

NDS Quality and Safeguards Sector Readiness Project

Emergency and Disaster Management: Prevention and Preparation Tip Sheet for Providers of NDIS Supports and Services.

This resource includes tips and ideas for developing emergency and disaster management procedures and plans. This includes actions which could assist your organisation in preventing, planning and responding to emergencies and disasters.

This resource is a starting point. Review the information and consider how your organisation's response will be specific to:

- the different types of emergencies and disaster;
- the size and scope of the organisation;
- the types of supports and services being delivered; and
- the people accessing supports and services.

Emergency and Disaster Prevention

Prevention activities should be happening all the time. These are the actions which contribute to reducing or eliminating the likelihood or impact of an incident, emergency or disaster. This is sometimes referred to as risk mitigation.

This could include using key people within the organisation to:

Identify what the risks are to the organisation, workers and the people being supported.

Brainstorm different scenarios, including the worst-case scenarios. Asking ‘what if’ questions, such as ‘what if our services lost access to amenities such as power for 2, 5, 10, 24, 48 hours’.

Assess the supports being provided to understand the impact of these supports being disrupted.

Consider answering questions such as:

- What are the critical supports being provided?
- How would workforce shortages be managed for these critical supports?

Review any incidents of emergency and disaster to ensure continuous improvement and that any gaps have been addressed.

This could include allocating roles responsible for:

Knowing which natural disasters and other hazards are likely to occur in the local area.

Monitoring the State Government’s website and directions for emergencies and disasters in the local area that have potential to impact on services.

Monitoring relevant weather warnings related to natural hazards in the local area (on a seasonal basis related to bushfire, storm, flood, cyclones etc).

Communicating changes to senior leadership.

This could also include:

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- If managing properties, taking actions to reduce the risk of known hazards.**
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- [My Bushfire Plan WA: Prepare for an Emergency - DFES](#) provides information on how to prepare your property for a bushfire.
- [SES Victoria - Plan for emergencies at work](#) provides information and tips on how to prepare your business for emergencies such as floods and storms.
- [Safe Work Australia Emergency plans and procedures](#) also have information on workplace preparation and responsibilities under WHS Law.

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- Ensuring there are mechanisms in place to document and escalate** early warning or risks which workers might identify through service delivery.
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- Having worker vaccination programs** and supporting workers to access these programs as required.
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- Provision of information to people with disability including supporting people** to access preventative healthcare information and options.
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Emergency and Disaster Preparation

Preparation is about the actions taken before an emergency, disaster or event. These actions aim to ensure people with disability, workers and the organisation can respond effectively in the event that something occurs.

Organisational preparedness actions

Having plans in place which include:

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- Information on how the governing body will respond** to and oversee the response to an emergency or disaster.

 - Emergency plans which cover each type of emergency** disaster or hazard event.

 - Contingencies for reduction in workforce.** Consider how this will be managed to minimise and where possible eliminate any impacts. This includes how the organisation will identify, source and induct additional workers if workforce disruptions occur.

 - Planning for reduced access to supplies and services.** This could include alternative supplier relationships and maintaining adequate supplies essential to the service delivery.

 - A communication plan** for how changes or events will be communicated to workers, people with disability, and their support networks. This could include up-to-date contact lists and communications which are prepared in advance and reviewed regularly to save time in an emergency or when a situation changes.

 - A schedule and process for testing** specific to different types of emergencies or disasters. Consider regularity of testing, how this will be recorded, the outcomes and how they will be used to review and improve future responses.

 - Periodic review points to adapt to the changing nature of an emergency or disaster.** Consider how to do this in consultation with people with disability and their support networks.

