Tasmanian Emergency Evacuation Framework

ISSUE 2

Tasmania Police | Tasmanian Government

The Tasmanian Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management acknowledges the Palawa/Pakana (Tasmanian Aboriginal people) as the Traditional Owners and continuing custodians of Lutruwita/Tasmania.

We acknowledge their deep and enduring connection to their lands, waterways and seas, including all living beings on Country. We pay our respects to Elders past and present. This framework was produced on the lands of the Muwinina people.

Acknowledgements

This framework was developed under the auspices of the Emergency Evacuation Project, with the support and collaboration of the Tasmanian Emergency Evacuation Project Steering Committee, and financial assistance from the Australian Government. This framework was made possible through the contributions of a diverse cross-section of the disaster risk reduction, disaster resilience, and emergency management sectors.

The Tasmanian Emergency Evacuation Framework, initiated by the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) and developed by Tasmania Police, represents a collaborative effort to enhance emergency preparedness.

This framework extensively draws on the expertise and resources of the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience (AIDR) and the Evacuation Planning Handbook (2023). The authors gratefully acknowledge the significant support and collaboration provided by AIDR.

Authority

The Tasmanian Emergency Evacuation Framework is issued under the authority of the State Emergency Management Committee in accordance with section 9 of the *Emergency Management Act 2006*.

Contents

Foreword

Tasmania is increasingly facing the need to evacuate communities affected by natural events such as floods and fires. Recent disasters, including the Tasmanian West Coast fires in February 2025 and the state-wide severe weather event in late 2024, underscore the urgency of robust evacuation planning. The Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements, established in response to the devastating 2019–20 bushfire season, has highlighted the critical importance of coordinated disaster management.

The State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC), as the leading authority on emergency management in Tasmania, continues to recognise the importance of evacuation planning and preparedness. This framework is essential for ensuring that evacuation is a well-coordinated risk management strategy, demanding comprehensive and collaborative planning at local, regional and state levels.

The Tasmanian Emergency Evacuation Framework aligns with evacuation principles established by the Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience and represents an evidence-based approach for the management of emergency evacuation, considered current best practice. It empowers Tasmanian response management authorities, emergency management committees and their partner agencies to prepare for community evacuations in a more consistent, collaborative, and robust manner.

I endorse the Tasmanian Emergency Evacuation Framework and trust this will contribute to a safer and more resilient Tasmania.

COMMISSIONER DONNA ADAMS
State Emergency Management Controller
19 January 2026

Introduction

Purpose

The Tasmanian Emergency Evacuation Framework describes a consistent approach across Tasmania to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of a five-stage evacuation process. It offers principles-based guidance on managing evacuations before, during and after an emergency or disaster. This framework is designed to support government agencies, non-government organisations and communities in inclusive evacuation planning.

Central to the framework's intent is ensuring the safety of community members and emergency personnel during evacuations and facilitating the timely return of evacuees to minimise negative health, social and economic impacts.

This framework has been developed to:

- Establish a consistent, state-wide approach to the management and coordination of evacuations in Tasmania.
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of State Government agencies, councils, and emergency services.
- Provide practical guidance aligned with the five stages of evacuation—Decision, Warning, Withdrawal, Shelter, and Return—to support effective evacuation planning for all types of emergencies.

Context

The Emergency Evacuation Framework is a key component of Tasmania's emergency management resources. It aligns with the Australian Disaster Resilience Handbook Collection and plays a crucial role in enhancing disaster preparation, response, and recovery, as outlined by the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (COAG, 2011).

The National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework (Australian Government, 2018) acknowledges that disaster resilience extends beyond the responsibilities of emergency services and management organisations. It is a shared responsibility involving individuals, households, businesses, communities and all levels of government.

Although individuals and communities play a crucial role, they often lack control over the systems required to mitigate or lessen the impacts of certain disaster risks. Therefore, it is essential that governments and businesses take coordinated action to reduce the disaster risks within their control and minimise any adverse impacts on communities.

