



## Provider Alert

# Emergency Management

November 2023

## Key points

- Good emergency management requires careful planning to prepare for and respond to emergency situations such as natural disasters like bushfires, cyclones and floods.
- Including people with disability in preparation for emergencies is essential to ensuring plans account for a person's individual needs and helps to develop a personal understanding of emergency procedures, enabling a participant's sense of agency in an emergency situation.
- Personal emergency plans should be developed to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of participants in the case of an emergency or disaster. This includes planning for individual support needs before and during and after the event of an evacuation or if required to take shelter in place.
- Plans should be regularly tested, reviewed and rehearsed. Measures should be in place to ensure effective communication of the plans to participants, their support networks, staff. Plans should be communicated in an accessible format for people with disability where needed.
- Providers should also ensure the continuity of supports that are critical to the health, safety and wellbeing of participants in an emergency or disaster.

## About Emergency Management

Emergency management relates to the preventative and responsive actions providers should take to manage and mitigate risks to participants, staff and workers in the event of an emergency such as bushfires, cyclones or floods. The continuity of services is crucial in the case of an emergency, ensuring participants have safe and appropriate supports before, during and after the event. Poor preparation for an emergency can have significant impacts, putting people with disability at disproportionate risk due to poor planning, which leads to inadequate care and ability to evacuate.

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People with disability in closed facilities or segregated settings can be at higher risk of neglect in emergency situations where the natural safeguarding and oversight from support networks may be limited.

Special consideration of a person's individual, supports and support networks is essential to managing emergency situations. It is important for participants to be given the option to contribute to both their personal and organisation's emergency management plan. People with disability provide important insight into barriers to safe and accessible emergency management strategies. Involving people with disability in the development of plans and strategies can also provide a sense of agency in the event of an emergency, allowing people with disability to be proactive and to encourage others to take action.

## Emergency preparedness for Participants

### Personal emergency management plans

Personal emergency management plans detail an individual participant's supports and any risks individual to them, and are developed separately to plans that are made for the organisation. Certain situations put people with disability at greater risk, such as living alone or having few informal supports, needing support to evacuate or shelter safely or having trouble communicating understanding.

Plans can be developed with the participant to develop an understanding of their personal needs and to help communicate evacuation procedures ahead of time. It is important that plans that are developed are accessible to participants. Consider how plans will be communicated with options to suit a person's individual communication preferences, such as braille, easy-read or social stories.

A personal emergency management plan should include information that details a person's needs should someone else need to take over a participant's care. It should include:

- A participant's emergency contacts and others from their support network that may need to be contacted.
- Important health information, including medication, health conditions that require active management and contact details of health professionals involved in the participant's care.
- Details about the person's preferred method of communication
- Strategies for supporting mental health or behaviour support.
- Information about the use of any mobility or communication aids, medical devices and other personal care items such as continence aids or wound care needs.
- With the participant's permission, details of other providers delivering supports and services, such as day programs or SIL arrangements.

A personal emergency management plan should also include how to manage different emergency or evacuation situations. This means planning for different scenarios, such as when to seek shelter, going to an evacuation point, what to do if power is lost or whether additional supports are needed. Consider any risks to the participant and strategies to mitigate those risks in the case of an emergency.

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In order to be effective, plans need to be communicated to a person's support network, their workers and others where needed. Personal emergency management plans should be reviewed regularly and every time there is a change in circumstances that may impact a person's ability to evacuate.

Emergency drills should be practiced routinely to ensure participants are able to safely evacuate in an emergency. Emergency drills could be incorporated into social stories or picture cards.

## Emergency preparedness for providers

Natural emergencies are common in Australia and depending on where you live, there may be higher risk for certain events. Providers should be familiar with their state and territory government plans to help plan for emergencies more common in your area. These plans detail the role of different departments and agencies in the preparation, response and recovery phases of an emergency. For links to state and territory emergency services and alerts, see

States and territories have different ways of communicating about emergencies. Emergency plans should identify the local authorities and channels to contact during an emergency and include the details how emergency alerts will be received and followed. Participants should also be aware of how to access emergency alerts. Providers should give consideration to how people who use alternative communication.

