



Mildura Rural City Council

READY REACT RECOVER

Preparing for an emergency
in the Mildura Region



The Mildura region is a relatively safe place to live but there are a number of hazards that have the potential to cause emergencies in our region. These include bushfire, urban flooding, power disruptions and hazardous material spills.

While we cannot remove these hazards altogether, we can take steps to ensure we're prepared for them and can recover quickly after them.

This guide outlines three key steps to emergency preparedness in our region and provides tips on how you can be **ready** for, **react** to, and **recover** from, potential hazards.

READY

Prepare yourself, your family
and your supplies for
potential hazards.

BUSHFIRES

Bushfires generally occur every summer in our region. While often contained to national parks, bushfires have the potential to impact the urban fringes of Mildura and every township in the municipality, devastating lives, property and the environment.

What are bushfires?

Bushfires (or wildfires) are fires that burn uncontrollably and are not managed, unlike the common practice of back burning. A bushfire can burn quickly and can be devastating if not detected and extinguished. In the drier seasons, the dangers of bushfire are very high and are usually caused by lightning, are deliberately lit or started accidentally. A bushfire can destroy homes and buildings, devastate crops, and threaten the lives of people and animals. Additionally, bushfires can cause power outages, poor driving conditions due to heavy smoke, respiratory and other health problems.

Code Red Days

Code Red is the highest rating on the CFA's Fire Danger Rating system. Code Red Days have the worst conditions for a bush or grass fire.

If you live out of town and are generally on your own during the day, have not prepared your property, and/or do not have extensive fire fighting capability, it's recommended on Code Red Days you leave in the morning for a safe location. You should remain there especially during the afternoon and early evening.

If you live in a rural town or on the urban fringe and have mobility problems, and have not prepared your home, on a Code Red Day it is highly recommended that you plan to spend the day in town. If you do not plan to spend the day in town, then you should make all preparations for leaving at a moment's notice.

All Mildura Rural City Council residents should remain especially alert on Code Red Days, delay any unnecessary travel and have plans in place to move to safety with little or no notice.

When a fire has started

All Mildura Rural City Council residents should consider leaving the area if a Watch and Act, Emergency Warning has been issued for their area, or they feel threatened or uncomfortable with the situation they are facing. Leaving early, before an evacuation order, is the best advice and generally the safest course of action. The longer you debate on staying or going the more you risk the possibility that it will be too late to leave. You also need to pay very close attention to any watch or warning messages as they will provide important information to help you with making decisions.

Neighbourhood Safer Places (Places of Last Resort)

Many towns have one or multiple designated Neighbourhood Safer Places (also known as Place of Last Resort). Neighbourhood Safer Places are Council designated spaces that may afford some protection from radiant heat, the biggest killer during bushfire.

They are a place of last resort in bushfire emergencies only. They are a last resort shelter that may assist people when there is imminent threat of bushfire and they have no plan, or their planned options are not possible.

They are not locations to relocate to when leaving early. On days when there is advice to leave early people should relocate well away to an area of lower risk either the night before or early in the morning.

These sites are not where the community should gather in the event of bushfire. Leaving early is always the best option.

Being ready for bushfire

Know your level of risk

Knowing what your risk level is at your home will determine what kinds of preparedness activities you should undertake to be ready for a bushfire.

The CFA and Mildura Rural City Council can provide information about your level of risk at your home. You can also see your area's bushfire risk map. No part of Mildura Rural City Council is immune from bushfire. Especially rural or urban fringe areas and even dense urban areas, can experience some degree of bushfire.

Prepare your home

Preparing your home well in advance of an approaching bushfire is your best defence. A well prepared home, due to the types of vegetation conditions we have in our municipality, can withstand all but the most destructive fire conditions (Code Red).

1. Make sure driveways and laneways to your house are clear to accommodate fire trucks (3m–3.5m).
2. Clean your gutters.
3. Remove all dry or dead plants from the perimeter of your home or shed.
4. Remove large shrubs next to or in front of windows.
5. Ensure you have no large shrubs under the eave line of your home or shed.
6. Use pebble or rock in your garden instead of wood mulch.
7. Keep all grass cut to less than 10 cm for at least 10 metres away from your home or shed.
8. Remove all dry grass, leaves, twigs, and loose bark from around your home or shed and also remove piles of these materials.
9. Remove all flammable items from on and under decks, verandas and porches such as boxes, grass doormats, cushions on outdoor furniture and other items which may be easily set a light.
10. Cut back all branches and limbs over hanging your house or shed.

