Emergency preparedness policy for clients and services

September 2017

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This is a managed document and will replace the *Emergency preparedness policy for clients and services,* dated 7 October 2016

Changes will only be issued as a complete replacement document.

Recipients must remove superseded versions from circulation.

Version	Date	Endorsed by	Key changes	Sections
1.0	October 2015	Deputy Director, Emergency Management Branch, Department of Health and Human Services	Combined the former Department of Health and Department of Human Services emergency preparedness clients and services policies. There has been clarifying edits to the policy and some additional information to support emergency planning.	All
1.1	July 2015	Unendorsed	Consultation Draft – minor review to update policy following legislation changes and departmental restructures.	All
1.2	September 2016	Unendorsed	Final draft incorporating feedback.	All
2.0	October 2016	Acting Deputy Secretary, Regulation, Health Protection and Emergency Management	Approved version for release	All
2.1	August 2017	Director, Emergency Management Branch, Department of Health and Human Services	Updated to reflect machinery of government changes and National Disability Insurance Scheme requirements	All

Accountability and review

A full revision of the policy will be conducted in 2018, and then every three years or as required.

Contents

1. Overview

1.1 Background

Victoria is prone to emergencies resulting from a range of events, including but not limited to:

- floods, storms or bushfires
- explosions or accidents
- epidemics, pandemics, or contamination of food or water supply
- disruptions to essential services.

These emergencies can affect services that are delivered, funded, managed, or regulated by the Department of Health and Human Services (the department). This can affect the ability of services to meet the needs of clients.

Services must plan for emergencies to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their clients and staff, and to identify the implications for service delivery.

1.2 Purpose of this policy

The Department of Health and Human Services *Emergency preparedness policy for clients and services* (the policy) aims to protect and enhance the health and safety of people accessing services from Victoria's health and human services sector.

The policy assists the department and agencies to prepare for and respond to emergencies. It describes the sector's responsibilities and considerations to prepare for, respond to, and recover from all types of emergencies. It seeks to achieve a consistent sector-wide approach, taking into consideration the local environment, conditions and resources.

1.3 Scope

The policy applies to all types of services that are:

- delivered from department-owned or managed facilities
- delivered by departmental staff
- provided through departmental funding
- regulated by the department (including supported residential services).

A list of service types covered by the policy can be found in the table below.

The term 'client' refers to a person who receives a service delivered or funded by the department. The department and department-funded agencies have different relationships with clients depending on the type and level of service provided. Services can range from having full departmental responsibility and care for a client to providing occasional information and support.

Table 1: Sectors and service types covered by this policy

Sector	Service type
Aged care	• Day programs and centre-based rehabilitation programs • Home and community care services and other related services • In-home services • Residential aged care (Victorian public sector) • Supported residential services (SRS)
Disability	• All host family arrangements (including Family Options) • Day services • Disability supported accommodation • Community-based respite • Facility-based respite • Residential institutions
Health	• Community-based and residential drug and alcohol services • Community health programs • Facility-based and in-home subacute services • Hospitals and health service facility-based acute care
Mental health	• Community-managed services (formerly psychiatric disability rehabilitation and support services) • Residential services
Out-of-home care	• Foster care • Kinship care • Lead tenant • Residential care
Public and community housing	• Community housing • Crisis accommodation and homelessness services • Public housing • Transitional housing
Sport and recreation	• State-owned residential camps • State-owned sport and recreation facilities

This policy applies to all Victorian-approved National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) providers, except Early Childhood Intervention Support providers. For more information, refer to the Victorian Quality and Safeguards arrangements for the NDIS transition: *Information for Victorian approved NDIS providers* (March 2017) located at http://www.vic.gov.au/ndis/getting-ready/service-providers.html. The arrangements state that providers are responsible for preparing their organisations for emergencies and supporting their clients' individual emergency preparedness under Victoria's emergency management arrangements.

The department also works cooperatively with a range of agencies in the health and human services sector with which it does not have any funding agreements. As such, the policy is also relevant to the following services:

• private and non-government hospitals and residential aged care services
• non-direct service providers funded by the department (such as those providing and supporting community activities).

These services can consider the information in this policy for emergency management planning purposes.

1.4 Implementation guidance for the policy

The policy is supported by four documents that include more detailed information on:

- types of emergencies
- emergency management planning
- emergency responses including relocation, sheltering options and evacuation
- contacting the department in an emergency.

The documents are:

- *Relocation, sheltering and evacuation guide*
- *Reference guide*
- *Implementation tables for the health and human services sector*
- *What to do in a fire, flood or other emergency* – quick guide for facilities and services.

Service providers will need to satisfy themselves that they are complying with all of their relevant legal obligations including, but not limited to, obligations that may arise under:

- any agreement with the department
- *Aged Care Act 1997* (Clth)
- *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005* (Vic)
- *Disability Act 2006* (Vic)
- *Health Services Act 1988* (Vic)
- *Home and Community Care Act 1985* (Vic)
- *Mental Health Act 2014* (Vic)
- *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013* (Clth)
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* (Vic)
- *Public Health & Wellbeing Act 2008* (Vic)
- *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* (Vic)
- *Supported Residential Services (Private Proprietors) Act 2010* (Vic)*.*

- *Health Records Act 2001*

2. Emergency management considerations

Service providers must plan to ensure the safety and wellbeing of clients and staff. This section outlines emergency management information to consider when developing an emergency plan.

2.1 All-communities, all-emergencies approach

Victoria uses an 'all-communities, all-emergencies' approach to respond to a broad range of incidents[*]. This approach is underpinned by the principles of working as one in conjunction with communities, government, agencies and business to create safer and more resilient communities. Building resilience to emergencies is a shared responsibility and connects community systems and networks to plan for and support wellbeing, liveability, sustainability, viability and community connection outcomes.

