on:

* The [**Health.vic Extreme heat and heatwaves webpage**](https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/environmental-health/climate-weather-and-public-health/heatwaves-and-extreme-heat) <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/environmental-health/climate-weather-and-public-health/heatwaves-and-extreme-heat>
* The [**Health.vic Heat health status webpage**](https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/environmental-health/climate-weather-and-public-health/heatwaves-and-extreme-heat/heat-health-alert-status) <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/environmental-health/climate-weather-and-public-health/heatwaves-and-extreme-heat/heat-health-alert-status>, where you can sign up for notifications of forecast heat conditions.
* The State Extreme Heat Sub-plan, available on [**Emergency Management Victoria**’s webpage](https://www.emv.vic.gov.au/responsibilities/semp-sub-plans/state-extreme-heat-sub-plan) <https://www.emv.vic.gov.au/responsibilities/semp-sub-plans/state-extreme-heat-sub-plan>.
* The [**Bureau of Meteorology Heatwave Forecast Service for Australia**](http://www.bom.gov.au/australia/heatwave%3e)<http://www.bom.gov.au/australia/heatwave>

#### Flood, storm, earthquake

The [**Victoria State Emergency Service**](http://www.ses.vic.gov.au) <www.ses.vic.gov.au> provides information about floods, storms and earthquakes, including safety videos, and how to prepare for these hazards.

Your local water catchment management authority may have information about the flood risk in your area.

See the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action’s [**waterways and catchments webpage**](https://www.water.vic.gov.au/waterways-and-catchments/our-catchments/catchment-management-framework) <https://www.water.vic.gov.au/waterways-and-catchments/our-catchments/catchment-management-framework> for more information.

#### Pandemic

#### Influenza

National, international and state plans for pandemic influenza are available on the:

* [Emergency Management Victoria Action plan for pandemic influenza webpage](https://www.emv.vic.gov.au/responsibilities/semp-sub-plans/victorian-action-plan-for-pandemic-influenza) <https://www.emv‌.vic.gov.au/responsibilities/semp-sub-plans/victorian-action-plan-for-pandemic-influenza>.
* Health.vic [Pandemic Influenza webpage](https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/emergencies/emergency-type/infectious-diseases/pandemic-influenza) <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/emergencies/‌emergency-type/infectious-diseases/pandemic-influenza>.

#### Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

COVID-19 pandemic and response plans are available from the:

* [Health.vic Victoria's pandemic management framework webpage](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/covid-19/victorias-pandemic-management-framework) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/covid-19/victorias-pandemic-management-framework>.
* [Commonwealth Department of Health’s Australian Health Sector Emergency Response Plan for Novel Coronavirus webpage](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/australian-health-sector-emergency-response-plan-for-novel-coronavirus-covid-19) <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/australian-health-sector-emergency-response-plan-for-novel-coronavirus-covid-19>.

COVID-19 resources for community services and care providers are available from the

* [Coronavirus (COVID-19) Victoria](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/) <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au>
* [Commonwealth Department of Health’s Resources for health professionals webspage](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-resources-for-health-professionals-including-aged-care-providers-pathology-providers-and-health-care-managers) <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-resources-for-health-professionals-including-aged-care-providers-pathology-providers-and-health-care-managers>.

#### Smoke exposure

Information about the health effects of bushfire smoke is available on the:

* [Health.vic Bushfires and public health webpage](https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/environmental-health/climate-weather-and-public-health/bushfires-and-public-health) <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/environmental-health/climate-weather-and-public-health/bushfires-and-public-health>.
* [BetterHealth Smoke and your health webpage](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/campaigns/smoke-and-your-health) <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/campaigns/smoke-and-your-health>.

#### Cyber Incident

Information on how to prepare and respond to cyber incidents and manage privacy impacts of a data breach is available on the:

* [Australian Cyber Security Centre webpage](https://www.cyber.gov.au) <https://www.cyber.gov.au>
* [Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner webpage](https://www.ovic.vic.gov.au) <https://www.ovic.vic.gov.au>

# Appendix 3 - Risk assessment

Assess the types of emergencies that are likely to affect your facility or client. Results of the risk assessments should be incorporated into the emergency management plan.

#### Likelihood

There may be multiple factors that contribute to the likelihood and degree of risk for a particular emergency. Consider adjusting the definitions for each likelihood level as appropriate to your service and clients.

Consideration should also be given to any historical incidents when determining the likelihood of an emergency. Your local government may be able to provide information about the history of emergencies in your area.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Likelihood | Example definitions |
| Almost certain | Will occur at least once per year or more frequently |
| Likely | Will potentially occur once within every two years |
| Possible | May occur once in every five years |
| Unlikely | Could occur once in every 10 years |
| Rare | Will only occur in exceptional circumstances, such as once every 50 years |

#### Consequences

Consequences represent the extent of injury of degree of harm that might be caused by an emergency.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Consequence | Example definitions |
| Catastrophic | Death of clients or staff, ongoing impact on facilities and service continuity |
| Major | Extensive injuries requiring hospitalisation, major impact on facilities and service continuity |
| Moderate | Clients require medical treatment, residential facilities temporarily uninhabitable, impact on service continuity |
| Minor | First aid treatment, some impact on client wellbeing, some impact on facility, Impact on service continuity |
| Insignificant | No injuries, no structural damage, low impact on business |

Services should develop definitions for likelihood and consequence categories relevant to their clients and operations. Likelihood and consequences of an emergency can be affected by the level of awareness of emergency plans, or the amount of training provided to staff and clients.

#### Risk Rating

* Use the risk matrix to assess risks as extreme, high, medium or low, and determine priorities for risk controls.
* Prioritise each risk according to its rating, with extreme and high risks requiring more urgent attention.
* When prioritising risks with a similar rating, risks with a higher likelihood or more serious consequence are to be given a higher priority.