For more information see the CFA website www.cfa.vic.gov.au

Leaving

- When should I leave early?
On Code Red Days
During an actual fire
- Where am I going to, where can I go?
- Who else needs to know I am leaving and where I am going?
- What routes are safest to get to my destination?
- How do I get information about what routes are safe during an actual fire?
- What should I take with me if I leave?
- What should I do if I cannot leave?

Please refer to the React section of this booklet for further information.



POWER DISRUPTIONS

Unintended power disruptions are not uncommon in our region. While most last less than three hours, there are times when they last longer and up to 12 hours. Longer duration power disruptions can become more than just a nuisance and potentially impact your health, ability to access fuel, communication, food, and cause property and economic damage.

Plan to take action

Preparing your property is key to preventing your home from possibly burning in a fire but even more important is your safety. Having an Action Plan gives you the best chance of survival.

Your Action Plan for bushfire should address the following:

What causes power disruptions?

Power disruptions can have various causes. Most local and short term events are caused by equipment failures or small tree limbs, road accidents and even wildlife interfering with power infrastructure. Most of these incidents are cleared up within minutes to a few hours. Larger and longer term power disruptions are most commonly caused by storm events, where strong winds can cause trees to fall across power lines, interrupting

the supply of electricity. Storms, bushfires and extremely hot days, when there is extra demands on the power grid, can cause power disruptions across large areas for longer periods of time.

Power disruptions in rural areas

If you live outside of the urban area, power disruptions will likely be more frequent and longer in duration. In larger towns a loop circuit is formed between major transformers, which means power is fed from both ends of the loop. However in rural areas power is not looped and generally runs from a single direction, which means that a break at any point in the line will disrupt power from that point on down the line. Because of this, those living rural in areas must be more prepared for power disruptions to prevent losses of items like food or loss of some forms of telephone service.

Pole fires

Pole fires are a common cause of electrical outages in regional Victoria. They can occur at any time of year, as a result of dirt and grime that builds up on insulators throughout the year. Insulators are used to attach electric power lines to wood distribution poles. They are typically made of porcelain and polymer. Dense fog and light rain can provide the right condition for pole fires to occur when the moisture in the air combines with the dirt on the insulators to allow an electrical short circuit, which can cause a fire. Sometimes the pole may burn through, leaving the top of the pole, cross-arms and insulators suspended by the power lines. Or power lines can break from the weight. Pole fires also create short circuits, cutting power to the lines, much like the fuses or breakers in a house. The tripped switch causes an outage, which could be limited to a small area or could involve a large number of customers.

What to do during a power disruption

- Use only flashlights for emergency lighting. NEVER use candles during a blackout or power outage due to extreme risk of fire.
- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed to keep your food as fresh as possible. If you must eat food that was refrigerated or frozen, check it carefully for signs of spoilage.
- Turn off or disconnect appliances, equipment (like air conditioners) or electronics in use when the power went out. Power may return with momentary

"surges" or "spikes" that can damage computers as well as motors in appliances like the air conditioner, refrigerator, washing machine or heater.

- Do not run a generator inside your home or garage.
- Do not connect a generator to your home's electrical system. If you use a generator, connect the equipment you want to run directly to the outlets on the generator.
- Listen to local radio and to a battery or generator-powered television for updated information.
- Leave on one light so that you'll know when your power returns.
- Use a standard telephone handset, mobile phone, radio or pager if your phone requires electricity to work. Use the phone for emergencies only. Listen to a portable radio for the latest information.
- Do not call 000 for information. Only call 000 to report a life-threatening emergency. Use the phone for life-threatening emergencies only.
- Take steps to remain cool if it is hot outside. In intense heat when the power may be off for a long time, consider going to a movie theatre, shopping mall or 'cooling shelter' that may be open in your community. If you remain at home, move to the lowest level of your home, since cool air falls. Wear lightweight, light coloured clothing. Drink plenty of water, even if you do not feel thirsty.
- Put on layers of warm clothing if it is cold outside. Never burn charcoal for heating or cooking indoors. Never use your oven as a source of heat. If the power may be out for a prolonged period, plan to go to another location (the home of a relative or friend, or a public facility) that has heat to keep warm.
- Provide plenty of fresh, cool water for your pets.
- Eliminate unnecessary travel, especially by car. Traffic signals will stop working during a power disruption, creating traffic congestion.
- Remember equipment such as automated teller machines (ATMs) and elevators may not work during a power outage.