Other actions could include:

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- Maintaining adequate insurance** in relation to emergencies and disasters.
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- Maintaining a list or database of workers:**
 - with skills and experience relevant to emergency and disaster response, for example, response coordination, logistics and communications
 - an up-to-date record of workers contact details
 - information about other employers or how this will be documented if people do not wish to provide this information.
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- Ensuring roles and responsibilities are clear.** Consider different ways of managing this for example through job descriptions, policies and procedures, training and supervision of teams.
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- Providing cyclical training in implementation of emergency plans** to workers at all levels. Consider how the delivery of refresher training will be tracked, delivered and documented.
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- Adding emergency plans and business continuity testing to internal audits** or compliance checklists.
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- Having audits across services** to check that infection prevention and control measures are in place across all settings.
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Supporting workers to be prepared.

These actions could include:

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- Ensuring workers have access to up-to-date information** and understand how to implement plans and fulfill their roles.
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Training and skills building considerations could include training which covers:

- General emergency management information**, what is it and how could this impact people with disability.
- The organisation's emergency management policy**, procedures and plans.
- The specific needs of each person being supported.**
- Infection prevention and control**, including appropriate use of PPE.

Emergency and disaster management is everyone's responsibility and people will have different roles, including direct support workers, supervisors, managers, senior leadership and Board members.

Remember to include:

- New workers as part of orientation and induction.**
- Training for other workers, who do not have a role in direct service provision.**
- Workers at all levels of the organisation.**
- Volunteers and students on placement.**
- Temporary workers and workers who are subcontracted.**

Other considerations for preparing the workforce could be:

- Building the skills of workers to be able to talk with the people they support** about changes as and when they occur. This could include conversations about non-critical support slowing down and stopping during a workforce shortage.
- Ensuring training and testing of plans involves workers** at all levels.

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- Regularly reviewing plans as part of team meetings.**
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Supporting people with disability to be prepared.

These actions could include:

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- Consulting with people with disability** and their support networks in the development of any emergency-related safeguards that need to be included in their support plans.
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- Identifying with people with disability what they consider to be their critical supports.**
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- Carrying out individual risk assessments in collaboration with the person.** Consider the degree to which each person relies on the support to meet their daily living needs and the extent to which their health and safety would be affected if those services were disrupted.
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- Ensuring people with disability and their networks are fully informed of supports they receive and how they might change during an emergency or disaster.**
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- Connecting - where appropriate and with consent - with other services** involved in providing critical supports and being aware of key contacts.
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Consider practical preparations, these could include:

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- For people with disability at a higher risk during an emergency,** consider preparations such as a 'go bag' with things the person might need for an overnight stay. Include information about where the bag is stored in support plans and procedures.
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- If providing residential supports,** are there emergency kits out at the properties? Are the people who live there involved in contingency planning and drills?
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- If supporting in people in their own homes**, do they have information and / or support to put together an emergency kit? Information of what to include in emergency kits can be found here: [DFES Emergency Kit Webpage](#)
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Consider options for documenting information, these could include:

- Documenting strategies in the person's Support Plan** on how they will be supported during an emergency or disaster. Include the potential need for referral to other providers or the need for relocation if the environment is impacted.
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- Updating support plan templates** to include additional safeguards, these could include:
 - The person's emergency contacts (e.g., next of kin, guardian, or advocate).
 - A photo or description of the person.
 - Other important contacts such as current GP and any other health professionals.
 - Any medical conditions as well as ongoing treatment and current medications, including dose and frequency.
 - A list of essential equipment, communication devices or other support aids.
 - The person's essential services / critical supports.
 - Any areas of increased risk or concern, such as people who have higher intensity or complex supports, people who have one support worker, who live alone, who live in remote or high-risk areas or people who have no informal supports.
 - Preferences of the participant i.e., dietary, support workers.
 - How often this plan will be reviewed.
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- Including information in service agreements** about how emergencies and disasters are managed and what services could be impacted.
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Emergency and Disaster Response

Response plans and procedures, need to guide and instruct workers on how to respond, managing the environment and providing supports safely. They should be specific to different types of emergencies or disasters and in the different environments services are provided in.

