



Emergency relief handbook:

A planning guide 2013

Photo credits

Cover: Australian Red Cross/Rodney Dekker

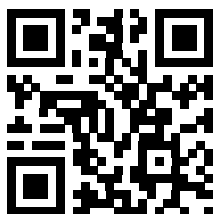
Case study 5: Australian Red Cross/Rodney Dekker

Case study 6: Newsphotos

Case study 7: Australian Red Cross/Rodney Dekker

If you would like to receive this publication in another format, please email emb@dhs.vic.gov.au

This document is also available on the internet at: www.dhs.vic.gov.au/reliefhandbook



© Copyright State of Victoria 2013.

This publication is copyright. No part may be reproduced by any process except in accordance with the provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968*.

978-0-7311-6643-5 (print)

978-0-7311-6644-2 (web)

Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 50 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne.

Print managed by Finsbury Green

November 2013

(2251112)

The Department of Human Services acknowledges the contribution of Red Cross in coordinating the review and update of the *Emergency relief handbook: a planning guide 2013*.

The Department of Human Services and Red Cross would like to thank the State Emergency Relief Planning Subcommittee, the local government reference group and the following organisations for their input and feedback.

Ambulance Victoria

Australian Business Register

Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health

Australian Psychological Society

Bendigo Community Health Services

City of Ballarat

City of Greater Bendigo

City of Melbourne

City of Whittlesea

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Department of Environment and Primary Industries

Department of Health

Department of Human Services

Department of Transport

Department of Treasury and Finance

East Gippsland Shire Council

Emergency Management Network Solutions

Environmental Health Professionals Australia

Fire Services Commissioner Victoria

Foodbank Victoria

Glenelg Shire Council

Mansfield Shire Council

Maribyrnong City Council

Metropolitan Fire Brigade

Mind Australia

Mitchell Shire Council

Moira Shire Council

Municipal Association of Victoria

Nillumbik Shire Council

Red Cross

Save the Children Australia

The Salvation Army

Victoria Police

Victoria State Emergency Service

Victorian Council of Churches

Yarra Ranges Shire Council

Yarriambiack Shire Council

The Department of Human Services and Red Cross understand that the development of the handbook is an evolving process that strives to reflect, and be informed by, emergency relief practice.

To continue this process it is important to receive feedback to measure and evaluate how useful this resource is. We encourage you to provide your feedback by calling Red Cross at 1800 232 969.

Foreword

Message from Victorian Government and Australian Red Cross

The *Emergency relief handbook: A planning guide* is a practical resource to assist Victoria's relief sector to incorporate best practice into local, regional and state emergency relief planning.

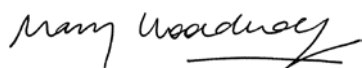
Now in its third edition, this guide contains a wealth of practical information gathered from those working face-to-face with Victorians in need during and after a disaster. Here you will find wisdom gleaned from the many bushfires, floods and other major events that have challenged our relief services in recent years.

We know that recovery from an emergency can take many years – affecting individuals and communities in very different ways. That process starts with effective relief: the care and humanity shown in those first crucial hours as an emergency unfolds. For this reason, relief services must be offered in a prompt, effective and professional manner – guided by resources such as this handbook.

The Victorian Government, through the Department of Human Services, and Australian Red Cross have worked together to broaden the understanding of emergency relief for this new edition.

The handbook will assist local government, and those agencies and organisations involved in emergency relief, to provide the best possible service to Victorian communities. It will also continue to be an invaluable resource for those organisations that need to understand the scope of the Victorian Government's emergency relief and recovery arrangements.

We would like to thank everyone who has been involved in the production of this very worthwhile resource, and we encourage you to use it to help your community in the event of an emergency.



Hon Mary Wooldridge MP
Minister for Community Services
Victorian Government



Toni Aslett
Executive Director, Victoria
Australian Red Cross



Table of contents

Foreword	4	4.4 Information for people affected by an emergency	28
Table of contents	5	4.5 Information for general public	29
Common acronyms	7	Psychosocial support	32
General information	8	5.1 Overview	32
1.1 Purpose and benefits	8	5.2 Local, regional and state planning	32
1.2 Relationship to other documents	8	5.3 Planning for specific needs	35
1.3 Emergency relief	8	5.4 Working in a relief centre	35
1.4 Emergency relief coordination	10	5.5 Further information	37
Pre-operational relief planning	12	Health	38
2.1 Overview	12	6.1 Overview	38
2.2 Developing and reviewing emergency relief plans	12	6.2 Vulnerable population groups	38
2.3 Overarching planning considerations	13	6.3 Local government planning considerations	38
2.4 Pre-planning for effective collaboration	15	6.4 State Health Emergency Response Plan	41
2.5 Financial planning and reimbursement	16	6.5 Healthcare	41
Relief operational considerations	20	Reconnecting families and friends	44
3.1 Overview	20	7.1 Overview	44
3.2 Emergency management team	20	7.2 Register.Find.Reunite.	44
3.3 Operational management systems	20	7.3 Local government planning considerations	46
3.4 Initial impact and needs assessments	21	7.4 Register.Find.Reunite. activation	47
3.5 Emergency relief locations	22	7.5 Other means of reconnecting families and friends	51
3.6 Resupply	22	Shelter	52
3.7 Relief monitoring	23	8.1 Overview	52
3.8 Reporting	24	8.2 Own arrangements	52
3.9 Requesting supplementary resources	24	8.3 Assisted shelter options	53
Community information	26	8.4 Longer-term accommodation	56
4.1 Overview	26	Food and water	57
4.2 Information provided by response and relief agencies	26	9.1 Overview	57
4.3 Strategic communication considerations	27	9.2 Local government planning considerations	57
		9.3 Local provision of food and water	58
		9.4 Escalating requests for supplementary resources	59

Non-food items (material aid)	61	Social media (such as Facebook, Twitter)	74
10.1 Overview	61	Community meetings and forums	75
10.2 Local planning considerations	61	Word-of-mouth	75
10.3 Local provision of other material needs	61	Guidance note 2: Psychosocial support	76
10.4 Escalating requests for supplementary resources	62	Support agencies working in the field	76
10.5 Planning the transition to recovery	62	Outreach	78
Emergency financial assistance	64	Guidance note 3: Emergency shelter (emergency relief centres)	81
11.1 Overview	64	Overview	81
11.2 Victorian Government	64	Preparedness and planning	81
11.3 Commonwealth Government	65	Guidance note 4: Emergency relief centre layout planning considerations	88
Animal welfare	66	Checklist 1: Overarching emergency relief checklist for local government	89
12.1 Overview	66	Checklist 2: Emergency relief centre site assessment	91
12.2 Planning considerations	66	Checklist 3: Emergency relief centre kit contents	97
12.3 Provision	68	Checklist 4: Setting up an emergency relief centre	101
12.4 Further information	68	Checklist 5: Operational checklist for the emergency relief centre manager	103
Harnessing goodwill	69	Checklist 6: Deactivating an emergency relief centre checklist	107
13.1 Overview	69		
13.2 Material aid	69		
13.3 Donated food	69		
13.4 Spontaneous volunteers	70		
Transition from response to recovery	71		
14.1 Overview	71		
14.2 Key planning considerations	71		
14.3 Local, regional and state planning considerations	71		
14.4 Conducting debriefs	72		
Guidance note 1: Planning for different communication channels	73		
Overview	73		
Radio	73		
Television	73		
Emergency alerts	73		
Emergency information lines	74		
Local government and emergency relief agency websites	74		

Common acronyms

CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
EHO	Environmental Health Officer
EMLO	Emergency Management Liaison Officer
EMMV	Emergency Management Manual Victoria
EMT	Emergency Management Team
FPCC	Field Primary Care Clinic
HHS REOC	Health and Human Services Regional Emergency Operations Centre
HHS SEMC	Health and Human Services State Emergency Management Centre
ICC	Incident Control Centre
IMT	Incident Management Team
MECC	Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre
MEMPC	Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee
MEMPlan	Municipal Emergency Management Plan
MERC	Municipal Emergency Response Coordinator
MERO	Municipal Emergency Resource Officer
MRM	Municipal Recovery Manager
NDFA	Natural Disaster Financial Assistance
NDRRA	Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements
PHAP	Personal Hardship Assistance Program
RERC	Regional Emergency Response Coordinator
RSPCA	Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
RTE	Real-time evaluation
SEMT	State Emergency Management Team
SERO	State Emergency Response Officer
SHERP	State Health Emergency Response Plan
SIC	State Inquiry Centre
VEAWP	Victorian Emergency Animal Welfare Plan
VERIL	Victorian Emergency Recovery Information Line

General information

1.1 Purpose and benefits

The *Emergency relief handbook: a planning guide 2013* (the handbook) is designed to assist with the preparation of local, regional and state emergency relief plans and operational procedures in Victoria.

The handbook is primarily for government and emergency relief agencies in Victoria. However, it may also be useful for the community and private sector. It is not intended as a guide to planning for single incidents, however some of the information may be useful for this purpose.

The handbook is a practical resource that:

- brings together the most up-to-date and comprehensive information available for relief planning
- provides guidance for the development of local, regional and state emergency relief plans
- provides a series of tools, templates and checklists for emergency relief planning.

1.2 Relationship to other documents

The information in the handbook should be read in conjunction with:

- Municipal Emergency Management Plans (MEMPlans)
- regional emergency management plans including regional relief and recovery plans
- State Emergency Response Plan (*Emergency Management Manual Victoria – Part 3*)
- State Emergency Relief and Recovery Plan (*Emergency Management Manual Victoria – Part 4*)
- The *Emergency Management Act 1986*.

1.3 Emergency relief

Emergency relief is a component of response and is the provision of essential and urgent assistance to individuals, families and communities during and in the immediate aftermath of an emergency. Internationally, the provision of emergency relief is guided by the *Sphere handbook: humanitarian charter and minimum standards in humanitarian response* (www.sphereproject.org). The guiding principles for people affected by an emergency are the:

- right to life with dignity
- right to receive humanitarian assistance
- right to protection and security.

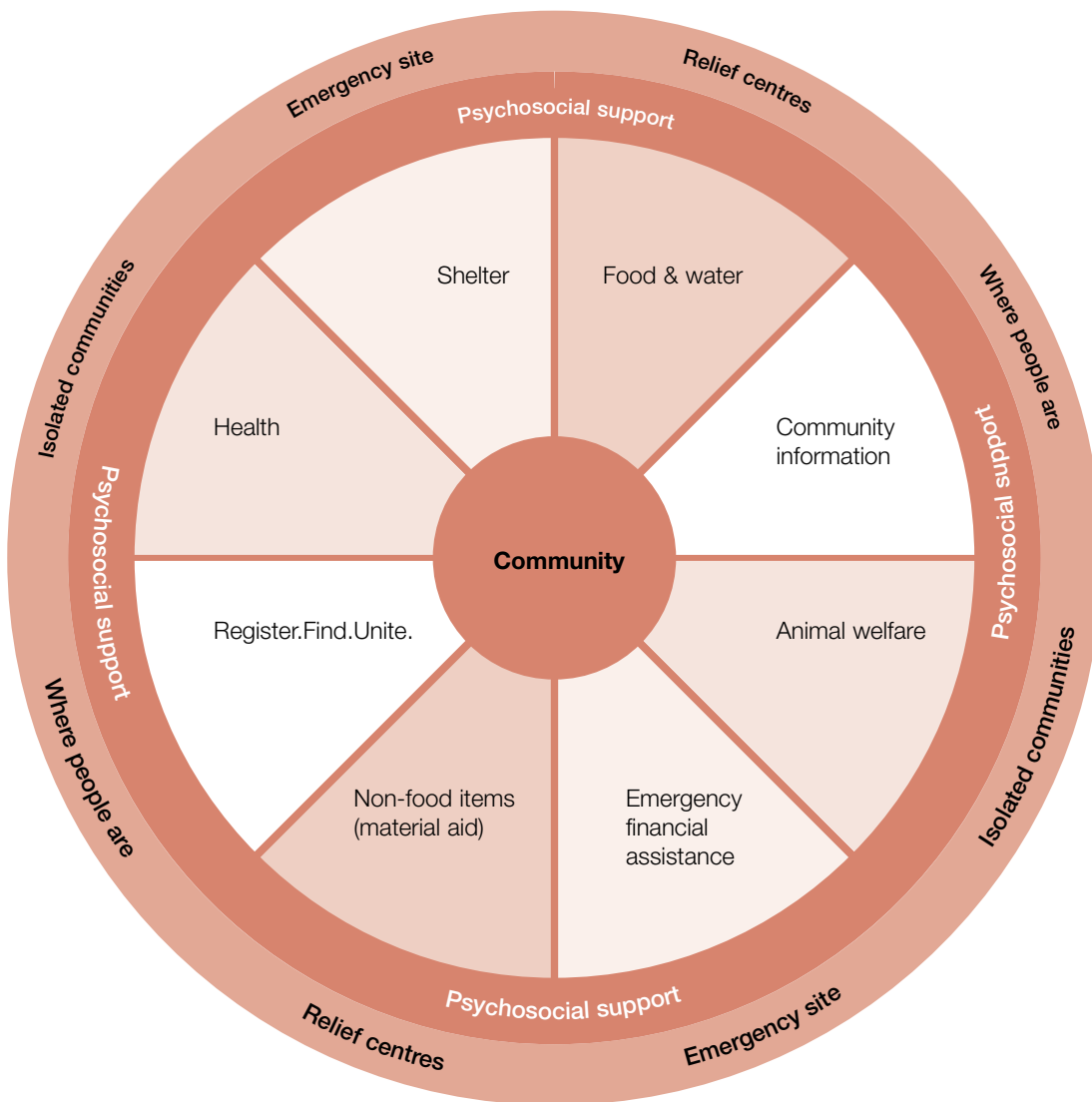
Emergency relief can be provided in a variety of locations including at or near the site of an emergency, to communities that become isolated or cut off by an emergency or in an established relief setting, such as an emergency relief centre.

Emergency relief consists of a number of activities that should be planned for (Figure 1). Emergency relief includes:

- community information
- psychosocial support
- health
- reconnecting families and friends (Register. Find.Unite.)
- shelter
- food and water
- non-food items (material aid)
- emergency financial assistance
- animal welfare
- harnessing goodwill.

Relief activities have lead agencies that are responsible for carrying out pre-operational planning with government overseeing the coordination of all activities.

Figure 1: Relief activities



Further information on planning for these relief activities can be found in sections 5 to 14.

1.4 Emergency relief coordination

Emergency relief is a collaborative effort that requires coordination between community, government, not-for-profit and private sectors. Coordination is the way in which communities and organisations (public or private) or parts of the same organisations work or act together in order to achieve a common objective.¹ Effective relief coordination is vital to ensure that emergency-affected communities are supported and receive timely and appropriate information and relief assistance.

Government coordination operates across all emergency relief activities. At a local level, municipalities are responsible for coordinating emergency relief. The Department of Human Services, supported by Red Cross, is responsible for relief coordination at a regional and state level.

Lead agencies coordinate specific relief activities such as food and water, emergency shelter. Local lead agencies are nominated in the MEMPlan. At a regional and state level, lead agencies are outlined in the *Emergency management manual of Victoria* (EMMV). The EMMV specifies that lead agencies must develop and maintain internal operational plans detailing their capacity and strategies for undertaking their roles and responsibilities.²

Table 1 lists the departments, agencies and organisations that are responsible for coordinating and providing emergency relief at a local, regional and state level. For further information on agency roles during an emergency, particularly their role in the coordination and provision of emergency relief, refer to EMMV – Part 7.

1 International Organization for Standardisation 2011, ISO 22320:2011 The International Standard on Societal Security – Emergency management – requirements for incident response.

2 Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner 2013, 'State and regional emergency management planning', Part V, *Emergency Management Manual Victoria*, p. 2.

Table 1: Emergency relief activities and lead agencies

	Community information	Public health	First aid	Primary care	Psychosocial support	Register.Find.Reunite	Emergency shelter	Food and water	Drinking water (households)	Food supply (private sector)	Non-food items (material aid)	Emergency financial assistance	Animal welfare
Ambulance Victoria			● ▲	▲									
Commonwealth Government	■											■	
Control Agency	■ ● ▲												
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development	■				■								
Department of Health	■	■ ●		●									
Department of Human Services	■				■ ●		●					■ ● ▲	
Department of Environment and Primary Industries									●	●			■ ●
Local water authority									■				
Local government	■	▲			▲		■ ▲	▲	▲		▲		▲
Red Cross			■		■	■		■ ●					
Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)													■
St John Ambulance			■								■ ●		
The Salvation Army													
Victoria Police	■					● ▲							
Victorian Council of Churches					■								

Legend

▲ Local government level coordination ● Regional / state level coordination ■ Provider

Pre-operational relief planning

2.1 Overview

The handbook seeks to encourage emergency relief practitioners to undertake planning that:

- takes into account the needs, interests, resources, mandates and capacities of communities, government, not-for-profit and private sectors
- involves self-assessment of resource capacity
- adapts the general planning guidance for specific locations
- involves partnering with leading organisations
- includes the community in the planning process.³

Many emergency relief organisations have very specific relief planning responsibilities, however it is important that all organisations understand their role in the broader emergency relief context. Planning should be a collaborative effort between all organisations that reinforces an all-hazards and multiagency approach.

2.2 Developing and reviewing emergency relief plans

It is important to consider the following:

- Planning should involve community members.
- If municipalities are geographically large, or access to townships may be compromised by emergencies, then planning should be considered at a community or locality level.
- Planning should encompass the whole of emergency relief, not only emergency relief centres, by considering a variety of relief locations and modes of delivering relief information and assistance.
- Agency roles, responsibilities and capacity to undertake emergency relief provision and/or coordination should be regularly assessed.

Emergency relief plans should be tested regularly. Emergency management exercises allow agencies to review capacity issues, decision-making processes and communication. They also provide an opportunity to strengthen relationships.

Local

At a local level, the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC) is responsible for developing and reviewing emergency management plans, including relief plans.

In several regions, local government collaboration protocols/agreements are in place. These agreements establish consistent operational procedures, formalise relief agency partnerships and facilitate exercises.

This alignment of practices and operating procedures means local government staff are better able to assist neighbouring municipalities during emergencies. All state agencies and departments should be aware of local government collaboration arrangements because these can affect the regional coordination of relief, including requests for supplementary resources.

Regional

DHS coordinates and chairs regional committees tasked with relief planning and developing regional relief and recovery plans. Key issues addressed as part of regional relief planning include:

- integration of relief into response operations, including evacuation
- surge planning at the local government and regional level
- support for evacuated vulnerable people
- resupply for isolated communities
- support for communities that cannot immediately return to their home
- transition from response to recovery.

³ International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) 2010. *Project/programme planning guidance manual*, Geneva: IFRC.

The region is also a key participant in planning interstate relief issues such as large numbers of people arriving from, or moving, interstate.

State

The State Crisis and Resilience Council, supported by the Recovery Subcommittee, is responsible for developing the emergency relief components of the State Emergency Relief and Recovery Plan (part 4 of EMMV). Key issues include:

- the development and implementation of emergency relief-related guidance, direction and policy
- inter-agency coordination at a state level
- support of local and regional emergency relief planning
- conducting strategic risk and consequence management
- establishing processes for requesting supplementary resources from the private sector and Commonwealth Government.

2.3 Overarching planning considerations

The following considerations are relevant to all aspects of planning and should be integrated into emergency relief plans.

Partnering with communities

Community engagement is the process to ensure views and input from communities are used to solve problems or make informed decisions. Community engagement should occur before, during and after an emergency and should recognise that needs will inevitably vary between communities. Government, emergency management organisations, essential services and local businesses and service clubs must be ready to work with each community according to its relief needs.

Community members should be treated with respect, recognising they have the capacity to solve problems. All individuals and communities have strengths and capacities

that they can draw upon in an emergency, however some may need more assistance to use these capacities. Local knowledge of people, history, risks, vulnerability, operational requirements, infrastructure and services significantly enhances emergency preparation, response and recovery.

There will already be networks in place in communities, and channels to reach many members of local communities. Working with strong community networks is one way to engage with and access the strengths and capacity of local communities. Where these networks are not strong, consider activities that strengthen networks.

Trust should be built over time between community members and relief agencies. Agencies should appreciate that a uniform or status does not automatically accord an agency with respect. Traditional and non-traditional techniques should be used to build knowledge about the strengths and weaknesses of local communities. For example, chemists, newsagents, supermarket operators, café owners and post office operators are likely to have strong local knowledge about the community.

Case study 1: Local incident management planning in East Gippsland

At the time of the June 2007 Gippsland floods, the East Gippsland Shire Council's Municipal Emergency Management Plan reflected the council's expectations for what its communities would do in the event of an emergency. However, actual behaviour was not necessarily as expected.

The experience of the 2007 floods convinced the council that its planning for emergencies needed to start with the community and that it needed to support 'grassroots planning'. As a result the Shire encouraged the development of a local incident management planning model which consists of the council and emergency service providers supporting communities to produce local emergency management plans.

Importantly, the council sees the local plan as owned by the community and seeks to support the community's decisions. For example, this means accepting communities' decisions about where to shelter during an incident and helping them to make this choice as safe as possible.



The information gained from the community is incorporated into the council's risk assessments, emergency management sub-plans and ultimately the Municipal Emergency Management Plan and Municipal Strategic Plan.

To date, East Gippsland Shire Council has identified 35 communities, and worked with 18, around the development of Local Incident Management Plans. Eight plans have been finalised and are available on the council's website: www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au

Understanding resource needs and capacity

All agencies must understand, document and communicate their own capacity to meet their responsibilities. Planning provides an opportunity to document individual agency capacity and build a shared understanding of this within the relief sector. As part of its coordination role, government at all levels has a responsibility to understand and monitor capacity across the relief sector.