Emergencies are characterised by some or all of the following:

- They are disruptive to individuals and communities
- They have a wide range of effects and impacts on the human, built and natural environments
- There are complex needs in dealing with them
- They can be of sudden onset.

Emergencies can cause direct risks to the department's clients and services. These risks include prolonged exposure to extreme weather conditions, smoke, water inundation and isolation and disruption to essential services such as transport, power and telecommunications, education and other normal activities.

While emergencies can occur at any time of the year, the Victorian summer is a period of heightened risk for hazards such as bushfires and heatwaves. Service providers must undertake specific preparedness activities prior to summer, such as conducting risk assessments and undertaking property maintenance in preparation for summer.

2.2 Obtaining emergency information

Information about current and forecast conditions is available from a variety of media sources, including radio, television and the internet. Agencies such as the Bureau of Meteorology, the Victoria State Emergency Service, fire services and Victoria Police monitor forecast hazards and provide advice and warnings.

VicEmergency <emergency.vic.gov.au> is a single all-emergencies website for Victoria. It is Victoria's primary website for incident information and warnings. VicEmergency displays a real-time map with incidents across Victoria including fires, floods, storms, power outages, hazardous material incidents and traffic incidents. The site also includes information from the Environment Protection Authority and the Chief Health Officer.

The VicEmergency app can be downloaded to mobile devices. The app allows users to create a location-based profile to access official emergency-related warnings and information. Refer to *Reference guide*.

2.3 Code Red declarations

The Code Red fire-danger rating forecasts the worst conditions for bush fires. A Code Red day may pose a significant risk to clients, particularly in Victorian Fire Risk Register – Bushfire (VFRR-B) extreme areas or areas assessed as being at high bushfire risk.

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[*] For more information, see 'All communities, all emergencies', <www.emv.vic.gov.au/latest-news/all-communities-all-emergencies>, 10/8/17.

The Emergency Management Commissioner is responsible for making a Code Red declaration. This will be made (specifying the weather district it applies to) no earlier than 1 pm the day before the Code Red day. The declaration will be communicated broadly and the department will disseminate information about the declaration to service providers.

Sometimes the forecast may indicate days in advance that there is a strong likelihood the fire-danger rating will escalate to a Code Red, and the department will be notified by the Emergency Management Commissioner.

All services need to plan their response to a Code Red declaration. Mandatory 'directed actions' apply for disability and out-of-home care services located in VFRR-B extreme risk areas on Code Red days due to the elevated level of risk (further detail is provided in Section 3).

2.4 Risk assessments

The department uses a number of risk assessments to support emergency planning and response. There is a particular emphasis placed on bushfire assessments due to the link between environmental features and the risk of bushfires.

Victorian Fire Risk Register – Bushfire

The Country Fire Authority manages the Victorian Fire Risk Register – Bushfire (VFRR-B), which is a multiagency approach to identifying and rating areas at risk from bushfire across Victoria. The VFRR-B assessment process is based on a number of factors including the:

- nature of the bushfire hazard due to factors such as vegetation and topography
- quantity of assets located in the area.

The VFRR-B identifies areas of extreme risk where large numbers of people may be exposed to dangerous bushfires.

Clients and facilities located in areas rated as VFRR-B extreme risk are exposed to an increased level of bushfire risk. The department requires specific actions, including mandated relocation and service cessation, for disability and out-of-home care services on Code Red days.

The VFRR-B is updated regularly to take into account increased urban development and changes to risk across the state. The department is provided with updated data quarterly from the Country Fire Authority. For the purposes of the policy, the department will use data correct as at 1 September each year[*] to identify service facilities in areas of VFRR-B extreme risk. The data will be distributed by 1 October each year.

High bushfire risk assessment

The VFRR-B does not identify all facilities or homes that may be exposed to an extreme risk of bushfire. Buildings in isolated areas with low population density may be excluded.

It is therefore necessary to consider other factors in addition to the VFRR-B rating. To assess whether a facility or property is exposed to a high bushfire risk, consider:

- local knowledge and the advice of fire services or others with relevant expertise
- bushfire risk assessments using a combination of factors such as vegetation type, distance from vegetation and slope
- other bushfire risk tools such as the bushfire management overlay or bushfire prone areas.

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[*] or closest business day, when 1 September falls on a weekend.

3. Emergency planning and response

All department service streams and funded agencies that deliver services to clients, whether in facilities, in community locations or in the home, must plan for emergencies that may affect the safety and wellbeing of their clients and the staff who support them.

This policy outlines general advice for emergency planning as well as specific policy advice for service areas where a higher level of planning is required.

Emergency management plans must:

- be appropriate to the location, physical environment and structure, client and staff profile and other relevant factors
- include emergency preparedness activities such as site assessments and risk mitigation strategies
- include planned emergency responses for different emergency situations, such as options for altering or ceasing services, relocation, sheltering and evacuation
- include clear triggers for activation, including processes for maintaining situational awareness and sourcing accurate and up-to-date information
- be tailored to meet the particular needs of communities and clients, such as Aboriginal people and communities, to ensure a culturally responsive approach
- outline clear authority for decision making and communication arrangements.

Service providers need to consider business continuity planning and options to improve resilience, as emergency services cannot guarantee to respond immediately during large-scale emergencies.

Emergency plans must be reviewed, exercised and updated regularly, preferably annually.

Information to support emergency planning can be found in the *Relocation, sheltering and evacuation guide*.

In addition to planning for the safety and wellbeing of clients in an emergency, the department and agencies should continually strengthen organisational resilience. Organisational resilience is the ability of an organisation's business operations to rapidly respond to and recover from dynamic and critical internal or external risks, disruptions or threats, and continue operations with limited impact on the business outputs.

3.1 Emergency planning for different service types

The types of services covered by this policy are varied and include services:

- delivered in facilities
- delivered in the home
- delivered from community venues or other locations.