The 2020 Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements commented that national arrangements are not confined to arrangements involving the Australian Government, they encompass all levels of government, the private and not-for-profit sectors, communities, families and individuals.

Reducing the impact of disasters now and in the future requires a coordinated effort across various sectors, including land use planning, infrastructure, emergency management, social policy, agriculture, education, health, community development, energy and the environment.

The significance of effective evacuation planning was underscored by the Coordinator-General of the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), who highlighted critical challenges faced by communities and emergency management organisations across Australia. These challenges include an aging population, increasing coastal populations and more extreme weather patterns, all of which are shaping the risk environment for Tasmania.

Climate change

Scientific evidence from the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) indicates that a variable and changing climate is expected to further increase the severity and frequency of many natural hazards in Australia (CSIRO and BOM, 2022).

This Issue 2 of the Tasmanian framework incorporates and reflects recommendations, observations and learnings from the:

State

- Tasmanian state-wide severe weather: October 2022
- Tasmania severe weather event: August 2024
- Tasmanian West Coast fires: February 2025.

National

- 2020 Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements (the Royal Commission)
- 2020 New South Wales Bushfire Inquiry (NSW Inquiry)
- Victorian Inspector-General for Emergency Management's Inquiry into the 2019–20 Victorian Fire Season (Phase 1 and Phase 2 Reports)
- 2022 Queensland Inspector-General of Emergency Management Southeast Queensland Rainfall and Flooding Event Report
- 2022 New South Wales Independent Flood Inquiry.

These inquiries recognise that Australia is experiencing more frequent and intense natural hazards. Recent disasters have exhibited complexity never before seen or experienced, with concurrent events such as fire, pandemic and flood having compounding impacts on communities and the Australian landscape. These events highlight the need for an adaptive, flexible and inclusive approach to evacuation planning.

Scope

This framework supports a consistent, state-wide approach to evacuation planning, coordination, and execution in Tasmania. It aligns with nationally agreed principles and adopts the five-stage evacuation process—Decision, Warning, Withdrawal, Shelter, and Return—to provide practical guidance that can be applied across a range of hazards. The framework outlines evacuation principles that support both preparedness and real-time response during emergencies requiring community evacuations.

The framework focuses on the safe movement and management of people away from hazard areas. Shelter-in-place arrangements are considered out of scope.

In scope

The framework defines a community as a social group with common associations, typically defined by location, shared experiences or functions, and characterised by shared elements such as culture, heritage, language, ethnicity, pastimes, occupation or workplace (AIDR Glossary 2019). It recognises communities of place and communities of interest, noting that multiple communities can exist within a single location.

This framework provides detailed guidance on emergency evacuation roles and responsibilities in Tasmania and serves as a scalable resource for agency-specific and hazard-specific emergency management plans. Its elements are designed to be flexible and adaptable to the unique circumstances of affected communities.

The framework should be used alongside special emergency management plans, associated guidelines, local arrangements and the Australian Disaster Resilience Handbook Collection. It should also be read in conjunction with the *Emergency Management Act 2006* and the Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements (TEMA), which provide relevant terms, definitions and arrangements that are specific to Tasmania.

> For a full list of Tasmanian emergency management documents, see Appendix 3 of the Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements.

Out of scope

This framework is not an operational manual for conducting emergency evacuations. Instead, it provides a strategic guide. Organisations in Tasmania with designated responsibilities for specific evacuation functions, as outlined in this framework, are expected to plan, implement, deliver and manage those functions accordingly.

The framework is not intended for use in planning site-specific evacuations (for example, high-rise buildings). This type of evacuation planning is addressed in AS3745 Planning for Emergencies in Facilities, and in relevant Tasmanian legislation.

This framework is not designed for planning evacuations related to terrorist incidents. Given the scope and complexity of such situations, please contact the Emergency Management Special Response Command (EMSR) within Tasmania Police for specific planning advice and requirements for terrorist-related evacuation scenarios.

> The Emergency Management Special Response Command within Tasmania Police provides subject matter expertise as well as consistency in advice and approach to counter-terrorism activities in Tasmania. The EMSR is the coordination point for Tasmanian Government counter-terrorism measures, and establishes the arrangements in relation to terrorist threats.