Emergency management exercises provide an opportunity to test and review the level of agency and sector capacity. This knowledge is invaluable when planning for larger-scale emergencies and is important for understanding where supplementary resources are required.

Considering specific needs of the community

Planning should take into account that people may have specific needs during emergencies. Needs will change depending on the community and the circumstances of the event.

It is important not to unnecessarily single out groups purely on the basis of perceived 'special needs' or vulnerabilities. The following table outlines some groups that may be identified as having specific needs.

Table 2: Considering specific planning needs

Example group	Example of specific planning consideration
Children and young people	Consider nutrition support requirements for infants and mothers during food and water planning.
People with disabilities	Assess access to emergency relief sites such as emergency relief centres.
Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities	Understand that cultural, religious and lifestyle factors may be inextricably linked, including the availability of prayer spaces, fulfilment of dietary requirements and access to financial assistance.
Elderly and frail people	Consider aged care facility plans during local government planning.

Conducting early recovery planning

It is vital that planning for recovery commences as soon as possible and is developed in parallel to the delivery of relief needs. Communities affected by emergencies do not differentiate between response and recovery; for the community it is just about the emergency and its effects. It is essential that planning for recovery commences when the emergency starts. This will ensure that the transition from response to recovery can be managed effectively – and most importantly that it is seamless for those who have been affected.

Emergency relief and recovery planning should ensure that the needs of individuals and communities are met, along with broader economic, environmental and built environment recovery. Planning should initially focus on ensuring essential and urgent needs are met, and then move towards empowering individuals and communities to lead their own recovery.

For further information on the transition from emergency response control to emergency recovery coordination, see 'Section 14: Transition from response to recovery'.

2.4 Pre-planning for effective collaboration

When response and relief agencies plan to work collaboratively, they can provide effective assistance to affected communities and individuals in the immediate aftermath of an emergency.

Emergency management teams are responsible for coordinating response and relief agencies at all levels, and are discussed in more detail in Section 3.2

Before an emergency, response and relief agencies should work together through emergency management planning committees to develop a shared understanding of relief arrangements, roles and responsibilities, agency capacity and decision-making processes.

Other ways for agencies to prepare for effective collaboration include:

- developing community education, awareness and networks
- emergency management exercises
- emergency management teams
- resupply operations.

A strong interface between relief and response agencies during planning will contribute to efficient and effective response operations. Key response/relief planning considerations may include:

- the process for making decisions about:
 - activating relief services
 - where relief is needed and will be provided
 - which relief functions will be activated
- understanding service/agency capacity
 - nominated/responsible agency service and capacity
 - where the same resources may be required simultaneously
 - requirements for and capacity of emergency relief centres
 - how capacity will be monitored
- resupply arrangements between response and relief agencies
- information for the community
 - understanding consequences of warnings (for example self-evacuation)
 - understanding consequences of evacuation
 - agreed community messages about relief services and support.

Support for emergency response agencies

In many emergencies, response agencies will need to provide their personnel with support, such as food and water.

Response agencies should use their own resources and procurement processes to meet these needs rather than drawing on the emergency relief system put in place for communities. This will avoid compromising agreed local, regional or state emergency relief arrangements. An agency contracted to provide an emergency relief service may not be able to meet their obligations if response agencies use these resources.

If a response agency engages a relief provider to support response personnel, the providers' ability to satisfactorily meet their emergency management obligations must be confirmed and documented in the relevant MEMPlan and regional relief plan.

2.5 Financial planning and reimbursement

To support relief and recovery from a natural disaster, the Victorian Government provides a range of financial assistance measures through the Victorian Natural Disaster Financial Assistance (NDFA) scheme, which essentially mirrors the joint Commonwealth–State Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA). Under the NDFA/NDRRA, local government, government departments and relief agencies may be eligible for reimbursement for costs incurred following a natural disaster, depending on the severity and the type of costs associated.

Assistance provided under the NDFA/NDRRA should not replace self-help, nor should it discourage councils, individuals or businesses taking out insurance to protect their assets.

Table 3: Eligible and ineligible events under NDFA/NDRRA

Eligible events	Ineligible events
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bushfire • Earthquake • Flood • Storm (including hail) • Cyclone • Storm surge • Landslide • Tsunami • Meteorite strike • Tornado • Terrorism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drought • Frost • Heatwave • Epidemic • Events where human activity is a significant contributing cause (for example poor environmental planning, commercial development, personal intervention [other than arson], or accident)

Table 4: Eligible and ineligible emergency relief expenditure

Eligible expenditure	
NDRRA specific (jointly funded by the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments)	NDFA specific (funded solely by the Victorian Government)
Establishment of emergency relief/recovery centres	Establishment of a Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre (MECC)
Costs associated with emergency food, clothing or temporary accommodation	
Personal and financial counselling aimed at alleviating personal hardship and distress arising as a direct result of a natural disaster	
Certain counter-disaster operations including the repair or restoration of facilities damaged while undertaking eligible counter-disaster activities	
Repair and restoration of direct damage to essential public assets owned by local government and/or government departments	
Ineligible expenditure	
NDRRA specific (jointly funded by the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments)	NDFA specific (funded solely by the Victorian Government)
Normal maintenance and administration costs that would have been incurred if the natural disaster had not occurred including salaries and day labour costs	Costs reimbursable under other external funding sources (such as insurance payouts)

Insurance premiums or future increases in insurance premiums brought about by claims against existing policy for a particular natural disaster event	Repair of direct damage to sporting, recreational or community facilities (for example, playgrounds and associated facilities), religious establishment (for example, churches, temples and mosques) and memorials
Environmental asset restoration such as restoration of natural vegetation, natural banks, streams, rivers, beaches and undeveloped public land	Consequential losses (for example, business interruptions, loss of income)
Costs incurred in restoring or replacing an essential public asset to a more disaster resilient level or higher level of service (unless otherwise agreed by the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments)	

For reimbursement of costs eligible under the NDRRA, the emergency must be formally notified to the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department as an eligible natural disaster. The Department of Justice, on behalf of the Victorian Government makes this notification.

Local government representatives should contact the Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF) as soon as practically possible after an emergency if they are unsure of which costs may be eligible. The DTF website lists up-to-date phone contacts: www.dtf.vic.gov.au

In exceptional circumstances, and where a council can demonstrate financial hardship, DTF may make arrangements for advance payments to help councils with financial hardship to commence NDRRA/NDFA recovery projects. Justification claims (offsetting against the advance) must be submitted regularly to DTF.

For eligible events, councils can claim any extraordinary salaries, wages or other expenditure that would not have been incurred had the emergency not happened. This includes employment costs for temporary office staff, contractors, or costs of staff seconded from other municipalities to help with the local government response to the emergency (for example, backfilling). Councils can also claim overtime undertaken by their staff when assisting local government efforts during an emergency.⁴

Further information can be found in the Financial management of emergencies guide developed for local government published by the Municipal Association of Victoria.

⁴ Department of Treasury and Finance 2013, State Government of Victoria, Melbourne viewed 22 July 2013, <www.dtf.vic.gov.au>

Emergency relief process

Local government and agencies should note the following arrangements for meeting the costs of emergency relief services:

- Local government is responsible for meeting the cost, and seeking reimbursement, of emergency relief measures provided to people affected by an emergency. Local government should apply to DTF for reimbursement of eligible costs outlined in Table 4.
- If emergency relief is requested by a response or relief agency for its own personnel, that agency will be responsible for costs incurred.

- When a response agency requests emergency relief (such as food and water) on behalf of a number of response agencies, the requesting agency will be responsible for costs incurred.

These arrangements apply regardless of whether emergency relief is coordinated at local, regional or state levels and should not preclude agencies meeting minimum humanitarian obligations to provide affected people with relief services.

For more information on the NDFA, including the process and eligibility of activities, refer to: www.dtf.vic.gov.au

Case study 2: Moira Shire and financial planning considerations

Moira Shire was affected by flooding in 2010, 2011 and 2012 and by a tornado in 2013. Each emergency triggered the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA).

The cumulative value of these natural disasters exceeded \$50 million. Therefore it was critical that council understood and adhered to the guidelines that were in place for NDRRA and other smaller funding programs that assisted in response, relief and recovery efforts.

Council had previously established a dedicated disaster recovery program ledger for managing income and expenditure through emergency relief and recovery. For each emergency, a new subledger is established to keep funding and expenditure separate for concurrent emergency recovery programs, as was the case with the 2012 and 2013 events.

A financial task group was established as part of council's recovery committee with representation from the Municipal

Recovery Manager, Finance Manager, Grants Officer, an elected Councillor as well as a community representative from Moira Shire's audit committee.

Early contact, and weekly communication, with Department of Treasury and Finance and VicRoads resolved queries about the NDRRA. The outcome of this approach was a response, relief and recovery process that enabled council to maintain its cash flow and not place itself in a vulnerable position over an extended time that encompassed multiple emergencies.



See 'Section 11: Emergency financial assistance' for more.

Relief operational considerations

3.1 Overview

Emergency relief practitioners should agree on operational arrangements that will be activated during an emergency, depending on the size, scale and complexity of needs.

These arrangements should also guide agencies' internal operational procedures.

3.2 Emergency management team

The primary point of coordination between agencies during an emergency is the emergency management team (EMT). The *Emergency management team arrangements 2013* provides information on the role and function of an EMT at the incident, regional and state level. The EMT is a collaborative forum for agencies with a range of responsibilities during emergencies to discuss the risks and likely consequences of the emergency and plan the response. Depending on the size or complexity of the emergency, EMTs may be formed at incident, regional and state levels.⁵

Who should represent relief agencies at the EMT?

Emergency relief should be represented at regional and state EMTs by the Department of Human Services Regional Recovery Coordinator (or delegate), and the Municipal Recovery Manager at incident EMTs, with relief agency commanders as needed.

The EMT is an important forum for relief agencies to discuss relief-related issues, risks and consequences with response agencies, and to gain information and intelligence about the incident to enable forward planning. Agencies with relief responsibilities should be represented at the EMT by someone who knows agency's capacity to provide relief services and potential risks, and who can

establish priorities with the Incident Controller. At a regional and state level, emergency relief agency representatives should meet with their EMT during the year to plan, establish good working relationships and undertake training.⁶

3.3 Operational management systems

Formalising requests for relief assistance

During emergencies it is important that all requests for relief assistance are formalised. Formalising requests is important for:

- tracking requests that have been made
- documenting who has authorised the request
- establishing the demand for relief services
- providing a mechanism for pre-empting and planning for any projected increases in demand for relief services.

During the emergency relief debrief these requests can also be used to analyse and improve the future responses.

Crisisworks

Crisisworks (sometimes known as MECC Central) is a web-based application that most municipalities use in incident management. It interacts with mobile devices and mapping and enables effective task-tracking, resource management and record management. Crisisworks can be used to manage the provision of emergency relief services including:

- requests during MECC operations
- local government operations during an emergency, such as road closures and animal welfare management
- incident management where a MECC is not activated.

⁵ Fire Services Commissioner 2013, *Emergency Management Team arrangements*, State Government of Victoria, Melbourne, p. 20.

⁶ Ibid.

Crisisworks enables communication between the emergency relief centre, the MECC, local government offices and works depots, and users at other locations. Municipalities can also provide authorised agencies with log-in details to access MECC Central workspaces.

3.4 Initial impact and needs assessments

Impact and needs assessments inform decision making for relief coordination.

Considering the impacts and needs of affected communities early on can help local government and relief agencies to:

- understand the extent of damage and indicate the types of emergency relief assistance needed
- gain an understanding of the impacts and consequences of an emergency
- help inform recovery planning, particularly the timing and types of support required by communities affected by the emergency.

Local government can coordinate an outreach service, in conjunction with relief agencies, in order to undertake the initial needs assessment, once the threat of the emergency has subsided and it is safe to do so. Outreach involves visiting people at their homes, temporary accommodation, businesses and community events in order to ensure that people have access to early psychosocial support and to conduct an assessment of their needs. For further information and guidance about conducting outreach refer to 'Guidance note 2: Psychosocial support'.

If the provision of relief services to the community extends beyond the activation of an emergency relief centre, the needs assessment and the provision of relief services will need to change to accommodate the different locations. It may also be necessary to overcome additional logistical challenges (for example the delivery of food and water to isolated communities).

Working with local businesses during emergency relief

The Australian Business Register (ABR) is an extensive database of business identity information collected when businesses register for an Australian Business Number (ABN). This whole-of-government resource is available to eligible government agencies and can provide free, up-to-date information on all ABN-registered businesses in a municipality or region.

ABR information can assist to provide a targeted response for:

- identifying hazardous industries
- providing community education and communication
- supplying logistics and resupply operations
- developing risk and impact assessments
- identifying vulnerable groups and facilities
- identifying businesses in affected areas
- providing government support and assistance.

To access the full range of ABR data it is necessary to become an ABR government partner. This partnership gives government organisations access to valuable information. For more information on becoming an ABR partner and how ABR data can be used to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters, contact the ABR at: www.abr.gov.au

3.5 Emergency relief locations

Emergency relief assistance may be provided in a variety of emergency relief settings including:

- at an emergency site
- directly to communities that have been isolated or cut off by an emergency
- in an established relief setting, such as an emergency relief centre
- where people are (for example, community meetings, homes, schools, businesses, airports, train stations)
- through the media such as radio, TV, newspapers, internet and established phoneline services and the State Inquiry Centre for Register.Find.Unite.

An important part of relief is helping people make informed decisions and understand what assistance is available. Letting the public know about emergency relief locations through a range of methods is crucial.

3.6 Resupply

Resupply is the supply of essential goods or services to a community, neighbourhood and/or households isolated by an emergency. The purpose of resupply is to assist with the basic health, safety and welfare needs of residents in a manner that attempts to maintain existing economic networks and functions.⁷

The need to resupply communities that could become isolated in an emergency should be considered in local and regional planning. The inherent logistical challenge of resupply means response agencies will usually be involved in providing essential goods and services to affected areas. Resupply arrangements should be considered and documented in the MEMPlan and the Regional Relief Plan.

This is resourced by either the Incident Control Centre or the Regional Control Centre, in partnership with local government and the Department of Human Services.

Relief and response agencies should work together to prepare communities that may become isolated in emergencies. When information indicates that communities, neighbourhoods and/or households may become isolated, response agencies should work with local government to inform the community of the risks and communicate preparedness messages.

Planning considerations include:

- communicating expectations of individual and community preparedness if there is enough time to warn people that a community will become isolated
- wherever possible, use the normal retail/wholesale resupply system, with supplies delivered via bulk orders from the normal wholesale outlets to the communities' retail outlets
- the logistics of resupply including the use of road, air and water resources
- supplies can come from many different locations (not just Melbourne) including neighbouring municipalities/regions
- goods should:
 - be properly prepared for transport by the nominated means
 - be clearly marked with volume, mass and details of recipient to ensure correct delivery
 - fully comply with regulations covering the transportation of dangerous goods
- educating the community, business and relief agency staff about resupply arrangements.

⁷ Victorian State Emergency Services 2012, State flood emergency plan, version 2.0, p. 18, <www.ses.vic.gov.au/prepare/em-planning/em-partners-resources/state-flood-emergency-plan>

3.7 Relief monitoring

Regional relief coordination and support

Many emergencies are small in size and/or effect, and relief services are best coordinated through existing local government arrangements.

Regional and State Relief Coordinators need to maintain situational awareness of existing local arrangements and any limits to local relief capacity.

Monitoring relief occurs through the daily situation reports prepared by regional Department of Human Services offices, which will summarise information from local councils and relief agencies. Monitoring also occurs through the local EMT meetings where discussions about community needs and response and relief plans are reviewed.

In an emergency of a medium to large size, the EMT will prepare a risk and consequence plan with an overview of relief arrangements. The Department of Human Services will produce a regional relief coordination plan for medium to large events. This is a key element for making decisions about when and how the department provides support for the coordination of relief activities, including assisting with requests for supplementary resources.

Aspects of emergency relief coordination and monitoring involve:

- providing operational planning, advice and support
- the activation of Regional Relief Support and Emergency Management Liaison Officer (EMLO) roles, in consultation with local government
- conducting real-time evaluations of relief operations
- working with other government departments and emergency relief organisations such as The Salvation Army, Foodbank Victoria, Save the Children and the Victorian Council of Churches.

Real-time evaluation

Real-time evaluations (RTEs) provide an opportunity to consider how regional and state relief coordination is supporting local emergency relief efforts.

An RTE is undertaken by an RTE team during an emergency. Unlike traditional post-emergency evaluations, RTEs can positively influence the relief effort as it is unfolding. Findings are fed straight back into operations, allowing incident managers to immediately incorporate recommendations.

Importantly, an RTE does not assess individual performance. Instead, it focuses on the overall effectiveness of relief coordination, and is a supporting resource for relief operations. The RTE brings an independent perspective when operational staff may not have time for reflection.

A real-time evaluation is authorised by the Director, Health and Human Services Emergency Management, in consultation with Red Cross. One or more of the following are a prerequisite:

- activation of regional or state level relief coordination
- likelihood of one or more of the following:
 - multiple emergency relief centres operating concurrently
 - depletion of agency/physical resources
 - when additional resources are likely to be requested from the Commonwealth Government for relief activities
 - an emergency of significant complexity or consequence, resulting in a recommendation for large-scale evacuation, or shelter in place / quarantine for a significant period

3.8 Reporting

Local and regional-level reporting is designed to capture the demand for services and preempt any projected increases in demand, or gaps in, service provision and resourcing.

There is a cascade of emergency relief operation reports. Information is collected at the municipal level and gradually aggregated up to a regional and state level as described below.

Municipal reporting

The MECC completes a report and submits it to the relevant Health and Human Services Emergency Management Regional Emergency Operations, which consolidates emergency relief information (including that relating to emergency relief centres). An emergency relief centre report template is included in 'Guidance note 3: Emergency shelter'.

Health and Human Services Emergency Management staff will work with municipalities to determine specific reporting requirements (such as timing and frequency).

Regional reporting

The HHS REOC completes a report and submits it to the HHS SEMC to consolidate emergency relief information into a state situation report.

State reporting

In significant emergencies, an Emergency Management Team is activated at regional and state level. The Department of Human Services will submit a statewide situation report on relief coordination that is based on information obtained from regional situation reports.

3.9 Requesting supplementary resources

As the needs and consequences of an emergency increase in size and scale, resource requirements for relief services can outstrip what is available locally. Requests for supplementary resources should be made when relief agencies do not have the capacity to meet the needs of the community.

The MECC can request supplementary resources for emergency relief from the Department of Human Services via the HHS REOC. Requests for support and assistance can be broad-ranging including:

- technical advice on public health issues
- relief service provision if local agencies or suppliers listed in the MEMPlan have reached, or are close to reaching capacity
- drinking water if local water authorities cannot assist
- working with response agencies to deliver essential relief services to isolated communities
- assessing people with additional needs for emergency shelter.

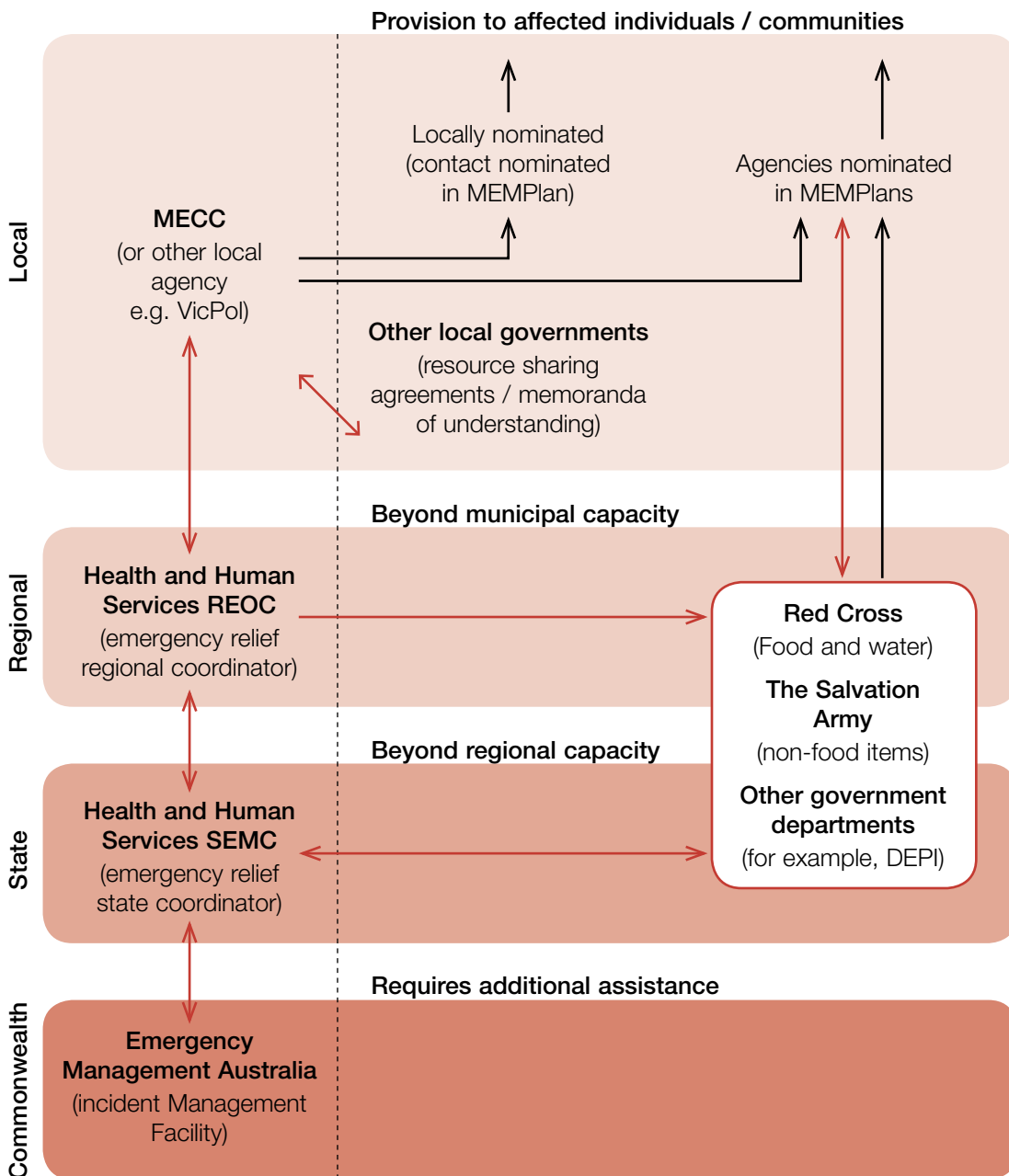
The Department of Human Services, in consultation with the municipality, will determine the appropriate course of action, which may include requesting another agency to coordinate the provision of relief. If supplementary resources are required, a further request will be sent to the HHS SEMC. The appropriate course of action will be determined at the state level, in consultation with the region, which may include requesting support from private providers and/or a request to the State Emergency Response Officer.