Facilities

In the context of this policy, facilities are buildings where services are delivered to multiple clients. This includes hospitals and health facilities, residential aged care services, disability accommodation services, residential institutions and out-of-home-care residential units.

Managers of facilities are responsible for preparing emergency plans that consider property preparation, relocation, sheltering options and evacuation. Section 4 provides more specific information for facilities in different service streams.

More information to support emergency planning for facilities can be found in the *Relocation, sheltering and evacuation guide*.

Home and community based services

Services can be provided in the home or at community venues such as neighbourhood houses, community halls and facilities or other locations suitable for the service provided.

Agencies providing home based services should consider cessation or relocation of services as part of their emergency planning. It is important to include in this planning, methods of communicating any changes to services with clients and contingencies (where necessary) for meeting the service needs of the clients during emergencies.

Those receiving services within the home should be encouraged and supported to develop individual/household emergency plans to cater for all types of emergencies, and importantly, cater for their needs. Key considerations include:

- health needs

- transportation

- location of the home in regards to fire or flood risks

- ensuring emergency information is readily available and relevant for the client.

Community based services should develop emergency plans to include relocation or cessation of services under an 'all emergencies' approach. Planning should consider:

- methods to communicate with clients about changes to service provision

- transport to alternate locations for continuity of service provision (where necessary)

- support for clients unable to receive services during emergencies.

3.2   Directed actions for out-of-home care and disability services

Directed actions are specific actions mandated by the department, which services must undertake in preparation for, and in response to, emergencies.

Directed actions only apply to services in:

- the disability service stream
- the out-of-home care service stream

and only under the following conditions:

- where facilities or clients are located in areas designated as **VFRR-B extreme** risk or assessed as being at high bushfire risk, **and**
- their weather district is subject to a Code Red declaration.

Clients and services subject to directed actions (see Section 5) must implement their client bushfire leaving-early plan or relocation plan when a Code Red is declared in their weather district.

Directed actions involving the relocation of clients must be completed **before** the Code Red day begins, although some services and clients may be exempt and may relocate early on a Code Red day.

Exemptions from relocation for Code Red days

Exemptions from relocation may be applied for by facilities, out-of-home care and host family arrangements (including Family Options).

Assessment of the client or facility considered at risk on a declared Code Red day will be based on a clearly prescribed approach, approved by the department's respective service stream.

The department's Fire Services Unit must be consulted before an application for exemption is submitted for approval. The Divisional Deputy Secretary is accountable for issuing exemptions but may delegate this responsibility to:

- Area Directors
- Directors, Client Outcomes and Service Improvement
- Child Protection Directors.

Notification of directed actions

All services are to notify their relevant departmental area contact[*]of all relocations or cessations when they:

- were completed (according to the plan or otherwise) – **reporting this no later than 9 am on the Code Red day**
- have returned to normal arrangements – reporting this no later than five days after the Code Red day.

3.3   Responding to emergencies

Service providers are responsible for implementing actions immediately when they become aware of a risk or actual emergency, including a Code Red declaration. **Do not wait for notification or advice from the department**.

Services need to continually monitor risks and warnings through local networks, as well as mainstream media, and maintain regular contact with local emergency service agencies, particularly during high-risk periods. Services must be prepared to act where an emergency may impact on clients or staff.

In larger-scale emergencies, the presence of emergency services and Ambulance Victoria cannot be guaranteed.

There are many types of emergency responses that need to be considered:

- altering or ceasing services
- leaving early
- relocation
- shelter in place
- shelter indoors
- evacuation.

Altering or ceasing services

Services delivered in facilities, community venues or in the home may at times need to be altered or ceased due to emergencies. This may be due to direct risk or impact on the facility or the client's home or because travel in the area is considered too unsafe.

Relocation

Relocation is the planned movement of clients and an appropriate number of staff from a facility or home to alternative accommodation with a similar type of care available, in response to a forecast or warning of potential or actual emergency.

Leaving early

Leaving early is the practice of relocating well in advance of an emergency. This activity is undertaken by households in response to a range of triggers such as a weather forecast, declaration of a Code Red day or flood warning.

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[*] Refer to *the Reference guide* for the appropriate contact.

Evacuation

Evacuation is the urgent movement of clients to a safer location using best endeavours from a facility or home in response to an imminent threat or impact of an emergency. An evacuation without any prior warning is resource intensive and potentially detrimental to the health of clients, staff and emergency services personnel. The main priority when deciding to evacuate is the protection of life. An evacuation must be effectively planned and executed.

Shelter in place

To shelter in place is to remain on site within an existing facility or home during an emergency. The decision to shelter in place is based on information from a variety of sources that confirms this option is safer or more appropriate than relocation or evacuation. The movement of clients from one facility or home to another safer building within the same location is also considered shelter in place.

Shelter indoors

To shelter indoors is to remain inside a building and limit the exposure to unhealthy conditions in the air outside such as gas leaks, smoke and other air contaminants. On receiving advice to shelter indoors, people must go indoors immediately, close all doors and windows, turn off heaters, air conditioners and exhaust fans, and listen to radio or television or monitor emergency services websites for the all clear message.

3.4   Notifying the department of service changes

Any time a service provider alters, relocates or ceases service provision in response to an external hazard, the service must notify the appropriate area of the department as soon as practicable that this has occurred.

The department must also be notified as soon as services have returned to normal. If services have not returned to normal within five days of the Code Red day, the department must be notified, indicating when the service expects to return to normal.

Service providers will be given details of who to contact in the department at the time the notification of the Code Red declaration is sent out.

For a list of contacts see the *Reference guide.*

4. Roles and responsibilities

The department, both directly and through service agreements with non-government organisations, delivers health and human services to clients in facilities, in community venues and settings, and within people's homes. The department has multiple roles including funding, regulating and providing services.

4.1 Departmental roles and responsibilities

The form and extent of departmental involvement in emergency management and decision making is determined by:

- service delivery arrangements
- legislative responsibilities and obligations.