Evacuation
Overview

What is evacuation?

Evacuation is a strategy used to reduce loss of life or lessen the effects of a hazard on a community, before or during a disaster. It involves the movement of people who are threatened by a hazard to a safer location and their safe and timely return. Removal of people from the threat is often the most effective way to manage public safety. For an evacuation to be as effective as possible, it must be appropriately planned and implemented.

Depending on the hazard and its impacts on communities, the evacuation process may take days, weeks or months to complete. Some evacuations may be carried out quickly and over short distances. For example, people may be advised to:

- move to higher ground pending a potential tsunami impact or flash flooding

- move two streets away from a rural-urban interface to avoid a bushfire.

In other circumstances, people evacuated from an area may be relocated many kilometres from their home and cannot return for a considerable period due to access or contamination issues.

Types of evacuation

There are two types of evacuation: pre-warned and immediate. Both evacuation types have distinctive characteristics and challenges, and different planning dynamics and responses.

1. **Pre-warned evacuation:** where a community has been provided with a warning of the impending hazard impact, and timely and coordinated preparedness and response actions have been facilitated in accordance with an evacuation plan (for example, flood or bushfire).

2. **Immediate evacuation:** where a rapid onset hazard causes a threat with limited or no opportunity to warn the affected individuals or communities. These events require immediate and rapid protective movements of those affected (for example, earthquake, structural collapse, gas explosion, or transport accident).

With complex, concurrent and compounding events there may be a need for a two-step evacuation process in both an immediate and a pre-warned evacuation scenario. In this scenario:

Step 1: Move communities out of harm's way from the hazard.

Step 2: When it is safe to do so, relocate communities to an evacuation centre(s).

Total, partial and phased evacuations

1. **Total evacuation:** Entire affected communities are recommended or directed to evacuate.

2. **Partial evacuation:** Some of the affected communities are evacuated. For example, only residents living in low-lying areas directly impacted by flood waters will need to evacuate.

3. **Phased evacuation:** When in either a total or partial evacuation, affected communities are recommended or directed to evacuate at different times (for example, due to the slow onset of a hazard or to avoid congestion on transport routes).

Evacuation approaches

In Tasmania, the decision to evacuate is determined by the response management authority (RMA), who maintains responsibility for managing the emergency event.

As outlined in Table 8 of the Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements, a Response Management Authority (RMA) is designated for specific hazards or emergency events that occur or are likely to occur in Tasmania. This responsibility is often established through legislation or strategic policy. The RMA is responsible for managing all aspects of the emergency response.

The evacuation approach is based on the nature of the emergency: rapid onset events necessitate immediate action; and slow onset or pre-warned situations allow for more deliberate and structured evacuation planning. This ensures that all evacuation efforts are effectively managed and executed, thereby safeguarding the community in times of crisis.

Directed evacuation

This is in circumstances where a relevant government agency has exercised a legislated power that requires people to evacuate.

In Tasmania, the *Emergency Management Act 2006*, provides authorised officers with the power to direct evacuations during emergencies.

Recommended evacuation

This is where an evacuation warning has been issued but people have the option to remain.

Self-initiated evacuation

This is the self-initiated movement of people to safer places prior to, or in the absence of, official warnings to evacuate. Some people may choose to leave early, even in the absence of a hazard but due to a forecast of, for example, high bushfire danger or a flood watch. Self-initiated evacuees manage their own withdrawal, including transportation arrangements. They may have their own shelter arrangements or they may rely on formal shelter arrangements and the support provided there.

Self-initiated evacuation must be recognised in the planning process, particularly in the shelter and return stages, as there may be an expectation of access to support services.

Shelter in place

Shelter in place means finding a safer location (often where they live) and staying there until the threat has passed or people are told to evacuate.

The RMA may recommend that some or all individuals in the anticipated hazard impact area shelter in place when it is deemed safer than evacuation. This decision is based on a thorough assessment of the situation to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the affected population.