Additionally, most councils are signatories to the Municipal Association of Victoria Resource Sharing Protocol which guides inter-council resource sharing for response and recovery activities during and after emergencies.

More information can be found on the Municipal Association of Victoria website at: www.mav.asn.au

These processes for requesting supplementary resources are outlined in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Escalating requests for supplementary resources



Community information

4.1 Overview

Successful public communications are a form of community development and capacity building. Information reduces anxiety and empowers the community and individuals to understand and influence their recovery, increases social cohesion and helps to rebuild the social fabric after a significant dislocation.

Access to quality information before, during and after an emergency can have a profound effect on the resilience and recovery of individuals and the community.

Agencies involved in responding to an emergency have a responsibility to observe and listen to communities, their strengths and needs, and collect, analyse and disseminate relevant information. In line with the *National principles for disaster recovery*, the following basic communication principles apply:

- Get information to the people who need it.
- Ensure all information is relevant, timely, clear, accurate, targeted, credible and consistent.
- Ask the community how they want to receive information.
- Ensure that information is accessible to audiences in diverse situations (including culturally and linguistically diverse audiences and people with disabilities).
- Repeat information.
- Remember people who are unaffected by the emergency.

During an emergency, the demand for and frequency of information will change. There will be different needs for certain types of information during different stages of an emergency – particularly during a lengthy incident, such as a slow-moving flood.

4.2 Information provided by response and relief agencies

When disseminating community information, agencies should first consider who they are communicating to. Generally, there will be two main audiences:

- those affected by the emergency
- the general public.

Agencies should first acknowledge that communities and individuals will create and disseminate information before, during and after emergencies. Traditionally, this has occurred through word-of-mouth or face-to-face channels, however larger populations of people are using digital and social media channels to generate and share information. While this is often considered unofficial or informal, it may be a valuable source of immediate or on-the-ground intelligence. Relief workers should be prepared to work alongside these unverified channels and sources of information.

Relief workers at all levels must also ensure that messaging is consistent, timely and accurate. Different messages will be required to meet response, relief and/or recovery needs of communities depending on what is occurring.

Communication should be clear and simple, to avoid creating information overload, and visuals and pictures should accompany text.

Where possible, messages about emergency relief support should include:

- that people should seek their own relief options first and what they need to take with them
- locations of safer places such as emergency relief centres
- information about basic needs including food, water, shelter and first aid
- details of how to register or reconnect with loved ones
- traffic or transport routes in case of evacuations

- disruptions to local services (for example telecommunications, electricity, sewerage)
- encouraging people to be prepared, including the steps to be taken.

Early messages should empower people to guide their own early recovery, such as:

- encouraging people to look after themselves and each other
- identifying local strengths and assets, such as community groups or support networks
- promoting social connectedness (people gathering together)
- focusing on local services, events, businesses and activities.

4.3 Strategic communication considerations

Relief agencies need to consider the communication needs of specific individuals or groups, such as:

- isolated community members
- people with a disability (including vision or hearing impairment)
- older people, and those in aged-care facilities
- culturally and linguistically diverse groups
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- people with low-literacy, including digital literacy
- travellers and people new to the area
- people who are socioeconomically disadvantaged

There is a high risk that disaster-affected individuals and communities will be overwhelmed with information from a range of well-meaning relief agencies, keen to help. To help counter possible confusion, the EMMV outlines the escalation process between local, regional and state communication coordination.

Local government

Initially, the affected local government is responsible for working as part of its local Incident Management Team (IMT) to produce and distribute appropriate relief information. This would generally involve safety and evacuation messaging regarding road or transport routes, school or business closures, the opening and location of emergency relief centres.

Local government websites and social media channels can provide an excellent additional communications channel to local residents.

The IMT, in consultation with local government, should also have clear messages for offers of goodwill. For further information refer to the section on 'Harnessing goodwill'.

Regional and state assistance

If the emergency is larger, the local IMT may request additional regional or state communications support. Typically, this request could be for a dedicated media/communications officer, team or spokesperson and can be requested using existing resource-sharing protocols, regional coordination structures or through the Department of Human Services and the relief and recovery coordinator at regional and state level.

At the state level, the Emergency Management Joint Public Information Committee (EMJPIC) coordinates all public emergency messaging. EMJPIC is chaired by Victoria Police and comprises senior communications representatives from state government departments. EMJPIC has trained media and communications officers available for deployment to local ICCs, to assist with short-term relief and recovery communications.

During larger emergencies the Department of Human Services is responsible for:

- maintaining the Emergency Relief and Recovery Victoria (ERRV) website
- operating the Victorian Emergency Recovery Information Line (VERIL)
- initiating advertising campaigns to inform emergency-affected communities about support that may be available.

When activated, VERIL operates on 1300 799 232 and includes emergency relief information, such as locations of emergency relief centres and details about available relief support services.

4.4 Information for people affected by an emergency

Agencies should consider the needs to the people they are communicating with. Early priorities will include where to find shelter and how to remain connected with family and friends. Depending on the scale of the emergency, it may be necessary to communicate with the general public about essential items like food and water.

Emergency shelter

Suggested key messages about emergency shelter

- People should stay with family or friends wherever possible and need to plan for this as their first option.
- Emergency relief centres are offering temporary shelter for people without a place to stay.
- People who stay at an emergency relief centre should bring items necessary for their health and wellbeing.

Before and during the emergency, control agencies have a key role in advising people whether it is safe to remain or leave their homes. Under certain circumstances, people may need to seek temporary shelter.

The messaging about sheltering options needs to be clear and incorporated as early as possible into control agency and local government communications.

Where people affected by the emergency seek temporary shelter in an emergency relief centre, it is important that emergency relief centre staff communicate with them, providing regular updates on the emergency, the support services available to them, and where possible, an indication as to when they may be able to return to their homes.

For further information on emergency shelter refer to 'Section 8: Shelter'.

Reconnecting families and friends

If people affected by an emergency do not go to an emergency relief centre, or if they have limited access to emergency-related communications, they may be unaware of the Register.Find.Reunite. process and its benefits. This can lead to a range of behaviour including:

- calls to emergency hotlines such as 000 or information lines, which can potentially clog lines
- convergences on emergency relief centres, while looking for family members
- convergences on emergency sites, including attempting to breach traffic management points to try to find missing family members.

Suggested key messages about reconnecting families and friends

- People affected by an emergency should register their details with Red Cross online, via phone or in person so that family and friends can inquire as to their whereabouts and safety.
- The stress on your family and friends may be reduced if they can confirm your whereabouts and safety.
- If you become separated from your family and friends, registering your details with Red Cross may help you to reconnect with them.
- Do not delay evacuation waiting for family members. Register so that they know that you have safely left.

For further information on reconnecting families and friends refer to 'Section 7: Reconnecting families and friends'.

4.5 Information for general public

Psychosocial support

Effective provision of information is essential to reassuring and empowering people affected by emergencies to guide their own recovery and to discuss how they can be better prepared. To promote psychosocial wellbeing in emergencies consider how you can include the following concepts in your messaging:

- safety
- hope
- calming
- empowerment
- social connectedness
- preparedness
- respecting that everyone reacts to crisis in different ways.

For further information on psychosocial support refer to 'Section 5: Psychosocial support'.

Donations

During emergencies, the general public and businesses may offer their assistance. These offers usually happen early on in the emergency. The intentions to help or donate are formed in the hours and days after the emergency has started and can be shaped by media images and reporting. Often reporting gives the impression that the emergency is chaotic and out of control; that people have been left with nothing and need help. Often community information does not state that people's needs are being met, which exacerbates the problem.

It is essential that relief agencies have clear and agreed communication strategies to effectively harness this goodwill from the initial hours of the emergency.

For further information on harnessing goodwill refer to 'Section 13: Harnessing goodwill'.

Cash, goods and services

Suggested key messages about cash, goods and services

- Thank you for your concern. People's immediate needs are being met by the agencies with their trained volunteers who are in our emergency plan.
- Donations are not needed at this time; we are working with affected communities to identify their needs.
- Donate money rather than goods because it puts money back into affected communities, which stimulates a quicker recovery for the local economy.
- Evidence shows that people recover more quickly when they can make decisions about purchasing goods that meet their needs.
- Donating unsolicited goods is not helpful because it diverts resources.
- Instead of donating unsolicited goods, we would encourage people to sell those items and donate the money instead.
- You can help by organising fundraising activities, instead of donating unsolicited goods.

Experience has shown that the vast outpouring of goodwill in the form of donations of goods, services and time can strain government and emergency relief agency resources and conflict with the priority of looking after people affected by the emergency. It is vital that community information addresses the issue of donations through clear and direct messages in control agency and local government communications from the earliest possible stage.

If financial donations are sought, they will often be in the form of an appeal. The state government may request a relief agency to act as the collection point for a statewide appeal (for example, Red Cross for the Victorian Floods Appeal 2011). The state government, the collection agency or organisation, control agencies and local governments must communicate consistent messaging about the appeal. Other relief agencies may launch appeals seeking donations. Where appropriate, this information should be incorporated into key messages about donations.

Time (spontaneous volunteers)

Suggested key messages about spontaneous volunteers

- Offers of assistance are appreciated, however trained emergency services personnel are responding to the emergency and supporting people with their basic needs.
- Municipal councils and emergency services personnel are working with communities to support their needs.
- We ask that people stay away from emergency-affected areas, and allow emergency services personnel room to perform the tasks for which they have been trained.
- If there is a need for additional volunteers, it will be communicated through the media.
- People wishing to volunteer should register using the Victorian Government's volunteering portal at: www.volunteer.vic.gov.au
- Emergency services agencies rely on the expertise of their trained volunteers. If you are interested in becoming an emergency services volunteer contact the appropriate agency and register your details.

Spontaneous offers of assistance from individuals, groups or businesses can be helpful, but they can also overwhelm relief agencies. Agencies should follow their existing processes for managing spontaneous volunteers. These processes are necessary to minimise disruption to service provision and to ensure offers of assistance are acknowledged, captured and taken up where necessary.

For further information, refer to the Spontaneous Volunteer Management Resource Kit, on the Red Cross website at: www.redcross.org.au

Psychosocial support

5.1 Overview

Some of the greatest sources of suffering in emergencies arise from complex emotional, social, physical and spiritual effects. Many of these reactions are normal and can be overcome with time.⁸

In the emergency relief context, psychosocial support most commonly refers to advice and simple practical and emotional support for affected individuals and communities.⁹

Anyone affected by an emergency has strengths, assets and resources that support their own wellbeing. A key principle – even in the early stages of an emergency – is building on these strengths, supporting self-help and promoting the resources already present. Most people will recover well on their own with the support of family, friends and relief agencies. While it is not necessary to have specialist mental health services as a core component of relief services, establishing a process to obtain advice, support and make referrals is important.

For examples of personal support and psychological first aid refer to ‘Guidance note 2: Psychosocial support’.

5.2 Local, regional and state planning

At the beginning of an emergency, community leaders and members play an important role supporting people in their community. This often occurs before formal structures are established, and this should be considered in planning.

Planning for personal support and psychological first aid should occur as part of local, regional and state emergency management plans. Plans should identify the roles and responsibilities of nominated agencies and the areas of relief where specific support may be required (Table 4). Agencies and organisations with skills in personal support and psychological first aid come from a variety of government and non-government sectors including the Department of Human Services, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Red Cross, Victorian Council of Churches, Community Health Centres and the Commonwealth Department of Human Services.

Psychosocial support is typically provided at one or more of the following locations:

- at the scene of an emergency (if it is safe to do so)
- where people are (for example, community meetings, homes, schools, businesses, airports, train stations and emergency relief centres)
- State Inquiry Centre (call centre for Register.Find.Reunite.)
- phone support Lines (for example Lifeline, Parentline, Kids Helpline).

⁸ The Sphere Project 2011, *The Sphere Project: humanitarian charter and minimum standards in humanitarian response*, Belmont Press Ltd, Northampton, United Kingdom.

⁹ Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) 2007, *IASC guidelines on mental health and psychosocial support in emergency settings*, Geneva: IASC.

Table 5: Summary of local, regional and state planning and operational considerations

Level	Planning	Operational
Local	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build on local services, networks and support that already exist within communities. 2. Identify type and location of the services that may be required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – meet and greeters at relief centres, airports – floating personal support staff/volunteers at relief centres – Register.Find.Reunite. at relief centres – personal support at community meetings – outreach (refer to: ‘Guidance note 2: Psychosocial support). 3. Establish a process to obtain advice, support and make referrals to counselling services, bereavements services and mental health services if these are needed. 4. Clarify the capacity of agency or agencies to deliver the services nominated in the MEMPlan. 5. Seek agreement with agency or agencies responsible for delivering services and ensure that their roles are clearly described in the MEMPlan. 6. Identify impact data that will heighten support requirements, for example number of houses destroyed, people displaced, injuries and deaths. 7. Ensure ongoing communication to MEMPC and other agencies about who is responsible for what. 8. Establish a clear process for collecting and reporting data on psychosocial support activities. Clear data on the emerging needs of impacted residents will help inform longer-term psychosocial support planning in particular and recovery planning more generally. 9. Ensure nominated agency or agencies understand activation and communication processes. 10. Ensure nominated agency or agencies participate in MEMPC meetings/exercises. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assess the needs of affected communities. Outreach is one way to do this (refer to: ‘Guidance note 2: Psychosocial support). 2. Activate nominated agency or agencies to provide service at designated locations. 3. Request agency input for briefings and reports as required. 4. Conduct debriefs post-emergency with agency or agencies participating as required. 5. Undertake planning to transition response to recovery – for example funding, assess long-term needs and developing appropriate support strategies.

Regional	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and document nominated agency or agencies across the region/division in the Regional Relief Plan. 2. Identify any capacity issues if agencies are requested to deliver services in multiple locations, or if there are any gaps in coverage across the region for particularly LGAs or townships. 3. Maintain regular contact and provide advice and support to local government and relief agencies. 4. Establish routine relief data collection to inform regional/divisional relief and recovery planning. 5. Involve nominated agency or agencies in Regional Relief and Recovery Committee meetings and exercises. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assess the needs of affected communities. 2. Monitor and support local government and respond to requests for supplementary resources. 3. Undertake planning to transition response to recovery – for example funding, assessing long-term needs and developing appropriate support strategies.
State and Commonwealth	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and document coordination mechanisms, psychosocial support strategies, roles and responsibilities. 2. Provide advice and support to regions and or state as required. 3. Involve nominated agencies in relevant meetings and exercises. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assess the needs of affected communities. 2. Monitor and support regions and or state and respond to requests for supplementary resources. 3. Undertake planning to transition from response to recovery – for example funding, assessing long-term needs and developing appropriate support strategies.

5.3 Planning for specific needs

The social reorganisation after an emergency usually leaves some people or groups more vulnerable than others.¹⁰

It is important to consider the specific needs of groups including vulnerable people, children, young people, people with disabilities, older people, the bereaved, as well as taking into account considerations like gender.¹¹

As an example, young people should be included in planning for disasters, ideally by representing themselves. The *Emergency management planning for children and young people: planning guide for local government* is available at: www.dhs.vic.gov.au

Guiding questions to assist with planning for specific groups include:

- What groups with specific needs can be identified in your community?
- Can adequate supports be put in place for these identified groups?
- How can those affected access appropriate supports?
- Are there any gaps? How can these be addressed?
- What other supports are required? What stakeholders should be engaged to assist?

5.4 Working in a relief centre

Meeting and greeting people as they enter the relief centre

Introducing yourself

You will be the best person to determine the approach that you will take when you first meet someone who has experienced an emergency. Remember, your goal is for the person you meet to feel comfortable, safe and trust that you can help them in whatever small way.

Use openers such as 'Hello, I'm Jenny from (insert local government or agency name). What can I do to help?' or 'Hi, I'm Jenny from (insert organisation). I'm here to help you sign in? Then, I can tell you what services are offered here.'

What information do you give about yourself?

Your first name is sufficient. You don't need to give any other personal information.

Coghlan A 2007, *Red Cross Emergency Services: personal support training workbook*, Australian Red Cross, Melbourne, p. 22.

Meeting and greeting people is a critical way to provide psychosocial support to people as soon as they enter an emergency relief centre. It is important to remember that most people have never been to an emergency relief centre before and won't know what to expect. They may be distressed, confused, unable to take in information and anxious about their situation. The person meeting and greeting introduces people to the centre and provides emotional support. This person can also listen to affected people, provide information and offer practical assistance where required.

¹⁰ Gordon R 2009, *Social effects of emergencies: research findings of the last half century*, unpublished.

¹¹ H&HS 2011, *Community-led recovery: workbook for community recovery committees after a disaster*. International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Agencies able to fulfil the meet and greet role should be clearly nominated in MEMPlans before an event so that roles and responsibilities are clear during an emergency.

Challenging interactions

If you experience a challenging interaction, call for further assistance from another personal support worker. Most people you speak with will be grateful for your support, but you may experience people who are:

- non-communicative
- compulsive talkers
- distressed, angry or abusive
- hard of hearing
- a distraught child
- suspicious of your intentions.

Coghlan A 2007, *Red Cross Emergency Services: personal support training workbook*, Australian Red Cross, Melbourne.

Assisting people to access support

Consider the following:

- Ensure that a quiet and private area is available.
- Maintain a calm manner and allow sufficient time for people to talk.
- Keep families together.
- Be honest – avoid making promises and it is ok to say you don't know.
- Be friendly and compassionate even if people are being difficult – if you feel threatened ask for assistance.¹²
- Be mindful and respectful of cultural considerations, ethnic or clan differences.

¹² Grigg M 2009, Presentation on personal support training for grants officers, Department of Health.

Referral

Refer people who need support to the agencies providing personal support services such as:

- Red Cross
- Victorian Council of Churches Emergencies Ministry
- or other nominated agency such as community health centre staff.¹³

Looking after yourself and your staff

Emergency relief staff can be affected by trauma. Some examples include:

- listening to people's stories
- observing the impact
- frustration¹⁴

Strategies to support yourself (and your colleagues)

- Manage the amount of time you spend doing your role.
- Take scheduled breaks – and avoid working back for long hours.
- Talk about your experience and how you are feeling (within bounds of confidentiality).
- Eat healthy meals.
- Use available support services – peer support, employee assistance programs.
- Develop posters with simple messages on ways staff can look after themselves.

Coghlan A 2007, *Red Cross Emergency Services: personal support training workbook*, Australian Red Cross, Melbourne.

Training courses, including Introduction to Personal Support, are available to prepare local government staff for working in an emergency relief centre, or other relief and recovery environments.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid

Case study 3: Support for frontline staff

As a result of the 2009 bushfires, the City of Whittlesea learned that as well as providing material support, it is critical to put psychosocial support in place as soon as possible to help people's recovery. This is important not only for communities but also for staff in emergency management roles – nearly three quarters of the City of Whittlesea's employees contributed to the relief and recovery effort after the 2009 bushfires.

The City of Whittlesea now ensures that all frontline staff in the emergency relief centre and MECC have personal support training in how to care for people, support teams in the field, and look after themselves. This helps them understand how people react when they come into an emergency relief centre, and gives them the confidence to talk with them and the insight to get more help from Red Cross and VCC personal support staff when it is needed. It also helps staff to look after themselves and their teams.

The other key change City of Whittlesea has made is to ensure that at least one person on a post-impact assessment team has a strong background in providing psychosocial support. One experience from the 2009 Victorian Bushfires was that the first person that many of those affected saw was a local government staff member. Being able to begin the process of psychosocial recovery from the very first point of contact is invaluable. This person is also able to look after the other staff who are assessing the impact, a job which can be distressing and upsetting for everyone. This is an important part of our being able to look after ourselves.



5.5 Further information

Victorian Relief and Recovery website:
www.recovery.vic.gov.au

Australian Centre for Posttraumatic Mental Health: www.acpmh.unimelb.edu.au

Australian Government Disaster Assist:
www.disasterassist.gov.au

Australian Taxation Office: Guide to dealing with disasters: www.ato.gov.au

Australian Psychological Society and Australian Red Cross 2013, *Psychological first aid: an Australian guide*, Australian Psychological Society and Australian Red Cross, Australia.

Health

6.1 Overview

Emergencies can have significant impacts on the health and wellbeing of affected communities. A core principle in preventing illness and injury in an emergency is providing access to safe food, safe drinking water, safe shelter, sanitation.

6.2 Vulnerable population groups

Emergencies may increase the incidence of illness, injuries and death, particularly among vulnerable population groups. A vulnerable person is someone who is especially susceptible to the effects of emergencies. Of particular health concern are those in the community who may be:

- frail and/or physically or cognitively impaired
- unable to comprehend warnings and directions and/or respond during an emergency situation
- babies and children
- people with pre-existing medical conditions.

