

State Emergency Relief and Recovery Plan

Part 4: Emergency Management Manual Victoria

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4.1 Introduction

The State Emergency Relief and Recovery Plan (this Plan) has been developed and agreed to facilitate the collaboration of all key stakeholders involved in supporting the relief and recovery of communities affected by emergencies.

This Plan is developed in accordance with the *Emergency Management Act 1986* and forms Part 4 of the *Emergency Management Manual Victoria* (this Manual).

This Manual is the principal policy and planning document for emergency management in Victoria. This Manual provides essential information and policy guidance on emergency management planning in local and regional situations.

In conjunction with Part 3 - the *State Emergency Response Plan* and other parts of this Manual, this Plan structures responsibilities to enable the planning, management and coordination of emergency relief and recovery activities for emergencies affecting Victoria. It is part of a broader framework and should be read in conjunction with the entire Manual.

The Department of Human Services is the coordinating agency for emergency relief and recovery at the state and regional level, working in collaboration with municipal councils who have that responsibility at a local level.

This Plan is written with the understanding that relief and recovery must be community-focused and consequence-driven, and be considered across the four environments of social, economic, built and natural. Emergencies of various scales frequently occur in Victoria. These emergencies vary greatly in terms of the size of the event, the geographic area affected, the nature of the hazard that causes the emergency, and the impacts on the community. An 'all hazards - all agencies' approach underpins this Plan.

This Plan is structured into the following key sections:

- 4.1 Introduction** - introduces this Plan, its purpose and provides an overview of fundamental theories and principles to be used during emergency relief and recovery planning and activities.
- 4.2 Emergency Relief and Recovery Management Planning** - details the emergency relief and recovery plans in place across all levels of government.
- 4.3 Emergency Relief and Recovery Activation** - addresses the activation procedures for emergency relief and recovery plans and roles.
- 4.4 Emergency Relief Services** - outlines the emergency relief services that may be considered during the immediate response to an emergency.
- 4.5 Emergency Recovery Services Framework** - presents a framework for good-practice longer-term emergency recovery planning and activities.
- 4.6 Community Engagement and Communications Framework** - provides good-practice considerations and principles for

community engagement and communication before, during and after an emergency.

- 4.7 Testing, Evaluation and Review** - outlines the measures that will be taken to test, evaluate and review emergency relief and recovery plans.

Purpose

Section 4A of the *Emergency Management Act 1986* states that “recovery is the assisting of persons and communities affected by emergencies to achieve a proper and effective level of functioning.” Emergency relief is defined as “the provision of essential needs to individuals, families and communities during and in the immediate aftermath of an emergency”. Typically, emergency relief is provided to individuals during and in the immediate aftermath of an emergency. By contrast, recovery is usually delivered through a longer term engagement with both individuals and communities.

The aim of emergency relief and recovery is to achieve a collaborative approach that is jointly owned by all levels of government, together with the individuals and communities affected, as well as other agencies and organisations that support them.

The purpose of this Plan is to:

- set an agreed strategy for managing the planning, assessment, and implementation of emergency relief and recovery activities in Victoria at an individual, household, local, regional and state level
- provide for the effective coordination of emergency relief and recovery activities
- set out principles and concepts that are agreed and committed to by municipal councils, Department of Human Services, government agencies, non- government organisations and the private sector in undertaking and coordinating emergency relief and recovery activities to support the recovery of communities from emergencies
- provide a framework for the development of supporting plans, guidelines and standard operating procedures
- ensure agencies and organisations involved in management, coordination and service delivery undertake emergency relief and recovery operations within a planned, coordinated and adaptive framework
- engage and empower communities in emergency recovery while recognising the complex and dynamic nature of emergencies and communities
- support and build on individual, household, neighbourhood, community and organisational capacity, and
- be community-focused and consequence-driven across the four recovery environments.

Scope

This Plan applies to all emergencies (as defined by the *Emergency Management Act 1986*) that have an impact on Victorian communities. The principles contained within this Plan may also be used, at the discretion of the Premier, Coordinator in Chief of Emergency Management or State Recovery Coordinators (Department of Human Services), to support communities affected by events that are not covered by the definition of emergency.

The Emergency Management Act 1986

The *Emergency Management Act 1986* is the primary piece of legislation that defines Victoria's emergency management structure, assigns significant roles and responsibilities and provides for particular needs associated with the management of emergencies.

Section 4A of the *Emergency Management Act 1986* describes its objective as being: '*to ensure that (prevention, response and recovery) are organised within a structure which facilitates planning, preparedness, operational coordination and community participation*'.

Section 17 of the *Emergency Management Act 1986* provides for the preparation of the state emergency recovery plan, known here as the State Emergency Relief and Recovery Plan (this Plan). The Minister for Police and Emergency Services has appointed Department of Human Services to be the coordinating agency for recovery. The Secretary of Department of Human Services has appointed the Executive Director, Service Delivery and Performance as the State Recovery Coordinator. In April 2010, the Minister approved an administrative action to change the state and regional lead agency for emergency relief from Victoria State Emergency Service to Department of Human Services (supported by Australian Red Cross) and, as a result, emergency relief is now functionally coordinated as part of emergency recovery.

This Plan has been prepared by the State Recovery Coordinator:

- in collaboration with the State Emergency Recovery Planning Committee, and
- in consultation with stakeholders from emergency relief and recovery agencies

and has been:

- endorsed by the State Emergency Recovery Planning Committee, and
- approved by the Coordinator-in-Chief of Emergency Management.

Overview of Commonwealth, State and Municipal Councils' Roles

Commonwealth

The Commonwealth assists emergency management in the states and territories in emergency relief and recovery and particularly through support for cost-sharing arrangements to alleviate the financial burden associated with the provision of emergency relief and recovery services and activities. Whilst the Commonwealth has no constitutional

responsibility for local safety and emergency services, it is responsible for the military defence of Australia and the civil defence of the Australian community during hostilities.

State

State departments and agencies are responsible for providing emergency-related services such as policing, social welfare and recovery services, agriculture, education, health and ambulance provision, land use planning policy, building control policy, and emergency management policy.

Local

Municipal councils also have significant roles and responsibilities for emergency management at the local level.

Emergency management roles are consistent with the purposes, objectives and powers of municipal councils and should be incorporated into normal business.

Section 4 of the *Emergency Management Act 1986* requires each municipal council to:

- appoint a Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee to prepare a Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMPlan), in accordance with this Manual, for the council's consideration
- prepare and maintain an MEMPlan which must be audited by the Director, Victoria State Emergency Service every three years
- appoint one or more Municipal Emergency Resource Officers (MERO) to coordinate the use of local resources for emergency response and recovery, and
- respond to an audit report within three months.

The Emergency Management Model

The key components of emergency management are organised to facilitate planning, preparedness, operational coordination and community participation and are defined under Section 4A the *Emergency Management Act 1986* as:

- **Prevention** - the elimination or reduction of the incidence or severity of emergencies and mitigation of their effects.
- **Response** - the combating of emergencies and the provision of rescue and immediate relief services.
- **Recovery** - the assisting of person and communities affected by emergencies to achieve a proper and effective level of functioning.

In order to minimise the impact of emergencies on the overall life and functioning of communities, the application of an integrated prevention, response and recovery model before, during and after an emergency is imperative. An 'all hazards - all agencies' approach to emergency management are fundamental and involve applying the same model for the management of all emergencies regardless of the type, scale and complexity.

Emergency Management encompasses

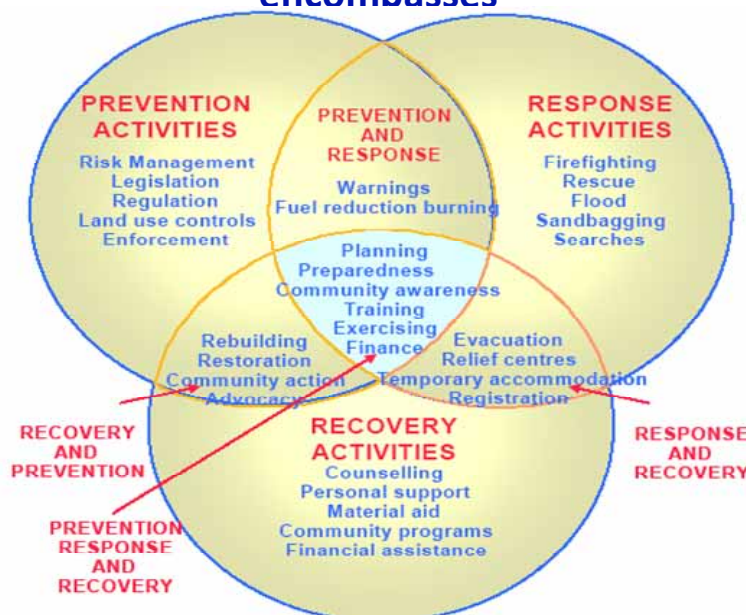


Figure 1: Recovery in the Emergency Management Model

The ultimate goal of emergency management is a safer more sustainable community. Emergency management is performed in conjunction with the community and must be community focused through all components.

The National Principles for Disaster Recovery

Planning for recovery is integral to emergency preparation. Recovery can provide an opportunity to improve conditions beyond previous states. Nationally recognised disaster recovery principles that are fundamental for successful recovery are:

- understanding the **context**
- focusing on the **consequences** of the emergency
- recognising **complexity**
- being **community focused**
- using **community**-led approaches
- ensuring **coordination** of all activities
- employing effective **communication**, and
- acknowledging and building **capacity**.



Figure 2: The National Principles for Disaster Recovery

These principles were endorsed by the Community Services Ministers' Advisory Council in 2009 and underpin the approach taken in preparing this Plan.

Fundamentals of recovery in Victoria

Recovery operations involve cooperation between all levels of government, non-government organisations, community agencies, the private sector, affected communities and emergent organisations in consideration of the

- **people, social, community & health environment** – the emotional, social, spiritual, financial and physical wellbeing of individuals and communities
- **economic environment** – the revitalisation of the economy of the community to ensure as far as possible that the wellbeing of a community is increased
- **built environment** – the restoration of essential and community infrastructure, and
- **natural environment** – the rehabilitation of the environment.

Recovery from emergencies is a developmental process of assisting individuals, families, neighbourhoods and communities to manage the re-establishment of those elements of society necessary for their wellbeing.

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The *National Principles for Disaster Recovery* are contextualised in Victoria in the following ways:

- consequence management and the tiered approach to emergency relief and recovery coordination
- resilience of individuals and communities is respected
- affected community involvement, and
- recognition that emergency relief and recovery is a multi-agency responsibility.

Consequence management and the tiered approach to emergency relief and recovery coordination

One of the key drivers of emergency management is consequence management. Emergency management personnel should:

- thoroughly understand the measures taken to protect public health and safety and restore essential community services
- appreciate the potential impacts and consequences of their decisions, and
- provide emergency relief and recovery to communities, neighbourhoods, families and individuals affected by emergencies.

Consequence management drives the tiered approach to emergency relief and recovery coordination. The tiered approach indicates the level at which coordination for emergency relief and recovery will be escalated at a particular point in time. It is also an indicator of the possible resource levels required.

	Tier 0	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 3+
Likely incidence	frequent	occasional	rare	very rare	extremely rare
Complexity	low-medium	medium	medium-high	high	extreme
Consequence	low-medium	medium	medium-high	high	extreme
Population effects	no significant disruptions	minor localised disruptions	moderate short-term disruptions	major medium-term disruptions	most or all usual activity disrupted
Activation	normal business procedures	MEMPlans	regional plans	state plans	state plans (possible Commonwealth involvement)
Coordination level	local	local	regional	state	state
Coordination point	None	Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre	Regional Emergency Operations Centre	Health & Human Services State Emergency Management Centre	Health & Human Services State Emergency Management Centre
Illustrative examples	house fire car accident	gas leak in a block of flats fire in an aged care facility	widespread hail storm significant bus crash	major bushfire prolonged flood situation	terrorist attack significant earthquake

Figure 3: Emergency relief and recovery coordination levels

The figure above is a summary of the considerations that influence the tier designation of an emergency. The tier is designated by the Regional Recovery Coordinator (or delegate) or State Recovery Coordinator (or delegate) for Tier 2, 3 or 3+ and can shift over time as emergencies unfold.

The tiers provide an indicative framework which will primarily be used by Health & Human Services Emergency Management for understanding the currently active level of coordination of emergency relief and recovery.

The tiers may also be useful for relief and recovery agencies and organisations in planning, preparedness and service delivery. Agencies responsible for operational plans and procedures (sub-plans) that deliver emergency relief and recovery functions outlined in this Plan can align activation of such sub-plans (or parts thereof) with the designated emergency relief and recovery coordination level.

Resilience of individuals and communities

Australian governments have agreed to adopt the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (the Strategy). The purpose of the Strategy is to provide high-level guidance on disaster management to federal, state, territory and local governments, business and community leaders and the not-for-profit sector. It also recognises that disaster resilience is a shared responsibility for all of these groups.

Relief and recovery activities should acknowledge the inherent resilient capabilities of individuals, households, neighbourhoods and communities affected by emergencies.

Community resilience is often described as having three properties:

- **Resistance** – the degree of disruption that can be accommodated without the community undergoing long term change. A highly resilient community can withstand considerable disruption before undergoing long-term change.
- **Recovery** – assisting people and communities affected by emergencies to achieve a proper and effective level of functioning. A highly resilient community returns to proper and effective functioning quicker than a less resilient community.
- **Creativity** – the community's ability to build on learning's of a crisis or disaster, to gain an improved level of functioning and increased levels of resilience. A highly resilient community will adapt to its new circumstances and learn from the disaster experience.

The Strategy focuses on the common characteristics of disaster resilient communities, individuals and organisations. These characteristics are:

- functioning well while under stress
- successful adaptation
- self-reliance; and
- social capacity.

Resilience is also promoted through programs that encourage, create and develop resources and connections that can be drawn on in times of

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crisis. Programs that build resilience for individuals, households and communities include those that encourage:

- community connection
- financial independence
- social inclusion
- volunteer assistance, and
- recognition of work done by community members.

Adequate and appropriate levels of insurance protection for individuals, households, organisations and businesses also enhances the ability of communities and individuals to recover quickly, financially, physically, and as a community, from an emergency.

The Insurance Council of Australia recognises that a resilient community will have a good level of general insurance cover, access and availability, allowing individuals recourse to financial reimbursement should assets and belongings be damaged or lost due to an insurable event.¹

Business continuity planning also contributes to community resilience as a preparedness measure designed to build capacity and ensure the continuation of services in times of an emergency. A business continuity plan ensures organisations plan for, respond and recover from emergency events. It can also aid overall business operations and processes.

The whole-of-nation Strategy recognises the important roles we all play in achieving a more resilient Australia. The priority outcomes in the Strategy call on all individuals, organisations and governments to actively play their part. Involvement means realising the potential of all parties to build their resilience to disasters, and supporting and influencing these outcomes. Governments, through adopting and supporting the Strategy, will review existing policies and instruments (not limited to the traditional emergency management sector), with a view to incorporating disaster resilience outcomes through all government operations.

Further detail of the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience is available at www.em.gov.au

Affected community involvement

Whilst recognising that communities are the first responders (and ongoing responders) in emergencies, emergency relief and recovery activities require the active involvement of affected communities for success. All agencies should seek to engage with affected communities during planning and operational processes and coordinate efforts to support spontaneous community recovery processes also. Ownership and direction by affected communities is pivotal in:

- the development of relief and recovery plans
- identifying and establishing strategies to assist the most vulnerable, and
- designing, implementing and evaluating recovery activities.