Food safety during a power disruption

If the power is out for less than 4 hours, then the food in your refrigerator and freezer will be safe to consume. While the power is out, keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to keep food cold for longer.

If the power is out for longer than 4 hours, follow the guidelines below:

For the Freezer section: A freezer that is half full can hold food safely for up to 24 hours. A full freezer will hold food safely for 48 hours. Do not open the freezer door if you can avoid it.

For the Refrigerated section: Pack milk, other dairy products, meat, fish, eggs, gravy, and spoilable leftovers into a cooler surrounded by ice. Inexpensive Styrofoam coolers are fine for this purpose.

Throw away any food that has been exposed to temperatures 4° C for 2 hours or more or that has an unusual odour, colour or texture. When in doubt, throw it out!

Never taste food or rely on appearance or odour to determine its safety. Some foods may look and smell fine, but if they have been at room temperature too long, bacteria causing food-borne illnesses can start growing quickly. Some types of bacteria produce toxins that cannot be destroyed by cooking.

If food in the freezer is colder than 4° C and has ice crystals on it, you can refreeze it.

If you are not sure food is cold enough, take its temperature with the food thermometer. Throw out any foods (meat, poultry, fish, eggs and leftovers) that have been exposed to temperatures higher than 4° C for 2 hours or more, and any food that has an unusual odour, colour or texture, or feels warm to touch.

What will and will not work during a power disruption

Will work...

- Torches
- Battery powered radio
- Most gas appliances (electrical starters may not work)

Will work for a while...

- Telephone (24–36 hours)
- Mobile phones (<12 hours)
- Town water (4–48 hours)
- Laptop computers (<6 hours)
- Tablet devices (<12 hours)
- Bottled oxygen (2–24 hours depending on size and volume of use)

Will not work...

- Cordless telephones
- Lights
- Pump or bore water
- Most alarm clocks
- Computers and wi-fi routers
- TV
- Oxygen generating machines
- Hot water heaters
- Fans
- Air conditioners
- Heaters
- Refrigerators & freezers
- Petrol bowsers
- ATMs
- Traffic lights

Being ready for power disruptions

To begin preparing, you should have basic emergency supplies and make a family communications plan. Also follow these simple tips:

- Follow energy conservation measures to keep the use of electricity as low as possible, which can help power companies avoid imposing rolling blackouts.
- Fill plastic containers with water and place them in the refrigerator and freezer if there's room. Leave about an inch of space inside each one, because water expands as it freezes. This chilled or frozen water will help keep food cold during a temporary power disruption.
- Be aware that most medication that requires refrigeration can be kept in a closed refrigerator for several hours without a problem. If unsure, check with your physician or pharmacist.
- Keep your car tank at least half full because petrol stations rely on electricity to power their bowsers.
- Know where the manual release lever of your electric garage door opener is located and how to operate it. Garage doors can be heavy, so know that you may need help to lift it.
- Keep a key to your house with you if you regularly use the garage as the primary means of entering your home, in case the garage door will not open.



URBAN FLOODING

While our region generally enjoys a dry climate, we can on occasion be subject to heavy rainfall and thunderstorms. These extreme weather conditions can lead to urban flooding that could potentially threaten lives, damage homes and vehicles, and generally endanger one's health.

What is urban flooding?

Urban flooding is the inundation of land or property in an urban environment, particularly in more densely populated areas caused by rainfall overwhelming the capacity of drainage systems. Urban flooding can happen regardless of whether or not affected communities are located within formally designated floodplains or near any body of water. There are several ways stormwater from urban floods can enter properties, including:

- Backing-up through sewer pipes, toilets and sinks into buildings.
- Seeping through building walls and floors.
- Accumulating on property and in public right-of-ways.
- Overflowing from water bodies such as rivers and lakes.

Debris caused blockages

While heavy rain is often blamed for the occurrences of urban flooding, generally the most common reason is debris blocking drainage pits, pipes, and pumps. Debris can be anything from leaves and bark chips to

plastic bottles and gravel. While these items can end up in drainage systems naturally, they are also often deliberately introduced into the system.

Sweeping leaves and grass into the kerb and channel (gutter) or lifting stormwater pit covers to deliberately sweep leaves and other debris into the pit can and often does block pits and pipes. This in turn can cause the street or properties to flood during rain events.

Littering can seem like a victimless crime. But if plastic bottles, food packaging and other rubbish winds up in the stormwater system and causes a blockage it has the potential to cause thousands of dollars' worth of damage to homes and vehicles as a result of flooding.