Emergency relief health planning should seek to identify:

- vulnerable population groups in the municipality
- the health risks these vulnerable people face during emergencies
- how health planning can mitigate these risks
- the data and information needed for emergency relief health planning.

6.3 Local government planning considerations

Under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* each municipality is responsible for health protection within its boundaries. Health agencies (including Ambulance Victoria, Red Cross, St John Ambulance, environmental health officers, hospitals, Medicare Locals, Department of Health) are responsible for emergency management planning. Ambulance Victoria, as the agency that provides the health command function, should be engaged in all local health planning.

As members of Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committees (MEMPC), health agencies contribute to the health aspects of the MEMPlan and the Municipal Public Health Plan. Municipalities should engage and work with local hospitals and other health agencies to develop a consistent approach to planning, preparedness and resilience, to support one another in the response phase of an emergency.¹⁵

¹⁵ Department of Health 2009, *State Health Emergency Response Plan*, State Government of Victoria, Melbourne.

Table 6: Local government health planning considerations

Local government planning consideration	Explanation	Example
Understand stakeholder roles and responsibilities.	Health responses will be implemented by a range of different government departments, agencies and emergency relief organisations. It is important to use the expertise of these organisations to ensure a holistic health response.	Before and during a heatwave, the Department of Health will provide heat-health alerts to help local government understand the key health risks and undertake incident planning.
Train local government staff and staff of other organisations.	Include health-specific local government staff who may be required to work together in emergency events	Local Government Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) play a key role in managing the public health consequences of emergencies. They are a valuable resource for advice, such as assessing the environmental health suitability of emergency relief centre facilities. EHOs need to be involved or kept informed in any emergency.
Include key health people in local government emergency relief planning.	It is important to include people in planning who have: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. knowledge about health risks and mitigation strategies in the local community b. the ability to make and influence health decisions during planning and emergencies. 	Include specific health professionals, such as the officer in charge of the local Ambulance Victoria branch, on the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC).

<p>Work with local health practitioners to build understanding about the health implications of emergencies.</p>	<p>During emergencies local health practitioners can be required to support the relief effort. This support may range from providing advice about vulnerable people in the community to supplying prescriptions to evacuees or people sheltering in emergency relief centres.</p> <p>People who feel unwell during an emergency or receive minor injuries may also seek medical support from their GP, so local health services should be actively included in local council relief coordination planning.</p> <p>Work with general practitioners and pharmacies who may be required to supply prescriptions to evacuees at short notice during emergency events.</p>
<p>Engage with the community and community health organisations.</p>	<p>Partner with Community Health Centre and Nursing Mothers Group to maintain a contact register.</p> <p>Encourage greater awareness and understanding of the role of first responders in health-related emergencies, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ensuring the safety of themselves and those around them 2. rendering assistance 3. calling 000 for further assistance in life-threatening emergencies 4. handing over care for their patient to health-response agencies. <p>Creating networks and partnerships with community groups before an the emergency occurs improves awareness about health needs and the ability of the relief effort to respond to the needs of the community.</p>

6.4 State Health Emergency Response Plan

The Department of Health is responsible for the State Health Emergency Response Plan (SHERP). The SHERP is Victoria's framework for a whole-of-health approach to emergencies, 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 contains sections dealing with first aid and volunteer medical practitioners.

Under the SHERP, a senior Ambulance Victoria manager will be appointed as Health Commander to oversee and, where appropriate, direct the operational health response to a major emergency. Depending on the emergency, the health response may involve a number of different agencies. The Health Commander will work with the Incident Controller and represent all responding health agencies as a part of the EMT.

At the scene of an emergency, the Health Commander will advise the Incident Controller of the need to activate field emergency relief services via the MERC in the EMT.

At an emergency relief centre or other relief setting, the Health Commander can activate a range of health services. Personnel at the scene of the emergency or another location where emergency relief is being provided should alert the Health Commander immediately if elements of emergency relief relating to health (including first aid and/or primary care) are required.

6.5 Healthcare

Emergency care

When emergency relief is being provided, the Health Commander will undertake a risk assessment to determine the level of health support required. This may include the use of existing qualified first aiders, deployment of a first aid agency, ambulance personnel or medical personnel depending on clinical requirements.

Health services

Health services, such as hospitals, play a critical role in responding to emergencies. Municipalities should develop relationships with local health services to plan for emergencies.

During larger-scale emergencies a variety of regional and/or state-level arrangements and coordination roles may also be activated. This ensures a consistent and strategic approach to responding to the emergency.

Primary care

In larger-scale emergencies, or where primary care infrastructure has been impacted, the SHERP offers several options for temporary primary care. The Field Primary Care Response Subplan outlines primary care options ranging from having clinicians operate existing infrastructure through to the deployment of a field primary care clinic (FPCC).

The decision to activate a field primary care response, including the establishment of a FPCC, will be informed by the Incident Health Commander. The activation and deployment of FPCCs is the responsibility of the State Health and Medical Commander, Department of Health through the State Health Coordinator.

Key activation triggers include:

- usual access to primary healthcare is limited or non-existent
- local/neighbouring general practice and community health service capacity is already at a maximum, or capacity is expected to be exceeded in the near future
- ready transportation or road access is difficult and so patients are unable to access neighbouring services
- members of the affected community are highly traumatised or considered to be at great risk of harm if movement from the local environment was encouraged.

Activating a field primary care response can have a positive effect in a community, as it provides a practical, tangible demonstration of support for a local community. The extent of the primary health response varies depending on infrastructure and staffing requirements. A FPCC aims to use existing infrastructure and local staff in the first instance; however, if necessary it may be operated from a non-medical building or mobile infrastructure and staffed by volunteer practitioners from another area. Deactivation of a FPCC should occur as soon as possible, to enable the community to return to normal conditions.

As Ambulance Victoria is the agency responsible for activating and managing the primary care response at the local level, it is important that it is integrated into all aspects of local health emergency relief planning.

Public health

Public health in relief is about preventing the spread of illness by providing safe food, water, shelter and sanitation to an otherwise healthy population. Refer to the relevant sections of this handbook for further planning guidance on food, water and shelter.

The *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* requires municipalities to produce a Municipal Public Health Plan (MPHP) that includes an examination of data about health status and health determinants in the municipality. When developing Municipal Emergency Management Plans municipalities should refer to the Municipal Public Health Plan for guidance. Emergency relief public health planning should take into account a variety of relief settings.

Public health fact sheets

The Department of Health has developed fact sheets in English and other community languages on a range of health issues:

www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

www.health.vic.gov.au

Table 7: Public health planning considerations according to relief settings

Emergency relief setting	Public health planning consideration
Emergency relief site	Power mains and back-up generator, adequate safe water supply, food preparation area, food handlers, monitor for disease outbreaks (respiratory, gastro), adequate toilet/hygiene facilities, consideration of space requirements, sleeping arrangements, physical capacity, access to healthcare / first aid mechanism for referral, waste removal
Where people are (for example in their homes)	Power, water, sanitation, food supply, medication other support requirements
Isolated communities	Power, water, sanitation, food supply, medication other support requirements
Emergency relief centres	Power mains and back-up generator, adequate safe water supply, food preparation area, food handlers, monitor for disease outbreaks (respiratory, gastro), adequate toilet/hygiene facilities, consideration of space requirements, sleeping arrangements, physical capacity, access to healthcare/first aid mechanism for referral, waste removal

Role of Environmental Health Officers

Local government Environmental Health Officers (EHOs) provide vital information to the Department of Health via the Regional EHO. This ensures consistent and relevant public health messaging and that there are adequate resources to prevent issues of public health significance.

The EHO's role may involve the following:

- advice on food safety (including donated food), inspection of food premises, food preparation areas, food handlers and food distribution outlets
- assessing for safe and adequate water supply
- advising on infectious disease prevention, control and investigation
- waste collection and disposal (including putrescible, dry and/or indestructible sullage); vermin and vector control
- assuring adequate sanitation such as toilets, showers and washing facilities including waste water management; disinfection: either concurrent (immediate) or terminal (at end of isolation)
- assistance with assessment of emergency shelter, including emergency relief centres
- liaison with Department of Health; collection and dissemination of information on public health issues or potential issues

Reconnecting families and friends

7.1 Overview

Separation from family and friends can be one of the more distressing aspects of an emergency. During an emergency, reuniting families and friends is a simple but significant contribution to meeting people's basic needs. Key considerations during planning for reconnecting families and friends are to:

- reunite people separated by an emergency
- reduce the stress and anxiety of families, friends and in the community
- reduce pressure on existing communication channels
- provide information about emergency-affected people to other emergency service agencies for recovery purposes.

In most cases families and friends reconnect independently through telephone contact, direct messaging (such as email and SMS), social media or indirect word-of-mouth.

In 2013 the Attorney-General's office and Red Cross renamed the National Registration and Inquiry System (NRIS). It is now referred to as Register.Find.Reunite.

In situations where there are large numbers of people seeking to reconnect, or where traditional forms of communication are not possible, then reconnection will be facilitated through the Register.Find.Reunite. service.

7.2 Register.Find.Reunite.

Register.Find. Reunite.

Person A registers
+
Families, friends or
loved ones inquire
about Person A
=
Match

Victoria Police is responsible for the control and coordination of Register.Find.Reunite. service and Red Cross manages and operates it. Register.Find.Reunite.

commences during the response phase of an emergency, continues throughout relief efforts, and assists to inform recovery.

Field registrations

Field registrations can occur in an emergency relief centre, at an emergency site/staging area, or in some cases, a hospital. Field registrations should not occur in a recovery centre; they are for reconnecting families and friends during an emergency.

The time in which Register.Find.Reunite. normally occurs ranges from hours to days.

State Inquiry Centre

Register.Find.Reunite. field registration kits

Register.Find.Reunite. field registration kits are held in 24-hour police stations and in many other stations across Victoria. They contain all of the resources required to operate Register.Find.Reunite. – registration and inquiry form pads, instructions, and stationery and signage. During an emergency it is the responsibility of the MERC to arrange for the delivery of the Register.Find.Reunite. kit to the nominated location where registrations are to occur.

Victoria Police and Red Cross are responsible for ensuring that kits are maintained annually, and after an emergency. For further information please contact Red Cross on 1800 232 969.

Victoria Police may ask Red Cross to activate the State Inquiry Centre if there are:

- large numbers of missing people and/or evacuations
- the volume of inquiries at emergency relief centres exceeds the capacity of the Red Cross team to respond
- the emergency is impacting on several municipalities and/or regions throughout the state
- the emergency is raising significant concern in the wider community.

A call centre will be established at Red Cross' Victorian office, 23–47 Villiers Street, North Melbourne. The dedicated phone number (1800 727 077) will be communicated to the community through multiple communication channels but should not be included in any emergency planning communications so as not to cause confusion if the number is not activated for a particular emergency event.

Online

Victoria Police may ask Red Cross to provide the opportunity for individuals and families to register and find family, friends or loved ones during an emergency through the Register.Find.Reunite. service at www.redcross.org.au or through the Register.Find.Reunite. app. Activation of the service will be communicated to the community through multiple communication channels but **should not** be included in any emergency planning communications so as not to cause confusion if the website is not activated for a particular emergency.

7.3 Local government planning considerations

Registration, via the Register.Find.Reunite. service, will normally occur within an emergency relief setting, such as an emergency relief centre. It is important that local government has established procedures with Victoria Police and Red Cross regarding notification about the activation of the service. These procedures should be detailed in the MEMPlan.

It is the responsibility of the local government to establish the Register.Find.Reunite. area in an emergency relief centre. This should take into account that Red Cross requires access to communications infrastructure which, at a minimum, should consist of a fax machine. Furthermore, consideration should be given to the importance of maintaining the privacy of affected people.

Register.Find.Reunite. is not a sign-in process for people visiting or sheltering at the emergency relief centre. It is therefore important that local governments have a separate emergency relief centre sign-in process. Local governments should consider ways to share information collected through the sign-in process with other agencies present in the emergency relief centre.

Collection of personal information

Experience from many emergencies has shown that people impacted by an emergency dislike having to provide the same information repeatedly while at a relief centre and want relief agencies to work together and share information.

People visiting a relief centre are likely to be in a state of anxiety due to the emergency and many may be feeling distressed or traumatised. While council and agency staff are keen to provide assistance, it can be frustrating and further upsetting for people to be faced with many agencies asking the same questions at the same location.

The local council, Red Cross and the Department of Human Services have worked together to produce a common form that collects the same basic information that the three agencies require. This personal information form (PIF) has been designed so that individuals approaching multiple agencies in a relief centre only need to provide this information once.

The main purpose of the form is to relieve the burden of repetition and therefore reduce the stress placed on individuals who are visiting the relief centre.

Using the form can also free up time for emergency personnel by reducing the amount of information they need to collect from individuals. When agency personnel are provided with a copy of the PIF they do not need to repeat the questions covered by the form, giving them more time to provide personal support and to focus on collecting additional information specific to that agency.

Any agency represented in the relief centre can complete the form. This allows flexibility for different agencies to take the lead role in completing the PIF or for all agencies to share the role when there are large influxes of people.

Table 8: What Register.Find.Reunite. is not

Outcome	Reason
A list of missing people	Register.Find.Reunite. registrations provide Victoria Police with information about people with known locations. Victoria Police maintains separate databases of people who are suspected or known to be missing.
A method of tracking people throughout the emergency	Register.Find.Reunite. provides the location and contact details of people when they register. Often people move to alternative locations once they have registered.
A requirement for people affected by an emergency to receive relief or assistance	The assessment criteria for relief services, such as emergency financial assistance, are independent and put together by the organisation providing the service.
Compulsory	Some people may choose not to register for a variety of reasons, including privacy concerns. It is important to ensure that affected people are treated with respect by not forcing them into a situation that could cause additional stress.
Exclusively for people directly affected by the emergency	Register.Find.Reunite. is made up of two parts – ‘registrations’ and ‘inquiries’. People who are not directly impacted by the emergency but who know someone that may have been affected can make an ‘inquiry’.
A sign-in process for people visiting/sheltering at the emergency relief centre	Affected people should have the opportunity to access shelter after an emergency. Accessing other relief services, including Register.Find.Reunite., are optional relief services.

7.4 Register.Find.Reunite. activation

The decision to activate Register.Find.Reunite. is made by Victoria Police depending on the size, scale and complexity of the emergency. Some factors that may determine the need for Register.Find.Reunite. activation include:

- a decision has been made that the affected community should relocate
- access routes are disrupted
- there are large numbers of missing people and/or evacuations or known deaths
- there are large numbers of travellers or tourists in the area (for example holiday destinations in the summer)
- the volume of inquiries at an emergency relief centre exceeds the capacity of the Red Cross team to respond
- the emergency is impacting on several municipalities and/or regions throughout the state
- a large number of calls are being made to 000 or other emergency information lines.

The decision to activate Register.Find.Reunite. follows the process outlined in the Figure 3.

Victoria Police members, trained agency staff (for example Tullamarine Airport staff) or trained local government staff may register people affected by the emergency, or take inquiries from family or friends, until Red Cross personnel arrive. This must be undertaken using the correct forms to ensure people have given their consent for information to be shared.

Victoria Police will distribute information about the activation of Register.Find.Reunite., and if relevant, contact details for the State Inquiry Centre.

Information about the need for Register.Find.Reunite. registrations and inquiries should be included in key messages, and replicated in messages released by relief organisations. Local government and agencies should

consider providing a link to the Red Cross website if Register.Find.Reunite. online has been activated to take registrations and inquiries.

Figure 3: Register.Find.Reunite. activation

	Role				Planning Considerations	
	Activation (Victoria Police)	Provision (Red Cross)				
	State Emergency Response Officer (SERO)	Regional Emergency Response Coordinator (RERC)	Municipal Emergency Response Coordinator (MERC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State Duty Officer Divisional Operations Officer 	Registration teams	
Decision to activate Register.Find.Reunite. in the field	✓	✓	✓		Requirement to work closely with local government to undertake needs assessment and to establish best location for undertaking registrations Victoria Police responsibility to ensure that the Register.Find.Reunite. kit is delivered to the nominated registration location	
Decision to activate Register.Find.Reunite. online	✓	✓			If activated then the web address needs to be integrated into Victoria Police community messaging	
Decision to activate State Inquiry Centre (SIC)	✓				If activated then the 1800 number needs to be integrated into Victoria Police community messaging	
Coordinate activation of Red Cross teams (SIC / field registrations)				✓	Responsibility to work closely with Victoria Police in order to understand registration needs and explain Red Cross capacity	
Register people at nominated location					✓	Responsibility to work closely with staff / volunteers (for example local government staff) at the nominated location in order to communicate Red Cross needs / capacities and to ensure the dignity and privacy of any people registering or inquiring using Register.Find.Reunite.

Responsibility

Registration of unaccompanied children

Red Cross may support Victoria Police registering unaccompanied children under the age of 18. The registration process is the same; however the priority should be identifying and protecting unaccompanied children and promptly reuniting them with their legal guardians by contacting Victoria Police.

Red Cross personnel registering and/or taking inquires from people, in any setting, are not permitted to release any information pertaining to children. Anyone inquiring about the whereabouts of children will have their contact details passed on to Victoria Police.

Registration of casualties/deceased

Victoria Police may request Red Cross to register casualties/deceased persons. If this is in a hospital setting, Victoria Police will attend, possibly with a representative from an agency that provides psychological first aid, such as the Victorian Council of Churches.

Red Cross personnel registering and/or taking inquires from people, in any setting, are not permitted to release any information about deceased persons. Anyone inquiring about a deceased person will have their contact details passed on to Victoria Police. It is the responsibility of Victoria Police to notify families, and if necessary friends, of any deceased persons.

Sharing of personal information

Any personal information captured during the Register.Find.Reunite. 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. Disclosure may occur where an organisation reasonably believes that the disclosure is necessary to lessen or prevent:

- a serious and imminent threat to individual's life, health, safety or welfare
- a serious threat to public health, public safety, or public welfare.

For further information see the Office of Victorian Privacy Commissioner:
www.privacy.vic.gov.au

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

During an emergency Red Cross may consent to releasing non-identified Register.Find.Reunite. statistical information to activated emergency operations centres. The decision to release this information will be made by the Red Cross State Commander, from the Red Cross State Emergency Operations Centre, in consultation with the Victoria Police State Emergency Response Officer (or delegate). Types of information that may be released include:

- number of field registrations, inquiries and/or matches
- number of registrations, inquiries and/or matches made through the State Inquiry Centre
- number of registrations, inquiries and/or matches made through Register.Find.Reunite. online.

7.5 Other means of reconnecting families and friends

While control agencies and local government 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. This can be assisted by providing community information and with simple steps, such as providing universal phone chargers in emergency relief centres and other relief locations. Social media such as Facebook and Twitter other ways people affected by an emergency can reconnect with their family and friends in a relatively short space of time.

Shelter

8.1 Overview

Emergency shelter provides spaces of relative safety for people affected by or facing the effects of an emergency. It can be as simple as people using 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 can 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 needed for a matter of hours or more than a day, particularly with a slow-onset emergency.

During the emergency, it is important for the MRM to ascertain quickly what the likely demands are for longer-term accommodation and begin to task recovery agencies to meet these demands.

Regardless of the type of shelter and length of stay, it is important that people affected by the emergency know about the financial and psychosocial support available from government and relief agencies.

8.2 Own arrangements

Early effective communication from the control agency about the likelihood of an emergency occurring and the expected impact will help people plan their own arrangements.

Staying with family and friends

Staying with family and friends can provide affected people with an instant support network and assist them to remain together. It can be relatively quick to organise, requires limited or no agency support, and fosters self-help and independence.

Family and friends are likely to automatically reach out to affected people, after seeing them displaced, possibly lose their personal belongings, their property, or a family member or friend.

It is important to recognise and factor into planning that these arrangements may only be short term, as it can contribute to mental, physical and financial hardship issues.

Shelter in place

In some situations, an alternative to evacuation is to shelter in a suitable home, building, structure or other safe area. Sheltering in place should be considered if the risks of evacuation are greater than the risks of sheltering in place. Examples of when shelter in place may be advised include chemical, biological or radiological emergencies. For example, in January 2011 fire agencies advised residents in Footscray to stay in their homes as a result of a fire in a local textiles factory.

The decision to shelter in place can be made by individuals and families themselves, and under certain circumstances, by control and government agencies.

Regardless of whether people choose to, or are instructed to, shelter in place, local governments need to provide them with emergency relief and support.

8.3 Assisted shelter options

MEMPlans and regional plans should identify a number of emergency shelter options for individuals and families who are not able to shelter in place or find alternative arrangements. Planning should include arrangements for:

- local shelter options including development of arrangements to use local hotels or motels during emergencies
- the activation of emergency relief centres
- a variety of timescales ranging from shelter that can be used to provide temporary respite and information through to shelter that can be used overnight
- providing emergency financial assistance (if available).

Planning should establish a coordinated approach to shelter requirements. For example, this may include arrangements between the ICC and MECC to work together to disseminate information about the activation of assisted shelter options.

Local shelter options

Some people may need help finding shelter. This may be as simple as finding out if they need support to book accommodation or contact relatives.

Local shelter options can be planned for and detailed in the MEMPlan. Where possible, this can include pre-arranged agreements with agencies and/or providers including student accommodation, hotels, motels and caravan parks.

Local families may offer informal temporary accommodation to affected people. This is known as billeting, and it often emerges in the early stages of an emergency. It has potential risks to both the persons affected by the emergency and the host, and is therefore not encouraged. It can also impact on the provision of relief as control agencies and local governments may not be aware of these arrangements.

All Commonwealth-funded residential aged care services (including those operated by Victorian public sector agencies) are required under Commonwealth law to have emergency management plans in place. Residential facilities funded by the Departments of Health and Human Services are expected to have plans in place with suitable arrangements for the relocation of their clients. It is recommended that municipalities work with these facilities to understand what plans are in place.