### Provider emergency management plans

Under regulation 43 of the Work Health and Safety (WHS) Regulation (2017), [persons conducting a business or undertaking must ensure there is an emergency plan prepared for the workplace](#), which includes natural disasters. Emergency plans are written instructions for workers and others in the workplace when an emergency occurs and what should be done. This includes a plan for responding to the emergency, evacuation procedures, notification to first responders and communication within the workplace about the emergency response and the testing, training and instruction of workers.

### Continuity of supports

Under the Emergency and Disaster Management Practice Standard and Quality Indicators, emergency and disaster management includes planning to ensure the continuity of supports critical to health, safety and wellbeing of participants in an emergency or disaster.

Business continuity planning is a cycle of four stages: prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. Business continuity planning can be used to anticipate the impact of emergencies on an organisation and plan for different contingencies to maintain vital business functions, identify key staff and establish priorities in an emergency. Business continuity planning includes testing different scenarios where important functions of the business may be impacted, such as:

- Staffing: reduced availability of staff or limited access to key personnel
- Facilities: damage to SIL homes or day program facilities
- Resources: limited access to food, water, power or health supplies

Business continuity planning requires the contribution of key personnel who are knowledgeable about the organisation and its processes and should be based on organisational knowledge and

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learnings that has developed through past experiences. It should also be informed by participants and their support networks, as they contribute to the understanding of people's needs and experiences. As with other plans, it is essential to devise methods to maintain knowledge and familiarity with the plan in order for it to be effective.

## Resources

### For participants: Personal Emergency Management Plans and resources

- [Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness \(Collaborating 4 Inclusion\)](#) resources are designed for people with disability to help them and their supporters develop a person-centred emergency plan.
- [Safety and Education resource library \(Queensland Fire and Emergency Services\)](#) contains a variety of different educational resources to prepare for and learn more about emergency situations. This website includes plan templates, instructions on how to prepare your property for an emergency and visual aids assist with communicating about different emergency events.
- [Emergency planning tools in Australia \(Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience\)](#) contains emergency planning tools and resources for individuals and families.
- [Creating a plan in the case of emergency \(Disability Support Guide\)](#) is a short guide on creating an emergency plan for people with a disability.
- [Disability inclusive disaster preparation \(National Emergency Management Agency\)](#) information and resources on disaster preparation and recovery for people with a disability.

### For Providers: Business continuity planning and emergency plans

- [Emergency Plans Fact Sheet \(Safe Work Australia\)](#) contains information about emergency plans for Work Health and Safety regulation purposes.
- [Australian Disaster Resilience Handbook \(Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience\)](#) is a comprehensive handbook for information about disaster management and emergency planning.
- [Emergency planning tools in Australia \(Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience\)](#) contains emergency planning tools and resources for businesses.
- [Continuity plans \(Queensland Government\)](#) contains guidance on developing business continuity plans.
- [Build a Business Continuity Plan \(NSW Government\)](#) contains guidance for small business owners on building a business continuity plan.
- [Disaster Management and Recovery Toolkit \(Community Services Industry Alliance\)](#) has a range of tools, such as a facilitators guide for developing a business continuity plan, plan templates and other resources.
- [Factsheet: Emergency and Disaster Management in NDIS Supports and Services \(National Disability Services\)](#) is factsheet with resources for NDIS providers.

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- [Emergency management Targeted Action Plan \(Disability Gateway\)](#) is an action plan to improve outcomes for people with disability in the event of national disasters.