¹ Insurance Council of Australia *Increasing Community Resilience to Extreme Weather Events*, 2008

It is important to consider groups with additional or specific needs within communities, including the vulnerable, disadvantaged, children, youth, men, women and the bereaved. The affected community may be broadly based and not just focussed upon a geographic area.

Emergency relief and recovery are multi-agency responsibilities

Emergency relief and recovery begin when an emergency occurs and depend on high levels of understanding and cooperation between emergency management personnel at all levels within an operation.

Part 3 and Part 7 of this Manual define which agency will be the single control agency with responsibility to lead and manage the response components for specific types of emergencies. Unlike response activities, emergency relief and recovery activities are not controlled by any single agency but are coordinated by Department of Human Services at regional and State level.

Local, regional and State emergency relief and recovery activities can operate concurrently at multiple levels. All government, non-government and private sector agencies and organisations willing to participate have an important role to play in whole-of-community processes. Those with agreed roles and responsibilities (refer to Part 7 of this Manual) need to develop and maintain their own internal operational plans that detail their capacity and strategies for undertaking these roles and responsibilities.

Whilst individuals, organisations and agencies that have not been a part of emergency relief and recovery planning processes may directly interact with affected individuals and communities to offer assistance and services, their active participation in coordination processes significantly improve overall outcomes for affected people. Emergency management personnel at all levels should engage where possible to achieve the best community outcomes.

Defining emergency relief and recovery functions

Emergency relief is defined as *“the provision of essential needs to individuals, families and communities in the immediate aftermath of an emergency”*.

Emergency relief includes:

- immediate provision of emergency relief at the site of the emergency, and
- provision of relief services elsewhere, including:
 - emergency relief centres
 - places of gathering (such as community centres, parks and ovals, schools and shopping centres)
 - airports, ports, train/bus stations and other transit sites, and
 - to those remaining in homes, workplaces and schools or other areas rather evacuating or relocating.

The provision of life support and essential needs to people affected by an emergency is the first stage of emergency recovery. In this respect, emergency relief functions are well integrated within early recovery activities.

The emergency recovery system can be described in four key functional areas (or environments) that require coordination arrangements as part of the recovery process.

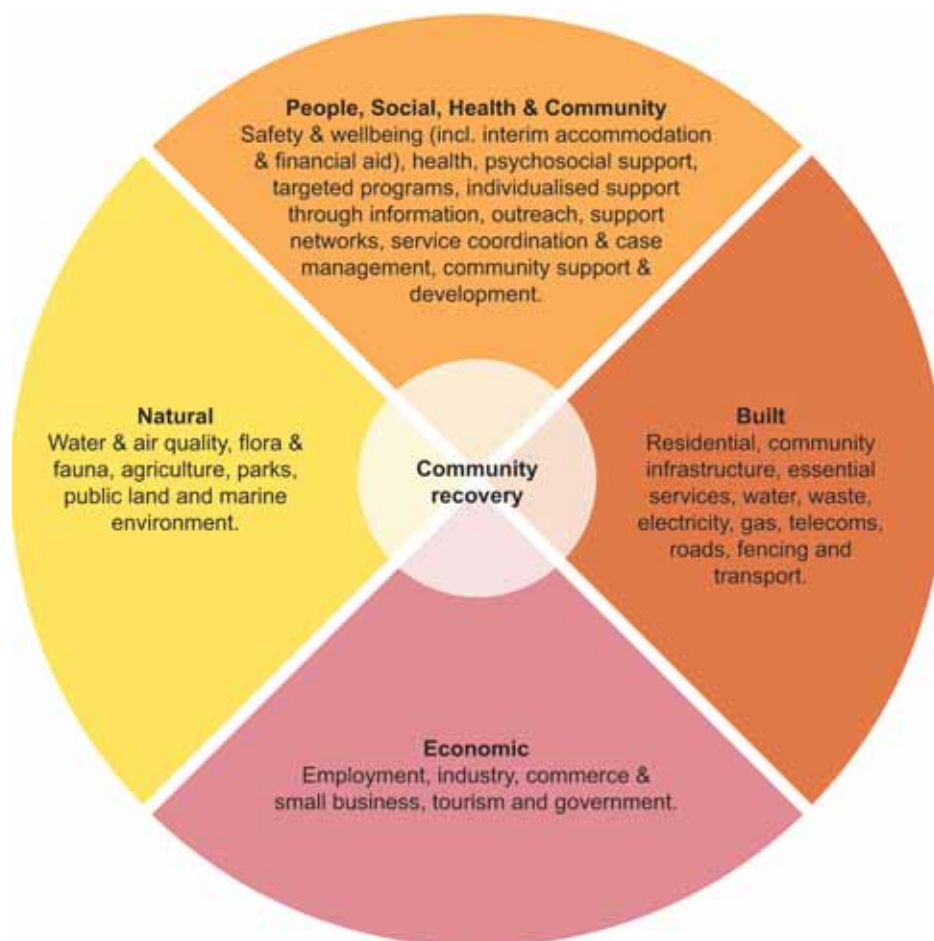


Figure 4: The four key functional areas (or environments) of emergency recovery

These functional emergency recovery environments focus on the various needs of communities following an emergency:

- **People, social, health and community** - the emotional, social, spiritual, financial and physical wellbeing of individuals and communities.
- **Economic** - re-establishment of economic wellbeing and help to ameliorate financial hardships in affected communities.
- **Built** - the restoration of essential and community infrastructure.
- **Natural** - the rehabilitation of native ecosystems, public lands and National Parks and water catchments and productive land.

Where a community experiences a significant emergency there will be a need to supplement the individual, family, neighbourhood and community structures that have been disrupted.

4.2 Emergency Relief and Recovery Management Planning

Planning for emergency relief and recovery is a critical and collaborative process involving consultation with all stakeholders. Plans should be based (as far as possible) on the all-hazard, all-agencies emergency management principle.

Under the *Emergency Management Act 1986* there is a requirement:

- to develop a state emergency recovery plan;
- for the appointment of a Regional Recovery Coordinator for each Victorian Government region, and
- for MEMPlans to contain provisions for emergency recovery at a local level.

Part 5 and Part 6 of this Manual provide the framework for preparedness planning at the local, regional and state levels. This section of this Plan details the emergency relief and recovery plans in place across all levels of government and is intended as a guide to assist in the collaboration and development of these plans.

Assessments

Targeted and appropriate relief and recovery activities benefit from accurate information about the specific scale and nature of the impacts of emergencies as their consequences can influence actions in emergency relief and across all recovery environments.

Rapid Impact Assessment (RIA) is an organised activity as part of response, led by the control agency. Assessments for relief and recovery can be informed by RIA reports and can build upon the information coming as a result of response activities.

These will be used by the relevant lead sector service provider to coordinate temporary service provision, relief and recovery planning and reconstruction, with support provided by emergency services, municipal councils and the State Recovery Coordinator (Department of Human Services) where required.

Following the initial assessments, technical teams undertake more detailed assessments where required and should coordinate with response agencies and the State Recovery Coordinator (Department of Human Services) to ensure safe access and prevent duplication. Examples of detailed assessment that have been undertaken in the past and which may be delivered as appropriate for different emergencies are:

- Bushfire Rapid Risk Assessment Teams (BRRATs) reports - assessment conducted by Department of Sustainability and Environment focus on immediate identification of risks post fire and actions that are needed to address these risks
- loss and damage assessments – following initial assessments, more detailed investigation to determine the recovery actions required to reinstate infrastructure such as roads, buildings and bridges, and
- economic assessments – drawing together data from multiple sources to get a better understanding of the effects of an

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emergency on local economies and predict the possible impact of options for intervention.

Department of Human Services will coordinate overall impact assessment reporting for the purposes of emergency relief and recovery planning at a regional and state level.

Plans for the restoration of essential infrastructure

If essential infrastructure and services are affected by an emergency its restoration is considered a first priority to ensure that response, relief and recovery activities are not compromised and thus agencies and organisations are able to effectively deliver services for affected individuals and communities.

Initial assessments of impacts on essential infrastructure and services should be coordinated at the local level by the municipal council or agency identified in MEMPlans and be undertaken as soon as practicable.

The cross sector coordination model (refer to *Figure 5* below) provides a framework that is intended to guide and support the restoration and recovery of essential infrastructure and services.



Figure 5: The cross sector coordination model for the restoration of essential infrastructure and services

The eight broad infrastructure sectors that might require a coordinated response in the event of an emergency (in that they are considered essential to response and recovery efforts) are:

- communication

- banking and finance
- health
- water
- transport
- energy
- supply chain/ food chain, and
- community infrastructure.

Clean up

Clean up after a disaster often poses a set of dangers that extend beyond the immediate danger of the disaster itself. There are a number of potential dangers for injury and disease for residents returning to their homes, properties, businesses and communities. Clean up is critical to expediting the recovery of people and communities affected by emergencies.

Clean up efforts are assisted by establishing responsibility for the coordination of activities at the local level and identifying agencies and organisations that can provide assistance.

At the regional and state level the Department of Human Services, as the coordinating agency for emergency relief and recovery, will coordinate clean up together with key support agencies and other organisations with capacity to assist.

Impact assessments are used to determine if the clean up required after an emergency is beyond the capabilities of agencies active at the local level.

These assessments will identify:

- the areas most affected, and
- any local government area that may require more assistance.

Where impact assessments highlight a need for event-specific clean up activities, these should be organized with regard to the following as necessary:

- households
- primary producers
- small business
- not for profit organisations
- community infrastructure
- parks, roads, bridges
- volunteer roles and spontaneous volunteer management
- appropriate communications messages.

Local emergency recovery planning

As the closest level of government to the affected community, municipal councils will take a lead in ensuring the local provision of emergency relief. Where communities are relocated, evacuated or advised to shelter in place, immediate relief services will most likely be required. When necessary, emergency relief centres should be activated.

MEMPlans should detail the local arrangements for the management of relief and recovery activities as well as local risk management, preparedness and response activities (refer to Part 6 of this Manual). Emergency relief and recovery components of MEMPlans should detail local arrangements and providers for:

- identifying suitable relief centre locations
- agreements between agencies and organisations to coordinate seamless access to emergency relief and recovery services
- coordinating and managing local resources through a Municipal Recovery Manager (MRM) (a municipal council staff member)
- the provision of material aid to affected persons to meet immediate needs
- environmental health such as food, water, sanitation, and vector (disease carrying pests) control
- coordination of and assistance with clean up activities
- volunteer workforce rostered to perform specified roles
- local public appeals
- providing personal support services (such as counselling and advocacy) and individual support services (such as service coordination, case management and community development services)
- assistance to affected people in managing the individual consequences of the emergency
- considering groups with additional needs (such as the vulnerable, disadvantaged, children, youth, men, women and the bereaved) in emergencies
- dealing with people affected by emergencies who have been displaced or who are dispersed
- emergency shelter, emergency accommodation and interim accommodation
- assistance with urgent animal welfare needs, including emergency shelter, catering/fodder and veterinary needs for domestic pets, companion animals and agricultural livestock
- provision and staffing of recovery/information centres
- provision of information services to the affected community (such as public meetings, newsletters, and advertising) and to recovery agencies and the State Government

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- procedures for communication and engagement with individuals and communities and for handling media requests and liaising with the media representatives
- participation in impact assessment activities
- establishment and management of Community Recovery Committees
- sponsorship and advocacy of the interests of affected communities
- spontaneous volunteer management - during and after an emergency event, there will often be a surge people wanting to provide assistance and offering their services to response and recovery agencies. The coordination and management of these spontaneous volunteers can be complex and requires pre-planning
- management of donated goods and services, and
- testing, exercising and reviewing emergency relief and recovery arrangements.

Municipal councils should identify and negotiate with local agencies that are able to provide these services (or lead the provision of these services in conjunction with others) as part of the planning process.

MEMPlans should identify local resources that can be used during emergency relief and recovery. These resources may include:

- municipal council owned or controlled assets
- municipal council employed or contracted personnel
- local agencies that have agreed to participate in the formal emergency relief and recovery arrangements
- local community agencies that have a capacity to assist people affected by emergencies, and
- private businesses and organisations with a capacity to provide emergency relief and recovery services or activities.

Where possible, these resources should be services and activities that are existing and already being provided to the community. Therefore, municipal councils, agencies and organisations should assume that they are responsible for funding the provision of these services themselves.

Depending on the scale and impact of an emergency, Regional Recovery Coordinators (Department of Human Services) may be able to facilitate financial assistance and funding for municipal councils, agencies and organisations providing relief and recovery services.

Regional recovery planning

A Regional Recovery Coordinator in each Victorian Government administrative region has responsibility for the preparation and maintenance of Regional Emergency Recovery Plans for their respective regions.

Regional Emergency Recovery Plans should detail

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- coordination arrangements across the four environments of recovery
- regional-level recovery agency roles and responsibilities, and
- communication arrangements between
 - municipal councils in the region
 - regional level recovery agencies
 - state level recovery management, and
 - affected communities.

State recovery planning

The State Recovery Coordinator (Department of Human Services) has responsibility for the preparation, testing and maintenance of this Plan. The State Recovery Coordinator convenes regular meetings of the State Emergency Recovery Planning Committee to ensure the development and maintenance of policies and procedures for effective emergency relief and recovery inter-agency coordination. The State Recovery Coordinator can also assist agencies and organisations interested in formalising their role in emergency management in Victoria by facilitating their participation in regional and local planning activities.

Relief and recovery emergency services sub-plans

Lead recovery agencies and organisations should develop additional sub-plans detailing specific arrangements, guidelines or procedures where a need exists. These sub-plans should be developed in conjunction with stakeholders that are likely to provide recovery services in each functional area. Sub-plans should be made available to all stakeholders and referenced in MEMPlans and Regional Emergency Recovery Plans where appropriate.

A list of sub-plans is available at www.dhs.vic.gov.au/emergency

Access principles for emergency relief and recovery services

Whenever possible, access to the emergency relief and recovery services should occur with a minimum of inconvenience to affected individuals. All emergency relief and recovery planning should consider the following principles:

- allow flexibility for different situational needs
- be supportive whilst promoting resilience
- be accessible to people with disabilities, their carers and people with additional needs
- be accessible to culturally and linguistically diverse groups, and
- utilise a range of access mechanisms including enabling access without requiring physical attendance at a specific location. The use of outreach programs may be included in this context.

4.3 Emergency Relief and Recovery Activation

This section of this Plan contains the activation procedures for emergency relief and recovery plans and roles in a given emergency event.

Key emergency relief and recovery roles

Incident Controllers (appointed by the control agency for the incident - refer to Part 3 and Part 7 of this Manual) are responsible for considering the current and potential impacts and consequences of an emergency, and advising the relevant emergency relief and recovery agencies as soon as possible.

The Emergency Management Team (which is established when an emergency requires a response by more than one agency - refer to Part 3 of this Manual) includes provisions for a functional commander for recovery - a Recovery Commander. This position is competency-based and can be held by anyone who has the appropriate experience and training.

The Recovery Commander will be appointed at the discretion of the Regional Recovery Coordinator (Department of Human Services). Regardless of the appointee's normal role, they will represent all emergency relief and recovery agencies at the incident control level. This position will not be required for all emergencies but is most likely to be beneficial for emergencies with Tier 2 or 3 impacts as per the tiered approach to emergency relief and recovery coordination outlined in the introduction to this Plan.