In preparing for emergencies, in particular each summer season, the department's engagement with the health and human services sectors will include:

- providing information, advice and guidance, including advice of VFRR-B extreme bushfire risk areas Code Red declarations and heat health alerts
- communicating with disability and out-of-home care facilities in VFRR-B extreme bushfire risk areas and other areas assessed as high bushfire risk, about undertaking site inspections, and mitigating or treating risks accordingly
- undertaking bushfire preparedness inspections of department-owned disability and out-of-home care properties in VFRR-B extreme bushfire risk areas and prioritising fire safety works at these sites
- delivering statewide emergency management workshops and forums

For further information on the roles of the department before, during and after an emergency, see Appendix 8.

4.2 Ambulance Victoria

In an emergency that results in either relocation or an evacuation, the Health Commander (Ambulance Victoria) will:

- work with the department and Victoria Police to ensure alternative client accommodation can be activated during relocations or evacuations
- work on site with the organisation's senior management or Hospital Incident Management Team (where established) to triage clients and prioritise transport to alternative facilities.

4.3 Victoria Police – Evacuation Manager

Victoria Police is responsible for managing the planning and operational aspects of an evacuation during an emergency.

Victoria Police will appoint an Evacuation Manager to perform a range of tasks and functions leading up to and during any evacuation.

4.4 Commonwealth Government Department of Health

The Commonwealth Government Department of Health's responsibilities for services it regulates and funds include:

- assisting services to build their capacity to respond effectively during an emergency event, including the development of emergency plans
- monitoring the capacity of services to care for clients during and after an emergency event

- supplying relevant information to services and reminding them of their responsibilities
- consulting with local and state authorities and supporting the service, if required, to access suitable emergency accommodation outside the area of threat, including possible alternative places in other facilities
- establishing and maintaining effective communication and collaboration with state and local governments
- ensuring existing free-call numbers are equipped to respond to queries from concerned parties, including residents, families and providers
- administering any Commonwealth Government measures available to assist affected people and facilities to recover from an emergency event (if required).

In support of residential aged care facilities undertaking appropriate planning measures for emergencies, the Commonwealth Government Department of Health promotes the application of early and informed decision making.

4.5 Responsibility of service providers

The level of emergency management responsibility of service providers will depend on the nature of the relationship with clients and any legislative responsibilities or obligations.

All service providers, including department service streams need to:

- consider their obligations and duty of care as outlined in Commonwealth and State legislation, regulations and guidelines when undertaking their emergency management planning, preparedness and decision making, including relevant standards, and procedures issued by the department
- implement the specific requirements for their particular type of services as outlined in this policy
- be aware of the risks that external hazards may have on their clients and services
- prepare their properties to be ready for emergencies
- actively engage with local emergency service agencies and local government, ensure their emergency plans are tested and link with broader community emergency frameworks
- plan their response to declared Code Red days, heat health alerts and other emergency threats in their local area
- prepare for the risk of critical infrastructure failure during an emergency, such as a heatwave
- understand the key issues in making informed decisions about whether to cease services, relocate early, or to shelter indoors (in cases where directed actions do not apply)
- consider how continuity of care to clients can be maintained if services are altered or ceased as a result of a Code Red day or an emergency
- ensure all client information is up to date, easily accessible and consider the client's needs in a range of possible emergency events
- ensure all relevant contact details (such as staff, client's family, emergency services agencies, and key department liaison) are up to date and available
- ensure staff are oriented in implementing the emergency management plan, including addressing individual client needs
- communicate emergency management plans to relevant stakeholders, for example, clients, family members and related service providers
- support clients living independently to develop their own personal emergency plan
- notify the appropriate area of the department of all relocations and service cessations related to emergencies, including those due to directed actions or as part of an established emergency plan, or in response to an imminent threat
- notify clients' next of kin of all relocations and service cessations related to emergencies.

Appendices 1 to 7 provide more information for service providers across the types of services that are in scope for this policy.

Appendix 1: Aged care services

Specific policy requirements

Context

This section of the policy provides additional information for aged care services to help them plan and prepare for external emergencies.

Scope

This section applies to:

- residential aged care (including Victorian public sector and private/not for profit services)
- supported residential services
- day programs and centre-based rehabilitation programs
- home and community care services and other related services
- in-home services.

Residential aged care services

The *Residential aged care services natural hazards ready resource* provides emergency management advice and guidance specifically for residential aged care facilities.

Residential aged care service providers have a responsibility under Commonwealth legislation and are accountable to the Commonwealth Government Department of Health and are required to:

- have emergency management plans in place
- exercise informed decision making
- take responsibility to protect the health and safety of residents and staff.

Chief executive officers, boards of management, owners and managers must maintain situational awareness at all times and be prepared and able to make timely decisions about appropriate emergency responses such as relocation, sheltering or evacuation. Decisions are to be made as soon as practicable, and need to consider the potential impacts to clients, staff and emergency services personnel.

Service providers must undertake a risk assessment to understand the risks associated with a range of hazards and develop an emergency plan that:

- outlines clear authority for decision making
- is appropriate for the location, physical environment and structure, client and staff profile and other relevant factors
- includes options for altering or ceasing services, relocation, sheltering and evacuation
- includes clear triggers for activation, including processes for maintaining situational awareness and sourcing accurate and up-to-date information
- includes communication arrangements
- includes options for the transport and relocation of clients.

Residential aged care service providers are encouraged to regularly review and update their plan in consultation with local emergency service organisations.

Surge capacity, accommodation and transport

Service providers need to determine their capacity to manage a surge in demand for accommodation due to an emergency.

Residential aged care facilities may be contacted and asked to determine their ability to temporarily accommodate people who have been relocated or evacuated. These requests will most likely come from the Commonwealth Government Department of Health.

Residential aged care facilities are encouraged to establish reciprocal accommodation arrangements with other providers to support any evacuations that may be required – the Commonwealth Government Department of Health can assist with this process.