Emergency relief centres

An emergency relief centre is managed by the local government and is a building or place established to provide immediate and basic relief services to affected people. Emergency relief centres should aim to meet current universal standards and consider the specific needs of children, young people, seniors, people with additional needs and culturally and linguistically diverse community members in the layout, design and services provided.

People who use emergency relief centres can be at the margins of society or travellers within an area. It is important to recognise this and ensure that staff have the appropriate skills to work with people from a wide range of backgrounds and occasional complex needs including mental health and wellbeing issues. Given the stressful nature of an emergency it is also important that staff can manage conflict. It is crucial that control agencies and local government maintain communication during the early stages of an emergency, to ensure emergency relief centres are established when needed, and so that relief services can be coordinated and delivered. Additionally, emergency relief centre standard operating procedures should include information about when, how and where regular communication should occur and between whom.

Services provided in an emergency relief centre can include shelter, food and water, non-food items such as bedding and clothing, and health services such as psychological first aid. The responsibility for providing and coordinating relief services is to be detailed in MEMPlans.

The Incident Controller may request local governments to activate emergency relief centres to assist people affected by the emergency. This could be considered once all other sheltering options have been exhausted. Councils can also determine to establish a relief centre based on local demands for assistance. Early considerations prior to activating an emergency relief centre include:

- that the proposed site and its surrounding area face minimal risk
- that the access routes taken by staff, volunteers or affected people are not subject to risk from fire, flood or any other type of threat
- whether the site is appropriate for relief organisations to provide the required services
- how the activation of the centre would be communicated to the public and to the emergency management sector, including:
 - name
 - address
 - relief services provided (for example Register.Find.Reunite., animal welfare)
 - number of expected affected people
 - number of days that the centre is expected to be open (if known).

For further information on emergency relief centre preparedness and planning, activation and operation, refer to 'Guidance note 3: Emergency shelter (emergency relief centres)'.

For further guidance about planning for and managing emergency relief centres, adapted from well-recognised international humanitarian best practice to the Australian emergency sheltering context, see: www.redcross.org.au/agencies.aspx

Emergency financial assistance

Emergency financial assistance is intended to help people meet basic and urgent needs including the cost of accommodation and or related costs, such as one-off transport costs, where this is causing personal hardship.

Emergency financial assistance may not be available for all types of emergencies.

For further information on emergency financial assistance refer to 'Section 11: Emergency financial assistance'.

Children and young people in emergency relief centres

Emergency relief centre planning should include:

- nutrition, hygiene (for example nappies) and sleeping requirements for infants less than 12-months old
- age-appropriate food, toys, activities and supervision for pre schoolers and primary-school children
- age-appropriate activities for adolescents
- consideration of the medical needs of children and young people through identification of local paediatric medical services in the MEMPlan
- consideration of the psychological needs of children during the emergency, including planning for child-friendly spaces or including local youth workers in the MEMPlan
- establishing processes for managing unaccompanied children coming to the emergency relief centre, such as identifying staff with Working with Children Checks, maintaining an up-to-date contact list of child protection service phone numbers, and working with Victoria Police to reunify children with their families.

Setting up a child-friendly space helps to alleviate chaos, provide respite for parents and provide a link to recovery activities for children. Child-friendly spaces are more than a play-space for children and are operated by staff with expertise in child development. Child-friendly spaces should be incorporated into MEMPlans, using local government staff with expertise in children's services, and incorporating relief organisations with specialist experience such as Save the Children. At all times the physical and psychological safety of children and young people should be considered the utmost priority.

The Department of Human Services has developed best practice guidance to improve planning for the needs of children and young people during emergencies. For further information refer to: www.dhs.vic.gov.au

8.4 Longer-term accommodation

Emergency shelter should provide people with immediate relief from an emergency only. If people need longer-term accommodation solutions, they should access recovery services.

Advice and support on accommodation options can be provided to municipalities through the Department of Human Services. Accommodation options include short-to-medium term emergency accommodation such as in motels, hotels or caravan parks, and longer-term interim accommodation: more likely a house, flat or other dwelling. It may also be necessary to move from emergency to interim accommodation as an affected household's future housing plans become clearer.

An important consideration for longer-term accommodation solutions is to ensure there is flexibility to assist people for the duration of need. In some cases this will be until permanent housing becomes available which can take many months and possibly years. For these households the suitability and sustainability of the interim housing is a primary consideration.

Case study 4: Community action relief teams

The 2011 floods impacted five towns in the Yarriambiack Shire over three weeks. Following the floods the council initiated a series of reviews that identified that the Yarriambiack Shire staff were over-worked and that the community needed more information on the roles and responsibilities for managing emergency events.

With this in mind the MRM and flood recovery officer worked with DHS, Red Cross and SES to develop and deliver emergency relief training for community members so that they could assist in the relief effort. In May 2012 eight training sessions were conducted in Hopetoun and Rupanyup and community members learned how emergencies are managed from local through to state level. The final week of training consisted of an emergency exercise involving community members setting up and managing an emergency relief centre until local government staff arrived.

The shire has now resourced these community-based teams with emergency relief centre kits and included this in its MEMPlan.



Food and water

9.1 Overview

Sustaining continuity of food supply in an emergency and keeping businesses open increases the resilience of the community. Food continuity, through the maintenance of commercial supply to local businesses can lower demand for food and water through the emergency relief system.

This section does not cover donated food, which needs to be handled sensitively. For further information on donated food refer to 'Section 13: Harnessing goodwill'.

9.2 Local government planning considerations

Key considerations for food and water are listed below:

- People and communities must have access to food and water to support their immediate basic needs.
- Local partnerships, providers and resources should be used wherever possible.
- If the emergency creates food insecurity, implement direct food and water provision.
- Food and water provision will only be implemented on a time-limited basis.

The return to normal supply should be resumed as soon as possible using contingencies that include strong community partnerships to ensure long-term sustainability and ownership.

- Emergency response agencies that have the capacity to provide food and water for their own personnel are to use internal organisational resources before requesting from the emergency relief system.

Arrangements with nominated agencies/suppliers for the provision of food and water during an emergency should be detailed in the MEMPlan, and could include Red Cross, The Salvation Army, Lions Clubs Victoria, local caterers, supermarkets, and restaurants, cafes and hotels. Arrangements with these agencies should set out:

- planning and preparedness activities
- activation processes and communications timelines
- training and exercising opportunities
- financial considerations.

When developing MEMPlans, municipalities should specify the range of food and water needs people could have during an emergency.

Table 8: Local government food and water planning considerations

Context	An example of a potential planning consideration
Planning for people sheltering in place	Plan for how to communicate updates to the food and water situation.
Planning for potentially isolated individuals and communities	Establish connections with emergency response agencies to plan food and water resupply (that is, delivery of food and water to potentially isolated communities).
People staying at an emergency relief centre	Undertake planning to understand the capacity of local food and water emergency relief providers who may be required to support emergency relief centres.
Households and communities with drinking water supply issues	Integrate contingency planning undertaken by the local water authority into the MEMPlan.

The food and water needs of individuals and groups with special dietary requirements also need to be considered and planned for.

Maintaining food safety standards is paramount. Municipal Environmental Health Officers play a significant role in overseeing food safety which involves inspection of food premises and food preparation areas.

For further information on food safety visit the Department of Health website at: www.health.vic.gov.au

9.3 Local provision of food and water

During the initial stages of an emergency relief, efforts will be focused on ensuring basic and immediate food and water needs are met. This will be managed by the nominated provider for food and water in the Municipal Emergency Management Plan.

Emergency relief packs

Emergency relief packs are designed to help an individual survive the first five days of an emergency.

The packs are for individuals to use at home, when sheltering in place, or at alternative emergency shelter locations. Emergency relief packs are not intended for use within an emergency relief centre.

The packs contain basic food and personal necessities including breakfast cereals, tinned meals, water, long-life milk, toilet paper, soap, sanitary items for women and oral hygiene products.

The type of meal provided in the first 24 hours of an emergency may vary according to time of notification, agency response and the facilities available. At best, the first meal should aim to be of the community standard; however a 'fast food' style or take-away meal may have to be considered sufficient in this instance. Initially, the provision of food and water during an emergency can be through emergency catering, and the short-term supply of emergency relief packs. This initial provision may be provided directly by the nominated food and water provider. Alternatively the nominated provider may choose to coordinate provision using third-party catering organisations, such as local restaurants.

As soon as possible, the provider should move to systems and facilities that use local businesses, while maintaining appropriate nutritional content and quality.

Food and water may need to be supplied to isolated communities (for example during flood events). In these situations it is important that municipalities have agreed plans to work with response agencies to maintain supply. If household drinking water supply is affected, municipalities should seek the assistance of their local water corporation. When local resources are unable to meet the demand, the Department of Environment and Primary Industries, following public health advice from the Department of Health, will coordinate emergency drinking water supplies to affected areas.

Case study 5: Involving communities in the food and water emergency relief effort

When providing food and water, Red Cross seeks to quickly move from ensuring that basic and immediate needs are met to looking at ways of using existing networks, including local businesses and restaurants, to provide food and water. By stepping back and overseeing the local emergency relief effort Red Cross enhances the affected community's ability to contribute to its own recovery and restore essential community functions.

As a result of the Aberfeldy Fire in January 2013 Red Cross catering teams were activated to support Wellington Shire. The Red Cross catering team initially purchased enough food to cater for the first meal in the recently activated emergency relief centre. From this point it was assessed that local supermarkets, bakeries and butchers would be able to provide any further supplies and meals. Over time the smaller retailers were involved, including establishing arrangements with the local sports club to cater for the Wellington Shire MECC and the CFA.



9.4 Escalating requests for supplementary resources

If local arrangements are unable to meet the demand for food and water, coordination and provision of food and water is escalated. This occurs when the locally nominated provider's capacity is exhausted. In these cases, municipalities can request supplementary resources through the HHS REOC. The HHS REOC will delegate responsibility for coordination to Red Cross.

Red Cross, as the lead agency for coordinating food and water at the regional and state levels, works in partnership with providers of food and water, such as Foodbank Victoria and The Salvation Army, to ensure that individuals and communities affected by emergencies have access to food and water to support their immediate basic needs. Foodbank Victoria is able to provide municipalities with emergency relief packs within 24 hours of receiving a request. In order to manage allocation of resources during emergencies, all requests for food and water assistance should first be directed to Red Cross, which will decide if a third-party organisation is needed.

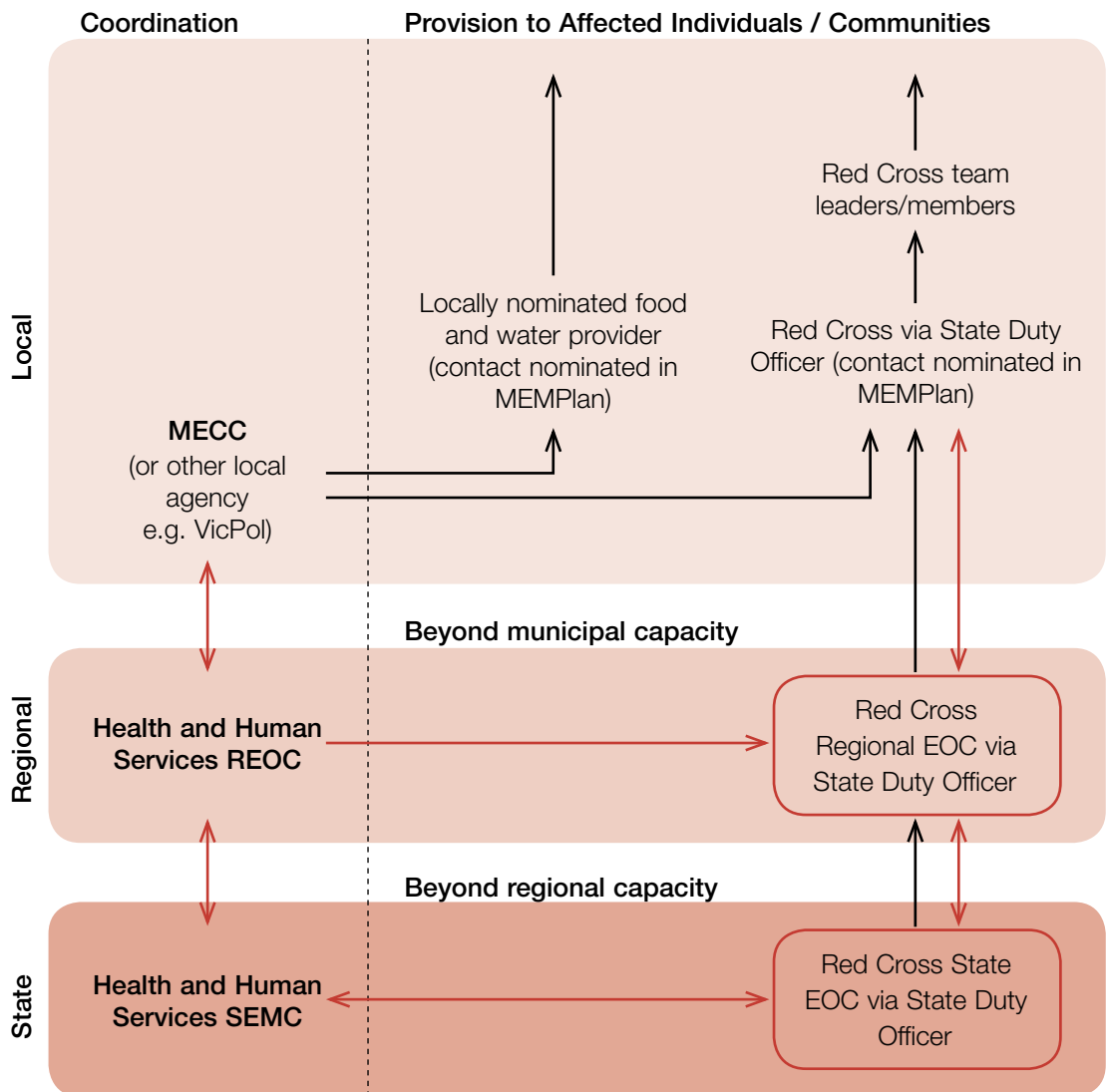
If supplementary resources are required over and above what Red Cross or other food and water providers can provide, Red Cross will request supplementary resources through the Health and Human Services State Emergency Management Centre (HHS SEMC). The HHS SEMC will determine the appropriate course of action, which may include requesting support from the State Emergency Response Officer.

Ensuring the continuity of the food supply chain is facilitated by government at a state level. The Department of Environment and 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. The Department of Environment and Primary Industries is a

conduit between government and the private sector. This would occur where:

- there has been substantial damage to food manufacturing and distribution infrastructure or essential services disruptions (such as power, water and transport) which has the potential to impact on the state
- an emergency prevents replenishment using existing contingencies for normal commercial supply chains, such as when a community has become isolated.

Figure 4: Escalation and coordination of food and water



Non-food items (material aid)

10.1 Overview

The term ‘non-food items’ is used to describe the immediate and basic material needs people may have during, and after, an emergency. Individuals, families and communities affected by an emergency need items such as clothing, bedding and personal necessities to ensure their personal comfort, dignity, and health and wellbeing.

This section does not cover donated goods. Goodwill during an emergency needs to be carefully managed. For further information refer to ‘Section 13: Harnessing goodwill’.

10.2 Local planning considerations

Municipalities, when developing their MEMPlans, should specify the range of non-food items people could need during an emergency. These may depend on whether, for example, people are sheltering in place, they are isolated or they are staying at an emergency relief centre.

The requirements for particular individuals and groups within a community also need to be considered and planned for according to the community profile set out in the MEMPlan.

Arrangements with nominated agencies/suppliers for the provision of non-food items during an emergency should be detailed in the MEMPlan, and possibly through a memorandum of understanding between the parties, to be reviewed annually and/or after an emergency. These arrangements should set out:

- planning and preparedness activities
- activation processes and communication timelines
- training and exercising opportunities
- financial planning considerations.

Agencies/suppliers could include The Salvation Army, St Vincent de Paul, local retailers, and camping and disposal stores.

Where the local nominated agency for non-food items is The Salvation Army or St Vincent de Paul, a cost recovery charge may be placed on municipalities requesting items such as blankets or mattresses. This will be at the discretion of The Salvation Army and St Vincent de Paul, and will usually be applied when non-food items have not been sourced from donated goods. To ensure the smooth operation of cost recovery procedures it is important that all requests for assistance are made in writing.

10.3 Local provision of other material needs

During an emergency the highest priority for non-food items would typically include:

- bedding (mattresses, pillows, sheet sets, blankets)
- clothing (including towels)
- baby items (prams, cots, nappies)
- personal items (toilet paper, soap and oral hygiene products).

It is important that the local non-food item provider is contacted early in the relief activation, including when local government is considering opening an emergency relief centre, so that sourcing and transportation of these items can occur.

When other non-food items are required, particularly during a slow-onset emergency, these items will be planned for and provided as required. It is the responsibility of the local government to undertake the community needs assessment for these items and to contact the local non-food item provider for assistance.

10.4 Escalating requests for supplementary resources

Where local arrangements are unable to meet the demand for the provision of non-food items, coordination and provision of non-food items is escalated above the local level. Escalation may occur through government or, if already involved, through The Salvation Army internal escalation procedures.

At a regional and state level The Salvation Army may choose the appropriate provider, either itself or another provider, to meet the needs of affected people. Other providers include St Vincent de Paul; a provider of bedding materials, clothing and baby items. These providers should only be requested by The Salvation Army.

Where supplementary resources are required over and above what The Salvation Army or other non-food item providers can provide, providers will request supplementary resources through the HHS SEMC. The HHS SEMC will determine the appropriate course of action which may include support from private providers and/or a request to the State Emergency Response Officer.

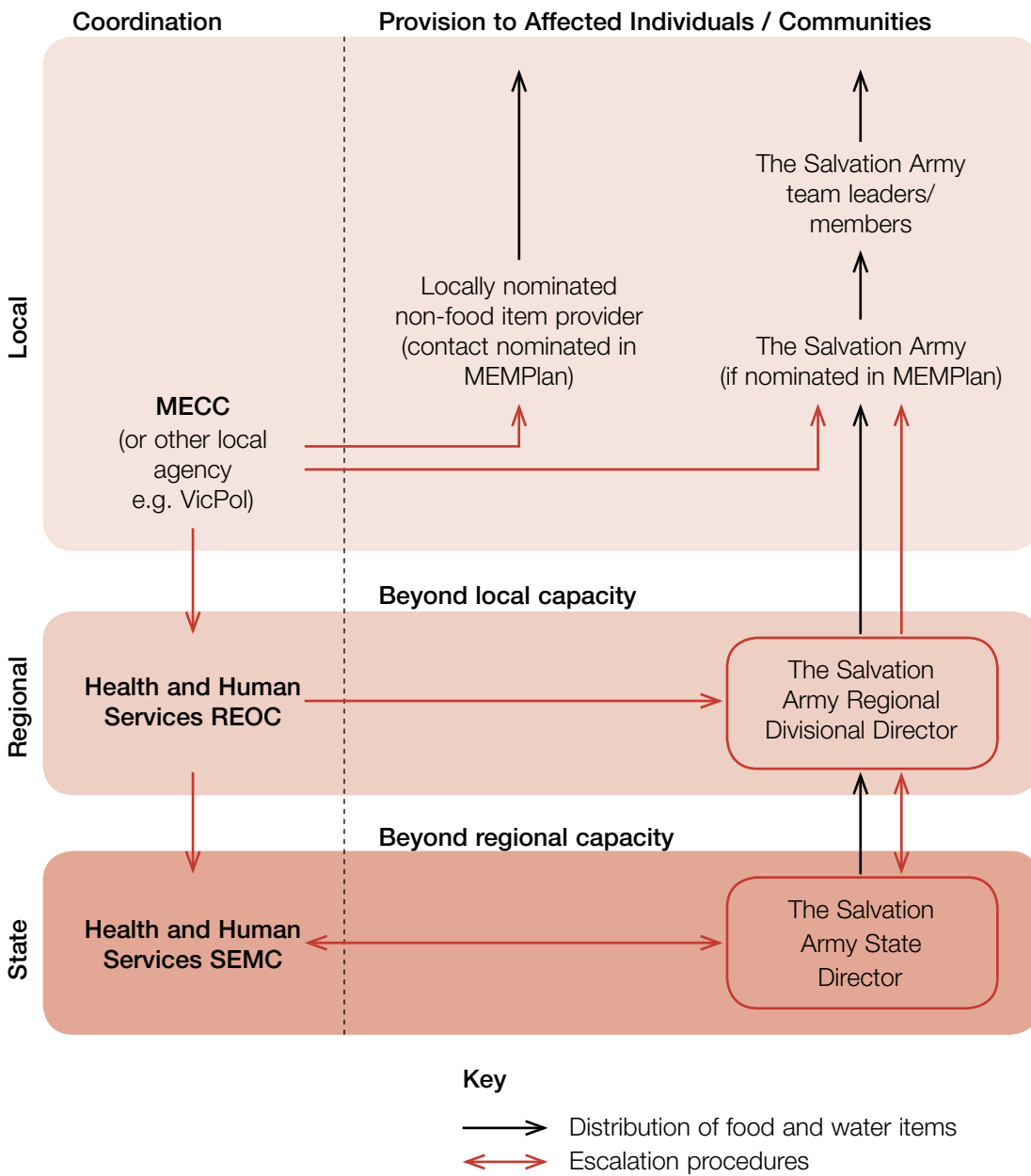
These arrangements, for escalating requests for supplementary resources, are detailed in Figure 5.

10.5 Planning the transition to recovery

During the transition to early recovery the planning considerations for non-food items will generally focus on:

- phasing out the direct provision of non-food items by emergency relief providers and encouraging affected people to purchase independently from local retail stores
- managing excess non-food items that have not been distributed throughout the emergency
- planning for any non-food item requirements that may be required during recovery.