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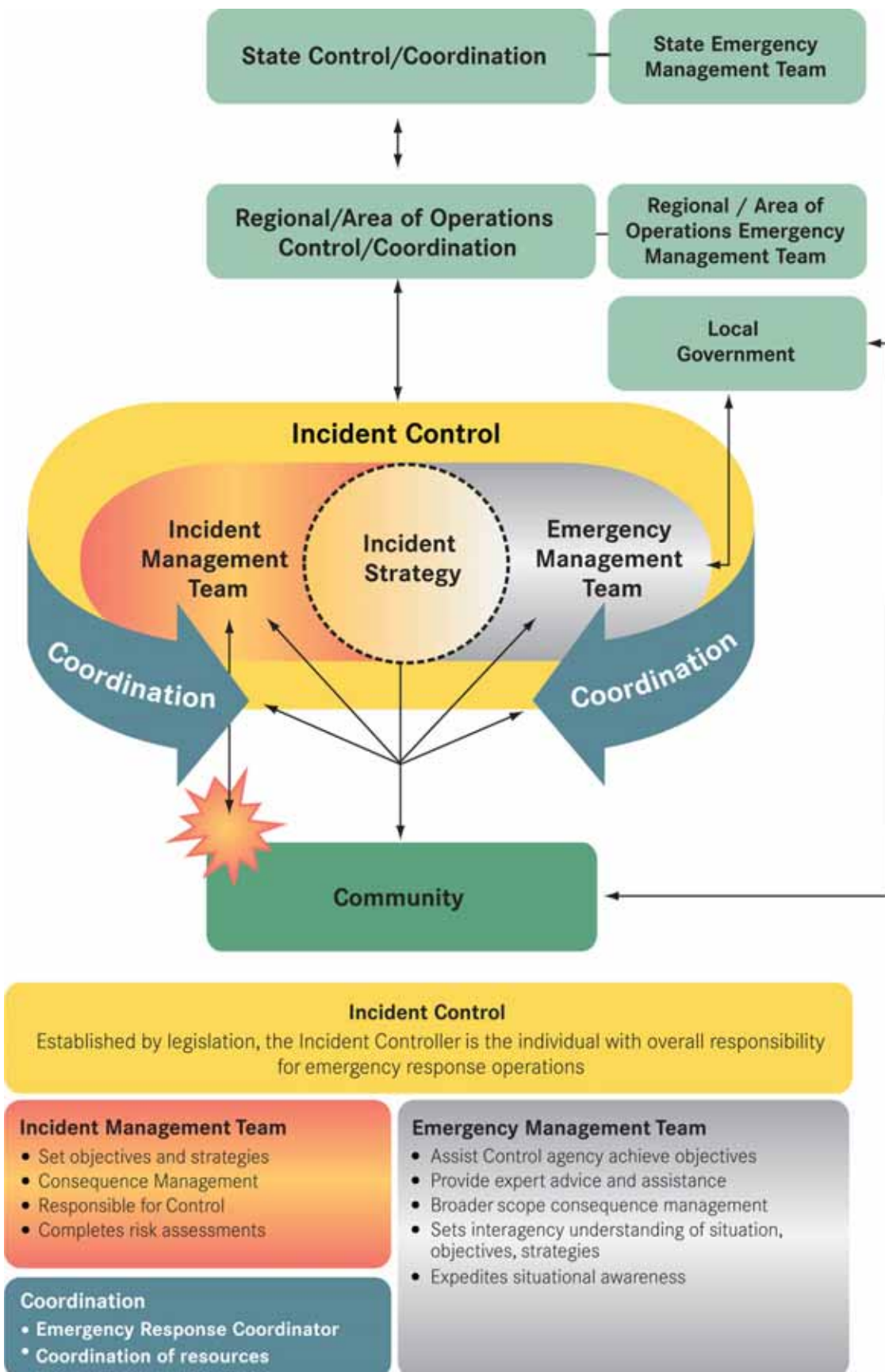


Figure 6: Emergency Management Interdependencies

The Recovery Commander provides functional management of emergency relief and recovery activities by guiding the development and implementation of relevant strategies and the management of resources.

The Recovery Commander also contributes emergency relief and recovery considerations into the development of the incident strategy in conjunction with the Incident Controller and Emergency Management Team. They will work with a Municipal Recovery Manager (a municipal council staff member appointed to this position when required) in affected communities to ensure municipal councils and support agencies:

- are aware of current and potential risks and consequences associated with the incident, and
- develop emergency relief and recovery management strategies that recognise and respond to these risks and consequences.

Activation of emergency relief services

Incident Controllers are primarily responsible for determining the need to activate emergency relief services. The following people have the authority to activate the provision of emergency relief services by affected municipal councils based on an Incident Controller's determination (which may include the activation of emergency relief centres detailed in Section 4.4 of this Plan):

- the appointed Municipal Emergency Response Coordinator (MERC) (Victoria Police officer)
- the relevant Municipal Emergency Resource Officer (MERO) (municipal council staff member)
- a Municipal Recovery Manager (municipal council staff member).

Activation of emergency recovery services

Local level

MEMPlans should contain details of the authority to activate emergency recovery arrangements. Generally, the Municipal Emergency Resource Officer is responsible for notifying a Municipal Recovery Manager (both municipal council staff members) of the potential need for recovery services. Together, they should consider the recovery needs of the emergency.

Circumstances when a Regional Recovery Coordinator (Department of Human Services) may be required to inform a Municipal Recovery Manager of the need for recovery activities may include those where:

- the event has occurred outside the municipal district
- the response to the event is small scale, but the potential impacts are large, and/or
- there has been no need to activate local resources during the response to the event.

The emergency relief and recovery plan may be implemented in support of events where no response activities were required.

*Part 4 – State Emergency Relief and Recovery Plan***Regional level**

The authority to activate the Regional Emergency Recovery Plan rests with the Regional Recovery Coordinators (Department of Human Services) on the advice of the:

- Regional Emergency Response Coordinator (Victoria Police)
- Municipal Recovery Manager (municipal council staff member),
or
- State Recovery Coordinator (Department of Human Services).

Generally, the Regional Emergency Response Coordinator is responsible for notifying the relevant Regional Recovery Coordinator of the potential need for relief and recovery services.

The Regional Emergency Recovery Planning Committee may be convened in response to a regional-level emergency to consider issues of regional significance, advise the Regional Recovery Coordinator of key issues for consideration and assist in coordinating recovery (including information, communication and service provision).

State level

The authority to activate the State Emergency Relief and Recovery Plan (this Plan) for state-level activities rests with the State Recovery Coordinator (Department of Human Services) or delegate, at the direction of the:

- Premier
- Minister for Police and Emergency Services, or
- Minister for Community Services,
- or on the advice of the:
- State Emergency Response Coordinator
- State Emergency Response Officer
- Emergency Services Commissioner
- Chief Health Officer, or
- State Health and Medical Commander.

The State Emergency Recovery Planning Committee may be convened to consider issues of State significance and advise the State Recovery Coordinator (and government more broadly) of key issues for consideration.

National level

Under cooperative arrangements with the states and territories, the Commonwealth Government provides:

- support to the states and territories in developing their capacity for dealing with emergencies and disasters across all hazards
- national coordination functions
- assistance to states or territories when requested, and

- financial assistance in the form of cost sharing arrangements for response and recovery expenditure.

Commonwealth Government advice and assistance for disaster recovery is coordinated through the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Arrangements (the Arrangements). The Arrangements are maintained by the Attorney General's Department, the lead Commonwealth Government agency for disaster recovery.

Under the Arrangements, the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Committee (AGDRC) provides advice, coordinates and implements disaster recovery assistance in response to disasters that occur within Australia. It also has a role in providing assistance for offshore disasters (however the Australian Government's primary response offshore is lead by Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade). The AGDRC has representatives from a range of Commonwealth Government agencies.

Assistance under the auspices of the AGDRC could include:

- implementation of the Australian Government Disaster Recovery Payment (AGDRP)
- exercising flexibility in implementation of existing Australian Government programs, payments and services, and
- development and delivery of specific financial payments and other assistance, such as an ex-gratia payment.

Australian Government agencies involved in recovery activities may include Centrelink, Australian Defence Force (ADF), Emergency Management Australia (EMA) and others.

The State Recovery Coordinator (Department of Human Services) will be the key contact point for communications with the Australian Government as recovery activities are planned and delivered following emergencies.

Information on assistance provided by the Commonwealth Government in response to emergencies is available at www.disasterassist.gov.au

Emergency recovery taskforces

In some cases where an emergency has a significant community-wide impact, the Premier or the Minister for Police and Emergency Services may decide to establish a ministerial taskforce (or other additional recovery coordination structure) to oversee a whole-of government response to the recovery needs of affected communities.

Regional Emergency Recovery Plans and MEMPlans should recognise the possibility of the establishment of such structures and ensure that there are appropriate strategies, plans and processes in place to enable successful local working relationships.

Following the appointment of an emergency recovery taskforce, the State Recovery Coordinator (Department of Human Services) will usually:

- be responsible for assisting the taskforce to understand the impact of the emergency on community recovery
- facilitate the effective contribution of regional and local relief and recovery considerations, and

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- assist in implementing Government decisions and work with local communities and agencies to deliver recovery services.

Escalation of relief and recovery services

The Department of Human Services emergency management tiered approach to emergency relief and recovery coordination is outlined in the introduction to this Plan. It indicates the level at which coordination for emergency relief and recovery is likely to be escalated at any particular point in time according to a number of considerations. The tier is designated by the Regional Recovery Coordinator (or delegate) or State Recovery Coordinator (or delegate) for Tier 2, 3 or 3+ and can shift over time as emergencies unfold.

If it becomes apparent that an emergency will exceed the capacity of a municipal council to perform emergency relief or recovery functions, the municipal council may request the relevant Regional Recovery Coordinator (Department of Human Services) to coordinate emergency relief or recovery at the regional level. This does not replace the requirement for the Regional Recovery Coordinator (Department of Human Services) to monitor the emergency relief and recovery situation and activate the Regional Emergency Recovery Plan as described above.

Further escalation to the state level of management may be necessary in respect of certain service needs in very large or complex events. The Australian Government may also provide Commonwealth resources to deliver particular services.

The diagram below (*Figure 7*) shows the interactions between the levels of government, both with regard to requests for assistance and formal escalation of coordination responsibility.

Importantly, escalation of coordination builds upon the layers of responsibility to contribute and coordinate, so additional levels are provided but none are replaced or relieved of their own responsibility.

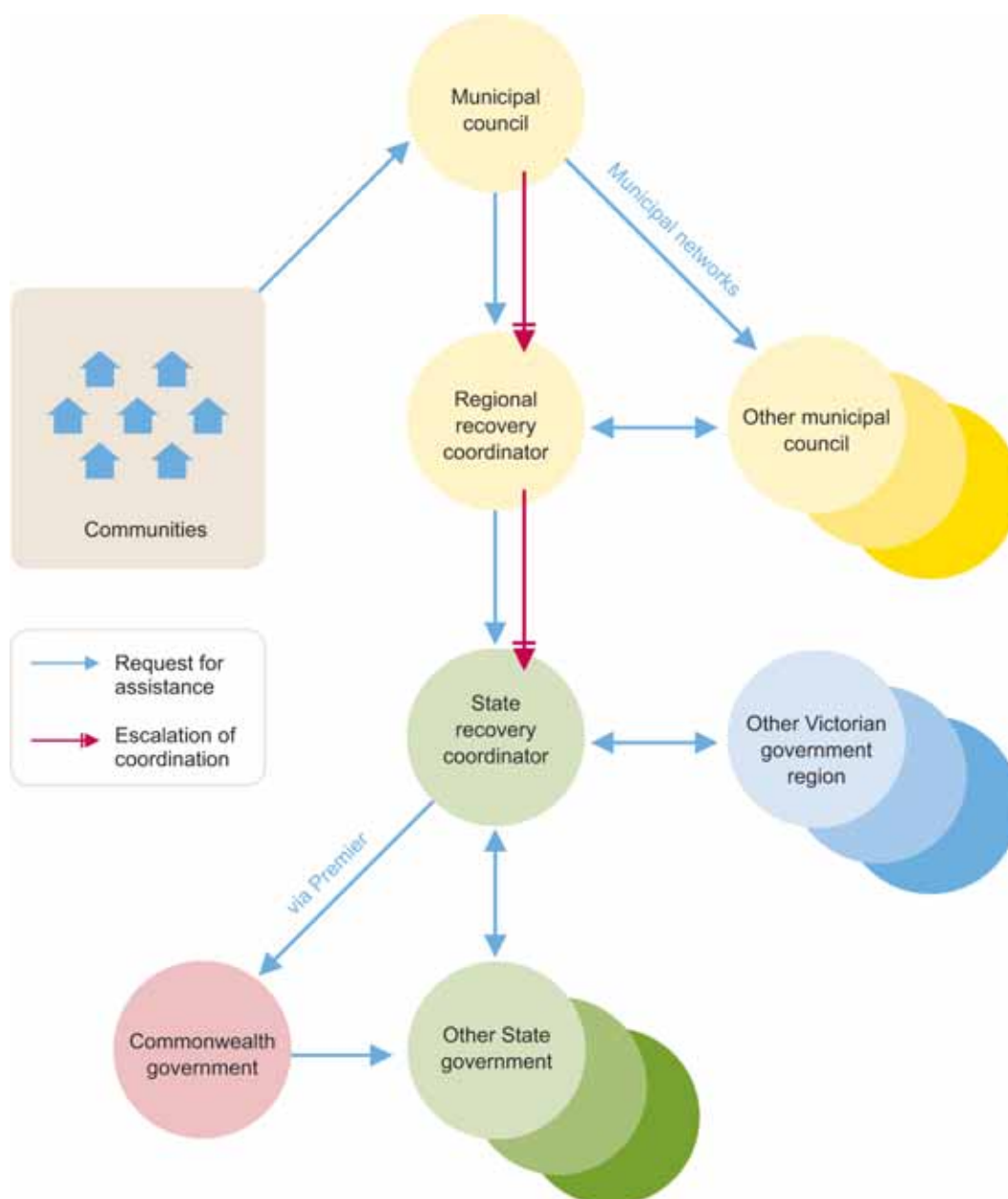


Figure 7: Interactions between levels of government

Transition from emergency response to relief and recovery

In most cases, operational plans for providing emergency relief activities will have been activated as soon as an emergency has, or is expected to have an impact. Recovery should commence as soon as practical and after the threat to human life subsides. In many cases recovery commences alongside emergency relief activities.

Whilst an emergency continues to pose a threat to a community, overall coordination of all activities will remain under the direction of the control agency. This should not, however, affect the delivery of emergency relief and recovery services. The decision relating to the timing of the formal transition of overall coordination from response to recovery will be influenced by a number of key considerations, including the:

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- nature of the hazard/threat and whether there is a risk of a recurring threat
- extent of impact on communities, as this may determine if a prolonged transition period needs to be implemented
- extent of and known level of loss and damage associated with the emergency, and
- considerations for the resources required to be activated for effective recovery arrangements.

To assist in the transition, the Recovery Commander (when appointed) should keep abreast of the progress of response activities and advise relief and recovery coordinating agencies on behalf of Emergency Response Coordinator (Victoria Police).