Department of Health and Human Services

Upon notification the department will, as necessary:

- work with residential aged care facilities or other organisations that provide bed-based care to identify alternative patient and resident accommodation options and surge capacity
- work closely with the Commonwealth Government Department of Health to identify alternative residential aged care accommodation
- work with Ambulance Victoria and Victoria Police to ensure alternative patient and residential accommodation options can be activated in an evacuation.

Appendix 2: Disability services

Specific policy requirements

Context

All disability service providers are required to plan for a wide range of emergencies that may impact on clients. This section of the policy provides additional information to help disability service providers plan and prepare for bushfires.

It also includes directed actions for facilities and host families located in VFRR-B extreme risk areas or assessed as being at high bushfire risk, on Code Red days.

> Mandatory directed actions on a Code Red day apply to these services. Refer to Section 3 for more information on responsibilities on a declared Code Red day.

Scope

This section applies to the following services (whether managed by the department or a community service provider):

- disability supported accommodation
- facility-based respite
- residential institutions
- disability day services
- all host family arrangements (including Family Options with volunteer carers).

Facilities

Service type	Property preparedness and planning
- Disability supported accommodation - Disability day services - Facility-based respite - Residential institutions	Facilities located in VFRR-B extreme risk areas or assessed as being at high bushfire risk[*] are required to: • undergo an on-site fire risk assessment (as part of the site's hazard assessment). • have developed a bushfire survival plan and ensure that staff are oriented to implement the plan • undertake site preparation and building maintenance works as identified through the on-site assessment. If an on-site assessment has not been finalised, the facility will be required to relocate in response to the declaration of a Code Red day.

Service type	Relocation
- Disability supported accommodation - Residential services and	**Directed action: it is mandatory for facilities located in VFRR-B extreme areas, or assessed as being at high bushfire risk, to relocate when a Code Red day is declared for their weather district.** All department and community services managed disability supported accommodation and residential services located in VFRR-B extreme risk

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[*] Service providers are advised to consult local emergency service organisations to identify hazards in their local vicinity.

Service type	Relocation
residential institutions	areas or assessed as being at high bushfire risk, are required to develop a relocation plan as part of their bushfire survival plan.
	If an exemption to relocate in response to a declared Code Red day is provided as an outcome of a current assessment, the facility is required to review their current fire preparedness and incorporate all requirements set out in the facility's assessment report.

Service type	Cessation of services
• Disability day services • All department and community service-managed facilities based respite	**Directed action: it is mandatory for services located in a VFRR-B extreme area, or assessed as being at high bushfire risk, to cease services on days that are declared Code Red for their weather district.** All disability day services and facility-based respite services located in VFRR-B extreme risk areas, or assessed as being at high bushfire risk, are required to develop a response plan for Code Red days that includes the cessation of services.

All host family arrangements (including Family Options)

Service type	Information and awareness
All host family arrangements (including Family Options) located in a VFRR-B extreme risk areas, or are assessed as being at high bushfire risk	The department will provide host families with information to assist them to prepare for the summer season and develop a bushfire leave early plan. Where directed to evacuate by Victoria Police or another designated control agency because of an emergency in the area, carers must immediately comply with the notice, if able to safely do so, and notify the department as soon as practicable following evacuation. Any child or adult with a disability living with a host family must be relocated in accordance with the direction provided.

Service type	Relocation
All host family arrangements (including Family Options) located in a VFRR-B extreme risk areas, or are assessed as being at high bushfire risk	**Directed action: it is mandatory to leave the area early when a Code Red day is declared for their weather district.** Host families are required to develop a client bushfire leaving-early plan consistent with the approach for all people in out-of-home care placements further discussed in Section 5.5 of this policy.

Notification of directed actions to the department

All disability services and host families that are subject to directed actions must notify the department of all relocations or cessations:

- once completed (whether in accordance with the plan or otherwise) – **reporting this no later than 9am on the Code Red day**
- once returned to normal arrangements – **reporting this no later than five days after the Code Red day.**

Emergency preparedness policy for clients and services

Appendix 3: Hospitals and health services

Specific policy requirements

Context

This section of the policy provides additional information for hospitals and health services to help them plan and prepare for external emergencies.

Scope

This section applies to:

- hospitals and health service facility-based acute care
- facility-based and in-home subacute services
- community health programs
- community-based and residential drug and alcohol services.

Facilities

Chief executive officers, boards of management and owners of hospitals and healthcare services, must be aware of their obligations and responsibilities in connection with emergency management. These obligations and responsibilities are contained in a number of pieces of legislation, standards and guidelines that relate to planning and preparedness activities, as well as decision making and actions that may need to be taken on behalf of the organisation during an emergency.

These documents include but are not limited to:

- *Health Services Act 1988*
- *Aged Care Act 1997, Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*
- *Mental Health Act 2014*
- the department's *Policy and funding guidelines*
- business continuity arrangements
- Australian Standard AS 4083-2010 Planning for emergencies – Health care facilities.

Hospitals and health services are responsible for planning and preparing for a broad range of emergencies. The level of emergency management responsibility will depend on the nature of the relationship with clients and any legislative responsibilities or obligations. Responsibility for emergency planning and response resides with the chief executive officer or person with delegated authority.

Chief executive officers, boards of management, owners and managers must maintain situational awareness at all times and be prepared and able to make timely decisions about appropriate emergency responses such as relocation, sheltering or evacuation. Decisions must be made as soon as practicable and need to consider the potential impacts to clients, staff and emergency services personnel.

Service providers must undertake a risk assessment to understand the risks associated with a range of hazards and develop an emergency plan that:

- outlines clear authority for decision making
- is appropriate for the location, physical environment and structure, client and staff profile and other relevant factors
- includes options for altering or ceasing services, relocation, sheltering and evacuation
- includes clear triggers for activation, including processes for maintaining situational awareness and sourcing accurate and up-to-date information
- includes communication arrangements

- includes options for the transport and relocation of clients.