People may decide to shelter in place even when an evacuation is directed or recommended. This may be:

- to protect homes, pets, livestock, crops, machinery and/or buildings
- because they believe it is too late or unsafe to evacuate
- because warnings have not been received, understood and acted on in a timely manner.

In some cases, steps may be taken by the RMA managing the emergency to protect residents in place, particularly those at increased risk (such as residents of aged-care and medical facilities). The RMA may consult with and inform managers of these facilities of the decision to evacuate or shelter in place. The facilities' evacuation plans should be available to incident managers and appended to the local emergency management plan and/or evacuation plan.

Information will need to be provided to those who shelter in place, particularly during the warning and return stages. Communication to those who shelter in place should be coordinated with those managing the evacuation to ensure consistent messaging about recovery arrangements and risk mitigation strategies for returnees.

Planning for evacuation

Effective evacuation management relies on detailed emergency management planning and routine exercises. Hazard-specific planning, undertaken by RMAs, involves working with communities before a disaster situation arises

to help alleviate some of the factors that might otherwise jeopardise the success of an evacuation operation.

Emergency management planning is a legislated responsibility in Tasmania. All levels of government, emergency management organisations, and other relevant non-government and community organisations are involved in emergency management planning. Engaging the community and relevant stakeholders to develop, exercise and continually improve hazard-specific and emergency management plans can enhance evacuation planning and management outcomes. Individuals and households also have a responsibility through their own household emergency planning to consider when they will evacuate, what they will take, where they will go and how they will reunite if they are separated.

Communities and individuals are unique, and their behaviours during an emergency will be driven by different factors.

In Tasmania, RMAs engage with communities at several stages to understand how their values might influence the community's response to disaster and stress. These engagements provide the opportunity for the emergency management sector to support communities and households in the development and delivery of readiness programs tailored to specific hazard risks. These interactions build individual and community resilience and promote shared responsibility. This information also assists in managing the withdrawal and sheltering of evacuees.

Bushfire Protection Plans and Local Community Flood Guides are examples of community-level hazard-specific planning undertaken by RMAs. These resources provide members of the public with:

Risk Awareness: Information about the specific hazard - bushfires or floods - that could affect the community.

Preparedness Tips: Guidance on how to prepare homes and properties to minimize damage.

Evacuation Routes: Clear instructions on safe evacuation routes and the location of safer places or places of last resort.

Emergency Contacts: Lists of important contacts, including local emergency services and community support networks.

Safety Measures: Steps to take during an emergency to ensure personal and family safety.

Recovery Information: Advice on what to do after the hazard has passed, including how to access support and resources for recovery.

Evacuation can be stressful for people. In addition to the risk of harm to their own life, other factors may influence behaviours and decisions in an emergency. These factors can include but are not limited to:

- concern for the safety and welfare of family, friends and animals
- concern for the safety of property and livelihoods
- dependency on others to assist with evacuation, particularly for those living with a disability and those who rely on others for care or transport
- reliance on equipment, devices, medications, and support to sustain life and maintain health
- exposure to misinformation on social media and informal communication platforms
- influence by the thoughts and actions of those around them or those who are influential in their lives
- socially isolated or disconnected from communities and mainstream supports and services
- cultural or linguistic constraints
- lack of trust in the organisations tasked with the evacuation process.

For guidance on helping you to get ready for an emergency in Tasmania, including knowing your warnings, insurance check-up and improving your understanding of natural hazard risks to your property, visit TasALERT Get Ready.

Preparing for Emergencies: Working Together for Safer Communities

Emergency services in Tasmania are focused on helping communities, households, and individuals prepare for emergencies—especially those that may require evacuation. A key priority is supporting people to create practical, personalised plans that:

- Reflect individual and local circumstances, recognising that every household and community is unique.
- Provide clear triggers and actions, so people know when to leave, what to do, where to go, what to take, and how to get there safely.
- Include support needs, such as assistance for children, older adults, people with disabilities, or pets.
- Are developed in collaboration with everyday support networks, ensuring people have access to ongoing help during emergency events

Stages of the evacuation process

Tasmania adopts the nationally consistent five-staged evacuation process:

1. Decision to evacuate
2. Warning
3. Withdrawal
4. Shelter
5. Return.

Structuring evacuation plans in accordance with these five stages ensures that key aspects of the process are considered and addressed in detail. Alongside the evacuation process is the fundamental need for individual, community and organisational resilience, which facilitates a more effective response to and recovery from an evacuation. The five stages are covered in more detail in the following chapters.