Properly disposing of green waste and litter can help prevent a large number of the blockages and urban flooding issues that our area experiences.

Driving in floodwater

Never drive, ride or walk through floodwater. If you must drive through flooded streets, drive slowly as to not produce any wake. This way you will not splash water into houses that may remain dry otherwise.

A 'road closed' or a 'road flooded' sign means the road is unsafe to travel on. Find alternate ways which are free from floodwater or wait until the all clear is given for that road. It is safer to turn around than to enter floodwater. A standard midsize car will begin to float in 60 cm of water. Never try to cross fast moving or water where you can not see to bottom.

Being ready for urban flooding

To begin preparing, you should have basic emergency supplies and make a family communications plan. Also follow these simple tips:

- Know your flood threat. If you have had issues in the past you could have issues in the future.
- Consider keeping valuable and irreplaceable items elevated off the floor.
- Consider elevate the heater, water heater and electric panel off the floor.
- If feasible, construct barriers to stop floodwater from entering the building
- If feasible, keep material on hand to stop floodwater from entering your home.
- Ensure that your insurance policies are up to date.

- Be mindful of the potential weather events that could lead to issues and prepare accordingly.
- If your street is subject to flooding move your car to higher ground if an event is expected.



HAZARDOUS MATERIAL ACCIDENTS

Our region is growing and developing and we rely more and more on modern chemicals to purify drinking water, increase crop production and simplify household chores. But chemicals also can be hazardous to humans or the environment if used or released improperly. Hundreds of transport vehicles move these kinds of materials through our communities. While normally this is done in a safe manner, accidents have and could occur in any of our communities.

What are hazardous materials?

Hazardous materials are solids, liquids or gases that can harm people, other living organisms, property or the environment. They are often subject to chemical regulations. Hazardous materials include things that are radioactive, flammable, explosive, corrosive, oxidizing, asphyxiating, biohazards, toxic, pathogenic, or allergenic. Also included are physical conditions such as compressed gases and liquids or hot materials, including all goods containing such materials or chemicals, or may have other characteristics that render them hazardous in specific circumstances.

Road accidents involving hazardous materials

Road accidents involving hazardous materials are fairly rare, but if you live within 1km of a major highway you could be affected if an accident did occur. Road accidents involving hazardous material can cause you to react in different ways depending on the level of threat posed by the chemical. Information from the emergency services, broadcast via radio or telephone will be key to your decision as to what you should do to remain safe.

Being ready for hazardous material accidents

To begin preparing, you should have basic emergency supplies and make a family communications plan. Also follow these simple tips:

- Leave Quickly: Major hazardous material accidents can occur without warning and decisions may be need to be made quickly. A Get Away Kit with basic information and items like medication will help while you are out of your home. Refer to the React section of this booklet for more information.
- Shelter-in-Place: A lot of times, you can remain safe from hazardous material accidents by basically remaining indoors with the air-conditioning turned off and the windows closed. Refer to the React section of this booklet for more information.
- In a Car: Most hazardous material accidents occurs as a result of a transport accident. If you can, try to leave the area immediately. If you are unable to move or leave, try to take shelter in a nearby permanent building. If that is not an option close all windows, turn off the engine of your car, turn off the air, and close all air vents.

REACT

A yellow emergency strobe light with a black base and a coiled power cord, set against a solid yellow background. The light has a clear, dome-shaped lens with a ribbed texture. The word "REACT" is written in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the middle of the light.

Knowing how to react in advance of an emergency situation could make a big difference to your overall safety and wellbeing.

LEAVING OR EVACUATING

Evacuations are more common than many people realise. The most common reasons for evacuation across the state of Victoria are fires, floods, and hazardous material accidents. In most circumstances, leaving early to avoid situations where you believe you are in a potentially dangerous situation is the right course of action.

When community evacuations become necessary local officials will provide relevant information to the public through the media. In some circumstances, other warning methods, such as sirens, telephone text message alerts, emails, telephone calls or door knocks may be used.

The amount of time you have to leave will depend on the hazard. If the event is weather related such as a flood, you might have a day or two to get ready. However, many emergencies allow no time for people to gather even the most basic necessities, which is why planning ahead is essential.

Planning ahead for evacuation

Plan how you will assemble your family and anticipate where you will go in different situations. Choose several destinations in different directions so you have options in an emergency and know the evacuation routes to get to those destinations.