Interdependencies of relief and recovery activities

Many emergency response, relief and recovery activities will be undertaken concurrently. Communication and coordination between agencies and service providers through a Municipal Recovery Manager (a municipal council staff member), Regional Recovery Coordinator (Department of Human Services) is vital to achieve the best community outcomes.

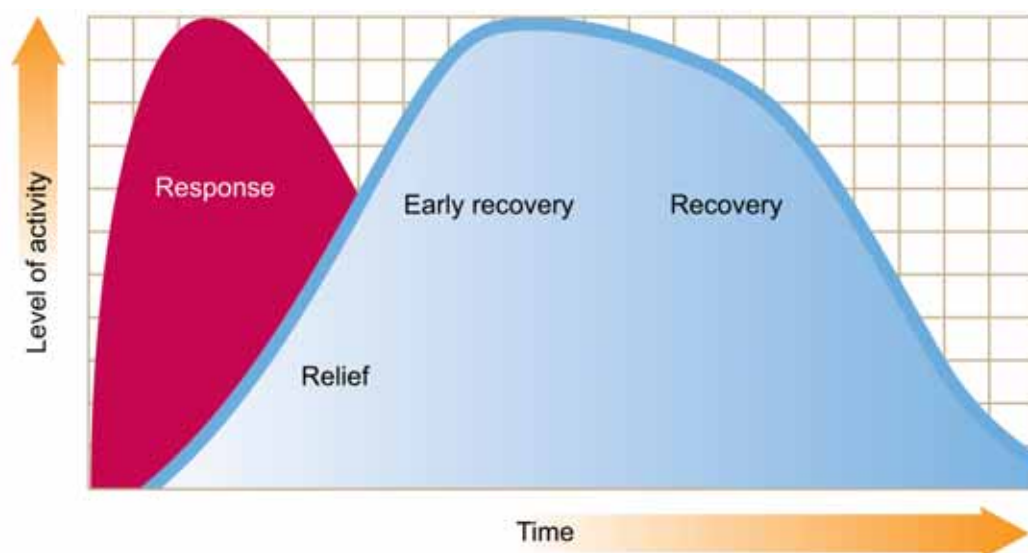


Figure 8: Emergency relief and recovery activities over time

Whilst an emergency is likely to cause disruption, it is important to recognise that relief and recovery activities do not begin with a blank canvas. Activities should be delivered in context of the existing community aspirations and building on community development work (including emergency preparedness) already undertaken. This will include maximising use of existing local community services and representative structures where possible.

Transition to post recovery

Transitioning to post recovery is an important phase that requires careful consideration and planning. After time, community recovery programs should transition into regular mainstream services and activities which

shift the focus from emergency recovery to community renewal and support, whilst still providing services for ongoing needs of affected people.

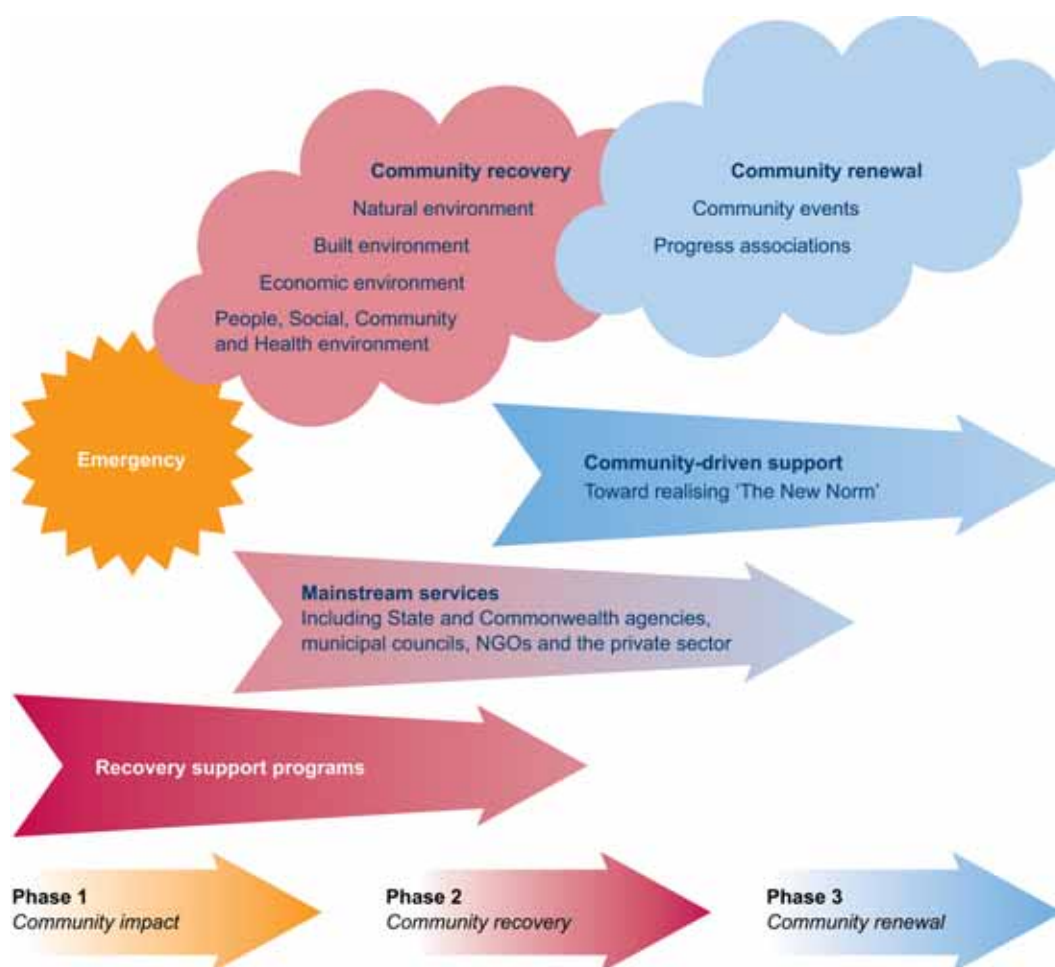


Figure 9: Transition of emergency recovery into community renewal.

4.4 Emergency Relief Services

Emergency relief is the provision of essential needs to individuals, families and communities in the immediate aftermath of an emergency. Needs including information, access to health services, shelter, food and water, non-food items such as clothing, bedding and personal items, and financial assistance.

Municipal councils have responsibility for emergency relief coordination at the local level. Emergency relief services and activities and the nominated agencies responsible for coordinating and providing these at the local level will be designated in the MEMPlan.

The Department of Human Services (DHS), supported by Red Cross, is responsible for emergency relief coordination at the regional and state levels.

This section of this Plan should be read in conjunction with the Department of Human Services *Emergency Relief Handbook: A planning guide* (Referenced in Appendix 10, Part 8 of this Manual).

Planning Considerations for Emergency Relief

Key planning considerations for emergency relief are:

- management and coordination
- community information
- health
- reconnecting families
- emergency shelter
- food and water
- non-food items
- emergency financial assistance
- animal welfare
- managing goodwill.

Management and Coordination

Part 3 of this Manual - the State Emergency Response Plan and this Plan identify the organisational arrangements for managing the response to emergencies, including emergency relief.

For the purposes of the State Emergency Response Plan, emergency relief and recovery agencies are support agencies during the response to an emergency. The State Emergency Response Plan requires that:

- the State Controller ensures emergency relief arrangements have been considered and implemented where required
- Regional Operations ensure emergency relief arrangements have been considered for each incident and implemented where required, and
- the Incident Controller initiates emergency relief arrangements (if required); ensures that the emergency recovery coordinator (or representative) is engaged in the Emergency Management Team, and that a decision is made as to when emergency relief services (including the setting up of emergency relief centres) should be established.

MEMPlans must identify agencies and suppliers responsible for the coordination and provision of emergency relief at the local level.

Health

Access to healthcare is critical in the initial stages of an emergency. Emergencies can have significant impacts on the health and well being of affected communities. First aid, health services, primary care, public health and psychosocial support are important components of emergency management planning.

The Department of Health is responsible for the State Health Emergency Response Plan (SHERP). The SHERP is Victoria's framework for a coordinated whole-of-health approach to emergencies in the pre hospital setting, ensuring that health and medical emergency

responses are coordinated and appropriate. The SHERP covers the initial treatment and management of casualties in the field while awaiting transport to hospital; it has an annexure that deals with first aid and volunteer general practitioners. It is a sub-plan of the State Emergency Response Plan and encompasses the interface between emergency response and relief.

The State Health Emergency Response Plan (SHERP) is available at www.dhs.vic.gov.au/emergency

Reconnecting families

Reconnecting with family and friends is an important aspect of emergency relief. Facilitating the reconnection of families is a simple but significant contribution to meeting peoples' basic needs during an emergency, as well as potentially reducing negative health consequences.

National Registration and Inquiry System (NRIS)

Where traditional forms of communication are not possible, reconnection of families is primarily facilitated through use of the National Registration and Inquiry System (NRIS). Whilst Victoria Police is responsible for the control and coordination of NRIS, management and operation of the system is facilitated by Red Cross. Registration commences during the response phase of an emergency, continues through relief, and assists to inform recovery.

Registration occurs in an emergency relief centre, an inquiry centre, or online through the Red Cross website. It can also occur at an emergency site/ staging area, or in some cases, a hospital. Registration should not occur in a recovery centre; it is for reconnecting families during an emergency.

Sharing of personal information

Any personal information captured during the registration process must be in compliance with privacy legislation. However, in an emergency situation, the public interest in safety will override the privacy requirements of the *Information Privacy Act 2000*, even where the emergency response was not the primary reason for collection.

The Office of the Victorian Privacy Commissioner advises that the *Information Privacy Act 2000* in the context of an emergency contains four main provisions permitting the disclosure of person information. For further information see the Office of Victorian Privacy Commissioner 'Information sheet 02.10: emergencies and privacy.'

Any requests to release lists or information by municipal councils or agencies should be referred to the Victoria Police State Emergency Response Officer (or delegate).

Other means of reconnecting families

Whilst control agencies and municipal councils should promote the need for people affected by the emergency to register their details with Red Cross, they should also remind people to use their existing communication networks to connect with their family and friends.

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Social media such as Facebook and Twitter are two such options where people affected by an emergency can connect with their family and friends in a relatively short space of time, and provide assurances as to their safety and well-being.

Emergency shelter

Emergency shelter provides spaces of relative safety for people affected by or facing the effects of an emergency. It can be as straightforward as people choosing to use their own resources and staying with family and friends or staying where they are at the time of the emergency (shelter in place). Alternatively, it could involve moving people away from the immediate vicinity of an emergency through an evacuation, or providing them with financial assistance for accommodation or transport. Emergency shelter may be required for a matter of hours or more than a day, particularly with a slow onset emergency.

Emergency shelter could be where people affected by an emergency make their own arrangements such as choosing to stay with family and friends or shelter in place, or involve local shelter options whereby people seek financial assistance to cover the cost of temporary accommodation, or an emergency relief centre.

An emergency relief centre is managed by the municipal council and is a building or place established to provide immediate and basic services to people affected by an emergency. Services provided in an emergency relief centre, or surrounding area, can include shelter, food and water, non-food items such as bedding and clothing, and health services such as psychological first aid.

Food and water

The provision of food and water is a critical support service that addresses the basic and immediate needs of people affected by an emergency. Food and water are essential to sustain life, counteract shock, raise the morale of those affected and provide energy. Municipal councils, other government and relief agencies need to ensure people have access to food and water, particularly when there has been damage to local infrastructure or where communities have become isolated.

The provision of food and water during an emergency can be initially through emergency catering, and short-term supply of emergency relief packs, before systems are put in place for longer term food and water provision.

Red Cross will coordinate the provision of food and water at the regional and state level. Support agencies include Foodbank Victoria and The Salvation Army.

Maintaining the continuity of the supply of food in an emergency increases the resilience of the community. It also lowers the demand on direct service provision of food and water that may be needed through the emergency relief system. The Department of Primary Industries is the support agency for food supply security and will advise on supply chain continuity and coordination of industry arrangements with the food manufacturing and distribution sectors.

Where there are impacts on the supply of drinking water to households, municipal councils should seek the assistance of their local water

corporation. Where the local resources are unable to meet the demand as a result of the size and complexity of the emergency, the Department of Sustainability and Environment, following public health advice from the Department of Health, will coordinate emergency drinking water supplies and sewerage services to affected areas.

Non-food items

Individuals, families and communities affected by an emergency require essential non-food items, such as clothing, bedding materials and personal necessities to ensure their personal comfort, dignity, health and well-being.

The Salvation Army will coordinate the provision of non-food items at the regional and state level. Support agencies include St Vincent de Paul and Foodbank Victoria.

Replacement of essential water taken during firefighting

CFA and DSE firefighters are empowered under legislation to take water from any waterway or water source on public or private land for firefighting purposes. Where water is taken for firefighting, the water owner can request (via their municipality) water replacement under the Victorian Government Essential Water Replacement Scheme. A copy of the scheme and how water owners can request replacement water can be found on the Department of Sustainability and Environment website at www.dse.vic.gov.au/fires.

Animal Welfare

In the event of an emergency, animal welfare may be compromised if management arrangements are not effectively in place. Companion animals, livestock and wildlife impacted by emergencies may need containment, food, water, veterinary treatment and or humane destruction.

A number of government agencies and non-government organisations contribute to improved animal welfare outcomes by providing or facilitating a range of animal welfare support services during emergencies. Animal welfare support services, relevant to relief include, but are not limited to, the following activities:

- planning for animals in the event of an emergency
- identification of affected animals
- animal welfare assessment, veterinary treatment, humane destruction/salvage slaughter and disposal
- provision of emergency pet food, livestock fodder and water
- management of displaced animals
- coordination of donations and offers of assistance
- longer term recovery needs.

The Victorian Emergency Animal Welfare Plan is available at www.dpi.vic.gov.au/animalemergencies

Financial and legal assistance

Financial and legal assistance is an important part of emergency relief and recovery. Financial pressures and concerns regarding legal matters immediately after an emergency can cause stress and uncertainty. To help alleviate this, there is a variety of assistance available from the Victorian Government and other organisations.

Financial assistance

Emergency financial assistance is intended to help people meet basic needs in a dignified manner.

Department of Human Services is responsible for the coordination and management of financial assistance. This includes:

- providing information about financial assistance available to the community
- administering Personal Hardship Assistance and other 'means-tested' financial support.

A decision about whether Commonwealth Government financial assistance will be available will be determined once the emergency has occurred.

In a relief context, a crisis payment may be available if people are in severe financial hardship because they have experienced an extreme circumstance. Centrelink administer these payments to people receiving a social security payment.

Legal assistance

The Law Institute of Victoria (LIV) is responsible for coordinating support from the legal community to people affected by emergency events. Depending on the nature of the emergency event, services and information may include:

- a 1800 hotline and website
- triage legal clinics at relief centres
- fact sheets on topics such as dealing with wills and estates, insurance and property matters and coronial processes
- information kits for lawyers, support workers and relief centre staff, and
- facilitation of *pro bono* legal referrals.

4.5 Emergency Recovery Services Framework

Effective emergency recovery should be responsive to the community and the impact of the emergency. Hence, it is not possible to provide a prescriptive series of potential emergency recovery services or activities. Rather, this section of this Plan presents a framework to consider when planning and implementing emergency recovery programs.