Figure 1: Evacuation planning process
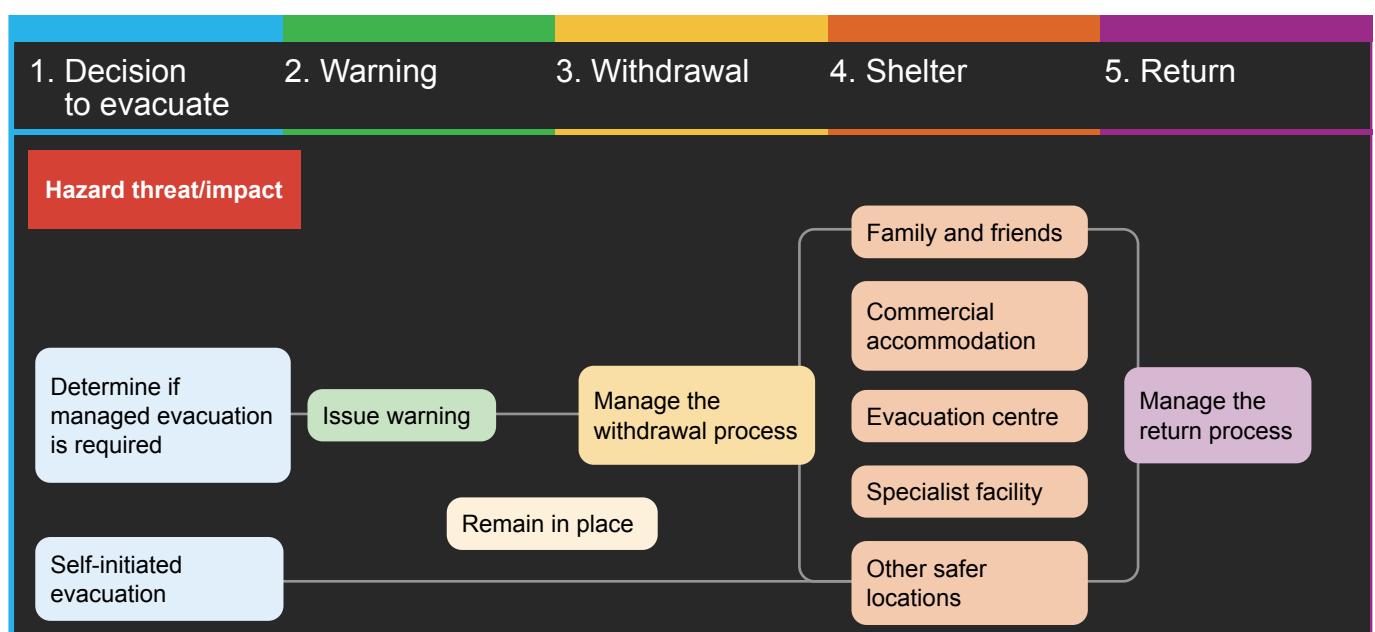
Responsibility for emergency evacuation in Tasmania

Chapter 3 of the Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements describes state-wide emergency management roles and responsibilities. These emergency management arrangements are scalable and flexible. They are underpinned by partnerships at every level.

The *Emergency Management Act 2006* defines emergency management as the planning, organisation, coordination and implementation of measures necessary or desirable to prevent, mitigate, respond to, overcome and recover from an emergency.

Emergency management related activities are managed by State, Regional and Municipal Emergency Management Committees. In addition, a Ministerial Committee also exists to provide ministerial level strategic policy oversight of measures to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies. The Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements provides a summary of emergency management roles as defined by the *Emergency Management Act 2006.*

Membership of each committee enables the development of strong partnership between the State Government, municipal councils, non-government organisations, business, industry and communities to ensure the delivery of comprehensive emergency management responses for the Tasmanian community.