## State and territory government emergency alerts and assistance

- [ACT Government Emergency Services Agency](#)
- [NSW Government State Emergency Service](#)
- [NSW Government "Hazards Near Me" App](#)
- [NSW Government Rural Fire Service](#)
- [NT Secure NT Alerts and Services](#)
- [NT Police, Fire & Emergency Services](#)
- [Queensland Fire and Emergency Services](#)
- [SA State Emergency Service](#)
- [SA "Alert SA" App](#)
- [Tasmania State Emergency Service](#)
- [TAS TasALERT](#)
- [Victoria State Emergency Service](#)
- [VIC Government VicEmergency alerts](#)
- [WA Government Emergency WA](#)

## State and territory government emergency plans

- [ACT Government Emergency Plan](#)
- [NSW Government Emergency Plan](#)
- [NT Government Emergency Plan](#)
- [QLD Government Emergency Plan](#)
- [SA Government Emergency Plan](#)
- [TAS Government Emergency Plan](#)
- [VIC Government Emergency Plan](#)

## Provider obligations related to emergency management

### Worker Capability

Providers should consider how to develop NDIS workers' training and skills in line with the [NDIS Workforce Capability Framework](#) and the [High Intensity Support Skills Descriptors](#).

### NDIS Code of Conduct

Providers and workers must comply with the [NDIS Code of Conduct](#) when providing supports or services to NDIS participants.

The NDIS Code of Conduct requires all NDIS providers and workers who provide NDIS supports or services to NDIS participants to, among other things:

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- act with respect for individual rights to freedom of expression, self-determination, and decision-making in accordance with relevant laws and conventions
  - provide supports and services in a safe and competent manner with care and skill
  - promptly take steps to raise and act on concerns about matters that might have an impact on the quality and safety of supports provided to people with disability
  - take all reasonable steps to prevent and respond to all forms of violence, exploitation, neglect, and abuse of people with disability

## NDIS Practice Standards

If you are a registered NDIS provider, you must comply with the NDIS Practice Standards contained in the [National Disability Insurance Scheme \(Provider Registration and Practice Standards\) Rules 2018](#) as part of your conditions of registration. The NDIS Practice Standards relate to the delivery of safe, quality supports and services, and the management of risks associated with the supports you provide to NDIS participants.

To achieve compliance with the NDIS Practice Standards, registered providers should demonstrate compliance with the [National Disability Insurance Scheme \(Quality Indicators for NDIS Practice Standards\) Guidelines 2018](#). The NDIS Commission's guidance on the [NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators](#) provides a further resource to assist registered NDIS providers to understand their obligations in relation to participants.

The NDIS Practice Standards that are most relevant to this alert include:

- **Privacy and dignity:** Each participant accesses supports that respect and protect their dignity and right to privacy.
- **Violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation and discrimination:** Each participant accesses supports free from violence, abuse, neglect, exploitation or discrimination.
- **Governance and Operational Management:** Each participant's support is overseen by robust governance and operational management systems relevant (proportionate) to the size and scale of the provider and the scope and complexity of supports delivered.
- **Risk management:** Risks to participants are identified and managed.
- **Quality management:** Each participant benefits from a quality management system relevant and proportionate to the size and scale of the provider, which promotes improvement of support deliver.
- **Incident management:** Each participant is safeguarded by the provider's incident management system, ensuring that incidents are acknowledged, respond to, well-managed and learned from.
- **Continuity of supports:** Each participant has access to timely and appropriate support without interruption.
- **Emergency and disaster management:** Emergency and disaster management includes planning that ensures that the risks to the health, safety and wellbeing of participants that may arise in an emergency or disaster are considered and mitigated, and ensures the continuity of supports critical to the health, safety and wellbeing of participants in an emergency or disaster.

- **Support planning:** Each participant is actively involved in the development of their support plans. Support plans reflect participant needs, requirements, preferences, strengths and goals, and are regularly reviewed.
- **Responsive support provision:** Each participant accesses responsive, timely, competent and appropriate supports to meet their needs, desired outcomes and goals.
- **Safe environment:** Each participant accesses supports in a safe environment that is appropriate to their needs.

## References

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