This section of this Plan is divided to address the four recovery environments:

- **people, social, health and community environment**

- **economic environment**
- **natural environment**, and
- **built environment**

To encompass these four recovery environments, cooperation is required between the community and all levels of government, non-government organisations, community agencies and the private sector. Recovery initiatives may address specific elements of one recovery environment or may work across multiple environments.

As community recovery and the recovery of individuals support each other, assistance should be based around three key elements:

- individualised support for people and families – information, support, access to generic services and facilitating provision of specialist services
- a focus on communities – support for existing community agencies to identify and respond to the needs of their members in ways that promote recovery and social cohesion, and
- ensuring vulnerable groups have strengthened networks and are linked to the most appropriate support services – through local activities, vulnerable groups will be supported and remain connected with their local community.

People, social, health and community environment

The people social, health and community environment refers to the impact that an emergency may have on the health and wellbeing of individuals, families, neighbourhoods, and the community fabric and includes the main elements of

- safety and wellbeing
- health and medical
- psychosocial support
- targeted programs for children, youth, men and women
- individualised support programs, and
- community support programs.

Safety and well-being

While much will have been done in the emergency response, real and perceived danger to life may continue as recovery activities take place. Planned emergency recovery activities addressing this element may include:

- provision of timely information about safety and protection issues
- demolition and/or securing of damaged buildings
- repair of sanitation and hygiene facilities and/or provision of temporary facilities
- securing continued access to essential food and water supplies

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- emergency and/or temporary accommodation and housing - further information is available at www.dhs.vic.gov.au/emergency
- security services
- financial assistance, and
- donated goods² and services:
 - coordination and distribution of donated goods and services
 - community appeal funds such as a mayoral fund appeal or fund coordinated by a State agency or other agency for larger scale emergencies, and
 - emergency medical facilities.

Many people make their own arrangements to address their recovery needs and therefore have minimal needs with respect to needing to access these services. Planning for the delivery of these services should recognise that such self-determination is often the most effective way for emergency-affected people to return to a proper and effective level of functioning.

Ensuring displaced households and individuals have appropriate accommodation is key to safety and well-beings and recovery. Accommodation arrangements may range from short-term to longer-term:

Emergency accommodation

Accommodation may be provided to households and individuals displaced by an emergency event in hotels, motels, caravan parks houses, and flats or similar. The timeframe usually ranges from days to weeks. In some cases emergency accommodation may transition into interim accommodation.

Emergency accommodation is organised as detailed in MEMPlans and usually provided by community, business or government organisations, although people often find their own accommodation with family or friends.

Interim accommodation

Interim accommodation is provided to households and individuals whose primary place of residence is destroyed or damaged by an emergency event. Interim accommodation can be in a house, flat, caravan or similar and can continue for extended periods of weeks, months or longer prior to permanent housing. In some cases interim accommodation may transition into permanent housing.

Interim accommodation is organised through the Department of Human Services Housing Emergency Management Policy and Procedures plan. Interim accommodation can also be provided by friends, family, community, business or government organisations.

² Refer to the “National guidelines for managing donated goods” available at www.dhs.vic.gov.au/emergency

Permanent housing

Permanent housing includes the range of normal housing options available to individuals and households. These include owner-occupied homes, renting, public housing or equivalent. Options for specific households and individuals may differ to the pre-emergency state.

Health and medical

There are a broad range of health and medical emergency recovery services that may be required following an emergency event, including:

- follow up care for those affected or injured from the event
- where additional primary health care is identified as a need, field primary care clinics may be established and staffed by registered general practitioners, nurses and paramedics. (Management of these Field Primary Care Clinics is the responsibility of Ambulance Victoria and is established under State Health Emergency Response Plan)
- management of individuals or groups that may have been exposed to hazards (such as chemicals, dust, smoke, etc) or traumatised by their experience
- specialist care for vulnerable groups such as children, socially and geographically isolated people or the frail and elderly
- ensuring continuity of care for existing health clients including access to medications
- clinical health services provided in the home or through outreach
- preventative public health services and health protection/environmental health messaging and activities, and
- Information and advice about stress and other abnormal psychosocial aspects of the situation to enhance self care and prevention of later hazards in recovery.

Psychosocial support

Psychosocial support addresses the emotional, spiritual, cultural, psychological and social needs of individuals as part of a community. Psychosocial support addresses immediate, medium and long term needs as communities recover from emergency events and return to a proper and effective level of functioning.

In order to address the various ways people are affected by emergencies, a range of levels of support are needed. *Figure 10* sets out a pyramid structure of the varying layers of support services.

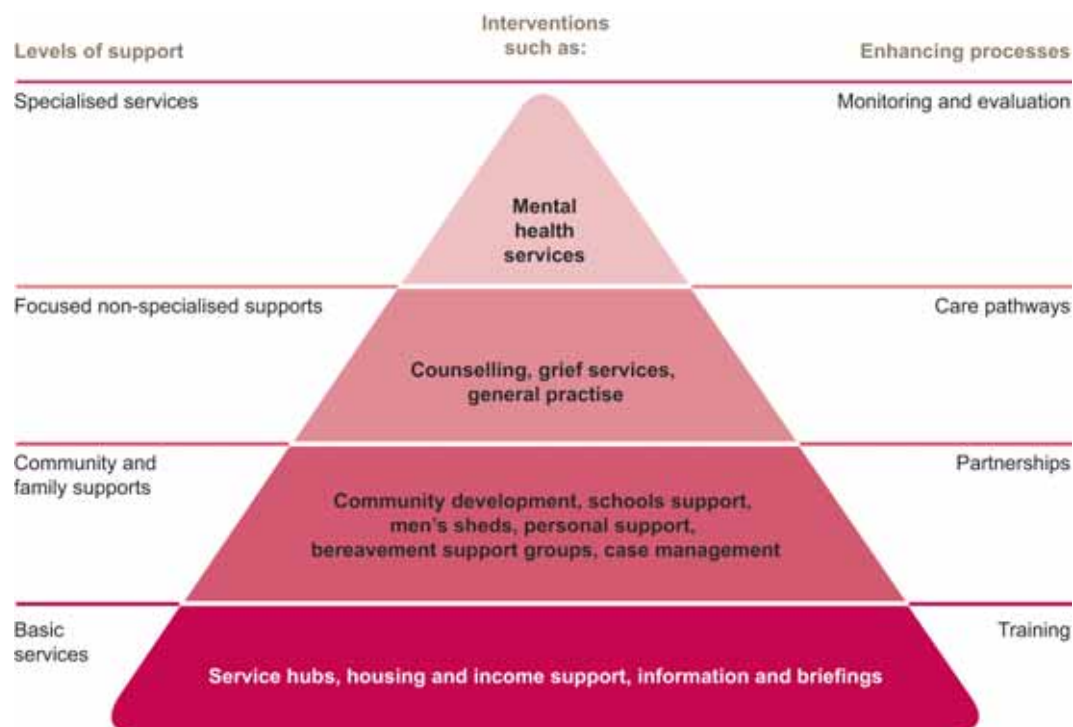


Figure 10: Levels of intervention pyramid for psychosocial support³

Psychosocial effort is built on ensuring access to basic services and rebuilding community and family support structures. Community information sessions can be effective ways of providing information and advice in a group context that can promote awareness and self empowerment. This can provide tools to help affected people in self recovery.

Individualised psychological supports are also an important component of the psychosocial effort. These services are strengthened through access to training, promoting partnerships and care pathways and monitoring and evaluation, and are best provided as an integrated component of other recovery services.

After the Bushfires: Victoria's Psychosocial Recovery Framework (developed for planners and service providers following the 2009 Victorian bushfires) offers advice on the principles and considerations that should underpin a psychosocial recovery process and identification of the range of people potentially impacted.

The framework is available at www.dhs.vic.gov.au/emergency

Personal support

Personal Support is initiated in emergency relief operations and can continue as part of emergency recovery alongside a range of individualised support programs.

The term personal support is used in Victoria to encompass the provision of:

- psychological first aid
- practical assistance

³ Inter-Agency Standing Committee *IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings* 2007

- access to general and specialist services (including counselling)
- information and education, and
- social support.

Specifically trained personal support workers assist during disasters to provide personal support. This can occur at a disaster site, if it is safe to do so, or at relief and recovery centres and during outreach programs.

Agencies able to provide personal support come from a variety of government and non-government sectors –Victorian Council of Churches, Australian Red Cross, The Salvation Army, Centrelink and Department of Health and Department of Human Services.

MEMPlans, regional and state level plans should identify which agencies will provide trained personal support workers from early relief through to longer term recovery.

Support for the bereaved

The bereaved are an example of a vulnerable group that will need specialised support and attention. Groups such as the Centre for Grief and Bereavement should be consulted early in the planning process to identify the supports that can be provided both individually and in groups for the bereaved.

As the bereaved group will include surviving family members who directly experienced the emergency event and family members who did not; plans will need to be made for identifying extended family members who may not be local to the community of impact. Counselling services should also be identified to assist with grief and bereaved communities.

Local and State level recovery coordinators will need to maintain close liaison with the Coroners office to ensure there is clear communication about support services available to bereaved groups.

Bereavement services are lead by the Department of Health and are important to support those individuals and families bereaved as a result of an emergency.

Services may include:

- one-on-one and family counselling
- bereavement support groups, and
- delivery of an annual commemorative event, including consultation and input from the bereaved community.

Suicide prevention

In 2006 the Department of Human Services released a comprehensive suicide prevention strategy- '*Next steps: Victoria's suicide prevention forward action plan*'. This strategy provides a framework for embedding suicide prevention activities in universal and specialist services. Other activities include the development of suicide risk best practice guidelines to complement this strategy.

'*Life: A framework for prevention of suicide in Australia*' is the national policy and is linked to key resources and information.

Following emergencies, the development of additional targeted responses to suicide prevention may be required to complement the Victorian strategy and national policy and should be based on the

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increased mental health risks following the exposure to trauma and the psychosocial stressors of recovery.

An example includes the development of a brief guidance note and action plan developed for the 2009 Victorian bushfires to advise health and welfare practitioners of the mental health vulnerability and potential increase risk of suicide and self harm of bushfire affected individuals.

Targeted recovery programs for children, youth, men and women

Children and youth in emergency recovery

The additional needs of children and youth that particularly need to be considered in emergency recovery management include:

- Recognition that children and youth are uniquely vulnerable following an emergency event and require targeted and specialised interventions to ensure the best opportunity to achieve a successful recovery.
- Children are not little adults and should not be managed in the same way as the adult population.
- There is not a one size fits all approach to emergency recovery planning for children and youth. Emergency recovery plans must consider the developmental stage of those affected.
- There is a lack of advocacy for children and youth in the emergency management arena.
- Children and youth are able to contribute to the recovery planning process.

Program and activities that could incorporate the special needs of children and youth in recovery could include:

- School holiday programs and mobile playgrounds;
- Information targeted specifically to children and youth such as youth websites; and
- Parent information sessions that provide advice and information to parents on ways to support their children.

Support of children and youth is needed both during and after school. Department of Education and Early Childhood Development is responsible for the management and coordination of school activities that address recovery of children and youth specifically.

MEMPlans need to incorporate and address the unique needs of children and youth in emergency relief and recovery. .

Men and women in emergency recovery

Men and women are considered to respond to emergency events differently. For many men and women doing activities and sharing experiences in gender groups provides a sense of being part of a supportive community and assists with recovery.

For many men doing practical activities together gives them the sense of being part of a supportive community and assists them with their recovery. Targeting activities for men specifically to interact and

participate in practical activities can be an important part of their personal recovery.

In the past, examples of these types of initiatives have included:

- Men's sheds which encourage men to work on projects that will have real and practical benefits for themselves and their community and at the same time to talk over their issues with others, seek advice, and get help;
- Tool libraries as a practical and tangible way that men can receive assistance with the tools they have lost or had damaged during an emergency; and
- Locally organised events relevant to the men in an area affected by an emergency such as sporting and leisure activities and other outdoor pursuits.

For many women sharing their experiences will be one of the most important aspects of their personal recovery. Programs that focus on ways in which women can interact, learn and share experiences will be vital and may include:

- Rural women's networks;
- Locally organised events relevant to the women in an area affected by an emergency such as pampering weekends, gardening groups, women's health information sessions; and
- Support groups that facilitate the sharing of stories and experiences.

Service delivery framework for individualised and community support programs

Municipal councils are responsible for the local management and delivery of recovery services for individuals and communities affected by emergencies.

Recovery arrangement needs to consider both how to support individuals and support communities as a whole.

Early consideration needs to be given as to how best to support individuals, families and communities in effectively managing the consequences of an event and to recover over time from their impact. Recovery programs will occur in varying forms, including the arts, sporting activities and community programs. The use of outreach support will help inform what recovery programs are needed.

Outreach support

Outreach support is an important component of recovery to both fully assess the impact of the event and ensure all community members have access to core recovery information and services available.

Outreach support ensures rapid contact with affected households and a prompt initial needs assessment of information recovery planning and priority setting. This process will also assist in the early identification of possible service delivery needs, leading to timelier request for additional support. Activities can include initial proactive telephone contact with identified affected resident/property owners. Information gathered can assist with briefing and prioritising activities of outreach teams.

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An outreach team may be multi-agency and is coordinated by municipal councils. This should generally commence as soon as access is made available to affected areas and be concluded as soon as practicable to enable recovery services/resources to be made available to affected persons.

Outreach support is tailored to the type, size and impact on the community. Municipal governments should organise outreach support to assist in their impact assessment and to provide information to residents about recovery and identify vulnerable groups that will require more assertive outreach. Red Cross may be requested to provide outreach coordination as well as being one of a number of organisations who provide outreach services. Department of Primary Industries will visit all affected properties within the Farming, Rural Activity, Rural Conservation and Green Wedges Zones of the affected area to assess the impact of the event, commence remediation activities and further plan for recovery.

Outreach support aims to:

- confirm impacts to premises and principal places of residence
- inform household/community recovery needs
- identify emerging needs to assist in information for planning
- Provide the opportunity for people who are socially isolated or vulnerable to receive recovery related information and be advised of available services;
- Reduce anxiety in people affected by a disaster
- Enable people to 'tell their story' to someone who will be supportive and attentive, and
- Provide referral to other community services including counselling where requested.

Vulnerable Groups

MEMPlans should consider how they will respond to vulnerable groups which includes the bereaved but can also include other groups such as those who were physically injured and parents with young children.

Use of community networks

There is inherent value in using and or extending existing community networks as a conduit for information delivery, needs identification and support of those affected and where possible and appropriate, emergency recovery programs should work with and through these networks.

Community networks that are functioning in an affected community should be actively engaged and supported in the emergency recovery process. Examples of community networks may include:

- volunteer emergency services (e.g. CFA, SES, Red Cross, CWA, Salvation Army)
- religious and spiritual organisations
- school organisations
- service clubs including arts and historical groups, and

- sporting clubs and community recreation groups.

Individualised and community support programs

In emergency events people may have a complex set of needs. Most people are not used to accessing community based services and in turn find it difficult to access or take advantage of emergency relief and recovery services. Others may need specialist support that is not readily available or need a complex mix of services to meet their needs.

In identifying the need for individualised support services recovery managers will need to consider the impact the event has had on local service providers and any disruption to their usual service delivery the event has had. There may be the need to develop strategies to counter the disruption and augment the availability of local service to meet demand. Recovery managers will need to put in strategies for coordinating and fostering liaison across service providers and service systems that do not usually work together, and ensure there are strong feedback mechanisms in place to ensure there is information available to ascertain if services are meeting demand and if there are any gaps emerging in available services.