There may be conditions under which you will decide to get away or there may be situations when agencies recommend that you leave. Follow these guidelines for this situation:

- Plan places where your family will meet, both within and outside of your immediate neighbourhood. Use the Family Emergency Plan to identify these locations before an incident.
- If you have a car, keep a full tank of fuel in it if an evacuation seems likely. Keep a half tank of fuel in it at all times in case of an unexpected need to evacuate. Fuel stations may be closed during emergencies and unable to pump fuel during power outages. Plan to take one car per family to reduce congestion and delay.
- Become familiar with alternate routes and other means of transportation out of your area. Identify several destinations in different directions so you have options in an emergency.

- Leave early enough to avoid being trapped.
- Follow recommended evacuation routes. Do not take shortcuts; they may be blocked.
- Be alert for road hazards such as washed-out roads or bridges and downed power lines. Do not drive into flooded areas.
- If you do not have a car, plan how you will leave if you have to. Make arrangements with family, friends or your local government.
- Take your get away kit.
- Listen to a battery-powered radio and follow local evacuation instructions.
- Take your pets with you, but understand that only service animals may be permitted in public shelters. Plan how you will care for your pets in an emergency.

If time allows:

- Call or email an out of area contact in your family communications plan. Tell them where you are going.
- Secure your home by closing and locking doors and windows.
- Unplug electrical equipment such as radios, televisions and small appliances. Leave freezers and refrigerators plugged in unless there is a risk of flooding. If there is damage to your home and you are instructed to do so, shut off water, gas and electricity before leaving.
- Leave a note telling others when you left and where you are going.
- Wear sturdy shoes and clothing that provides some protection such as long pants, long-sleeved shirts and a cap.
- Check with neighbours who may need a ride.

SHELTERING -IN-PLACE

Whether you are at home, work or elsewhere, there may be situations when it's simply best to stay where you are and avoid any uncertainty outside.

Use common sense and available information to assess the situation and determine if there is immediate danger. If you see large amounts of debris in the air, or if local authorities say the air is badly contaminated or smells or tastes odd, you may want to take this kind of action.

Sheltering in place requires pre-planning. Follow these guidelines for this situation:

- Bring your family and pets inside.
- Lock outside doors and close windows, air vents and fireplace dampers.
- Turn off fans, air conditioning and forced air heating systems.
- Go into an interior room with few windows, if possible.
- Leave all inside doors open.
- Avoid using the telephone, except for emergencies, so that you can be contacted by emergency response personnel if necessary.
- Call the emergency numbers you have been provided if you are experiencing symptoms or smelling odours.
- Stay tuned to local radio and television for possible information updates.
- Even if you see people outside do not leave until told to do so.
- If you are unable to follow these instructions, please notify emergency response personnel.
- After the hazard has passed through the area you should receive an "all-clear" message from emergency response personnel.
- You may also receive, if required, instructions to ventilate your building by opening all windows and doors and turning on fans. During this time the air outside may be fresher than that remaining inside your home.

STAYING AND DEFENDING YOUR HOME

MILDURA RURAL CITY COUNCIL AND ALL EMERGENCY SERVICES STRONGLY DISCOURAGE THIS PRACTICE.

Defending your home is risky - you could be seriously injured, suffer psychological trauma or die. The safest option is to be well away from any threat.

Please consider the following before considering this action:

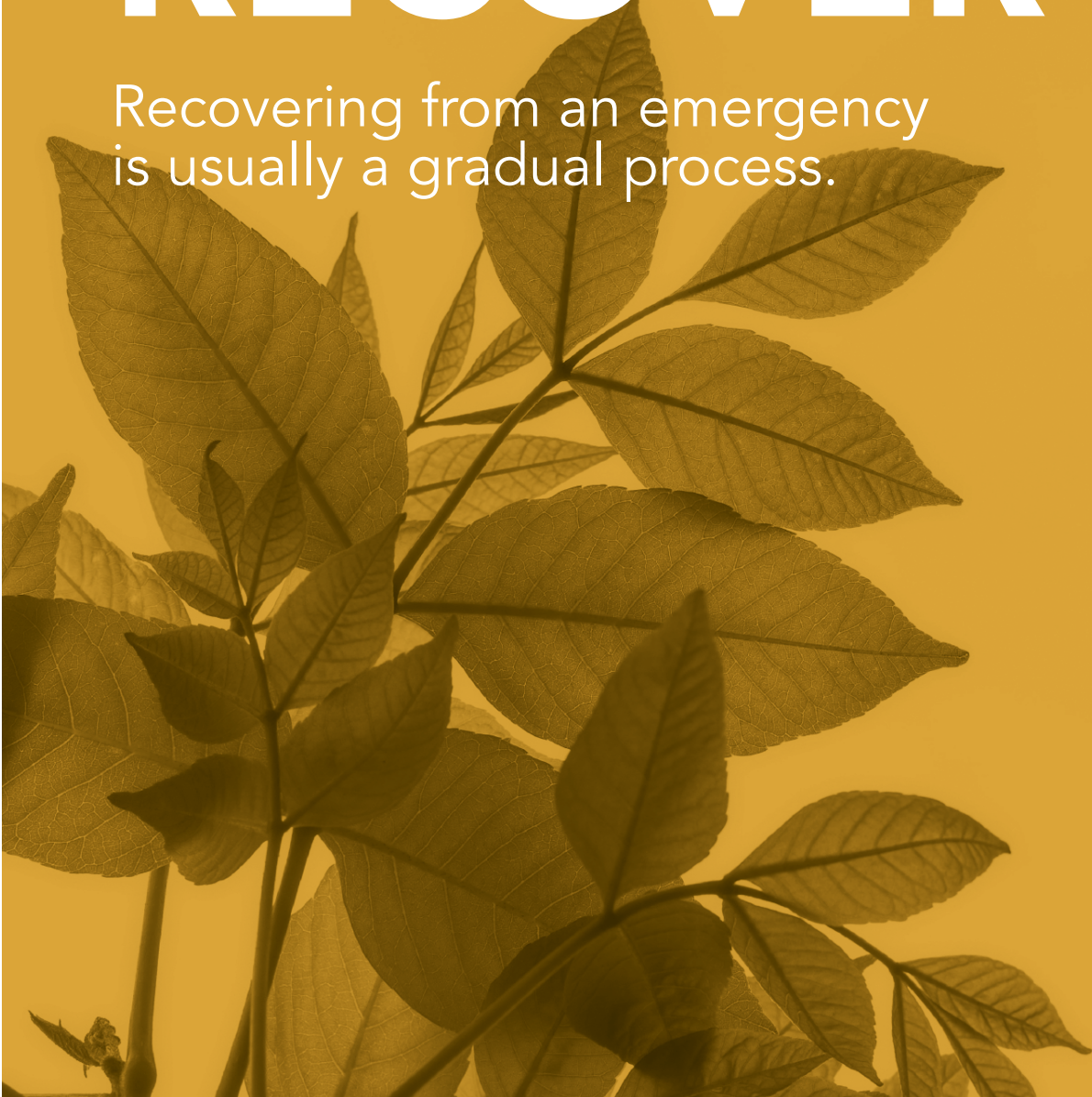
1. Are you willing to risk the lives of your family or friends?
2. How will your family cope if your life is lost?
3. Is your home really that important?

Staying and defending your home or business against an emergency takes the **HIGHEST LEVEL OF PLANNING AND PREPARATION**. General planning and preparation is not sufficient to stay and defend.

See the CFA website, www.cfa.vic.gov.au for more details on defending your property.

RECOVER

Recovering from an emergency
is usually a gradual process.



STAYING SAFE IN THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH OF AN EMERGENCY

Safety is a primary issue, as is mental and physical wellbeing. If assistance is available, knowing how to access it makes the process faster and less stressful. The information below outlines some general steps you can take after emergency strikes to begin getting your home, your community and your life back to normal.

Although each type of emergency brings its own unique challenges, the steps below are applicable to many different situations you may face.

- Check the area around you for safety. In the case of biological, chemical or radiological threats, listen for instructions on local radio or television stations about safe places to go.
- Have injuries treated by a medical professional. Wash small wounds with soap and water. To help prevent infection of small wounds, use bandages and replace them if they become soiled, damaged or waterlogged.
- Some natural hazards, like severe storms or earthquakes, may recur in the form of new storms or aftershocks over the next several days. Take all safety precautions if the hazard strikes again.
- Avoid using the telephone (mobile or landlines) if a large number of homes in your area have been affected by an emergency. Emergency responders need to have the telephone lines available to coordinate their response. During the immediate post-emergency time period, only use the telephone to report life-threatening conditions and call your out-of-town emergency contact.
- Remain calm. Pace yourself. You may find yourself in the position of taking charge of other people. Listen carefully to what people are telling you, and deal patiently with urgent situations first.
- If you had to leave your home, return only when local authorities advise that it is safe to do so. Also, be sure to have photo identification available, because sometimes local authorities will only permit people who own property in an emergency-affected area back into the area.
- Except in extreme emergencies or unless told to do so by emergency officials, avoid driving during the immediate post-emergency period. Keep roads clear for rescue and emergency vehicles.