Figure 5: Escalation and coordination of non-food items (material aid)



Emergency financial assistance

11.1 Overview

Emergency financial assistance is intended to help people meet basic needs in a dignified manner. It is not compensation nor is it an entitlement.

Financial pressures immediately after an emergency can cause stress and uncertainty. Financial assistance from the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments can help alleviate this stress for eligible events.

Financial assistance needs to be managed carefully and sensitively because if the intention of the assistance is not well communicated it can set up expectations within the community that are then not met, and lead to frustration directed at government and relief agencies.

In addition to government programs there may be other types of financial assistance that are made available. In the past this has included not-for-profit, community organisations and appeal funds.

11.2 Victorian Government

The Department of Human Services administers the Victorian Government's Personal Hardship Assistance Program (PHAP), which includes two categories of assistance:

- emergency relief assistance
- emergency re-establishment assistance.

The PHAP provides financial assistance to alleviate the personal hardship and distress suffered by eligible Victorians, as a result of an emergency.

This assistance is not intended to replace insurance or other compensation for loss.

Emergency relief assistance

Emergency relief assistance payments are available to reduce personal hardship following an emergency, by helping to meet the immediate essential health, safety and wellbeing needs of affected Victorians.

Emergency relief assistance is provided on a needs assessment basis, and is available to assist households after house fires, and after natural emergency events. Eligibility for financial relief assistance is assessed case by case to determine if the person or family has suffered (or is likely to suffer) financial hardship in providing members of the household with shelter, food, clothing, personal items or specific transport needs as a result of an emergency.

Emergency re-establishment assistance

The emergency re-establishment assistance payment is available to assist people who do not have adequate resources to return to and re-establish their home. It is subject to income and insurance criteria.

The re-establishment payment can also help people whose homes have become inaccessible for more than seven days as a result of an emergency, such as a fire or flood.

The availability of emergency re-establishment assistance is subject to approval by the Premier or the Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Once approved, the Department of Human Services then administers this assistance.

Eligibility

Eligibility for assistance includes:

- principal place of residence has been destroyed, rendered uninhabitable (unfit to live in), or made inaccessible for more than seven days – all as a result of an eligible natural emergency
- income test, with income limits based on gross weekly family income for PAYE taxpayers, or gross weekly income, minus gross weekly expenditure, for self-employed
- eligibility is established only where loss of essential structure and/or contents are not being met by insurance, compensation or some other assistance.

Costs covered by re-establishment payments

Once eligibility has been established, the emergency re-establishment assistance payment is paid to meet any of the following needs:

- the repair or replacement of essential household items
- essential repairs to housing (to restore housing to a habitable condition)
- demolition or rebuilding works (to restore housing to a habitable condition)
- removal of debris from residential properties
- or to cover alternative accommodation.

For further information visit the Department of Human Services website at:
www.dhs.vic.gov.au/emergency

11.3 Commonwealth Government

A decision about whether Commonwealth Government financial assistance will be available is 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.

For further information on current emergencies and grants visit the Australian Government Disaster Assist website at:
www.disasterassist.gov.au

Animal welfare

12.1 Overview

Many emergencies in Victoria will threaten the state's animal population, including pets, service animals, livestock and wildlife. Agencies should ensure that they consider animals when planning for emergency relief services, as the bonds formed between animals and people can strongly influence decision making of affected persons in times of crisis:

- People may choose to remain with animals or be reluctant to leave if they have not adequately planned for their needs, or do not perceive that the needs of their animals will be met.
- People may seek to enter unsafe or isolated areas to care for them.
- Affected individuals may attend emergency relief centres with animals.

Animals themselves may require housing, containment, supplementary feed or water, veterinary treatment or humane destruction (if injured) and disposal. If not properly managed, these needs can contribute to further suffering and issues of public health and safety.

12.2 Planning considerations

Planning for the needs of animals and delivery of animal welfare support services will assist in minimising the impact of an emergency on animals and the community, and aid the recovery process.

Animal welfare services include, but are not limited to, the following activities:

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

Local planning considerations

MEMPlans should detail the municipality's plans for delivering animal welfare relief services in the context of services provided by other agencies. Planning should note that primary responsibility for the welfare of animals remains at all times with the persons in charge of animals, while also establishing animal welfare contingency measures, including establishing spaces and procedures for animals in emergency relief centres. MEMPlans should:

- list the emergency animal welfare services likely to be required in the municipality
- provide a description of relevant activities, relevant municipal policies and implementation arrangements
- describe arrangements to be used for recording reports of animals requiring emergency welfare in the municipality, or another municipality being supported by another municipality, and coordinating services for those animals

- establish processes for collecting animal welfare information relevant to financial reimbursement
- list Department of Environment and Primary Industries contacts for animal assessment activities for companion animals and livestock, and wildlife
- carcass transport providers and disposal sites
- options for the management of displaced (stray) animals
- potential sites for donated fodder distribution
- alternative emergency water sources for animals
- systems for the management of offers of assistance or donations.

Local arrangements for the management of animals at emergency relief centres should give consideration to:

- the supply of secure and functional housing or holding facilities and their proximity to the emergency relief centre
- accommodation of pet owners wishing to remain with their animals
- feed and water requirements
- animal admission, identification and record keeping (including contacting owners)
- veterinary/health assessments
- the implementation of quarantine measures that will minimise the opportunity for the spread of any disease that might be present
- access to veterinary treatment for injuries, illness and humane destruction
- animals requiring specialist attention (such as horses and wildlife)
- referral of animals with special needs or that are unable to be supported at the emergency relief centre to appropriate shelters or containment facilities
- staff health and safety.

In addition to defining the practical elements of animal welfare relief services, the MEMPlan provides a valuable opportunity to set out the principles that govern management of animals in an emergency. Operational staff are often unsure of how to deal with animals (for example, at relief centres) and a MEMPlan can provide useful guidance by recognising the complementary relationship between the welfare of people and animals (for example, allowing – where practical – people to remain with their pets while attending a relief centre can provide valuable psychosocial support, especially to vulnerable individuals, during times of significant uncertainty).

State planning considerations

The VEAWP describes Victoria's overall arrangements for animal welfare in emergencies. The plan supplements the animal welfare arrangements under incident-specific plans (such as the Australian Veterinary Emergency Plan). It sets out standard expectations for managing animal welfare in emergencies.

Under VEAWP the Department of Environment and Primary Industries is the lead agency for all animal welfare support services, with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), Australian Veterinary Association and the Victorian Farmers Federation having particular roles reflecting their distinctive capabilities.

The VEAWP sets out the responsibilities for agencies involved in emergency management, including the relief services which local Government should plan to provide. It also sets out how agencies can access the range of support services which will be activated in the event of an incident with significant animal welfare impacts.

The Victorian Emergency Animal Welfare Committee supports the plan and includes representatives from a number of local governments.

Case study 6: Yarra Ranges Council emergency animal welfare plan

Yarra Ranges Council has put in place an Animal Welfare Emergency Management Plan, aiming to be prepared for the animal welfare needs of any emergency.

The plan supports this aim with a range of objectives, including coordinating local laws functions and **animal rescue/shelter during emergencies**, and encouraging **community awareness about the need for self-managed animal plans** during an emergency.

Yarra Ranges' plan sets out the accountabilities and operating structures to address animal welfare issues in emergencies and contains extensive detail on how the council will prioritise, coordinate and deliver services to the community in an emergency.

Copies of the plan are available at: www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au



12.3 Provision

Initially, municipalities should activate relevant provisions of their MEMPlan to deal with animal welfare needs. These may include identification of affected animals, management of displaced animals, disposal of animal carcasses, or provision of emergency fodder/water.

When municipal resources (either those owned or available through pre-existing arrangements) cannot meet the demand for delivery of animal welfare support services, a request for assistance should be escalated from the Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre to the State Emergency Animal Welfare Coordinator.

DEPI assesses animal welfare needs following an incident as part of impact assessments. This begins once access to the affected area is granted by the control agency. DEPI will liaise with the MECC to pass on information about animal welfare impacts as it becomes available.

The State Emergency Animal Welfare Coordinator, from the Department of Environment and Primary Industries, supported in major incidents by the State Emergency Animal Welfare Unit, provides statewide coordination across multiple agencies and organisations for animal welfare services during large-scale and complex emergencies.

12.4 Further information

For further information on the VEAWP, guidelines, technical fact sheets and local government animal welfare planning templates relating to animal welfare in an emergency, visit the Department of Environment and Primary Industries website at: www.depi.vic.gov.au

For information about managing animals in disasters visit: www.em.gov.au

Harnessing goodwill

13.1 Overview

The issues of material aid, donated food and spontaneous volunteers need to be handled carefully and sensitively, as they can be represented in the media in simplistic terms, and cause challenges and resentment.

Financial donations are preferable to other types of donations such as material goods. Cash ensures that money can be directed back into the local economy and allows purchases to be made that meet people's actual needs.

This message will be reiterated through media and communication channels at local, regional and state levels. Unsolicited donations of goods, while well meaning, should be discouraged. Money should not be taken at an emergency relief centre or other relief setting, but at a collection point at an alternative location determined by the local government, agency or state government and should follow, where relevant, any official appeal guidelines. The handling of cash should adhere to normal local and state government procedures.

For further information on community information, particularly suggested messaging about donations, refer to 'Section 4: Community information'.

13.2 Material aid

One of the main issues with material aid donations is the management of unsolicited donated goods. Often a large proportion of unsolicited donated goods are unusable or inappropriate for recipients' needs. Administration and storage of these goods is a significant cost and considerable effort can also be required to avoid offending the donors.¹⁶

¹⁶ State Recovery Office 2010, *Management of donated goods following a disaster*, Department for Families and Communities South Australia, Adelaide, p. 5.

The National Guidelines for Managing Donated Goods states that there should never be a need for a general appeal for donated goods as this encourages donations of items that are unsuitable, unusable and in quantities that are often unmanageable.¹⁷

For national guidelines for managing donated goods visit the Attorney-General's Department website at: www.em.gov.au

13.3 Donated food

Emergencies are unpredictable, and the risk of food poisoning is often greater than usual at these times. Food poisoning bacteria are often naturally present in food, even if the food looks tastes and smells normal. Some donated foods can quickly become unsafe if not refrigerated or eaten immediately, especially in warm weather.

It is vital that emergency workers remain healthy when they are attending to emergencies. It is also important that affected people do not suffer additional hardship as a result of food poisoning.

Even if donated food is prepared safely in a community members home, emergency relief agencies cannot guarantee safe storage, handling and distribution of donated ready-to-eat food in emergency conditions.

For further information on donating food to emergency services visit the Department of Health website at: www.health.vic.gov.au

¹⁷ Australian Government 2011, *National guidelines for managing donated goods*.

Case study 7: Black Saturday and pallets of toothbrushes

Immediately after the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria, 25,000 pallets of material aid were donated and delivered to metropolitan Melbourne. Semi-trailers and individuals arrived in the fire-affected areas, having driven from interstate, and on arrival looked for food and accommodation – and warehousing and materials handling equipment to offload the goods. The donated goods were not sorted or categorised.

A caller to a radio station stated that no toothbrushes were available. Later that day 25 pallets of toothbrushes – or approximately 100,000 pieces – were donated. It took 18 months to distribute them even though these items were required immediately after the event.¹



Australian Emergency Management Institute 2011, *Community recovery: Handbook 2*, Australian Emergency Management Handbook Series, Commonwealth Government of Australia, p. 276.

13.4 Spontaneous volunteers

Spontaneous volunteers are individuals, as well as groups and agencies, who seek to contribute assistance but are unaffiliated with the existing official emergency management response and recovery system.

Effective management of spontaneous volunteers is based on the principle that those affected by the emergency are the first priority. Offers of assistance can be productive, but can also overwhelm response and recovery agencies attempting to assist people affected by emergencies. One of the most important tools is a clear and agreed communications strategy. Messages put out through the media play a key role in managing spontaneous volunteers.¹⁸

Municipalities and agencies should have a clear and agreed communication strategy for managing spontaneous volunteers. This will often be captured in MEMPlans. A central and publicised way for people to register their interest (such as a telephone hotline or website) is essential in managing potential volunteers. This reduces confusion and potential duplication of volunteer offers. Enquiries and expressions of interest can then be referred to this registration point.¹⁹

For further information on community information, particularly suggested messaging for managing spontaneous volunteers, refer to 'Section 4: Community information'.

For further information on helping to manage spontaneous volunteers in emergencies visit the Red Cross website at: www.redcross.org.au

¹⁸ Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and Red Cross 2010, *Spontaneous volunteer management resource kit*.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Transition from response to recovery

14.1 Overview

As emergency response activities wind down, the coordination role will transition from response coordination to recovery coordination, which will include coordinating remaining urgent and immediate community needs while planning and implementing longer-term recovery support and services. Relief and recovery planning is a parallel operation to response and commences after the onset of the emergency.

The transition from emergency response to recovery needs to be effectively managed and communicated. It should involve control, relief and recovery agencies.

The timing of transition depends on:

- whether there is a recurring threat
- the extent of impact on the communities
- the extent of known loss and damage
- the level of resources needed for recovery.

14.2 Key planning considerations

As relief services cease and recovery support and assistance is put in place, some of the key questions are listed below:

- What relief activities need to be maintained – and by which agencies?
- What are the additional needs in the short to longer term?
- What is the capacity of the local community to guide their own recovery either formally or informally?
- Who are the local or emerging leaders?
- Is there a procedure for the handover of control agency loss and damage data?
- Are incident recovery plans being developed?
- What is the capacity/capability of local government to coordinate recovery needs?
- What additional resources and funding are required?

14.3 Local, regional and state planning considerations

Response and recovery agencies should work cooperatively during the period of transition and provide each other with appropriate support. Coordination responsibility is passed to the Department of Human Services as the recovery coordination agency at the state and regional level, while local government has management responsibility locally.

Before transitioning relief services and support to recovery, the Municipal Recovery Manager, in consultation with the Municipal Emergency Resource Officer, Municipal Emergency Response Coordinator (MERC), Department of Human Services and the control agency will commence the development of an incident-specific recovery plan.

Incident-specific recovery plans are tailored specifically for recovery activities following an actual emergency. These plans are generally operational plans developed for each emergency, defining strategies and interventions specific to the affected communities. The plans establish a benchmark of priorities as a snapshot in time and aim to agree and communicate the immediate, medium and long-term goals for recovery. These goals are reviewed regularly throughout the recovery process in consideration of the changing environment.

It is best practice to include local or emerging leaders in these discussions, to give a community focus, as well as demonstrating commitment to community led recovery. This may be as simple as including the local councillor for the affected area, or prominent community members (for example, school council president or netball club president).

The plans may include:

- the impacts to individuals, families, households, businesses and communities
- the recovery needs of affected communities, depending on the scale and impacts of the specific incident
- what is already known about the community, its demographics, community narrative, networks, local issues, strengths, weaknesses, local and/or emerging leaders
- the transition from relief to recovery including dates
- recovery strategies for:
 - the social, economic, natural and build environments
 - specific groups such as children and young people
 - identifying key partners to support current and future recovery needs
 - linkages to established networks
 - establishment of recovery committees – municipal and community
 - community engagement
- volunteer coordination
- communication strategies to ensure people are receiving timely, concise and accurate guidance on recovery.

14.4 Conducting debriefs

Once emergency relief operations and response has ceased, debriefing of the emergency can occur. A debrief is the forum to discuss what occurred in order to identify good practices and areas for improvement.

A debrief should take place as soon as is practicable after an emergency. Municipal, regional and state emergency response coordinators will convene the meeting, and all agencies that participated should be represented. Such meetings may be chaired by the chairs of emergency management planning committees.

Debriefing should evaluate the success of the outcomes at each step of the emergency relief process. Actions resulting from a debrief may include revising training, amending plans or operating procedures, or changing policy.

Guidance note 1: Planning for different communication channels

Overview

People affected by an emergency (and the general public) will seek and receive information through a range of communications methods and networks.

You may need a spokesperson to represent your organisation in interviews or media commentary. A spokesperson should:

- be credible, authoritative and confident
- have compassion and acknowledge the impact of the emergency event
- only discuss facts or topics which they know to be true or verified
- never comment on behalf of another agency without prior approval
- avoid sensationalising events, perpetrating rumour or eliciting blame or fear
- empower people to stay informed and take necessary precautions.

Radio

During emergencies, radio is one of the most relied-upon media channels in Australia. It is a forum for breaking news.

ABC Local Radio, the Victorian Commercial Radio Broadcasters, and other commercial and/or community/ethnic radio broadcasters are signatories to the Victorian Government's Emergency Broadcasters' MoU that obliges them to broadcast emergency information and warnings. They will be keen to include messaging in their regular news and current affairs programs, and provide free airtime to promote important community information – such as the location of emergency relief centres.

- Language style should be conversational, credible and authoritative.
- Speak clearly and at a measured pace.
- Avoid jargon and acronyms.
- Repeat key messages.
- Keep message simple, direct and action oriented.

Television

Television is a popular way for people to obtain information, especially as a way for people outside affected areas to stay informed. Morning and evening programming are key viewing times.

ABC TV (including ABC News 24) and SKY NEWS TV are signatories to the Victorian Government's Emergency Broadcasters MoU that obliges them to broadcast emergency information and warnings.

- Messages need to be short and sharp.
- Reporters and producers will want appropriate images, such as live video, stills and/or graphics, to accompany stories.
- The broadcasting of images of people or animals in distress should not be encouraged as this can trigger negative responses.

Emergency alerts

Emergency agencies leading the response to a major incident can access multiple systems to issue public information, advice and warnings. These include the Emergency Alert (EA) telephony system, where an Incident Controller (IC) can authorise the sending of a short automated message to landlines and mobile phones within a geographically defined area (that is, from a town or city block, to statewide).

In rare cases, it may be appropriate for a relief agency to consider using EA to send a short message to recipients (for example to advise recipients of the location of an emergency relief centre). All such requests must be made via the ICC, and be approved by the IC.

Emergency information lines

The Victorian government operates the Victorian Emergency Recovery Information Line (VERIL) on 1300 799 232.

In the immediate aftermath of an emergency, the VERIL would typically offer information on:

- the location and opening times of emergency relief centres
- relief support services, including emergency financial assistance (if we must mention this at all)
- methods to locate missing family members, relatives and friends.

Call centre operators use prepared scripts that include Q&As covering most relevant topics, tailored for an individual event.

Relief agencies, including local government, can submit information to VERIL by contacting the H&HSEM's State Emergency Management Centre. All information/scripts submitted by a relief agency to a VERIL call centre should use simple, concise, clear and unambiguous language.

Local government and emergency relief agency websites

Victorians are increasingly relying on online sources of information to guide them in an emergency. During an emergency, local government in an emergency-affected area, as well as DHS and supporting relief agencies, should have appropriate information on their websites as soon as practicable.

Once information is posted on a website there is an expectation that it is kept current, factual and relevant. This can place significant strains on the resources of relief agencies.

Information written for websites should be simple, direct and action oriented. It is also important to consider culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities and, or people with a hearing disability – who may need translation services, or crucial information available in a range of languages.

Social media (such as Facebook, Twitter)

Increasingly municipalities are using social media to communicate with local audiences. Relief agencies should consider the following:

- Be prepared to engage with the two-way stream of communication of social media users – and have policies in place to guide appropriate usage.
- Build an audience before any emergency (for example by sharing preparedness advice).
- Use consistent, daily interaction during the emergency to build credibility and trustworthiness and to engage with the community.
- Establish procedures for aligning messages with other communication channels.

Community meetings and forums **Word-of-mouth**

Community meetings and forums are one of the best ways for affected people to receive relief information and advice, and gather to consider community challenges.

Community meetings allow attendees a chance to ask questions, discuss issues, and perhaps pose solutions. They provide an opportunity for communities to vent frustrations and anger – which may be uncomfortable for some, but this is nevertheless an important part of the recovery process.

Relief agencies should consider the following:

- Meetings should be chaired by a trusted local authority (for example local mayor, police officer) as local residents are more likely to respond to advice from these people.
- Information should be succinct, empathetic and free from jargon.
- All verbal information should be reinforced with printed material.

Community meetings can be emotional, and affected people may not yet be ready to listen, or absorb large amounts of complex information.

Though it has a very small initial spread, word-of-mouth is perhaps the most influential medium for conveying information. Those spreading the message should be a trusted local authority, such as the local mayor or councillors, the local police officer, school principal or doctor. Residents will generally more readily accept this advice ahead of that from external sources, such as government figures or external media. Communicators should identify, seek out and equip these people with the latest information as soon as practicable during and after an emergency.

Guidance note 2: Psychosocial support

Support agencies working in the field

Personal support and psychological first aid

A key focus of psychosocial support in the early stages of an emergency is the provision of personal support to affected individuals, families and communities. Personal support is aimed at preventing longer-term physical and mental health problems.

Personal support is the provision of information, practical assistance, emotional support, assessment of immediate impact for the individual, assessment of immediate needs and referral to other support agencies and services as required.²⁰

Personal support is delivered by trained and experienced volunteers and agency staff and is based on the principles of psychological first aid of promoting safety, calm, connectedness, self and group efficacy, help and hope.²¹

Simple strategies such as meeting and greeting people, providing food and refreshments for people, having signs so people can be directed to the assistance they need quickly, attending to the physical comfort of individuals, and allowing families to stay together are all consistent with the principles of psychological first aid.

Personal support includes:

- focusing on providing information, establishing safety, providing food and water and protection from the environment
- facilitating the provision of practical assistance
- listening without judgement to how people have been affected
- encouraging self-reliance
- encouraging people's beliefs in their capacity to help themselves
- gently observing people to identify if specialised assistance is required
- helping people to reunite with primary supports such as family and friends
- helping people to reconnect with other significant supports, like faith-based supports
- offering people access to other services.

²⁰ International Federation of the Red Cross Red Crescent.

²¹ Australian Red Cross personal support training workbook.