As illustrated below, individualised and community support programs are intertwined.

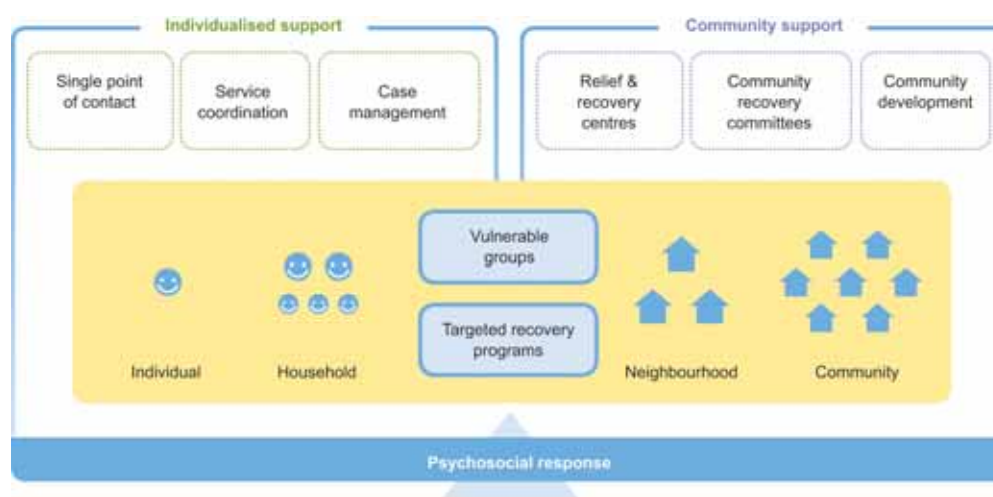


Figure 11: Psychosocial recovery – individuals, households, neighbourhoods and communities⁴

Individualised support programs

Emergencies will have differing impacts on individuals and recovery arrangements will need to consider how to provide information and support that graduates in intensity from self accessed information and support to coordinating service delivery through to case management.

MEMPlans should detail the plan for implementing and providing a range of individualised support strategies so that needs assessments and decisions can be made early.

⁴ This model follows the 'umbrella of care' proposed by B Raphael *When disaster strikes, How individuals and communities cope with disaster*, 1986 and uses processes for developing the social infrastructure to deliver the 'whole person' care required to effect recovery from a disaster cited in R Gordon *Community process and the recovery environment following emergency*, Emergency Health, vol 4 no 1, 2004

Strategies should consider how to provide information and support that graduates in intensity from self accessed information and support to coordinating service delivery through to case management.

Strategies will depend on the impact of the event and may include:

- providing a **single point of contact** for information that people can self access and find out what supports and services are available to assist with recovery needs;
- Identifying what types of services will be needed for recovery and undertaking **service coordination** of agencies at a local level and providing assistance to those who need limited support in navigating the various services they require.
- the provision of **case management** support to those, who are unable to access the help and services they need for recovery.

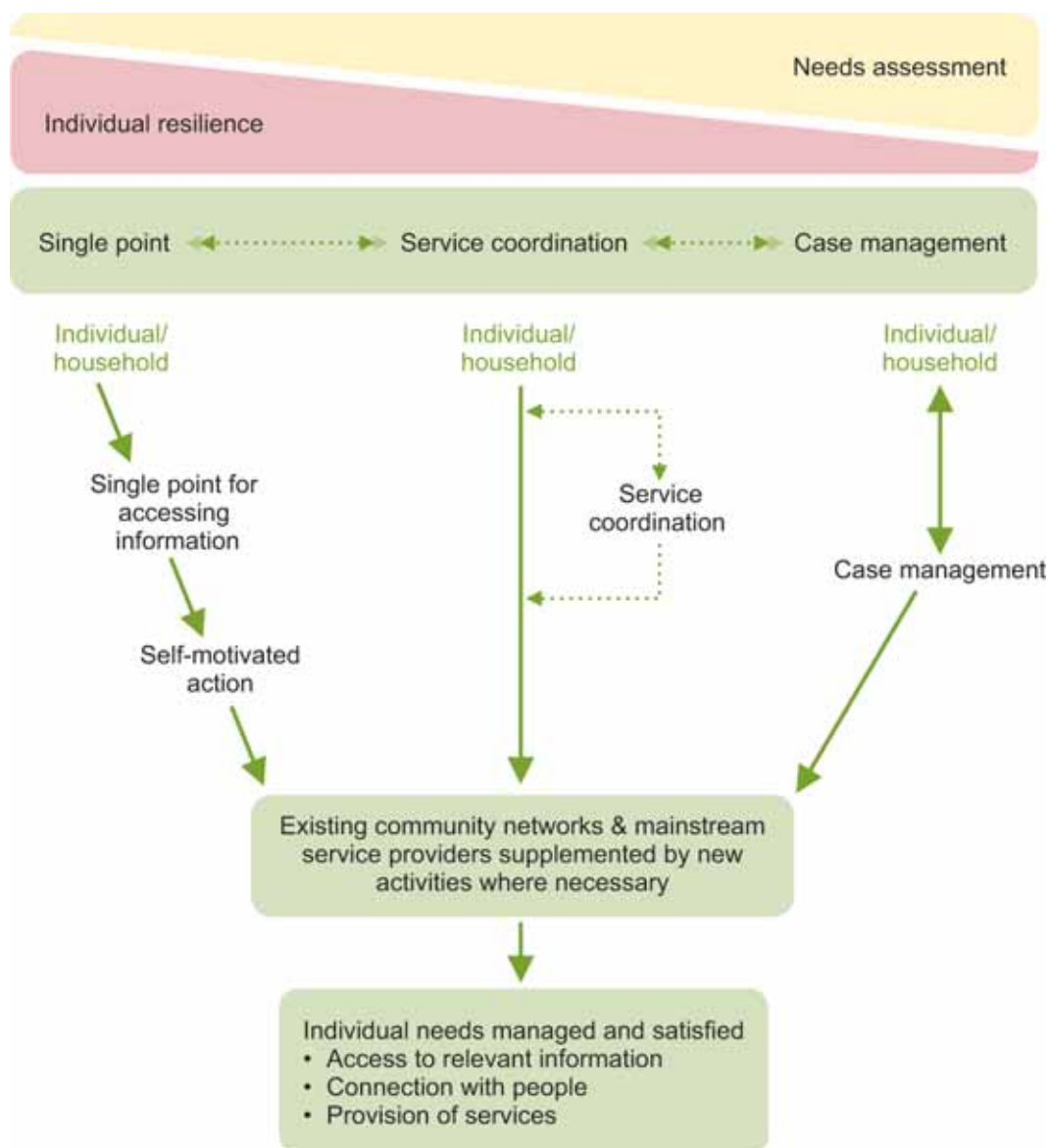


Figure 12: Service delivery framework for individualised support programs

Single point of contact

Helping people to help themselves is key to recovery and offering a single point of contact will help reduce confusion and create confidence that people are receiving the most up to date and correct information.

MEMPlans should contain arrangements for the promotion of a single point of contact for residents to obtain information about support, services and grants that may be available following an emergency.

All levels of government will be required to coordinate to determine an appropriate single point of contact for recovery information. It is important that all levels of government and agencies involved promote the same single point of contact.

The agency responsible for the single point of contact mechanism will be determined by the nature, size and impact of the event.

Consideration will need to be given as to how to make this single point of contact as accessible as possible. Phone lines, recovery centres and online web sites are all examples of how to coordinate and deliver a single point of contact. Collecting and organising the information that needs to be made available through the single point of contact is critical.

Keeping records of the requests for information made at the single point of contact can be a valuable source of intelligence about the impact of the event and the recovery needs people have. The records should be regularly reviewed to ensure that local recovery plans are responsive to the needs arising.

Service coordination

Service coordination responds to requests by individuals needing assistance to understand what services are available, help to access these services, help with applications or limited advocacy. Many individuals will be able to more capably progress their recovery planning if provided with brief assistance through service coordination.

Service coordination can help ensure that services required by the community are identified and organised to ensure adequate coverage and access. Service coordination should include consideration of utilities, insurance, legal, health, material aid and specialist services related to the actual consequences of the event.

Service coordination can include:

- facilitation of referrals to specialist services and provision of limited follow up
- provision of advocacy for individuals
- provision of assistance with applications and paperwork
- responding to requests for outreach visits
- coordination of services at the local level, and
- identification of vulnerable individuals who are unable to meet their recovery needs for referral to case management support.

MEMPlans should identify how service coordination will be managed in an event.

Case management

Case management is an individualised service that is more comprehensive than service coordination. It encompasses a comprehensive assessment and development of a recovery plan for individuals in need. The recovery plan is developed in collaboration with the individual/family and works to strengthen their resilience. Case management offers personal support, advocacy, attends to immediate needs, provides information, assesses current circumstances, and undertakes risk minimisation. Case management actively engages other service providers for the benefit of the individual or family and ensures that services are coordinated.

An effective case management program can greatly assist vulnerable individuals and families establish a recovery plan and assist them implement this plan.

Early identification for the need of case management is critical. If the need is limited, then existing recovery community service agencies should be utilised to meet the demand. Where these local arrangements will need to be supplemented, consultation with the Regional Recovery Coordinator (Department of Human Services) needs to occur to seek authorisation and funding for additional case management resources. Further information is available at www.dhs.vic.gov.au/emergency.

MEMPlans should identify arrangements for either council staff or community services to be engaged in the delivery of case management support. If it is not stipulated in the MEMPlan, the Department of Human Services regional officers will work with council to identify a lead agency to deliver the case management program.

Where primary producers are impacted Municipal Recovery Managers should liaise with the Department of Primary Industries to determine what level of case management deployment Department of Primary Industries will activate to ensure coordination and minimise duplication.

Community support programs

There are collective consequences for communities affected by an emergency. A key focus should be on engaging community members in the development and delivery of shared community activities. Key tasks include extensive networking with the community neighbourhoods and undertaking comprehensive meeting and communication activities to address practical issues impacting upon individuals, households and communities or providing opportunities to come together around common issues or needs.

Community support programs are can include the following elements:

- community engagement, information and briefings
- community development activities and programs
- community recovery committees, and
- emergency recovery centres and community service hubs.

Community engagement, information and briefings

Community briefings or meetings are conducted by response agencies in the preparedness and response phases of an emergency as part of their role in keeping communities aware of the emergency situation before,

during and after emergency events. Local and regional recovery management personnel should form part of the briefing teams.

Community information sessions are useful as soon as practicable after an emergency event has occurred. The development of these sessions is a first practical step in the process of ensuring an affected community is actively involved in the emergency recovery management process and can also be used to support the development of Community Recovery Committees.

In the event of a major incident, community information (including community briefings and meetings) will be lead jointly by the municipal council and Department of Human Services.

The role of community briefings in the emergency recovery context is to provide:

- clarification of the emergency event (control agency)
- advice on services available (recovery agencies)
- input into the development of management strategies (municipal council), and
- advice to affected individuals on how to manage their own recovery, including the provision of public health information (specialist advisers).

Various information lines may be established in and post an emergency, including:

- Victorian Bushfire Information Line – the primary contact point at the initial stage of a bushfire emergency
- Nurse-on-call
- mental health advice lines, and
- telephone counselling.

Emergency Recovery Centres

In some cases, a municipal council may transition an Emergency Relief Centre into an Emergency Recovery Centre or an Emergency Recovery Centre can be established independently. An Emergency Recovery Centre is designed to provide a single point of entry for affected persons for an “all agency, all stakeholders” integrated recovery process - a ‘one-stop shop’. An Emergency Recovery Centre provides support to affected communities in the restoration of their emotional, social, economic and physical wellbeing and facilitates the provision of services, such as:

- psychological services (for example, counselling)
- temporary and medium-term accommodation
- environment (for example, public health)
- financial assistance and legal and insurance advice
- case coordination/management service, and
- primary industry advice.

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Various emergency recovery support agencies (at the request of a Municipal Recovery Manager - a municipal council staff member) may attend an Emergency Recovery Centre to provide advice and guidance.

Municipal councils are responsible for establishing Emergency Recovery Centres.

The site selection for an Emergency Recovery Centre is important, given the longer term nature of services provided.

Community Service Hubs

Community Service Hubs are similar to Emergency Recovery Centres, however, they are established by the Department of Human Services and are longer term establishments.

The type, size and complexity of an emergency event will determine the need to establish a Community Service Hub. The Community Service Hubs can operate in conjunction with Emergency Relief Centres and Emergency Recovery Centres to address long term recovery needs of the affected community. A manager ('Hub Captain') may be assigned to oversee each Community Service Hub.

Community Recovery Committees

The primary method of ensuring and fostering community management of recovery after an event is through the use of Community Recovery Committees.

Where the impact of an event is sufficiently significant, municipal councils and Regional Recovery Coordinators (Department of Human Services) have a responsibility to ensure the establishment of Community Recovery Committees as soon as possible after the emergency.

Draft Terms of Reference of Community Recovery Committees should be included in MEMPlans and modified to suit the circumstances of the emergency.

Municipal councils have a responsibility to resource the establishment of Community Recovery Committees. Existing local community representative committees should be considered in the process and conversely such recovery committees can transition into more mainstream committees, when appropriate. Additional processes should be considered to enable the requirements of specific needs groups (vulnerable, disadvantaged, children, youth, women, men and bereaved) to be understood.

Refer to Part 6 of this Manual for more detail on the establishment and operation of Community Recovery Committees.

Community development

Often multiple community development activities will be taking place in an affected community. A community development program focuses on engaging with communities to develop and deliver shared community activities and may utilise Community Development Officers (CDOs) to undertake these activities. Key tasks include extensive networking with communities and undertaking comprehensive meeting and communication activities to develop responses and focus on re-strengthening the community through organising tailored events and groups.

Early assessment should be made of any need for, and likely benefit of, a community development service, and should focus on when the community is ready to engage in community development activities. Community development may be required when:

- the emergency has a demonstrated impact upon community networks
- an affected area is experiencing or is likely to experience socio-economic disadvantage as a result of the emergency, and/or
- the emergency has created a high degree of stress/distress within the community that will impact upon its health and wellbeing.

Community Development Officers are appointed and employed by municipal councils and/or government departments. Municipal councils may seek assistance in funding Community Development Officers or community development activities from various State Government departments.

Further information is available at www.dhs.vic.gov.au/emergency

Displaced/dispersed people

As a result of an emergency people may be forced to leave their homes to take up residence in an unaffected municipal district (displaced people) or be affected by an event but normally reside in a municipal district not affected by the emergency (dispersed people).

Planning arrangements at local and regional levels must be conscious of the responsibility to support recovery activities for emergencies that occur outside their boundaries, for example in another municipal district or region, interstate or overseas. Plans should include provisions to ensure equity of emergency recovery services in such circumstances.

Economic environment

Economic recovery can operate at a number of levels, ranging from:

- microeconomic that address the needs of individuals and households
- enterprise-level activities which assist businesses, and
- the macroeconomic where the consequences of the economic impact of the emergency on the broader economy are monitored and addressed by both government and the private sector.

Economic emergency recovery activities should:

- be designed to support the re-establishment of economic wellbeing and help to alleviate financial hardships in the affected community
- facilitate effective utilisation of existing economic development and financial assistance programs and opportunities
- directly intervene in local economies where there is a clear likelihood of market failure and preventable hardship.