Hospitals and health service providers should regularly review and update their plan in consultation with local emergency service organisations such as the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and the Victorian State Emergency Service.

Surge capacity, accommodation and transport

Hospitals and health service providers need to consider their capacity to provide care for sick and injured people during an emergency. In the event of a large-scale or fast-moving emergency, hospital and health services can anticipate a surge in presentations of unwell or injured people or those seeking refuge.

Hospitals and health service providers may be contacted and asked to determine their ability to temporarily accommodate relocated or evacuated patients from other facilities or the community. These requests will most likely come from the department, through the State Health Coordinator or their delegate.

Service providers should also determine their capacity to manage a surge in demand, related to injuries and people seeking shelter from the emergency.

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

Where ambulance transport is not required, use alternative transport to relocate patients and residents.

Appendix 4: Mental health services

Specific policy requirements

Context

This section of the policy provides additional information for mental health services to help them plan and prepare for external emergencies.

Scope

This section applies to:

- residential services
- mental health community support services (formerly psychiatric disability rehabilitation and support services).

Facilities

Mental health service providers are responsible for planning and preparing for a broad range of emergencies. The level of emergency management responsibility will depend on the nature of the relationship with clients and any legislative responsibilities or obligations. Responsibility for emergency planning and response resides with the chief executive officer or person with delegated authority.

Chief executive officers, boards of management, owners and managers must maintain situational awareness at all times and be prepared and able to make timely decisions about appropriate emergency responses such as relocation, sheltering or evacuation. Decisions must be made as soon as practicable and need to consider the potential impacts to clients, staff and emergency services personnel.

Service providers should undertake a risk assessment to understand the risks associated with a range of hazards and develop an emergency plan that:

- outlines clear authority for decision making
- is appropriate for the location, physical environment and structure, client and staff profile and other relevant factors
- includes options for altering or ceasing services, relocation, sheltering and evacuation
- includes clear triggers for activation, including processes for maintaining situational awareness and sourcing accurate and up-to-date information
- includes communication arrangements
- includes options for the transport of clients.

Mental health services must regularly review and update their plan in consultation with local emergency service organisations such as the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and the Victorian State Emergency Service.

Community support

Some services will have contact with isolated individuals, including some who may be receiving treatment under the *Mental Health Act 2014*. These clients require particular consideration in preparation of personal emergency plans. While all mental health clients receiving treatment under the Mental Health Act will be linked in with clinical mental health services, collaboration between mental health community support services and clinical services will support all their clients to prepare for emergencies.

These services should ensure that advice and guidance to develop an individual emergency plan is included within client treatment and support plans. Consultations with specialists, such as the treating psychiatrist, general practitioner, and other mental health professionals must be undertaken in preparing plans for this client group.

Appendix 5: Out-of-home care services

Specific policy requirements

Context

All out-of-home care service providers are required to plan for a wide range of emergencies that may affect clients. This section of the policy provides additional information to help out-of-home care service providers plan and prepare for bushfires.

It also includes directed actions for out-of-home care service providers and carers located in VFRR-B extreme risk areas or assessed as being at high bushfire risk, on Code Red days.

Mandatory directed actions on a Code Red day apply to these services. Refer to Section 3 for more information on responsibilities on a declared Code Red day.

Scope

The leaving-early provisions of this policy apply to children and young people placed in out-of-home care, including residential care, lead tenant, foster care, and kinship care and who are subject to the following child protection orders or child care arrangements:

- voluntary placements (where child protection is involved)
- refugee minors where the department has agreed to act on behalf of the Commonwealth Minister for Immigration and Border Protection who has been assigned guardianship through the *Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act 1946*
- children placed for adoption for whom the Secretary is guardian
- interstate protection orders by another state or territory prior to registration
- protection orders
- children and young people on protection orders authorised to Aboriginal agencies under section 18 of the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005
- therapeutic treatment (placement) order, and
- any other out-of-home care arrangement where the Secretary is the guardian of a child or young person.

Child protection orders including:
- family reunification order
- care by Secretary order
- long-term care order.

Facilities

Service type	Property preparedness
Residential care provider/ lead tenant	Site/building assessments and necessary preparedness works need to be undertaken for facilities assessed as being at high bushfire risk.

Service type	Relocation
Residential care provider/	**Directed action: facilities located in a VFRR-B extreme area, or assessed as being at high bushfire risk, must enact their relocation**

Service type	Relocation
lead tenant	**plan when a Code Red day is declared for their weather district.** Bushfire survival plans must include a relocation plan and be completed and **updated annually for residential facilities assessed as being at high bushfire risk**.

Home-based care

Service type	Information and awareness
All home-based care services	Service providers must provide clients, carers and staff with information to assist with individual/service planning and are strongly encouraged to prepare for summer hazards, which may include bushfires, smoke and heatwaves. Information will be provided to potentially affected local areas at the earliest opportunity once a possible emergency event is anticipated. Key messages to include: • Service providers must provide foster carers and kinship carers with reminder information about the Country Fire Authority fire planning and preparedness advice which can be found on the CFA website <www.cfa.vic.gov.au>. • Where directed to evacuate by Victoria Police or another designated control agency because of an emergency in the area, carers are to immediately comply with the notice if able to safely do so and are required to notify the department as soon as practicable following evacuation. Any child or young person covered by the policy must be safely relocated in accordance with any direction. Carers must always relocate any child or young person in their care to a safe location when confronted with a perceived emergency or safety threat.
All home-based care in VFRR-B extreme risk areas and other properties assessed as being high risk	Additional messages must emphasise: • The importance of adequate preparation by carers and staff residing in VFRR-B extreme risk areas and other properties assessed as being at high bushfire risk by the out-of-home care service stream, to prepare for the range of adverse circumstances that may arise during the summer season. • The need for carers residing in VFRR-B extreme risk areas and other properties assessed as being at high bushfire risk by the out-of-home care service stream to consider modifying their routine behaviour on fire-danger rating days declared severe or higher, and use caution to maximise the safety of children and young people in their care, their personal safety and that of family members.