Consider outlining:

- The type of emergency the plan is for.** Include definitions relating to this type of emergency and any related information such as links to where to find official information on the hazards.



The State Government provides advice on emergency management and the most common types of emergencies in WA. [Prepare - Emergency WA Warnings & Incidents](#)

- The scope of the plan.** Describe who this plan is for, who will it be given to and the locations in which the plan applies.

- Emergency and essential contacts.** Include the internal and external contacts that workers responding might need in an emergency.

Examples could include:

- External emergency contacts: Police, fire, ambulance, SES.
- Internal emergency contacts: First Aid Officers, WHS Officers, Fire Wardens.
- Other internal key contacts: Managers, reception, nearby services operated by the organisation.
- Information lines: Poisons Information line, COVID information, local emergency information such as Emergency WA.
- Utilities: Gas, electric, water.
- Local businesses.
- Supports in the area.

- **Roles and responsibilities.** The nature and type of roles included, will depend upon the size and scale of the organisation and the scope and complexity of supports provided. Consider all levels of the organisation, including CEO and senior leadership, supervisors, direct support workers, people with disability and their support networks.



Examples of some roles and responsibilities could include:

- **External stakeholder liaison** – such as high-level liaison or communication with state/territory departments, the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission (NDIS Commission) and the NDIA.
- **Monitoring changes in directions** – Monitoring trusted sources of information for changes in directions, such as DFES and Emergency WA websites for changes in bushfire warning levels.
- **Mandatory reporting** – Such as incident reporting, or notification of changes to the NDIS Commission which impact continuity of supports.
- **Internal communications** – Keeping workers informed, ensuring information is communicated to workers including contracted agency workers to ensure they can do their job well.
- **Monitoring and distribution of essential supplies** - Such as food and water, cleaning, PPE, medical or healthcare supplies.
- **Individual safeguarding** – Supporting workers with any emergency-related safeguards for the people being supported. This could include referral and liaison with other supports and services, or communicating workers to ensure they are aware of any individual support requirements.
- **Communicating with people with disability including their families and networks** - Ensuring people are consulted and informed around any issues or changes, checking in with the workers about any people with additional communication support needs.
- **Continuity of supports** - Managing worker shortages, rostering and leave management, liaising with partners in support such as agencies and ensuring inductions of new workers are completed.

- Emergency management team** - Consider if there is a need to establish an emergency management team to support good governance and share the workload. These could be roles which already exist within the organisation, or they could be allocated during an emergency.

Also consider outlining:

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- Responsibilities of other people who could be impacted** such as contractors and other visitors to services.

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- The emergency procedures.** Explain the response will be coordinated and the roles and responsibilities of each worker's position.

Consider:

- Actions to keep people with disability, workers and premises safe.**
 - The communication strategy.** Who will communicate, when, to who and how. What are the communication channels to communicate changes to workers, people with disability and their networks? How and when might they be activated?
 - The different environments that supports and services are provided in.** How the measures may differ or change for different support environments.
 - Where to find necessary equipment** such as first aid, emergency kits or PPE.
 - The measures in place to support people's health and well-being.**
 - The escalation processes and expectations if the situation changes,** including the impact of the emergency continuing over a prolonged period.
 - Guidance directing support workers** on when to access a person's individual Safety Plan and take any required actions specified in the plan.
 - The plans for continuity of services,** including any changes to service delivery, relevant contact details and the plan for returning to usual services following any unavoidable disruptions.
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Please note: This resource was reviewed in May 2023 by the NDS Quality and Safeguards Sector Readiness Project. The resource is general in nature and is provided as a guide only. NDS believes that the information contained in this publication is correct at the time of publishing, however, NDS reserves the right to vary any of this publication without further notice. The information provided in this publication should not be relied upon instead of other legal, medical, financial, or professional advice. Please always refer to online documents for the latest versions including the NDIS Practice Standards and advice to providers on the Code of Conduct.