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Early consideration of economic consequences of an event is critical for the economic recovery of a community. The investment, development and promotion of local employment opportunities, local tourism and support of locally affected business are all areas that need to be included in emergency recovery activities. Economic initiatives may include incorporating the use of other pre-existing strategies such as employment programs and encouraging private sector investment in retraining and redevelopment activities to assist the recovery process.

The economic environment may include, but is not limited to:

- employment
- industry and primary producers
- commercial operations (including home-operators and small business)
- tourism and hospitality, and
- government.



Figure 13: Pictorial representation of the elements of the economic environment

Individual and household (microeconomic)

Emergency events can affect:

- employment security (availability of work or the ability of people to undertake work)
- payment of salaries or wages
- ability to service debts, and
- access to bank accounts, liquefiable assets and insurance payouts.

Recovery activities should assist in replacing and repairing pre-existing disaster livelihoods or re-establishing new alternative livelihoods for individuals and households.

The purchasing power and general consumption of individuals within affected communities is vitally important to local economic sustainability as businesses feel an added impact of emergencies through a reduction in trade.

Businesses (enterprises)

Prompt restoration of normal trading activities is a key determinant of the ability of businesses, to survive financially following an emergency event.

Businesses should be encouraged to establish emergency continuity plans to reduce the impact of emergencies on the local economic environment.

Emergency recovery activities may include various forms of direct and indirect financial assistance, asset protection and salvage and information to assist decision making and planning.

A range of State Government departments may assist, such as the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development and Department of Primary Industries.

Emergencies can have a profound effect on the tourism and hospitality industry whether it directly affects a tourism business or simply occurs within the same area. Tourism regions are vulnerable to public perceptions of health and safety. A crisis can result in a downturn in visitation to tourism and hospitality businesses. Tourism Victoria has produced comprehensive guides for tourism businesses in times of crisis. Links to these can be found at www.dhs.vic.gov.au/emergency.

Macroeconomic

Where possible, the State Recovery Coordinator (Department of Human Services) should facilitate economic assessment and intelligence on the current and predictable economic impacts of an emergency. This will inform the development of appropriate interventions to support the continuity of affected business. Activities should aim to restore confidence of stakeholders in the sustainability of affected businesses and local economies.

Natural environment

Emergencies can have serious effects on the natural environment which can cause community hardship. These effects can have multiple consequences which can be considered across the three themes of:

- societal
- commercial, and
- biodiversity and ecosystems.

These effects include, but are not limited to impacts on:

- air quality
- water quality and quantity (including catchment management)
- land degradation and contamination
- agriculture
- nature-based tourism
- cultural heritage
- flora and fauna

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- marine and coastal habitats (including Marine National Parks and Sanctuaries, and
- terrestrial and freshwater habitats (including public/crown lands and National Parks).

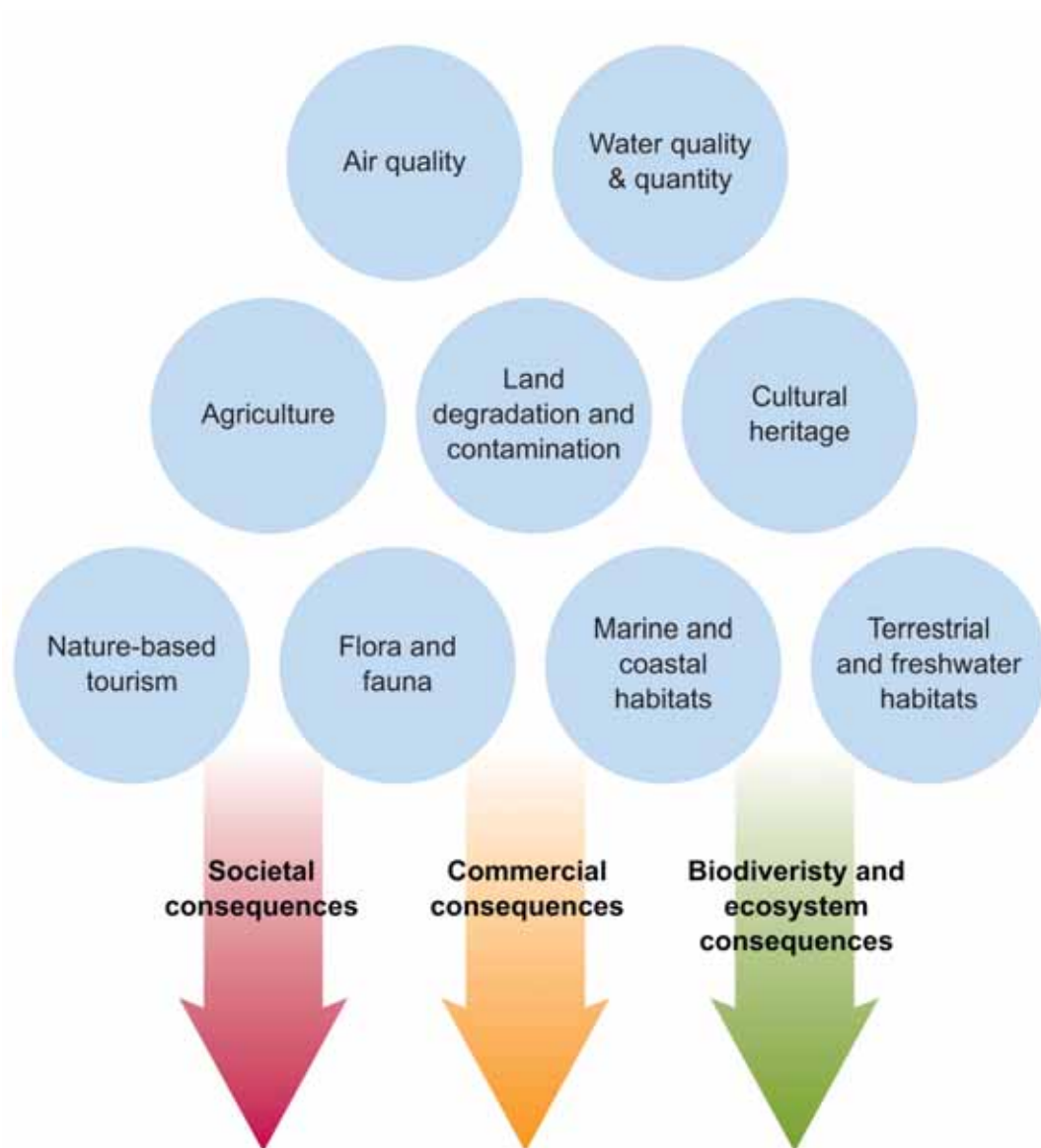


Figure 14: Natural environment impacts and the consequences they might have

Societal impacts

Natural environments and the infrastructure that supports them have further value to society when they provide a sense of place and connectedness and have some form of recreational, cultural, social and/or spiritual importance to individuals, families and communities. Examples may include:

- culturally, historically and/or spiritually significant sites
- walking/bicycle tracks
- recreational facilities

- visitor facilities, and
- open spaces in towns and cities

The societal value of an environment can be compromised as the result of an emergency event, reducing the quality of life for a community. Recovery activities should consider the importance of the natural environment to a community's social, emotional and/or spiritual wellbeing.

Commercial impacts

Adverse seasonal conditions causing drought and flood and emergency events such as fire or threats from exotic plant and animal diseases may significantly affect farming, forestry or cropping values of natural landscapes. In addition to rehabilitating natural habitats and wildlife populations, recovery activities should also focus on restoring the economic viability of land, forestry, freshwater and marine resources.

Nature-based tourism

Natural environments support eco-tourism and provide jobs by protecting the natural resources crucial to key recreational and tourism opportunities. International and local experience demonstrates that protected natural habitats provide the opportunity to educate the public about conservation and provide scientific reference sites for long-term monitoring of the natural environment. Tourism Victoria has produced comprehensive guides for tourism businesses in times of crisis. Links to these can be found at www.dhs.vic.gov.au/emergency.

Animal welfare

Department of Primary Industries (DPI) will coordinate all animal welfare (livestock, companion animals and wildlife) and work with Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE), municipal councils, Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), local veterinarians and volunteer groups involved with assisting the recovery of animals after emergencies.

This includes access to adequate feed and water, provision of shelter, housing and adequate space, freedom from pain, injury, disease and obvious discomfort, freedom from unnecessary fear and distress; and the ability to express normal patterns of behaviour. Key animal welfare considerations include:

- maintaining acceptable animal welfare standards for all animal species
- effective management of animals within restricted areas and elsewhere, based on sound risk assessment, to avoid later welfare problems
- destruction of the minimum number of animals or suspects during the emergency response, and
- best use of available resources (personnel, infrastructure, feed and water).

Department of Primary Industries will also assess and assist with urgent animal welfare (livestock and companion animals) needs of commercial primary producers and rural land managers, with emphasis in the first instance on the relief of animal suffering. Initially Department of

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Primary Industries will target affected properties with animals, as a priority, and those involved in primary production in the Farming, Rural Activity, Rural Conservation and Green Wedges Zones of the impacted area (local govt planning zones).

Department of Primary Industries is able to provide direction to municipal councils regarding the location of stock disposal sites.

The Department of Primary Industries and the Victorian Farmers Federation will provide an emergency fodder period for four weeks following an emergency to provide feed for farm animals. Further information regarding emergency fodder for livestock is provided in Section 4.4 of this Plan.

Supplies of water may also be required for livestock after an emergency. Department of Primary Industries is able to provide advice to municipal councils about urgent needs for emergency water supplies.

Further information is available at www.dhs.vic.gov.au/emergency

Biodiversity and ecosystem impacts

Many emergency events have a significant impact on wildlife in the affected area and the supporting ecosystem. This can result in the loss of habitat and food and water scarcity. Changes in water quality may lead to fish deaths, development of algal blooms, weed kills or the choking of waterways with weed or algae. Spilled chemicals (including fuel) and water used for fire fighting can introduce toxic residues to soil, waterways or marine environments. Recovery activities which may be coordinated by the Department of Sustainability and Environment include assessments of environmental impacts, restoration of habitats and monitoring of the recovery of affected wildlife.

Built environment

Infrastructure assists individuals and communities in the management of their daily lives and underpins the ability of private and public community services to function.

It may also form an important part of community identity. For example, some public buildings have an important symbolic role and their loss can have a severe negative impact on community morale.

Built environment impacts include, but are not limited to:

- essential utilities and services
- water, electricity, gas, telecommunications, roads and transport
- residential buildings
- water and wastewater management
- waste and pollution management
- fencing, and
- community and public buildings and assets.

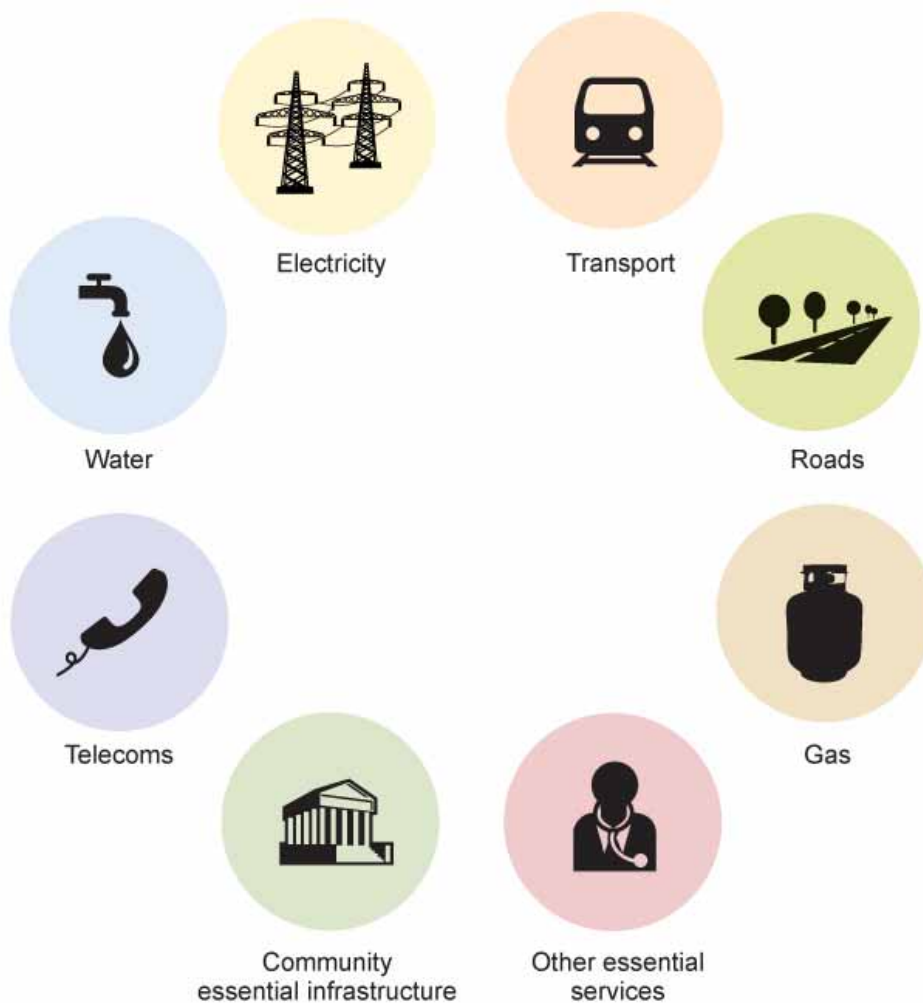


Figure 15: Pictorial representation of the elements of the built environment

Restoration of critical infrastructure must be undertaken with an awareness of the needs of vulnerable individuals and communities. In rebuilding infrastructure, responsible agencies should:

- understand the community's restoration priorities
- keep the community informed of recovery progress, and
- wherever possible, build back better.

Essential utilities

The achievement of community recovery, along with their supporting structures and systems, is underpinned by the restoration of essential utility services (electricity, gas, water, sewerage) and communication and transport links. These in turn enable essential business services, such as banking, education, and health and retail trade to be returned.

Plans for the restoration of essential services are described in Section 4.2 of this Plan.

Residential buildings

Residential losses can contribute significantly to individual, family and community disruption. Residential damage affects:

- provision of shelter
- protection of household contents
- the feeling of belonging that is 'home'
- vulnerable sectors of the community, and
- coordination of recovery and reconstruction operations.

Damage may be a combination of structural and non-structural damage that may:

- render the residence dangerous for entry
- may allow entry but prevent occupation of the building
- require building repairs
- be fixed by minor work, and
- involve damage to contents.

Assessment and repair of homes is critical to expediting the return of people to normal life functioning. The Building Commission provides building advice and information and in some cases can assist in the expediting the building cycle after an emergency event.

Potential providers should be identified in local plans for other recovery activities that can assist and help in the transition between displacement to repatriation such as:

- clean-up and demolition operations
- information for individuals and industry about temporary homes and buildings and new building standards
- facilitating access to public housing or the private rental market, and
- advice on obtaining building permits and engaging building practitioners.

Water and wastewater management

When a community is affected by an emergency, they often require the provision of emergency water and wastewater management to support health and wellbeing.

When the size and complexity of emergency recovery exceeds the local resources, coordination of emergency drinking water supplies and sewerage services becomes the responsibility of Department of Sustainability and Environment. Department of Health are responsible for providing advice about the safety of drinking water. For more information refer to *Emergency Recovery Plan – Water and Wastewater Services*.