Service type	Relocation
All out-of-home-care in VFRR-B extreme risk areas and other properties assessed as being high risk.	**Directed action: all home-based services are to enact the client bushfire leaving-early plan no later than the evening before the declared Code Red day.** An endorsed client bushfire leaving-early plan (specific to out-of-home care) must be completed and include the following requirements: • clients must leave and go to a safer area no later than the evening before a declared Code Red day (unless an exemption has been approved) • details about periods when clients will be away from their recorded residential address (such as during the school holiday period) • alternative contact details for clients when they are away from their recorded residential address must be recorded and kept up to date • safe destination areas are not in, or in close proximity to, VFRR-B extreme risk areas, or • suitable leaving-early arrangements for declared Code Red days. In addition, Aboriginal children in placement in properties assessed as being at high bushfire risk must have client bushfire leaving-early plans that are culturally appropriate and reviewed by an Aboriginal Child Specialist Advice and Support Service.

Notification of directed actions to the department

All out-of-home care services and carers that are subject to directed actions must notify the department of all relocations or cessations:

- once the directed action is completed (whether in accordance with the plan or otherwise). **The notification is due no later than 9 am on the morning of the Code Red day**

- once the service has returned to normal arrangements – **notification is due no later than five days after the Code Red day.**

Emergency preparedness policy for clients and services

Appendix 6: Public and community housing

Specific policy requirements

Context

This section of the policy provides a summary of key actions required from public and community housing service providers to plan and prepare for external hazards.

Scope

Public and community housing in Victoria includes the following:

- public housing, which is owned and managed directly by the Director of Housing
- community housing owned by the Director of Housing or registered housing agencies and managed by a registered housing agency, including:
  - long-term community housing
  - transitional housing
  - temporary crisis accommodation
  - joint venture arrangement with accommodation managed community service organisations and local government authorities.

Responsibilities

Responsible area	Property preparedness
Director of Housing owned or leased: • public housing • community housing • transitional housing • crisis accommodation	The department ensures all properties in the VFRR-B extreme risk areas are identified and that fire safety preparedness works are prioritised and completed. Newly identified properties will have a fire preparedness inspection.
Registered housing agency owned or leased: • community housing • joint venture arrangements • crisis accommodation	The department will ensure agencies owning or leasing such properties in the VFRR-B extreme risk areas are provided with information on where to access the Country Fire Authority fire planning information and are encouraged to undertake emergency planning.
Caravan park owners	Caravan park owners are required to ensure that there is adequate space around moveable dwellings and adjacent structures for fire fighter access and fire separation in accordance with the Country Fire Authority Caravan Park Fire Guidelines.

Service type	Information and awareness
Public housing Community housing (including transitional housing) Registered housing agency	All tenants and facility managers have access to general community information such as relevant Country Fire Authority and Australian Red Cross publications so they can make their own decision about if and when to relocate.
Caravan park owners	Caravan park owners are required to display a copy of any public emergency warning in a prominent position in: • the caravan park office

Service type	Information and awareness
	• each building in the caravan park that contains communal facilities • any other place as determined by the local council.

Service type	Planning
Community housing agencies	Community housing agencies must: • have procedures in place to ensure they receive or are made aware of Country Fire Authority and Victorian State Emergency Service alerts and any similar alert • be prepared to activate emergency plans at the earliest reasonable opportunity • plan for Code Red declarations • be actively aware of localised Country Fire Authority community information guides in VFRR-B extreme bushfire risk areas. Community housing agencies may consider involving management, staff and tenants/residents when developing emergency plans to ensure the wishes and needs of interested stakeholders are met.
All crisis accommodation	All crisis accommodation must have comprehensive emergency management plans that: • take into account any vulnerabilities or special needs of staff and clients • consider any risks associated with relocating clients • address the appropriateness of alternative accommodation within community settings.
Crisis accommodation located in VFRR-B extreme bushfire risk areas	In addition to the above, community housing agencies that operate crisis accommodation must also develop a fire emergency management (and leaving-early) plan as part of their comprehensive emergency management plan which includes: • collaborative planning with clients as part of their individual service planning and risk management planning • whether or not services are to operate on declared Code Red days and, if so, how they will operate • communication plans regarding closure for residents/clients, staff, Country Fire Authority, local authorities and other key stakeholders.
Caravan park owners	Caravan park owners are required to prepare an emergency management plan in consultation with relevant emergency services agencies which must: • specify the risks identified in the caravan park's risk assessment • describe the specific measures to be taken to reduce emergency risks • include communication and response measures as well as evacuation procedures.

Emergency preparedness policy for clients and services

Appendix 7: Sport and recreation

Specific policy requirements

Context

This section provides a summary of key actions required by state-owned sports and recreation facilities and state-owned residential camps to help them plan and prepare for external hazards.

State-owned sport and recreation facilities

Scope

The guidance applies to:

- Melbourne Sport and Aquatic Centre
- State Netball and Hockey Centre and
- Lakeside Stadium
- Kardinia Park Stadium
- Melbourne Cricket Ground
- Melbourne and Olympic Parks.

Responsibilities

Chief executive officers, boards of management and owners of the facilities must be aware of their obligations and industry standards in connection with emergency management.

Facility managers are responsible for planning and preparing their organisations and facilities for a broad range of emergencies. Ultimately, assessing risk and making decisions on how to act in specific circumstances on specific days are matters for the management of each organisation.

Facility managers should have an emergency management plan that can contribute to decision making about evacuation. The emergency management plan should be reviewed and updated regularly with the involvement of local emergency service organisations.