Regional Emergency Management Committees, chaired by Regional Emergency Management Controllers, are well positioned to support RMAs to plan for large-scale emergencies within their regions. This includes coordinating specific agencies that hold functional responsibilities across each of the five evacuation stages.

Example: During the 2025 Tasmanian West Coast fires, regional emergency coordination activities were effective in assisting the Tasmania Fire Service and the Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service with coordinating the evacuation and sheltering arrangements for impacted communities.

Example: During a state-wide severe weather event in September 2024, municipal emergency coordination activities were effective at managing local evacuation centres and coordinating immediate relief efforts. Municipal Emergency Management Committees, chaired by local councils, can include representatives from Tasmania Police, Tasmania Fire Service, State Emergency Service, as well as other government and non-government community organisations. For example tourism operators, local business owners, local healthcare service providers.

Municipal Emergency Management Committees, chaired by councils, can support RMAs and Regional Controllers by identifying local solutions that contribute to evacuation planning and sheltering arrangements.

Functional roles and responsibilities for each stage of emergency evacuation in Tasmania is listed at Table 1. During an emergency or disaster situation, the RMA retains overall responsibility for all activities that are undertaken.

The RMA holds overarching responsibility for managing the emergency event, including any decision to evacuate. Where evacuation is required, it is incumbent on the RMA to engage the Primary Support Agency to support implementation.

Table 1: Functional roles and responsibilities for emergency evacuation stages in Tasmania

STAGE ONE: DECISION TO EVACUATE	PRIMARY SUPPORT AGENCY	OTHER SUPPORTING AGENCIES
Evacuation risk assessment	Response Management Authority Tasmania Police	Municipal Council
Decision to evacuate	Response Management Authority	

STAGE TWO: WARNING	PRIMARY SUPPORT AGENCY	OTHER SUPPORTING AGENCIES
Decision to warn	Response Management Authority	Department of Natural Resources and Environment
Provision of warnings	Response Management Authority	Tasmania Police State Emergency Service Department of Premier and Cabinet

STAGE THREE: WITHDRAWAL	PRIMARY SUPPORT AGENCY	OTHER SUPPORTING AGENCIES
Coordination	Tasmania Police	State Emergency Service Ambulance Tasmania
Transport and logistical support	Department of State Growth	Contractors, Commercial transport providers
Security	Tasmania Police	Contractors
Traffic management	Tasmania Police	Municipal Council State Emergency Service Department of State Growth

STAGE FOUR: SHELTER	PRIMARY SUPPORT AGENCY	OTHER SUPPORTING AGENCIES
Evacuation centre activation	Municipal Council (Regional Controller makes a formal request)	State Emergency Service (Emergency Management Unit)
Evacuation centre management	Municipal Council	Department of Premier and Cabinet Contractors Non-Government Organisations
Environmental health and waste management (at evacuation centre)	Municipal Council Department of Health	Environment Protection Authority
Alternative emergency accommodation	Department of Premier and Cabinet	Non-Government Organisations
Registration of evacuees (at evacuation centre)	Municipal Council	Department of Premier and Cabinet
Animal welfare (pets and companion animals)	Owners	RSPCA Municipal Council (if facilities available) Department of Natural Resources and Environment Community / volunteer groups
Animal welfare (livestock)	Owners Department of Natural Resources and Environment	RSPCA Municipal Council (if facilities available)
Care for children	Parents and guardians	Department for Education, Children and Young People

STAGE FIVE: RETURN	PRIMARY SUPPORT AGENCY	OTHER SUPPORTING AGENCIES
Return risk assessment	Response Management Authority	Key stakeholders
Decision to return	Response Management Authority	Municipal Councils Tasmania Police State Emergency Service

Tasmania's evacuation history

Tasmania's ability to respond to emergencies has been strengthened by the invaluable lessons learned from past events and experiences. While these events presented challenges and hardships for many individuals and communities, they have contributed to enhancing Tasmania's resilience and improving its capacity to manage future emergencies and support communities in times of crisis.