Risk Acceptability Chart

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Risk | Acceptability |
| **Extreme** | **Unacceptable (Must have Chief Executive Officer oversight)** |
| **High** | **Tolerable (with senior manager review)** |
| **Medium** | **Tolerable (with frequent risk owner review)** |
| **Low** | **Acceptable (with periodic review)** |

Risk assessment matrix

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Likelihood | Consequences | | | | |
| Insignificant | Minor | Moderate | Major | Catastrophic |
| Almost certain | H | H | E | E | E |
| Likely | M | H | H | E | E |
| Possible | L | M | H | E | E |
| Unlikely | L | L | M | H | E |
| Rare | L | L | M | H | H |

Example risk assessment matrix

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Hazard | Likelihood | Consequence | Rating | Example Comments |
| Grassfire | Unlikely | Major | H | Facility is in an area that could experience grassfire. Emergency planning for relocation underway |
| Heatwave | Likely | Minor | H | Impacts of heatwave may exacerbate effects of client’s medical condition; however, this is mitigated by client having air conditioning installed in their home |
| Heatwave + Power outage | Possible | Major | E | Additional support to client required in the event of power outage and heatwave combined. Refer to client’s support plan and follow first aid guidelines if client or staff are affected by heat. |

Likelihood assessment chart

Complete definitions appropriate for your service

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Likelihood | Definitions |
| Almost certain |  |
| Likely |  |
| Possible |  |
| Unlikely |  |
| Rare |  |

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Consequence assessment chart

Complete definitions appropriate for your service

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Consequence | Definitions |
| Catastrophic |  |
| Major |  |
| Moderate |  |
| Minor |  |
| Insignificant |  |

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# Appendix 4 - Preparing a relocation and evacuation kit

A pre-prepared kit containing relevant emergency information and equipment could save valuable time and resources in the event of a relocation or evacuation. Contents should be checked regularly, particularly if any perishables are included in the kit.

***This list a sample list only and is not exhaustive. Your service should be aware of any specific circumstances for your clients and adjust your kits accordingly.***

#### General equipment and supplies

* Traffic/emergency safety vest and tabards
* Facility keys
* Charged mobile phone and charger (batteries checked and charged)
* Battery-powered radio, and spare batteries (check expiration dates)
* Torches in good working order and spare batteries
* Woollen blankets
* Garbage bags and ties
* Whistle
* Paper, pens and markers
* First-aid kit
* Service user evacuation travel kit (if applicable)
* Antibacterial wipes, hand sanitiser gel, surgical face masks, N95 mask (smoke)
* Toilet paper
* Bottled water
* Non-perishable food and snack items
* Sunscreen and spare sunhats.

#### Client-specific items

* Medication and medical aids
* Copies of care plans
* Any important documents (including prescriptions)
* Thickened fluids and enteral feeding
* Continence aids
* Changes of clothes (natural fabrics), toiletries
* Identification.

#### Facility-based residential services requirements

* Emergency contact details (facility-based service)
  + your local government emergency contact
  + your regional departmental emergency contact
  + your state/federal agency emergency contact
  + local emergency services
  + hospitals, ambulance etc.
* An up-to-date list of residents that includes information such as medical conditions, mobility status and next-of-kin emergency contact information and a photo
* Resident identity bands if applicable
* Spray water bottles (particularly useful is relocating during hot weather)
* Cool packs for transporting refrigerated medicines
* Clipboard with notes, pens and pencils to record information.

# Appendix 5 - Key roles and responsibilities in emergency management

Emergency management planning occurs at national, state, regional and local levels through a range of planning committees. The level of a response is dependent on several factors including the scale and severity of the emergency and the potential consequences for the community.

Victoria’s emergency management arrangements are enshrined in the *Emergency Management Act 1986*, *Emergency Management Act 2013* and detailed in the State Emergency Management Plan and associated documentation. The emergency management sector works together under these arrangements to pursue the shared vision of building safer and more resilient communities.

Understanding the key roles and responsibilities for emergency management provides the basis for a planned and integrated approach to managing emergencies across the social services sector.

#### Local government

Local government works in partnership with agencies at the municipal level and has a range of emergency management responsibilities including:

* planning and preparing for emergency events
* undertaking risk reduction and mitigation activities
* supporting the community to respond to, and recover from, emergency events.

Local governments coordinate the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee, which brings together emergency services, support agencies and other relevant parties to develop and review municipal emergency management plans.

#### State government

In Victoria, the state government is responsible for developing emergency management response and recovery capabilities, for protecting life, property and the environment and for coordinating a multi-agency response.

Emergency Management Victoria has the overarching responsibility for control, command and coordination across government, with specific agencies across government responsible for various elements of the emergency response. These responsibilities are detailed in the State Emergency Management Plan.

#### Commonwealth government

#### National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) supports and services

The NDIS Quality and Safeguards commission has responsibility for ensuring that NDIS providers meet NDIS practice standards which includes (where applicable) preparedness and planning measures are in place to enable continuation of critical supports during and after an emergency.

#### Residential aged care

At the national level, the Department of Health is responsible for:

* assisting residential aged care providers to build capacity to respond effectively during an emergency, including developing emergency plans.
* monitoring the capacity of residential aged care providers to care for residents during and after an emergency event.
* supplying relevant information to residential aged care providers and reminding them of their responsibilities.

1. Emergency Management Victoria, n.d. *Role statement - Department of Families, Fairness and Housing*, viewed 8 July 2024, < https://www.emv.vic.gov.au/node/1435/role-statement-department-of-families-fairness-and-housing>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)