²² Australian Psychological Society and Australian Red Cross 2013, *Psychological first aid: an Australian guide*, Australian Psychological Society and Australian Red Cross, Australia.

Table 9: Practical ways psychological first aid can be applied in the field²²

Psychological first aid principles	Examples
Safety: Reduce exposure to threat; help people meet basic needs; provide physical and emotional comfort; and provide information on how to get needs met.	In a relief centre reassure people that they are in a safe environment. Orientate people to the space around them. Offer people food, water and warmth.
Calm: Stabilise people who are overwhelmed; provide a stress-free environment; listen to people and be compassionate; offer information about the emergency.	Take people into quiet areas of the relief centre where possible. Be honest about what you don't know. Listen to people who wish to share their stories. Provide people with relevant, up-to-date accurate information. Remind people that their reactions are common. Use clear language in a calm well-paced voice.
Connectedness: Keep families together; help people contact friends, loved ones and support people; respect cultural norms.	Ensure that people have registered themselves and/ or made inquiries about loved ones with the Register.Find. Reunite. service. Check whether people have friends or family at the centre. Provide telephones where possible for people to make contact with loved ones. Discuss how people may reconnect with other sources of support, for example faith-based support.
Self-efficacy: Help people meet their own needs by helping them to prioritise problems and solve them; normalise their feelings.	Ask, 'What would you like to do now?' Help people act for themselves.
Help: Find out what services are available and link people to them; offer practical help and information.	Familiarise yourself with the services available. Introduce yourself to the other agencies and find out what they do. Listen carefully to what people's needs are and make an assessment of what their needs might be and where they might find support. 'I will help you as best I can.' 'There are other people in here who can help you too.'
Hope: Be willing to help; convey expectancy that people will recover.	Convey to people the belief that things will get better, but without being trite and patronising.

Outreach

Outreach is a service-delivery method that can be used to provide psychosocial support to people after emergencies and to carry out needs assessment. It involves visiting people in their homes, temporary accommodation, businesses or at community events.

Visits ideally occur within the first two weeks of an emergency to ensure that people have access to early psychosocial support and assessment of their needs so agencies are able to tailor their services effectively.

Aims of outreach

There are three key aims of outreach:

1. provision of psychosocial support
2. information collection and distribution (two-way communication)
 - assessment of relief/recovery needs
 - general conversation and observation
 - distribution of timely information about relevant local services
3. referrals to local support services.

Purpose of outreach

Outreach visits are conducted in order to:

- collect critical information to address urgent needs
- promote resilience and decision making in individuals and communities
- validate people's experience and help people feel emotionally supported
- inform people about relevant services
- encourage people to be socially connected
- identify people that need additional support
- identify service gaps
- foster positive relations between agencies and affected communities.

Outreach is for all emergency-affected people, but especially those who:

- have no knowledge of services or how to access them
- are isolated or have limited access to transport
- believe they are not entitled to services
- do not think they need services
- are unable to readily access relief centres or community meetings.

Conducting outreach

Outreach can be conducted by a range of organisations. It may be carried out by one organisation or by multiple agencies in partnership. A multiagency approach allows for a range of areas of expertise in providing psychosocial support and assessing need. Agencies that may be involved will vary but may include:

- Department of Health
- Department of Human Services
- Red Cross
- Victorian Council of Churches
- building inspectors
- community health organisations
- volunteer organisations
- Centrelink
- Department of Environment and Primary Industries
- local government.

Information that may be collected or communicated will vary depending on the nature and time of the event. Some of this information may relate to the following:

- food and water
- financial assistance
- material aid
- building inspections of dwellings
- insurance assessments
- livestock support
- essential services including water, sewerage, gas and electrical supply
- emotional support.

It can be overwhelming for emergency-affected people to be swamped by many visitors collecting information. It is therefore critical to collaborate when planning coordinated outreach visits to consolidate personnel and information.

Outreach can be resource intensive and time consuming. There are a range of volunteer organisations that are trained in outreach and may be available to assist. Utilising untrained people may be harmful.

Practical considerations

Outreach may be coordinated at the local or regional level depending upon the nature and scale of the event as well as organisational capacity.

Table 10: Practical ways psychological first aid can be applied in the field

Phase	Tasks/considerations
Planning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and seek agreement from agency or agencies to conduct outreach and list in MEMPlan. 2. Identify factors that will heighten support requirements, for example the number of houses destroyed, people displaced, deaths. 3. Ongoing communication to MEMPC and other agencies about who is responsible for what. 4. Ensure nominated agency or agencies understand activation and communication processes. 5. Nominated agency or agencies participate in MEMPC meetings.
Operations	<p>Prior to outreach</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Activate designated outreach organisation/s and clarify whether multiagency approach to be used 2. Confirm purpose, objectives and activities of outreach program with partner agencies. 3. Assemble and brief outreach management and operational staff. 4. Establish mapping systems (geographic, property). 5. Establish data collection, collation and distribution systems. 6. Clarify what information can or cannot be shared between organisations. 7. Determine which specialist services residents may be referred to. 8. Confirm capacity of specialist services to action referrals. 9. Inform communities about the outreach program (if time allows). 10. Prepare contingencies for communicating with non-English speakers and people with communication disabilities. 11. Ensure safety issues for outreach teams are identified, communicated and managed. 12. Assemble resources for outreach teams: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – vehicles – printed information – food and water 15. Establish rosters.

Table 10: Practical ways psychological first aid can be applied in the field

Phase	Tasks/considerations
	<p data-bbox="517 589 727 618">During outreach</p> <p data-bbox="517 633 1129 663">16. Undertake briefing of outreach field teams outlining:</p> <ul data-bbox="560 674 1358 887" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="560 674 842 703">– purpose and objectives <li data-bbox="560 714 1070 743">– teams, maps and areas to visit/address lists <li data-bbox="560 754 1358 815">– information about available services and which specialist services they can obtain referrals for <li data-bbox="560 826 810 855">– safety and wellbeing <li data-bbox="560 866 858 896">– data collection methods. <p data-bbox="517 907 1031 936">17. Maintain communications with field teams.</p> <p data-bbox="517 947 775 976">18. Debrief field teams.</p> <p data-bbox="517 987 703 1016">Post outreach</p> <p data-bbox="517 1028 1102 1057">19. Provide information and feedback to partners on:</p> <ul data-bbox="560 1068 1118 1214" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="560 1068 1078 1097">– nature and extent of impact on infrastructure <li data-bbox="560 1108 783 1137">– community needs <li data-bbox="560 1149 855 1178">– individual specific needs <li data-bbox="560 1189 1118 1218">– identification of high-needs persons/households. <p data-bbox="517 1229 1110 1258">20. Provide referrals to specialist services as required.</p> <p data-bbox="517 1270 1031 1299">21. Ensure ongoing support for outreach staff.</p>

Guidance note 3: Emergency shelter (emergency relief centres)

Overview

These guidance notes provide information for local government preparing and planning, activating, and operating an emergency relief centre.

Municipalities are encouraged to liaise with other local governments and the Department of Human Services to ensure they are preparing appropriately for the management and operation of emergency relief centres. A number of checklists have been included at the back of this handbook to assist in this process.

Preparedness and planning

Conduct emergency relief centre planning

MEMPlans must identify a list of appropriate emergency relief centre sites. There is no prescribed number of emergency relief centre sites a municipality must have – this should be considered according to the needs of the municipality's community. Sites should be documented and communicated to the MEMPC, but not to the community until the decision is made to activate the relief centre in an emergency.

When selecting potential sites, it is important to consider a range of factors, including:

- a location in the municipality that is relative to current and anticipated population concentrations
- capacity – both for day usage and potential overnight accommodation
- having sufficient distance from potential risks or threats
- contractual or lease arrangements
- availability at short notice with 24-hour access.

Municipalities should also consider taking a regional approach to the use and deployment of emergency relief centres and associated resources, through sharing arrangements

and memorandum of understanding. At a minimum, emergency management personnel should be familiar with the location of emergency relief centre sites in neighbouring municipalities.

For further guidance on best practice standards in Australian emergency relief centres, adapted from international best practice, refer to:

www.redcross.org.au/agencies.aspx

Conduct emergency relief centre site assessment

The MERO, MRM and MERC, or their delegates, are responsible for assessing the suitability of emergency relief centre sites. When conducting emergency relief centre planning, input should be sought from the following relief agencies:

- Ambulance Victoria
- Department of Human Services
- Metropolitan Fire Brigade / Country Fire Authority
- Red Cross
- Victoria Police
- Victoria State Emergency Services.

All locally agreed arrangements should be documented in MEMPlans and, where necessary, formalised in a memorandum of understanding between the parties.

When conducting a site assessment of an emergency relief centre, the following should be considered:

- Visit the site with appropriate local government staff such as the facility manager, or a person who has an operational knowledge of it and an Environmental Health Officer.
- Conduct the assessment at a time that minimises its impact on community users.
- Use a defined set of criteria against which sites will be commonly assessed.
- Access the site's floor plan in both hard and electronic copies.

- Overlay the 'normal usage' floor plan with an 'emergency relief centre usage' floor plan.
- Take photos of the emergency relief centre and storing them with the layout.
- Record the outcomes of the assessment.

Minimum standards for emergency relief centre sites are not prescribed. However, an emergency relief centre should have the following:

- power supply and communication equipment
- adequate ventilation
- accessibility (including provisions for people with disabilities)
- kitchen or food preparation area
- water supply
- toilets, washroom facilities and segregated areas.

Identify rooms or areas for specific functions

Once the emergency relief centre's location is selected, an emergency relief centre layout plan should be developed that assigns locations for the centre's functions.

Table 11: Essential and desirable rooms in an emergency relief centre

Essential	Desirable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible main entry, including a reception area (one main entry point / restrict access via other doors) • Register.Find.Reunite. area • First aid • Accessible toilet and shower facilities • Food preparation area • Eating area • Sleeping areas • Separate area for emergency relief centre operations and planning meetings by all agencies • Communications area / noticeboard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smoking area • Personal support and privacy area • Prayer room • Child friendly space • Baby changing area • Visiting area • Recreation area • Staff rest area • Holding area for companion animals

Washroom and toilet facilities

There should be sufficient hand basins, baths or showers, and toilet facilities for the number of people in the centre. These facilities must be segregated (include at least one universally accessible toilet and shower), and need be located an appropriate distance from food preparation, eating and sleeping areas.

Where there are insufficient toilets or washroom and shower facilities, MEMPlans should provide details of known service providers able to provide portable facilities at short notice.

Refer to the Emergency Relief Site Assessment Checklist for more.

Emergency relief centre kits

The emergency relief centre kit contains items that are immediately required to set up an emergency relief centre. Municipalities can consider pre-packaging and storing these kits so that they can be accessed quickly in an emergency.

Refer to the Emergency Relief Centre Equipment Checklist for more.

Activation

Incident Controllers are responsible for determining the need to activate emergency relief services. The following people have the authority to activate 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 of this handbook):

- 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).

Each impacted municipality should monitor local conditions and emerging community requests for assistance and determine the need to establish a relief centre or relief services in discussion with the Incident Controller.

Some events will require an emergency relief centre to be set up in an adjoining municipality. Prior arrangements should be established and documented in the MEMPlan for this eventuality.

Once a suitable emergency relief centre has been nominated, the MERO or MRM will appoint and brief an emergency relief centre manager.

The emergency relief centre manager will then make arrangements for the selected emergency relief centre to be opened, collect the necessary equipment and attend the centre.

Establishing an emergency relief centre

The emergency relief centre manager is responsible for setting up the centre. It will generally require a minimum of two people to open up and establish a centre, but this may vary depending on the size of the centre itself. People affected by the emergency will have been notified of its location by emergency radio broadcast messages or other communication channels.

Assigning roles and responsibilities

The following roles may be involved in the establishment and operation of the centre:

- emergency relief centre manager (may also be known as the Relief Centre Coordinator or Team Leader)
- deputy emergency relief centre manager
- other local government staff
- Municipal Emergency Response Coordinator (MERC)²²
- Municipal Emergency Resource Officer (MERO)*
- Municipal Recovery Manager (MRM).*

The roles, responsibilities and management structures will reflect the size and scale of the emergency, and the emergency management arrangements.

Establish rooms or areas for specific functions

The Emergency Relief Centre Manager should seek to assign locations for the centre's functions according to the pre-prepared emergency relief centre layout plan. Please note that in some circumstances a level of improvisation may be required.

Print and display appropriate signage

Signs must be displayed at the centre to indicate key services (such as Register.Find.Reunite. service) and locations (such as toilets). Directional arrows may also be used to direct centre users where appropriate. It is recommended that such signage is included in the pre-prepared emergency relief centre kit.

Noticeboards should also be used to display important information for people affected by the emergency (such as activities planned for the day or support agencies visiting the centre). When printing and displaying signage consider any special requirements (for example, culturally and linguistically diverse people may require signage to be translated).

For further guidance on types and uses of universal signage during emergencies refer to: www.reliefweb.int.

Purchase or source essential provisions

The emergency relief centre manager (or delegate) is responsible for sourcing essential provisions. Requests for resources or materials should be referred to the MERC, who will liaise with the MERO and MRM at the MECC. Financial accounting for local resources used in emergencies is the responsibility of the MERO or the MRM, and should be in accordance with the normal financial arrangements of the municipality. Provisions should be purchased using the municipality's existing purchasing protocols. Where practical, all purchases should be charged to a single charge code to create an audit trail for cost recovery at a later date.

²² The MERC, MERO, and the MRM and are likely to be stationed at the MECC. The other roles are located at the emergency relief centre/s.

Operating an emergency relief centre

People management

Local government staff

Local government personnel in the MECC are responsible for overseeing the deployment and wellbeing of local government staff at the emergency relief centre.

Normal human resources policies should apply as far as is practical, and the municipality's human resources department may be called upon to provide support or expert advice.

The number of local government staff required to effectively operate an emergency relief centre depends on several factors including:

- the number of people affected by the emergency
- the complexity of the needs of people attending the centre
- the length of the emergency relief centre operation
- the size of the centre, and the activities occurring in it (for example, while Register. Find.Reunite. is operating higher staffing numbers may be required).

The people that attend the centre and the reasons for attending will also affect the number and type of local government staff required (for example, child-care workers, attendant carers and healthcare support services for people with disabilities).

The emergency relief centre manager is to take steps to provide welfare support to local government staff, including:

- providing a suitable working environment (such as providing security arrangements are in place)
- allowing adequate time for briefings, debriefings and shift handovers
- managing workloads
- providing rest and recreation areas
- ensuring regular breaks

- supplying hot and cold drinks, snacks and meals
- maintaining a supportive atmosphere
- making psychological support and counselling available
- providing information and assistance regarding staff families and related issues
- taking into consideration the travel and access arrangements to and from the relief centre site
- providing after-hours accommodation for staff unable to return home
- recognising post-emergency event staff needs.

It is important to recognise that local government staff may be emotionally affected as they may be working longer shifts far outside their normal day-to-day practice. Additionally, staff may not have access to their normal facilities or equipment, have concerns about their own families, friends and property, and may not be able to obtain information or reassurance about these matters.

Relief agency staff

The emergency relief centre manager is to take steps to also provide support to agency staff in an emergency relief centre. Individual agencies and organisations may have their own internal policies and procedures for operating in an emergency relief centre, where possible, the steps listed above should also be considered for agency staff.

It will also be important to provide briefings and establish reporting lines between agency staff and local government staff. Briefings should also occur, covering:

- when opening a centre
- for any incoming staff and volunteers
- at shift changes
- when the situation or objectives change
- when closing the centre (debriefing).

Affected people

People affected by the emergency who present at an emergency relief centre will experience a range of emotions. They may feel numb, shocked, disoriented, confused or uncertain about the future.

The emergency relief centre manager, through the MERC, MERO and MRM, will facilitate the activation of relief services to address their health needs, particularly psychosocial support services.

The role of the Meet and Greet team

The Meet and Greet team is the first point of contact at an emergency relief centre. Most affected people have never visited an emergency relief centre; therefore it is important they receive a warm welcome and initial assistance. Relief agency personnel will also look to the Meet and Greet team to provide preliminary guidance about the emergency and services offered at the centre.

The team can be expected to provide:

- basic information on the emergency relief centre and services available
- triage any urgent needs and prioritise waiting times
- ensure a waiting area and queuing system is established
- liaise with centre management to ensure cooperation between the precinct, traffic and facility management teams
- supply refreshments and children's activities, as needed
- provide personal support.

Emergency relief centre management staff should consider providing the Meet and Greet team with up-to-date key messages and information. Key messages may include:

- what an emergency relief centre is
- information about the incident
- what essential items (e.g. food, water, blankets, clothing, first aid) are being provided at the centre
- what services are being provided by local government and support agencies including:
 - personal support
 - accommodation
 - non-food items (material aid)
 - care and assistance for pets / animals
- where further information about the emergency can be found.

Logistics management

It is essential to ensure ease of access to the emergency relief centre. There should be one logical entry and one logical exit point for vehicles and these should not obstruct access by emergency services and relief agencies. In managing the logistics of the emergency relief centre, the following should also be considered:

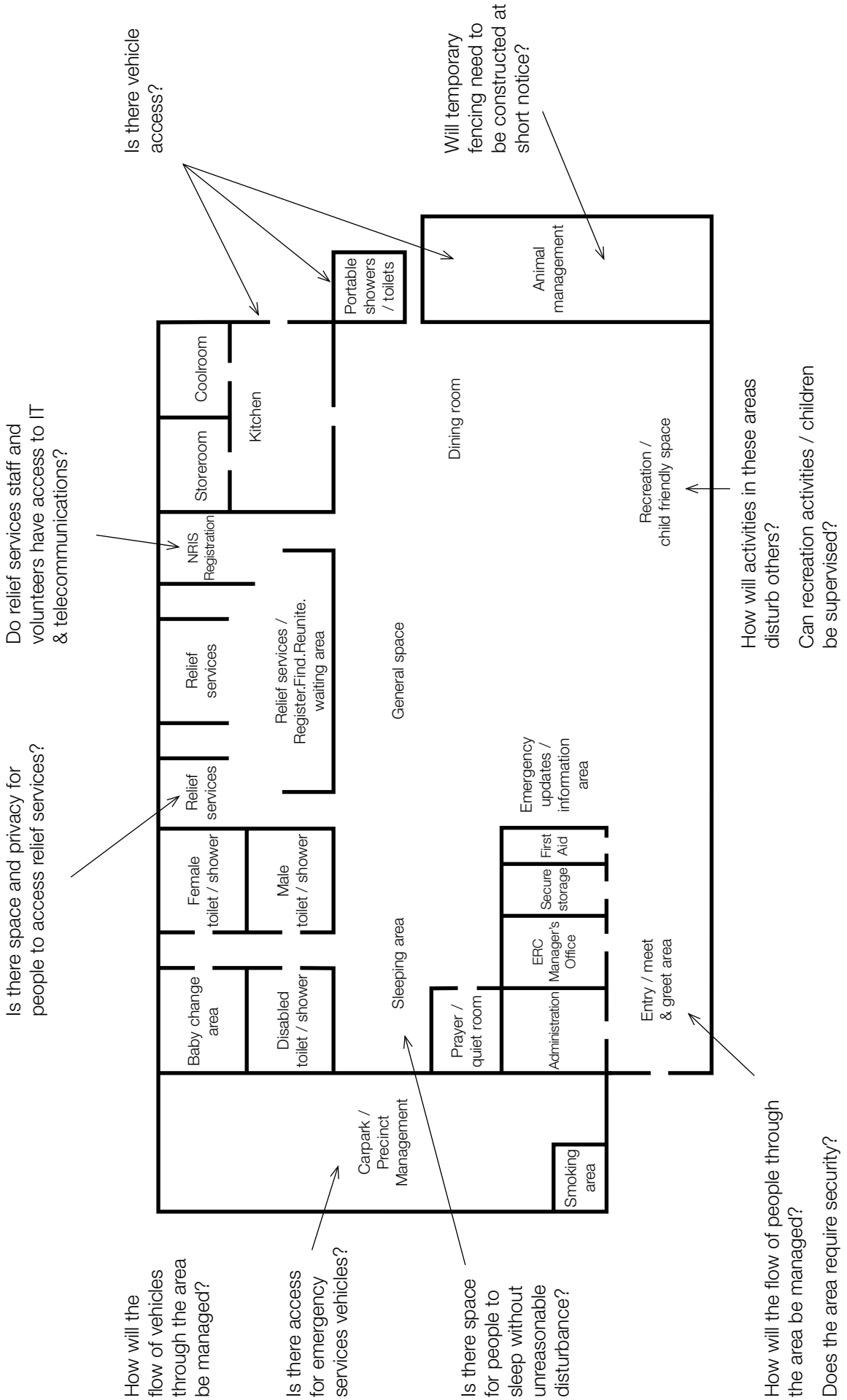
- Ensure that adequate space has been provided for all relief agencies.
- Manage queues that may form outside the centre.
- Monitor the stock of material supplies and arrange replenishment as required.
- If possible, provide a secure storage facility for local government and relief agency staff, and for the possessions of people affected by the emergency.
- Contact Victoria Police for advice on public safety issues as required.
- Restrict public parking so as not to inhibit site or vehicle access.
- Undertake an assessment of whether a security firm is required.
- Determine acceptable service levels for all of the above points.
- Provide universal access to emergency relief centre, toilets and showers.

Escalation procedures

Operational issues arising in the emergency relief centre should be escalated to the MERC, MERO and MRM in the MECC.

Guidance note 4: Emergency relief centre layout planning considerations

This diagram is only an example layout of an emergency relief centre. When conducting relief planning it is important to adapt the available space in the most appropriate manner to meet the needs of affected people.



