

the Standard



Special Edition re-issue newsletter from Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency



Preparing for an emergency

We live in a vast continent. At any given time we can have bushfires in Victoria or South Australia, floods in Queensland and northern New South Wales and tropical cyclones in Western Australia or the northern gulf region. These are just some of the regional challenges we face.

How has your home prepared for the possibility of a disaster, natural or otherwise, affecting your home, and therefore your residents and possibly your whole community?

If you haven't already, it's time to start talking about it - within your home and with local councils, emergency services, the local

hospital and places you can use if you need to evacuate. What are the options available to you for evacuating your home? You need to think of more than one option - where do you go? How do you get your residents there, particularly if no ambulances are available? What if staff aren't available? If parts or all of the town are also being evacuated, how do you ensure your residents are at the forefront of emergency services' minds not just during the evacuation process but in the planning process leading up to such an emergency (i.e. now).

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Preparing for an emergency cont.

How do you ensure that you are kept informed about potential emergencies, e.g. emergency broadcasts, the media, keeping in contact with local authorities – so that you are on the front foot before disaster hits.

How do you keep residents and their families informed during and after an emergency?

This issue of *The Standard* is designed to assist the thinking about and planning your evacuation procedures, within the context of a local disaster that affects the whole community. There are so many variables when it comes to a natural or other emergency, and it is impossible to predict exactly what may happen, but by investigating all the options and scenarios and feeding them into your emergency or business continuity plan, you are likely to be more prepared, and residents better protected. ■



Expected outcome 4.6 Fire, security and other emergencies

This expected outcome requires that management and staff are actively working to provide an environment and safe systems of work that minimise fire, security and emergency risks.

With a focus on results, our assessors look at a range of ways that homes meet this expected outcome, including whether approved providers have processes for the management of emergencies which may include natural disasters.

To read more about the assessment of expected outcome 4.6 Fire, security and other emergencies, refer to the *Results and processes guide*, available on our website: www.accreditation.org.au under Education, training and resources. ■

Want to read more?

Following is a list of helpful websites.

www.cfa.vic.gov.au – The Country Fire Authority in Victoria provides information on fire restrictions, fire ratings, and a step by step guide to developing a fire plan.

www.redcross.org.au – click on Emergencies: prepare, respond and recover.

www.dhs.vic.gov.au/emergency – developed for Victorian aged care homes, the information would be useful for other states also.

www.em.gov.au – Emergency Management in Australia (Attorney General's Department)

www.fesa.wa.gov.au – Fire and Emergency Services Authority of Western Australia

www.nswfb.nsw.gov.au – Fire and Rescue New South Wales

www.rfs.nsw.gov.au – New South Wales Rural Fire Service

www.fire.qld.gov.au – Queensland Fire and Rescue Service

www.acpmh.unimelb.edu.au – Click on First response for information to manage trauma. Under publications and resources and fact sheets about trauma there is also information about coping with impact of natural disasters and emergencies. ■

Checklist

Questions to consider when developing an emergency management plan

Have a look at what plans are already in place and reassess how valuable they are. Do they answer all the following questions?

- What emergencies are likely to occur in your local environment and specifically in your home? (For example bush fires, floods, cyclones, chemical explosions, mouse/insect infestations, electrical blackouts)
- Check for any local evacuation plans already in place with your local government and authorities.
- What local or regional emergency services are able to assist?
- Do your key personnel have their contact details?
- Do the emergency services have your home's contact details, names of key personnel they should contact and their off-site contact details?
- Do the emergency services know about your home, its location, any access restrictions, number of residents and their needs in an emergency, numbers of staff and possible visitors?
- Have you contacted them to seek input into your plan and then provided the final plan so they understand what communication processes are required and at what points in any unfolding emergency?
- Have you liaised with your local hospital/s and other care services to ensure that all services have emergency management plans that can work together?
- Have you developed a process to ensure that during any period of high risk, key personnel will regularly monitor emergency broadcasts and the media for localised warnings and advice?
- What equipment or supplies are needed for residents to ensure care is continued?
- Have you identified all the decisions which must be made and who and when they will be made including at what point in an unfolding emergency you decide to evacuate residents? (Prioritisation plan)
- Have you arranged for multiple transport options in the event of an emergency as ambulance transfers may not be available nor plentiful enough? Do you have 24 hour contact details? Can they respond quickly and at short notice?
- Have you arranged alternative accommodation in the case of a need to evacuate? Is there more than one option as your first option may not be available during an emergency? Do you have the correct contact details for personnel in the Department of Health and Ageing who may be able to assist in sourcing alternative accommodation including long term and short term options?
- Regularly confirm all arrangements, for example that accommodation agreements made a year ago are still standing.
- Does your home have a current fire certification?
- Do you have regular fire safety inspections carried out by an approved professional?
- Do you conduct regular emergency evacuation drills? How do you ensure new staff are aware of procedures during an emergency?
- How do you intend to provide appropriate care during an emergency?
- Will you need additional or different staff? What if your regular staff aren't available? Will you be able to utilise volunteers and services? Do you have contact details for these people?
- How will you communicate your plan to residents and their representatives and staff before any emergency unfolds?
- Do your residents know what to do in the event of an emergency?
- How will you keep them informed during an emergency?
- Have you developed a plan for post-trauma counselling for residents, families and staff in case it is needed?
- What local agencies provide recovery or other relevant services you may need? Have you contacted them?

Further advice during an emergency can be obtained through your local emergency services or state fire authority for fires. For general matters and access to accommodation information you can contact the Department of Health and Ageing during office hours on **1800 550 552**.

The Department has an emergency response number **1800 852 649** in NSW and **1800 078 709** for Victoria. ■

Contact information

The Editor, *The Standard*, Aged Care Standards and Accreditation Agency Ltd
PO Box 773 Parramatta NSW 2124

editor@accreditation.org.au

Contact the editor if you have a story, or if you wish to receive printed or emailed copies of *The Standard*.