A risk assessment needs to be undertaken for each facility, to understand the risks associated with a range of hazards. The plan should reflect risks relevant to the service's location, physical environment and structure, staff profile and other internal factors.

Facility managers must be prepared to act in the event that an emergency may impact on facility users and staff. Decisions need to be made as soon as practicable.

Chief executive officers, management, and boards of management must maintain situational awareness at all times during an emergency. They must be able to undertake situational assessment in a timely manner for decisions about sheltering indoors or evacuation.

State-owned residential camps

Scope

The five state-owned residential camps[*] situated at:

- Howmans Gap (Falls Creek)
- Anglesea

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[*] These camps are operated by the YMCA under contract.

- Mount Evelyn
- Mount Eliza
- Rowsley.

Responsibilities

The operators of state-owned camps must be aware of their obligations and responsibilities in connection with emergency management. These obligations and responsibilities are contained in contracts regarding the operation of the camps and industry standards and guidelines. The camp operator must maintain the camp's accreditation with the Australian Camping Association.

Operators are responsible for planning and preparing their facilities for a broad range of emergencies. Ultimately, assessing risk and making decisions on how to act in specific circumstances on specific days are matters for the management of each organisation.

Operators must have an emergency management plan that can contribute to decision making about relocation, sheltering indoors or evacuation. The emergency management plan should be reviewed and updated regularly with the involvement of local emergency service organisations.

Operators must undertake a risk assessment to understand the risks associated with a range of hazards. The plan should reflect risks relevant to the service's location, physical environment and structure, resident and staff profile and other internal factors.

The emergency management plan must contain clear indicators and authority for decision making, communication and transport arrangements, and resident needs. The ultimate responsibility resides with the camp manager or person with delegated authority.

Services should be prepared to act in the event that an emergency may impact on services, clients and staff. Decisions should be made as soon as practicable.

Chief executive officers, management, boards of management and owners must maintain situational awareness at all times during an emergency. They must be able to undertake situational assessment in a timely manner for decisions about relocation, sheltering indoors or evacuation.

Appendix 8: Department of Health and Human Services roles

State Health and Human Services Commander

The State Health and Human Services Commander is responsible for leading the health and human services command function including agency command, relief and recovery coordination and health coordination at a state level. The department's Secretary has delegated the role of State Health and Human Services Commander to the Director Emergency Management within DHHS. The role provides leadership to state operations and briefs senior executives and Ministers during emergencies. The State Health and Human Services Commander ensures the effective coordination of relevant divisions and service streams in the department to minimise the potential health and wellbeing impacts on Victorians during emergencies.

A Regional Human Services Commander performs similar responsibilities at a regional level.

State Health Coordinator

The State Health Coordinator is responsible for coordinating the department's emergency activities involving health (hospitals, primary health and other acute services), mental health and aged care facilities at the state level.

During an emergency, the State Health Coordinator will:

- issue advisories, notifications or alerts and facilitate two way communications between health service providers and the department
- liaise with emergency services including the control agency and support agencies
- receive notifications from rural Regional Health Coordinators and metropolitan health services
- work with rural Regional Health Coordinators and metropolitan health services, hospitals, residential aged care facilities or other organisations involved in the provision of bed-based care to identify alternative patient and resident accommodation options and surge capacity
- work closely with the Commonwealth Government Department of Health to identify alternative residential aged care accommodation
- work with Ambulance Victoria and Victoria Police to ensure alternative patient and residential accommodation options can be activated in the event of an evacuation
- monitor statewide health-system capacity and capability and coordinate resources and surge capacity.

Regional Health Coordinator

Regional Health Coordinators in Divisions will:

- disseminate advisories, notifications or alerts
- receive notifications directly from regional and rural services
- in consultation with the State Health Coordinator, engage with regional and rural services when an emergency is impacting that region
- liaise with emergency service organisations including the control agency and support agencies at the regional level

- work with regional and rural services to identify alternative patient and resident accommodation options and surge capacity in that region
- work with Ambulance Victoria and Victoria Police at the regional level to ensure alternative patient and residential accommodation options can be activated in an evacuation
- liaise with the State Health Coordinator in connection with statewide capacity and capability, health-system needs identification, resource coordination and provision of regular updates and briefings.

Chief Health Officer

The Victorian Government's Chief Health Officer undertakes a variety of statutory functions under state health legislation and food legislation, and is responsible for developing and implementing strategies to promote and protect public health. The Chief Health Officer regularly informs Victorians about issues with the potential to impact their health and safety. Information is provided via health alerts and advisories <www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/news-and-events/healthalerts> and a range of other documents accessible on the website of the Chief Health Officer.

In certain health-led emergencies, where the Department of Health and Human Services is the designated control agency, the Chief Health Officer acts as the Controller on behalf of the department.

The Chief Health Officer also acts as the government's media spokesperson on matters relating to the control of disease and promotion of health as required, for example public health emergencies, retail food contamination, food / drinking water contamination and human disease..

The Fire Services Unit

The Fire Services Unit can assist with:

- professional and technical advice in relation to fire safety service equipment
- obtaining an appropriate level of fire safety in facilities for which the Secretary and the Director of Housing have a responsibility
- managing the department's *Fire risk management guidelines* (Capital Development Guidelines series no.7) <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/about-the-department/documents-and-resources/policies,-guidelines-and-legislation/fire-risk-management-procedure-and-guidelines>
- supporting program staff to manage emergency and fire-risk projects
- managing and preparing bush fire preparedness programs for nominated VFRR-B areas for properties relating to the department's Capital Development Guidelines series:

7.3	Secure facilities
7.4	Supported community-based houses
7.5	Congregate-care buildings
7.7	Community-based Houses
7.8	Single dwelling (lead tenant)
7.10	Accommodation buildings
7.11	Short-term emergency (contingency) accommodation

- managing the fire services upgrade and maintenance program
- access to bushfire safety information for public housing tenants living in bushfire areas.