If you must drive, do not drive on roads covered with water. They could be damaged or eroded. Additionally, vehicles can begin to float in as little as 30cm of water. Vehicles such as utes and SUVs have larger tyres and are more buoyant. However, even though these vehicles are heavier than a standard sedan, the buoyancy caused by the larger amount of air in their tyres actually makes these vehicles more likely to float in water than smaller vehicles.

- If the emergency was widespread, listen to your radio or television station for instructions from local authorities. Information may change rapidly after a widespread emergency, so continue to listen regularly for updates. If the power is still out, listen to a battery-powered radio, television or car radio.
- If the area was flooded and children are present, warn them to stay away from storm drains, culverts and ditches. Children can get caught and injured in these areas.

Access to information is key

Access to information is key for your recovery. Information on how to contact companies, insurers and financial institutions is critical post-emergency.

For many of us, boxes fill our home cupboards, files stick out from our cabinets, and some may even have boxes in storage lockers. But the time has come to get a handle on our important data and plan for the worst case scenario.

Grab some USB thumb drives and identify your most important data – that is information or images that you cannot live without. Add the data to your storage devices – and make them easily accessible in case you need to leave home quickly. You may need to allocate some time to sit down and scan documents, but the time will be well worth it.

As you think through your data, consider storing these items:

- Birth, death, and marriage certificates
- Diplomas and academic transcripts
- Medical data – details of medications, illnesses, injuries – and contact information for all doctors (include medical details for your pets)
- Financial data — contact and basic information on how to contact banks, credit cards, stocks, insurance (house, car, life), and recent tax returns (don't forget contact information for all financial institutions)

- Contacts — a list containing addresses and phone numbers of friends and family
- Family photos (weddings, births, graduations, etc.)
- Portfolio – if you're a writer, designer, artist, or musician you may wish to add your work to a storage device (if not already there)
- Insurance recovery – take photos or videos of all large items so that in the event the items are destroyed, you have proof of ownership (for example, cars, TV, computer and other appliances)

It's better to be prepared and have your data in this format than the alternative... to experience an emergency and wish you had your data.

RECOVERING EMOTIONALLY

Emergencies are upsetting experiences for everyone involved. Children, senior citizens, people with disabilities and people for whom English is not their first language are especially at risk and are likely to need extra care and help. But everyone, even the people that others look up to for guidance and assistance, is entitled to their feelings and deserves support throughout the recovery process.

When we experience an emergency or other stressful life events, we can have a variety of reactions, all of which can be common responses to difficult situations.

These reactions can include:

- Feeling physically and mentally drained
- Having difficulty making decisions or staying focused on topics
- Becoming easily frustrated on a more frequent basis
- Arguing more with family and friends
- Feeling tired, sad, numb, lonely or worried
- Experiencing changes in appetite or sleep patterns

Most of these reactions are temporary and will go away over time. Try to accept whatever reactions you may have. Look for ways to take one step at a time and focus on taking care of your emergency-related needs and those of your family.

Getting ourselves and our lives back in a routine that is comfortable for us takes time.

- Take care of your safety. Find a safe place to stay and make sure your physical health needs and those of your family are addressed. Seek medical attention if necessary.
- Limit your exposure to the sights and sounds of emergency, especially on television, the radio and in the newspapers.
- Eat healthy during times of stress, it is important that you maintain a balanced diet and drink plenty of water.
- Get some rest. With so much to do, it may be difficult to have enough time to rest or get adequate sleep. Giving your body and mind a break can boost your ability to cope with the stress you may be experiencing.
- Stay connected with family and friends. Giving and getting support is one of the most important things you can do. Try to do something as a family that you have all enjoyed in the past.
- Be patient with yourself and with those around you. Recognise that everyone is stressed and may need some time to put their feelings and thoughts in order. That includes you!
- Set priorities. Tackle tasks in small steps.
- Gather information about assistance and resources that will help you and your family members meet your emergency-related needs.
- Stay positive. Remind yourself of how you've successfully gotten through difficult times in the past. Reach out when you need support, and help others when they need it.

