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| Home-based care emergency management factsheet |
| Social services sector emergency management policy |
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# Introduction

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (department) Social services sector emergency management policy v4.0 (the policy) outlines the emergency management planning and preparedness obligations for services that are delivered, funded, or regulated by the department.

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

This easy-to-read factsheet outlines your responsibilities as a foster or kinship carer under the policy. It also provides links to useful information on how to plan and prepare for emergencies.

# Home-based care emergency management responsibilities

The following emergency management responsibilities apply to home-based care. When planning for emergencies, home-based carers must:

* always relocate any child or young person in your care to a safe location when confronted with an emergency or safety threat
* consider modifying your routine behaviour when emergency warnings, including Heat Health Alerts, are in place
* evacuate your property with any child or young person in your care when recommended by Victoria Police or other lead emergency services
* notify your service contact as soon as practicable following evacuation.

## Leave Early Plans

All foster and kinship carers living in an area of heightened bushfire risk must complete a Leave Early Plan as part of emergency preparedness planning.

Leave Early Plans must include the following:

* suitable leaving early arrangements for forecast Catastrophic fire danger days or when advised to relocate by emergency services
* safe destinations that are not in heightened bushfire risk areas and which can be safely accessed
* alternative contact details for when you or the children or young people you care for are away from home.

If you require a leaving early plan your home-based care service contact or child protection practitioner will help you complete one.

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| **A Leave Early Plan template** is available on the department’s [Emergency Management webpage](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/emergency-management) <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/emergency-management>. |

## Reviewing your Leave Early Plan

Leave Early Plans must be reviewed:

* annually by 1 November before summer, a high-risk emergency season
* as required between 1 November and 30 April if the carer/supervisor’s Leaving Early Plan changes
* when a new child is placed with the carer or lead tenant supervisor 1 November and 30 April.

**Note:** the plan does not need to be re-endorsed if the carer/supervisor’s Leaving Early Plan is unchanged however it must be placed on the new child/young person’s CRIS/CRISSP file.

# About emergencies in Victoria

An emergency is an incident or event that threatens the health, safety or wellbeing of a carer and the children and young people in their care. An emergency may also impact your ability to continue to care for children and young people in the short-term.

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

* floods, storms, bushfires, grassfires and earthquakes
* building fires and explosions
* extreme heat and heatwaves
* accidents and illness
* disruption to essential services (such as electricity and/or gas, water, or telecommunications networks)

While each emergency is unique, planning for emergencies will help you act quickly and safely and know where to find information when one occurs.

# Emergency management planning

Foster and kinship carers should plan for a range of emergencies that may threaten the health, safety or wellbeing of the children and young people in your care.

A good emergency management plan will consider the impacts an emergency may have on your daily life. It will include:

* important information such as emergency contacts and where you will stay in the event of an emergency
* what you will take with you, including pets, chargers, medicine, and medical aids
* any special needs the children and young people have, such as medical conditions or mobility support.

For more information on how to plan and prepare for emergencies see the [Emergency planning information](#Emergency_planning_information) box below.

Emergency planning information

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| * **[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 handy mobile app available on their website. These step-by-step guides will help you create 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 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. * [**Fire Rescue Victoria**](https://www.frv.vic.gov.au/) <https://www.frv.vic.gov.au> has a home fire safety booklet to help prevent fires and keep you and the children you care for safe if one happens. |

# Bushfire and grassfire

Victoria is one of the most fire-prone areas in the world.

Home-based carers that live in areas at risk from bushfires or grassfires should include fire preparedness in their emergency management planning. This will help you respond if you are threatened by a fire, or if conditions become too dangerous to remain at home.

Bushfire-specific planning should consider and include the following:

* understanding fire danger ratings and what they mean for you
* identifying the fire district you live in and closely monitoring fire danger ratings
* developing a bushfire survival plan that details early relocation triggers, a safe relocation destination, transport and relocation processes
* inspecting your property before each bushfire season and completing any preparation and maintenance
* planning and preparing to relocate the day before a forecast Catastrophic fire danger day.

## Fire Danger Ratings

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. They include simple messages to help you understand what you need to do.

Every day you should:

* Monitor conditions and official sources for warnings.
* If a fire starts near you, take action immediately to protect your life.
* not wait for a warning.
* Adhere to local regulations governing fire activity.

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| A **know your fire danger rating** table can be found at [**Appendix 1**](#_Appendix_1_–) below |

Bushfire planning information and training

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| * [**Country Fire Authority**](https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au) <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au> website 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> aims to help 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 a range of online learning modules are available for people who work, travel or care for people in high bushfire areas |

## Areas of heightened bushfire risk

Assessing bushfire and grassfire risk can be complex. Several tools are available to help you understand if your property is at risk of fire. More information about each of these tools can be found in the box below.

A property 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.

Speak with your home-based care service contact or a child protection practitioner if you are unsure if your property is at risk of fire.

Bushfire risk assessment tools

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| * A **Bushfire Prone Area (BPA)** is an area where a bushfire may occur. This includes most of Victoria outside urban areas. To find out if your property is within a BPA create a free property report using the Department of Transport and Planning’s [Vic Plan tool](https://mapshare.vic.gov.au/vicplan/) <https://mapshare.vic.gov.au/vicplan>. * A **Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO)** 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 <https://mapshare.vic.gov.au/vicplan>. * The [**Victorian Fire Risk Register - Bushfire (VFRR-B)**](https://www.vfrr.vic.gov.au) <https://www.vfrr.vic.gov.au> allocates levels of bushfire 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. |

## Catastrophic fire danger days

A Catastrophic fire danger 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 day is forecast, leave bushfire risk areas. Your life and the lives of the children and young people you care for may depend on decisions you make, even before there is a fire. Homes cannot withstand fires in these conditions. You may not be able to leave, and help may not be available.

### Enacting your Leave Early Plan

If you live in an area of heightened bushfire risk and a Catastrophic fire danger day is forecast for your fire district **at 9:00am the day before,** you must enact your Leaving Early Plan.

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

If you need to alter 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 regardless of any change in weather or fire danger forecasts.

# Information about emergencies

Home-based carers should stay informed about emergency information and warnings relevant to where they live. Information about current and forecast conditions is available from a variety of media sources, including radio, television and the internet.

The VicEmergency website and mobile app provide information, warnings and advice about emergencies across Victoria. Carers are encouraged to download the VicEmergency app to their mobile device. The app allows you to receive official warnings and information based upon where you live.

Agencies such as the Bureau of Meteorology, the Victoria State Emergency Service, the Country Fire Authority and Victoria Police also monitor forecast hazards and provide advice and warnings.

Sources of emergency information

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| * [**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 incidents and traffic incidents.   You can also download the VicEmergency app to your mobile devices. The app allows you to receive official warnings and information based upon where you live, work or stay.   * 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://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 across Victoria.   * [The **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. * The **Country Fire Authority** <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. |

# More information

Home based carers may also find these other Department of Families, Fairness and Housing documents useful.

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

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# Appendix 1 – Fire Danger Ratings

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 |

**Ensure to**:

* 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, take action immediately to protect your life.
* Do not wait for a warning.