Checklist 1: Overarching emergency relief checklist for local government

Tasks	Considerations	Completed (Y/N)
Review MEMPlan to ensure it covers relief activities and overarching areas of emergency relief planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relief activities (community information, psychosocial support, health, Register.Find. Reunite, shelter, food and water, non-food items (material aid), emergency financial assistance, animal welfare) Partnering with communities Resource needs and capacity Specific needs of the community Recovery planning Planning with response agencies Financial planning and reimbursement 	
Review MEMPlan to ensure it covers relief operational considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Level of relief agency and sector capacity Managing relief operation/coordination centres Establishing information sharing and reporting procedures Establishing briefing processes for emergency relief staff / volunteers and the community Activating mutual support arrangements with other municipalities Establishing links with the Department of Human Services 	
Review membership and operating arrangements of the MEMPC to ensure representation from relevant relief support agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to EMMV – Part 6. Municipal Emergency Management Planning Arrangements Guidelines for Committees 	
Put in place mechanisms to conduct emergency relief impact and needs assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The extent of damage and types of emergency relief assistance needed Impacts and consequences of the emergency The timing and types of support required by communities affected by the emergency 	
Develop an internal workforce support strategy to be utilised during emergency relief activations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involving senior management Peer support Staff contingency arrangements 	

<p>Review and update all relevant internal and external local plans to include emergency relief</p>	<p>Municipal Emergency Management Plan</p> <p>Municipal Public Health Plan</p> <p>Whole-of-Council plans, such as risk management and business continuity plans</p> <p>Emergency management standard operating procedures</p>	
<p>Conduct exercises and / or workshops to test emergency relief planning and preparedness arrangements</p>	<p>Coordination arrangements</p> <p>Support services for isolated individuals and communities</p> <p>Emergency relief messages for the community</p> <p>Activating and operating emergency relief centres</p> <p>Managing the transition from response to recovery</p>	
<p>Establish planning and operational links with the Department of Human Services at a regional level</p>	<p>Attending regional committee meetings</p> <p>Providing input into regional relief planning</p> <p>Clarifying emergency relief reporting requirements</p> <p>Clarifying escalation procedures</p>	

Checklist 2: Emergency relief centre site assessment

This checklist may assist in conducting a site assessment for potential emergency relief centres. An item noted with an asterisk (*) is considered by the document's authors to be a mandatory consideration.

Site details	
Site name and address	Usual site use
Melway/VicRoads reference	
Site manager details	*Anticipated capacity (catering)
After-hours access	*Anticipated capacity (sleeping)
Site photographed?	Site floor plan documented?
Audit conducted by	Audit conducted on (date)
Local Government	Additional comments
Victoria Police	
Ambulance Victoria	
DHS	
MFB / CFA	
Red Cross	
VICSES	

Checklist 2: Emergency relief centre site assessment (continued)

	Assessment Criteria	Yes	No	Comments
Location (generic)	Is the emergency relief centre's location appropriate?			
	Does the site's usual purpose make it suitable to be used as an emergency relief centre?			
	Are there surrounding buildings which could be put to use? <i>Note: An emergency relief centre should not be located in proximity to a staging post.</i>			
	Are there nearby shopping facilities?			
	Could this venue be used for overnight accommodation? With optional separate sleeping area for cultural needs? <i>Note: the recommended ratio is 5m² of space per bed.</i>			
	Is the site able to be listed with the water authority as a critical site for restoration of water supply?			
	If using tank water is there sufficient capacity to meet the reasonable demands of an emergency relief centre?			
	If using tank water is the water normally fit for human consumption?			
	Can the site be supplied from at least two alternative electricity zone sub-stations?			
	Is the site able to be listed with the electrical authority as a critical site for restoration of electrical supply?			
	Will the site be impacted by known sewage overflows, pumping station failures or other causes?			
	Is the site able to be listed with the sewage authority as a critical site for the restoration of waste water services?			

	Assessment Criteria	Yes	No	Comments
Risks (surrounding area)	Is the site within 1 km of a Bushfire Prone Area?			
	Has the CFA confirmed that the site is in a defendable space?			
	Could the site become isolated in a bushfire for a significant period?			
	Could the overhead power lines and/or telephone lines to the site be destroyed in a bushfire?			
	Could the route taken by staff, volunteers or affected people be subject to fire attack?			
	Is the site above the appropriate flood contour?			
	Could the site be isolated by flood waters?			
	Is the site within a designated tidal surge zone?			
	Is the site within a dam failure inundation zone?			
	Is the site protected by flood levees, have the levees been assessed as adequate by qualified engineers?			
	Could the approach routes to the site be subject to flooding?			
	Has the MFB/CFA confirmed that the site is outside the Consequence Zone of any major hazard facilities?			
	Has the MFB/CFA modelling for any major hazard facilities indicated that the site would be affected by a gas plume?			
	Could the approach taken by staff, volunteers or affected people be subject to risk from any major hazard facilities?			
	Is there any risk of drowning present – pools, ponds, fountains, waterways?			
Are there any significant traffic risks – major roads, heavy vehicles, passenger / vehicle common use, car park areas?				

Checklist 2: Emergency relief centre site assessment (continued)

	Assessment Criteria	Yes	No	Comments
Site access	Is there ease-of-access for people affected by the emergency, including universal access (level or ramp entry, wide doors, seating)?			
	Is there adequate car parking for the anticipated capacity?			
	Is there ease-of-access to the site for traffic management?			
	Is access for emergency services' vehicles adequate?			
Animal management	Are there appropriate external facilities to the site, such as storage facilities and holding places for pets?			
	Is the kitchen of adequate size for anticipated capacity? Record an appropriate catering capacity.			
Facilities	Is the level of refrigeration adequate, including for medicines requiring refrigeration?			
	Is there an adequate supply of hot and cold water?			
	Is there a dedicated hand wash basin?			
	Could an emergency food vehicle be located near the kitchen with suitable power supply?			
	Is there appropriate provision for a meals area?			
	Could special food requirements or preparation be accommodated (for example, separate preparation and storage facilities)?			
	Is there a range of catering equipment (such as ovens, microwaves, kettles, toasters, urns etc.)?			

	Assessment Criteria	Yes	No	Comments
Facilities	<p>Are there adequate accessible toilet facilities including male, female, child and disabled? (Or could locations for portable toilets be found?) <i>Note: the recommended number of toilets for male patrons is one per 20 people, urinals one per 25 people. Hand basins one per 30 people. For females the recommended number of toilets is one per 15 people.</i></p>			
	<p>Are there adequate accessible shower and washing facilities? (Or could locations for portable showers be found?) Note: the recommended ratio is one shower per 50 people.</p>			
	<p>Does the site have laundry (washing and drying) facilities?</p>			
	<p>Is there room for the storage and provision of material aid?</p>			
	<p>Is there a play area or outdoor playground for children?</p>			
	<p>Is there an entertainment area?</p>			
	<p>Does the site have heating and air conditioning?</p>			
	<p>Is there a room or area in which emergency relief centre staff can hold discussions away from the general public?</p>			
	<p>Is there provision for: Activities to be conducted discreetly, such as attendant care, one-to-one conversations, baby changing, infant feeding? Power points/boards for recharging medical, communication and mobility aids? A multi-faith prayer room/quiet reflective space?</p>			
	<p>Are there a range of rooms available for multiple specific functions, or a large open plan area that can be divided up?</p>			
	<p>Are there sufficient tables and chairs for a variety of uses?</p>			
	<p>Is there adequate external and internal lighting?</p>			

Checklist 2: Emergency relief centre site assessment (continued)

	Assessment Criteria	Yes	No	Comments
IT management	Are there landline phone lines available for public use? If so, how many?			
	Are there phone jacks and electrical points? If so, how many?			
	Are there two landline phone lines available for local government use, and a minimum of one for the Register, Find, Reunite, service purposes?			
	Is there internet access available for public use?			
	Is IT access available and accessible in an emergency?			
	Does the site have mobile telephone reception?			
	Are there photocopiers, fax machines and printers available? If so, how many of each?			
	Is there a PA system available to be used?			
	Are there noticeboards available for use?			
	Does the site have back-up power arrangements?			
Medical services	Is there a designated First Aid area and facilities?			
	Is there stretcher accessibility – wide doorways and ramps?			
	Could a field primary care clinic be set up at or near the site?			
Risk management	Is there fire protection equipment? Are they clearly marked?			
	Are there internal safety/exit signs, or the ability to prominently display temporary signage?			
	Does the site have an appropriate level of security (for example, doorway control or suitable storage for staff belongings)?			
	Are there arrangements for rubbish collection?			

Checklist 3: Emergency relief centre kit contents

Below is a suggested list of materials, for an emergency relief centre kit. Items may be added and deleted from the list as required to suit the needs of each emergency relief centre, and the circumstances under which it has opened. Many items may pre-exist at the site, others may have to be sourced via the Municipal Emergency Response Officer or Municipal Recovery Manager and support agency contacts.

Category	Item	Quantity	✓
Documents (One hard copy of each, together with details for online access)	Local government MEMPlans and associated sub-plans/ recovery plans, including contact lists for key local government personnel, emergency services, maintenance services and key support agencies		
	Emergency relief centre guidance notes (including templates)		
	The municipalities community services directory		
	Melway/VicRoads and relevant municipality maps		
	Any relevant information pamphlets to be handed out		
	Local phone book/ <i>Yellow Pages</i> /other business directories		
Signs (Signage can be downloaded from http://www.aiga.org/symbol-signs/)	Emergency relief centre (exterior large sign or banner)		
	Car parking		
	Entry/Exit		
	Access ramp		
	No standing		
	Information/Inquiries		
	Key services board (to indicate the services offered)		
	Toilets: Male, Female, Universally accessible, Baby change		
	Showers		
	Eating area		
	First aid		
	No smoking and smoking areas		
	Arrows for direction: left, right, up, down		
	Telephone		
	Private area		
	Staff only		
	No animals		
	Prayer room		
Find your language wall chart (refer to: www.healthtranslations.vic.gov.au)			
Reception area welcome notes	Welcome notes available in English and the municipality's most commonly spoken languages		

Checklist 3: Emergency relief centre kit contents (continued)

Category	Item	Quantity	✓
Stationery	Blu-tack		
	Bulldog clips		
	Sticky tape roll and dispenser; masking tape		
	Clipboards		
	Document trays		
	Drawing pins		
	Hole punches		
	Manila Folders		
	Name tag holders and lanyards		
	Paper (A4) and writing pads		
	Pens (red/blue/black), highlighters and pencils		
	Post-it notes		
	Scissors		
	Stapler and staples		
	Sticky labels		
	String		
	A4 ring binders		
Whiteboard markers and eraser			
Communication/ electronic equipment	Clock		
	Universal phone charger		
	Batteries of varying sizes and types		
	Extension cord (extension lead – five metres)		
	Flashing light (mini strobe light – yellow)		
	Megaphone		
	Power board (six outlet)		
	Radio (tuned to emergency station ABC Radio AM)		
	Satellite phone (only in the event of no mobile phone reception)		
	Tabards (identification bibs)		
	Torches		
	Whistles		

Category	Item	Quantity	✓
Suggested equipment for local government staff use only (Quantities to vary with size, anticipated capacity of emergency relief centre, and the number of staff required to resource the relief centre)	Disinfectant		
	Disposable gloves		
	First aid kit (including saline)		
	Fire blanket		
	Hand wash		
	Insect repellent		
	Large black bin liners		
	Matches		
	Paper towels		
	Plastic cups, plates and cutlery		
	Rope		
	Sunscreen		
	Tea towels		
	Tissues		
	Toilet paper		
	Water bottles		
	Washing powder		
	Wet wipes		
	Sanitary pads		
	Tampons		
Baby bottles			
Baby food/formula			
Dummies			
Nappies – small / medium / large			
Food Supplies	Basic staple food items (such as tea bags, instant coffee, UHT milk and muesli bars) with extensive shelf life, for initial requirements only until catering is onsite		
Furniture	Beds / mattresses		
	Chairs		
	Privacy screens		
	Noticeboards		
	Tables		
	Whiteboards		
Technology	Computers (networked)		

Checklist 3: Emergency relief centre kit contents (continued)

Category	Item	Quantity	✓
	Fax machines (for Register.Find.Reunite. use)		
	Photocopier		
	Printers (networked)		
	Portable radio (with back-up battery)		
	Telephones (preferably landlines)		
	Television		
	Generator (if not already installed in the building)		
Catering	Kettle		
	Microwave oven		
	Refrigeration		
	Toaster		
	Urn		
Toilets	Sufficient number of toilets / portable toilets, including accessible toilets		
Washing provisions	Sufficient showers / washing facilities / portable showers, including accessible showers		
	Washing machine / dryer		
Baby equipment	Baby bottle		
Sleeping provisions	Blankets		

Checklist 4: Setting up an emergency relief centre

This checklist may assist in the setting up of emergency relief centres. An item noted with an asterisk (*) is considered by the document's authors to be a mandatory consideration.

Site details			Complete	Site specific information/comments
Site name and address				
Melway/VicRoads reference		Usual site use		
Sleeping capacity		Food and water capacity		
Site manager name		Contact number		
Checklist (in chronological and priority order)				
Prior to departure for emergency relief centre site:				
Advise the Municipal Recovery Manager to notify key support agencies (as listed in the MEMPlan) that an emergency relief centre has been put on standby.				
Confirm that the proposed site and its surrounding area face minimal risk from fire, flood or any other type of threat.				
Confirm that the approach taken by staff, volunteers or affected people is not subject to risk from fire, flood or any other type of threat.				
Arrange access into site (for example, obtain keys and security codes) and notify users or tenants of its use as an emergency relief centre.				
Source site floor plan, other relevant documentation and collect emergency relief centre kit				
Arrange transportation for emergency relief centre staff to site.				

Checklist 4: Setting up an emergency relief centre (continued)

At emergency relief centre site:	
Establish and test communication into and out of the site.	
Communicate with the Municipal Recovery Manager to advise of arrival at the emergency relief centre site and commencement of set up.	
Ensure the emergency relief centre site is appropriately lit and heated/cooled.	
Ensure the emergency relief centre site is appropriately secure.	
Ensure universally accessible public access, entrance, and public areas, with ramps if required.	
Identify rooms or areas for specific functions within the emergency relief centre.	
Designate external areas for emergency relief centre use and establish site management arrangements.	
Designate traffic entry/exit points and establish traffic management arrangements.	
Designate public entry/exit points and reception area.	
Set up the Register.Find.Reunite. service and administration areas.	
Put up signage according to the emergency relief centre use.	
Prepare showers/toilets for public use (if required).	
Prepare kitchen area for public catering (if required).	
Prepare sleeping area for public use (if required).	
Put out furniture and establish communal areas.	
Notify the Municipal Recovery Manager that the emergency relief centre site has been established.	

Checklist 5: Operational checklist for the emergency relief centre manager

The emergency relief centre manager's prime responsibilities are to coordinate resources and services within a designated emergency relief centre. In certain situations it may be necessary to delegate some of these tasks to the deputy emergency relief centre manager, or appropriate delegate.

	Action required	Time completed	Next check	Action completed
Initial tasks	<p>Obtain initial briefing from the Municipal Recovery Manager before attending the emergency relief centre (for example, SMEACS - Situation, Mission, Execution, Administration, Communications and Safety).</p> <p>Confirm that the proposed site and its surrounding area face minimal risk from fire, flood or any other type of threat.</p> <p>Confirm that the approach taken by staff, volunteers or affected people is not subject to risk from fire, flood or any other type of threat.</p> <p>Advise other team members of the activation of the emergency relief centre.</p> <p>Collect emergency relief centre kits and other required equipment.</p>			
Set up emergency relief centre	<p>Assign roles and responsibilities to the deputy emergency relief centre managers and other staff and volunteers.</p> <p>Ensure that all staff / volunteers fulfilling emergency relief centre roles are suitably identified with tabards / ID badges.</p> <p>Direct support staff in setting up the emergency relief centre in accordance with the checklist and floor plan.</p> <p>Communicate emergency relief centre evacuation plans to centre staff and support agency representatives. A designated gathering point should be created outside of the building.</p> <p>Brief emergency service organisations onsite regarding arrangements for receiving and assisting persons affected by the emergency.</p> <p>Assign a staff member to set up an information and communication exchange area with whiteboards and noticeboards. Ensure all relevant information provided by the Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre is made available.</p>			

Checklist 5: Operational checklist for the emergency relief centre manager (continued)

	Action required	Time completed	Next check	Action completed
Set up emergency relief centre	Assess internal facility requirements and refer requests for additional resources to the Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre.			
	Determine the essential provisions required and refer requests for additional resources to the Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre.			
	Consider site logistical management (for example, access, egress, parking, security, safety and refuse) issues and refer requests for additional resources to the Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre.			
	Organise cleaners and other external service providers for ongoing duties as needed.			
	Establish an emergency relief centre logbook.			
Register, Find, Reunite, service	Confirm with the Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre that the emergency relief centre is open to receive persons affected by the emergency.			
	Ensure attendant care and support services for people with additional needs.			
	Liaise with Red Cross and Victoria Police to ensure sufficiently trained staff are available to undertake Register, Find, Reunite, service duties; engage both genders if possible.			
	Liaise with the Municipal Recovery Manager in relation to those people affected by the emergency who require additional consideration or assistance.			
	Establish procedures to document all communications in and out of the emergency relief centre – phone calls, enquiries, liaison with the Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre.			
Ongoing	Establish procedures to maintain communications equipment.			
	Establish procedures to monitor the stock of material supplies and arrange replenishment through the Municipal Recovery Manager.			
	Establish procedures to monitor the arrival of food in accordance with hygiene and food safety standards.			

	Action required	Time completed	Next check	Action completed
Ongoing	Establish procedures to monitor the clean up after meals and other daily events.			
	Ensure that communication is passed on to the relevant parties in a timely, clear, and efficient manner (including to people affected by the emergency).			
	Ensure that regular contact is made with emergency relief centre and support agency staff / volunteers to keep abreast of the situation at the emergency relief centre.			
	Brief emergency relief centre and support agency staff / volunteers at the beginning of each shift.			
	Hold debriefs with emergency relief centre staff at the end of each shift.			
	Hold regular meetings (at least daily) with the team leaders of service providers and support agencies to determine any ongoing and emerging requirements to be incorporated into planning and briefings.			
	Maintain the emergency relief centre log recording all emergency relief centre activities, key contacts onsite, and incidents. This log can be used in debriefing and handover sessions.			
	Ensure that the emergency relief centre is adequately staffed and that there is support in place for staff (for example, staff rest areas, supervision, regular breaks and snacks).			
	Ensure update communication is occurring regularly between the Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre and the emergency relief centre.			
	Advise the Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre of any ongoing requirements.			
	Make informal contact with the local government staff present on a regular basis.			
	Carry out an overall assessment of emergency relief centre operations, based on reports from all parties.			
	Ensure the maintenance of staff and volunteer attendance sign-in sheets.			
	Monitor the impact of the emergency on those affected by the emergency, particularly on individuals that require additional consideration or assistance.			
Liaise with the Environmental Health Officer for monitoring onsite hygiene and food safety requirements.				

Checklist 5: Operational checklist for the emergency relief centre manager (continued)

	Action required	Time completed	Next check	Action completed
Ongoing	Check that all provisions/supplies are tracked and recorded.			
	Provide situational reports as required.			
	At end of a shift, handover to oncoming emergency relief centre managers and advise on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what has happened (the emergency and its current status) • Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre contact numbers • Municipal Emergency Resource Officer and Municipal Recovery Manager contact numbers • any outstanding requests to the Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre • the location of facilities in the emergency relief centre and contact numbers • support agencies in the emergency relief centre and their contact details • the number of people affected by the emergency in the emergency relief centre, and any associated issues • which local government staff are on the floor • any staffing issues • any security issues • food and water arrangements for persons affected by the emergency, and agency and local government staff • any other relevant issues. 			

Checklist 6: Deactivating an emergency relief centre checklist

This checklist may assist in deactivating an emergency relief centre. Deactivating an emergency relief centre may cause negative feelings as it disrupts the routine and predictability affected persons may have come to expect. It is therefore essential to manage the process carefully and communicate accurately and consistently with affected persons as well as ERC staff and support agency staff about the closing of the ERC.

The decision to close the ERC should be made collaboratively by the MRM, MERO, MERC and agencies at the ERC with advice from the Precinct and ERC Managers and be part of an integrated strategy to transition from response to recovery. Closing of the ERC should be coordinated with public information on the location and opening hours of Recovery Centres.

Site details

Site name and address	
Melway/VicRoads reference	Usual site use
Site manager name	Contact number

Checklist 6: Deactivating an emergency relief centre checklist (continued)

Checklist	Complete	Site specific information/comments
<p>The ERC Manager will liaise with the Municipal Recovery Manager and provide detailed information on the reduced need for the emergency relief centre, taking into consideration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • progressive decline in patronage • guidance about broader issues surrounding the emergency situation • political impact and sensitive nature of closing the facility 		
<p>Decision made by the MRM, in consultation with the MERO, to deactivate the emergency relief centre</p>		
<p>Inform the ERC Manager of the decision to deactivate the emergency relief centre</p>		
<p>ERC Manager develops, communicates and implements site specific deactivation plans that include OH&S and public safety considerations</p>		
<p>Inform all staff /volunteers of the reason for the deactivation and the proposed timing, actions and responsibilities</p>		
<p>Arrange appropriate accommodation for all emergency relief centre attendees who are unable to return to their homes</p>		
<p>Arrange for all attendees to vacate the site</p>		
<p>Remove all temporary facilities, signage and rubbish from the site</p>		
<p>Return all equipment to their rightful place within the building</p>		
<p>Return all local government equipment to the rightful owners</p>		
<p>Report any lost or damaged items to the MECC</p>		
<p>Advise necessary people in local government regarding any grounds restoration requirements</p>		
<p>Advise facilities management of any additional cleaning and/or repair works</p>		
<p>Advise necessary people when the facility will be available to return to normal use</p>		
<p>Complete any final documentation, including any financial claims</p>		