The emergency management framework plays a crucial role in this ongoing development. It provides strategic guidance and a structured approach to planning, implementing and managing emergency evacuations. This framework ensures that all emergency management efforts are coordinated, comprehensive and effective, ultimately safeguarding the wellbeing of Tasmanians.

YEAR	TYPE	LOCATION	IMPACT
1893	Flood	Launceston	200–300 people evacuated
1929	Flood	Launceston	4,500 people evacuated—nearly 2% of total Tasmanian population at that time
1944	Flood	Ouse/Mersey Rivers	Evacuation occurred, numbers unknown
1960	Flood	Derwent River	650 homeless
1967	Fire	Black Tuesday	1,400 homes destroyed, 128 other buildings
1969	Flood	South Esk River	250 people evacuated
1970	Flood	Mersey/Meander rivers	100 people evacuated
1981	Fire	Zeehan	40 homes destroyed
2013	Fire	Southern Tasmania (Sorell/Tasman Municipality)	1,000 campers and tourists evacuated, 320 properties destroyed or damaged, $150 million in damage
2016	Flood	North and North West Tasmania	Emergency accommodation for 192 people, 130 residential houses inundated, $180 million in damage
2019	Fire	Riveaux Road, Gell River and Central Plateau fires	Evacuation of hundreds of residents and campers. An evacuation centre opened in Huonville on 24 January 2019 for almost two weeks.
2022	Flood	North and North West Tasmania	Over 25,000 people at risk, with hundreds evacuated from across 17 local government areas. 62 homes damaged, $12.4 million in insurance claims.
2024	Flood	River Derwent	Record rainfall led to major flooding and the evacuation of residents in low-lying areas. Widespread power outages.

Principles for developing an evacuation plan
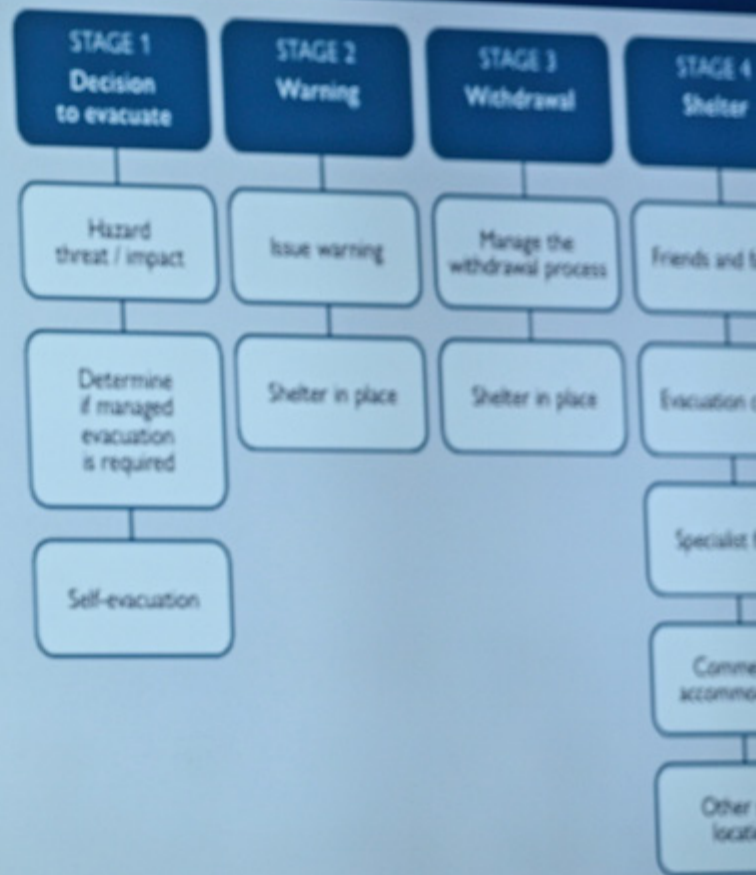
Evacuation planning in an emergency or disaster context

Evacuation planning is an integral part of emergency management planning. Functional roles and responsibilities for the management of evacuations (Table 1), are documented in emergency management plans at state, regional and municipal levels. Development of a dedicated evacuation plan should consider the context and capability of the individuals, organisations and communities at risk, together with a hazard-specific state emergency management plan that identifies evacuation as an appropriate risk management strategy.