Waste and pollution management

As a direct result of an emergency or due to the emergency response, waste and debris is generated and accumulates. Air, water pollution and soil contamination can result. Local plans should include commitment of relevant agencies to strategies dealing with:

- removal, transport and disposal of solid waste and debris
- mitigation of the impact of wastewater on catchments, waterways, marine environments and human health
- response to the health, visibility and amenity impacts of air pollution caused by smoke, dust, chemicals and unpleasant odours, and
- supplementation of disrupted systems and facilities to manage the ongoing generation of human waste (sewerage) and garbage.

Fencing

It is the responsibility of the owner of private land to fence their property and secure stock within their boundary. Landholders are expected to manage risks to their assets from the potential impact of emergencies. All landholders are expected to have appropriate levels of insurance cover for boundary and internal fences.

Assistance can often be provided to rural landholders by volunteer groups to assist in dismantling damaged fences and reconstruction of fences. Municipal councils take the lead role in coordinating volunteer efforts after emergencies.

The Victorian Government will pay 100 percent of the restoration costs of fences damaged on private land as a result of machinery used by fire agencies to control bushfires. This includes damage to fences by machinery such as bull-dozers entering the property and/or constructing fire control lines, and other fire emergency vehicles obtaining access.

The Victorian Government will meet half the cost of materials to replace or repair fencing between private land and all national parks, state parks and state forests destroyed or damaged by bushfires.

Public buildings and assets

Damage and loss can be sustained by all community facilities that make use of buildings in one form or another. Damaged facilities can include:

- community/neighbourhood centres and places for congregation
- schools and learning institutions
- kindergartens and child care facilities
- places of spiritual worship (churches, mosques, graveyards, memorials)
- sporting and recreational facilities and clubs
- cultural centres
- entertainment venues, and
- restaurants and cafes.

Each of these facilities has the potential to assist the community in its recovery process, but if damaged would be unable to perform their community functions. The damage may be structural damage to buildings or damage to furnishings and contents, or both.

Critical public buildings and facilities need to be pre-identified as priorities in the recovery planning process and adequate arrangements developed for their restoration or replacement if required. Recovery activities should also recognise the key elements of the built environment that have social value, such as landmarks and significant community sites, which are symbolically and functionally important in community's recovery.

4.6 Community Engagement and Communications Framework

This Section provides an introduction to good practice community engagement and emergency relief and recovery communication principles. These principles may be utilised during all stages of emergency management, however, they are particularly relevant when planning and undertaking emergency relief and recovery activities. Effective community engagement and communications are important to help ensure emergency relief and recovery activities are responsive to community needs.

Engaging the community

Community engagement is:

- the communication, measures and processes used to engage or interact with communities
- where the views and input from communities are used, and
- to solve problems or make informed decisions relevant to the community.

Community engagement covers a wide range of activities including information provision, consultation, education, relationship and capacity building and enhancing community resilience.

The terms community engagement, public participation, stakeholder engagement and stakeholder management are often used interchangeably.

Basis for community engagement

Before, during and after emergencies, the value of community engagement regarding emergency relief and recovery activities should not be overlooked. The benefits to individuals, communities, business, government and society more generally, of 'good' community engagement include:

- higher quality and innovative solutions to issues and problems
- more effective use of resources
- enabling an agency or organisation to gain a better understanding of local needs and issues

- opportunities for learning by agencies and the community, and through this to assist with organisational and community capacity building
- an open process to identify and resolve conflict, along with contributing to accountability and transparency objectives
- community ownership of final decisions and hence a greater commitment to the implementation of decisions, and
- assistance with strengthening and building a sense of community spirit and identity and social capital.

These benefits are widely recognised by national and international organisations, including the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development and the International Association of Public Participation and are adopted by major corporations, government agencies and municipal councils.

Types of community engagement

The type of community engagement employed is influenced by the nature of the emergency, the outcome sought, and the degree of community input into decision-making required. Depending on these factors, and combined with the stage and element of recovery being addressed, one or more of the following types of engagement may be employed at any point in time:

- **Inform** — this relates to providing balanced and objective information on any aspect of the recovery process, and assists communities to understand the problems, alternatives and preferred solutions. This type of engagement includes information gathering but does not involve community input into decision making, although it does result in having more informed communities.
- **Consult**— this refers to seeking community feedback on proposed solutions, alternatives and decisions. Whilst this type of engagement allows communities to influence the direction of decisions, it may not result in direct input to decision making.
- **Involve** — which means working directly with the community to understand concerns and to generate aspirations and ideas that are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and decisions made. This type of engagement is similar to consultation but provides for greater community inclusion in the development of options, making decisions about which option to pursue, and feedback opportunities.
- **Collaborate** — which involves a partnership with the community on each stage of a project including scoping, information gathering, developing alternatives and identifying the preferred solution. In such an approach to engagement communities collaborate with the decision maker but may not be equal partners in the process.
- **Empower** — where all or part of the decision is implemented by the community (with various stakeholders involved). This type of engagement provides for the greatest level of devolved decision making to communities. In the context of emergency

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recovery, final decision making rests with the level of government with funding responsibility.

Best practice community engagement principles

Based on the International Association of Public Participation engagement spectrum, best practice community engagement is underpinned by a set of principles including those outlined below.

- **Inclusiveness** — the involvement of people potentially affected by, or interested in, projects or activities, including individuals and groups from culturally diverse backgrounds. Engagement should be undertaken in ways that encourage people to participate and that seek to connect with those who are hardest to reach.
- **Commitment** — engagement should be genuine and be aimed at identifying, understanding and engaging relevant communities and be undertaken as early as possible.
- **Building relationships and mutual respect** — development of trust through personal contact and keeping promises is a priority. Effective relationships between government, industry and community should be maintained by using a variety of communication channels, by acknowledging and respecting community capacity, values and interests and by exploring these areas to find common ground.
- **Integrity** — genuine community engagement is a means through which the integrity of government and the democratic processes of government are maintained.
- **Transparency and accountability** — engagement should be undertaken in a transparent and flexible manner so that communities understand what they can influence and to what degree.
- **Feedback and evaluation** — engagement processes should inform participants of how their input contributed to decision making.

Communicating with the community

Effective communications are essential to successful emergency relief and recovery and should be coordinated across relevant agencies.

‘Communications’ refers to the practice of sending, gathering, managing and evaluating information. This can occur before, during and after (both long and short term) emergencies.

Where a need to communicate relief and recovery information to the community is identified, well planned and executed public information campaigns at local, regional and state level are required. Communications in emergency relief and recovery should go beyond merely sending information to actually forming a dialogue with the community. The information provided must be accessible during all stages of an emergency. Consideration should be given to ensuring information is accessible by all in the community. Multiple methods of communication may be recommended to achieve this.

Municipal councils should use existing communication networks to communicate relief and recovery information to local stakeholders. State and regional agencies will also utilise existing communication procedures to communicate relief and recovery messages to a wider audience if required.

People affected or concerned by an emergency have basic informational needs to assist in their recovery, they can include:

- What is happening? What is about to happen? What just happened?
- What, if any, physical dangers still exist?
- What support is available?
- What do they need to do to qualify for support?
- What can they do if they have questions, concerns or complaints?
- What can they do to help?

Key emergency relief messages

As the provision of emergency relief can begin simultaneously with or immediately after an emergency has occurred, there are important considerations about what to communicate and how to communicate these messages.

- Announcements from response, relief and recovery agencies must be consistent with each other and with the media and communications provisions of MEMPlans.
- Information should be relevant, timely, accurate, consistent, and concise.
- When communicating, provide only confirmed statements- do not communicate speculative information. If something is not known, be honest about the fact that it is not known and provide advice about when it will be known.
- From an early point, it is important that key messages delivered by control agencies, municipal councils and other government agencies incorporate the issue of donations, primarily conveying the preferred option for donations is money. Financial donations, rather than other types of donations (goods, services and time) provides choice, can more accurately target needs and circulates money in affected communities, which stimulates a quicker recovery for local economies.
- It is important to communicate emergency relief messages in ways that reach vulnerable people in the community (or those that have become vulnerable because of the emergency). Additionally, tailored emergency relief messages should be considered for community members who have additional needs.
- Procedures for handling media requests and liaising with the media representatives should be detailed in the media and communications provisions of MEMPlans and be consistent

with Victoria Police emergency response communication procedures.

- In constructing messages, it is important to consider the impact they are likely to have on the intended audience at a time when emotions are heightened. Stick to the facts and be sure to use language that is unambiguous and easily understood.

General rules for good communications⁵

Three rules of communications can be applied by considering the following simple questions:

- **Is it relevant?**

People affected by emergencies are often overwhelmed by huge amounts of information. Ask the question - this piece of information needed at this time?

- **Is it clear?**

After a disaster, people often have trouble remembering or understanding information. Ask the question – is simple, concise language being used and is the message logical?

- **Is it targeted?**

The method of communication you use should fit the audience. Ask the question – will this information make sense to those receiving it?

Best practice principles of communications⁶

Public information, not public relations

Broadly speaking, the aim of public relations is to promote an organisation, person or event, while the aim of public information is to channel information to the relevant audiences. The aim of all communications should be to assist the community, not to promote or market.

The right to know

Members of the community should, wherever possible, be given the same status as emergency management personnel, providers of funding or others in positions of authority when considering their need for information. The community has a *right to know* about services, programs and other developments relating to relief and recovery planning.

Respect people

When people are displaced or affected by an emergency, it is easy to only see their vulnerability. Communications should be respectful at all times. It is imperative that all communications recognise that affected people are rational beings with local knowledge and skills, who are able to make their own decisions. Materials and messages that forget this principle can be viewed as paternalistic and patronising and can further traumatise an affected community.

⁵ Based on *Communicating in Recovery*, Australian Red Cross, 2010

⁶ *Ibid.*

Acknowledge the impact

People affected by the emergency have potentially experienced a life shaping event. To be able to make sense of what has happened, they need to be able to tell their story and to have their experiences validated and acknowledged.

Build on local assets – ‘Asset Based Community Development’

Asset Based Community Development refers to the practice of utilising and building on existing local networks and strengths in the community. Asset Based Community Development can also influence communications practices. Simply put, don't reinvent the wheel when you don't need to. If a community already has well-functioning and respected communication systems (for example, a popular community radio network) utilise them to inform the community rather than developing new, and potentially ineffective, communication channels.

Following Asset Based Community Development principles mean you are working *with* the community rather than merely working *alongside* them. Asset Based Community Development empowers the community to contribute to their own recovery.

Repeat information

After an emergency people often don't remember information. As they are working through their individual recovery, people will be looking for information to assist their specific needs at that specific time. What may be irrelevant to someone at week three may be the exact information they require at week five.

Information must be repeated periodically throughout the recovery process and be reinforced by multiple sources. An effective system of receiving and recording feedback from the community – that is, working with the questions being asked - will help decide when to introduce new information and when to repeat information already provided.

Remember the ‘unaffected’

Be careful not to focus solely on those directly affected in an emergency (for example people whose properties were burned or those relocated due to a flood). Those not directly affected can often experience significant trauma and stress following an emergency. Care should be taken not to alienate or differentiate between the ‘affected’ and ‘unaffected’ in an emergency.

No spin

People recovering from an emergency have specific requirements and want information solely to address their needs. Communications containing rhetoric or brand-leveraging information are counterproductive as they will damage reputations and just add to the communications ‘noise’ in the community.

Communicating with people with additional needs

The impact of public information in recovery is maximised when it is designed with knowledge and understanding of the target audience.

People affected by an emergency will have different needs, circumstances and abilities when it comes to accessing and understanding information. Those with additional needs can be more acutely affected by an emergency.

Communications Needs Assessments can be useful when working with groups with additional requirements. This is a 15 minute exercise that can help shape communications and involves considering the questions listed in *Figure 16*.

Issue	Questions to consider
Communication Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What broader context are we trying to communicate in? • How are people coping, generally speaking? • How is the recovery proceeding, generally speaking? • Are there ongoing safety/security concerns?
Stakeholder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is it that we are trying to communicate with? • What additional requirements do they have, if any? • What local or other assets can we build on to make communication more effective? • What are the issues/problems the stakeholders have?
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is it that we are trying to achieve by communicating? • What actual information are we trying to communicate or inform the target audience of?
Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What communication methods are available and unaffected by the emergency • What method(s) is best suited to the above listed issues?
Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we ensure that issues or views from the stakeholders are fed back to us during this information exercise?

Figure 16: Communications Needs Assessment considerations

4.7 Testing, Evaluation and Review

This section of this Plan outlines the measures that will be taken to test, evaluate and review emergency relief and recovery plans.

Training

Department of Human Services has an ongoing commitment to relief and recovery training and education. Training sessions will be made available to personnel of all agencies involved in relief and recovery management, coordination or service provision. Where possible this training should also include other emergency management agencies to encourage greater understanding of issues.

It is the responsibility of all agencies and organisations to ensure personnel activated to provide relief and recovery services or to manage recovery activities are appropriately trained and resourced.

Testing

Agencies and organisations which have a role in emergency relief and recovery at local, regional or state level will participate in exercises to test the arrangements and operational procedures of the this Plan, Regional Emergency Recovery Plans and the recovery component of MEMPlans, at least annually.

Emergency relief and recovery exercises may be conducted in a variety of formats and may test various sections of this Plan at local, regional or state level. There should also be testing of the links between the levels of recovery management.

Emergency relief and recovery exercises may be run in conjunction with other emergency management exercises or agency exercises, but must have discrete aims and objectives for the testing this Plan .

It is expected that a Municipal Recovery Manager (a municipal council staff member) will summarise the outcomes of exercises for the Regional Recovery Coordinator (Department of Human Services), and that in turn the Regional Recovery Coordinator will provide a summary of all exercises to the State Recovery Coordinator.

Monitoring

While relief and recovery activities are being undertaken following an emergency, coordinators and managers at the local, regional and State level (as well as agencies and organisations delivering emergency relief and recovery services) should establish and implement processes to:

- monitor the delivery and effectiveness of emergency relief and recovery operations through regular periodic reporting, and
- adjust the management and delivery of activities as necessary to better achieve desired goals and optimal outcomes.

Evaluation

Evaluation of relief and recovery activities and programs following emergency events is essential to maximise lessons learned and identify where improvements can be made.

Evaluation should be conducted at local, regional and state level, (depending on the scale of activation of recovery activities related to the event). The evaluation can be an informal or formal debrief, can involve workshops, seminars or applied research into particular areas of activity and should identify the strengths and weaknesses of the operational response to the needs of the community.

The outcomes of the evaluation should be reported and shared between local, regional and state level agencies.

Review

As understanding of emergency relief and recovery continues to evolve, best practice is identified and lessons are learned from activation of this Plan, recovery coordinators and managers at all levels should ensure plans are reviewed and revised to reflect developments.

*Part 4 – State Emergency Relief and Recovery Plan***State level**

This plan shall be reviewed:

- every three years (this review will be the responsibility of the State Recovery Coordinator (Department of Human Services))
- following any major emergency, and
- following any major development in the Relief and Recovery domain.

Regional level

Regional Emergency Recovery Plans should be updated as necessary and reviewed on a regular basis. These reviews should incorporate lessons learned from debriefs of recovery operations during the preceding period and are the responsibility of the Regional Recovery Manager in each region.

Local level

The emergency relief and recovery component of MEMPlans should be reviewed by Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committees at least annually (and updated as necessary) and audited consistent with the requirements of the this Manual. In addition, municipal councils should endeavour to consult with stakeholders on a regular basis to ensure that these plans capture community priorities, needs and wishes.