Many people have experience coping with stressful life events and typically feel better after a few days. Others find that their stress does not go away as quickly as they would like and it influences relationships with their family, friends and others.

If you find yourself or a loved one experiencing some of the feelings and reactions listed below for two weeks or longer, this may be a sign that you need to reach out for additional assistance.

- Crying spells or bursts of anger
- Difficulty eating
- Difficulty sleeping
- Losing interest in things
- Increased physical symptoms such as headaches or stomach aches
- Fatigue
- Feeling guilty, helpless or hopeless
- Avoiding family and friends



RECOVERING FINANCIALLY

In addition to the physical and emotional impact of a disaster, you may also face financial challenges in the days, weeks and even months or years ahead. Of course, ensuring your family's physical safety is your first priority. Afterward, you can begin to take these practical steps to recover your financial wellbeing.

Insurance claims

- Contact your insurance agent, broker or insurance company as soon as you can to report how, when and where the damage occurred. Provide a general description of the damage.
- Prepare a list of damaged or lost items and provide receipts if possible. Consider photographing or videotaping the damage where it occurred for further documentation to support your claim.
- If possible, keep damaged items or portions of those items until the claims adjuster has visited your home. Do not throw away anything you plan to claim without discussing it with your adjuster first.
- Keep receipts for all additional expenses that you may incur such as lodging, repairs or other supplies.
- Make copies of all documents and pictures given to your claims adjuster or insurance company. Besides insurance, there are many questions related to taxes, expenses and determining just how you will recover from a personal financial point of view.

Cash flow, bills and debt

- Stop unnecessary expenses. For example, if your home is temporarily uninhabitable or totally destroyed, notify the utility company and other service companies, such as the phone company, so they can stop billing immediately.
- Estimate the amount of income and emergency savings you have to pay bills while you recover from the disaster, then prioritise your bills. Paying your insurance premiums and rent or mortgage should be your top priority.
- Call any creditors and ask for more time to pay. Most creditors will be willing to work with you, especially if you notify them before a payment is due.

READY, REACT, RECOVER

EMERGENCY CONTACTS & INFORMATION

IN AN EMERGENCY DIAL 000
FOR POLICE, FIRE & AMBULANCE

MILDURA RURAL CITY COUNCIL
AFTER HOURS EMERGENCY 1800 241 540

FLOOD AND STORM INFORMATION

VICSES Emergency Calls
132 500

VICSES Website
www.ses.vic.gov.au

VICSES Information Line
1300 842 737
Only available during
large-scale emergencies.

VicEmergency Website
www.emergency.vic.gov.au

**Bureau of Meteorology
(BoM)**
1300 659 217
www.bom.gov.au

BUSHFIRE INFORMATION

Victorian Bushfire
Information Line
1800 240 667

CFA Website
www.cfa.vic.gov.au

VicEmergency Website
www.emergency.vic.gov.au

NON-URGENT MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

After Hours GP Helpline
1800 022 222

NURSE-ON-CALL
1300 606 024

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Lifeline
131 114

beyondblue
1300 224 636

EMERGENCY RELIEF AND RECOVERY ADVICE

**Victorian
Emergency Recovery
Information Line**
1300 799 232
www.recovery.vic.gov.au

ANIMALS IN EMERGENCIES

**Department of Environment
& Primary Industries**
136 186
www.depi.vic.gov.au

Wildlife Victoria
1300 094 535

Report sick or injured wildlife
www.wildlifevictoria.org.au

FREE INTERPRETING SERVICES

TIS National
13 14 50
Access to immediate 24hr
telephone interpreting
services.

EMERGENCY FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Centrelink
132 850
www.centrelink.gov.au

**Victorian Emergency
Recovery**
Information Line
1300 799 232

ROAD CLOSURES AND TRAFFIC ALERTS

VicRoads
13 11 70
www.vicroads.vic.gov.au

PUBLIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Department of Health
[www.health.vic.gov.au/
emergency](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/emergency)

Preparing for an emergency in the Mildura Region

READY

Prepare yourself, your
family and your supplies
for potential hazards

REACT

Know what to do if a
hazardous event occurs

RECOVER

Have a plan in place so you
can recover quickly and
comfortably after a hazard

Deakin Avenue Service Centre

76 Deakin Avenue, Mildura

Madden Avenue Service Centre

108 Madden Avenue, Mildura

Ouyen Service Centre

79 Oke Street, Ouyen

Phone: (03) 5018 8100

PO Box 105, Mildura Vic 3502