Emergency planning

Emergency planning is crucial for enhancing Tasmania's disaster resilience capability. The emergency planning process involves a collective and collaborative effort where agreements are reached and documented between various stakeholders, including local communities, government agencies and emergency services. This process ensures that the unique emergency management needs of Tasmanian communities are met.

In Tasmania, emergency planning involves identifying and documenting strategies for preventing, preparing for, responding to and recovering from emergencies. This comprehensive approach, known as PPRR (Prevention, Preparedness, Response, Recovery), is embedded in the Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements.

Effective emergency planning in Tasmania contributes to reducing the likelihood and impact of emergencies on individuals, communities, entities and the environment. It also brings significant economic benefits by minimising the costs associated with disaster response and recovery.

The Tasmania State Emergency Service Emergency Management Unit (SES-EMU) plays a pivotal role in coordinating these efforts, ensuring that state emergency management plans are practical, inclusive and adaptable to the state's unique geographical and environmental challenges.

By fostering strong partnerships and leveraging local knowledge, Tasmania's emergency planning framework aims to build a resilient and prepared community that is capable of effectively managing and mitigating the impacts of disasters.

Inclusive community engagement

Evacuation can be a complex process which relies on detailed information / intelligence on the hazard or threat.Evacuation planning should consider the cultural, social and geographic characteristics of communities.

Community representatives can provide valuable local knowledge and context, especially if they have lived experience in emergencies and evacuations and good knowledge of community networks, capacities and resources.

In Tasmania, Special Emergency Management Plans (SEMPs), which address specific hazard risks or emergencies, are detailed and involve input from a diverse range of stakeholders including those with hazard-specific functions or capability, special interest groups, cultural and community leaders, and community members and organisations that reflect the communities' demographic characteristics.

The diversity of Tasmanian communities and specific support requirements need to be reflected in evacuation plans. Consideration should be given to each group's needs, including but not limited to:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- culturally and linguistically diverse groups (CALD)
- people with disability, chronic illness or mental health issues
- women
- people with diverse gender and sexual orientations
- infants, children and young people, including kinship arrangements and unaccompanied minors
- pregnant and breastfeeding women
- seniors
- new migrants
- asylum seekers and refugees
- those living in socially or physically isolated, or high-risk circumstances or locations
- those experiencing homelessness, housing insecurity, unemployment or poverty
- people living with or escaping family violence
- tourists, holiday-makers and visitors
- international students and people on temporary work visas
- people with neurodiversity
- those without access to independent transport.

Consider: Taking the time to understand the diversity of community capacities and needs will assist in improving evacuation outcomes. For example, Tasmania's population is aging rapidly, with the median age now at 42 years, higher than the national median of 38. The number of residents over 85 is expected to nearly double in the next decade. This poses challenges for healthcare and social services, particularly in regional areas. Emergency evacuation plans should incorporate strategies to address the unique needs of older adults, who may have limited mobility, chronic health conditions or require regular medications.

Consider: There have been instances where an evacuation warning has been issued by an RMA; however, a high percentage of the community were unable to follow the advice due to a range of pre-existing barriers—for example, access to the internet to receive the latest emergency warnings and advice on evacuation routes.

Gendered needs in evacuation planning

Gender and Disaster Australia (GAD) have developed the Gender and Emergency Management (GEM) Guidelines, which provide a shared and improved understanding of the specific issues (social, structural, psychological, financial, interpersonal and physical) relating to gender and disaster, and a capacity to respond to these issues. It supports changed practices by key emergency management organisations and communities to help identify, prevent and respond to gender-based disaster impacts.

GAD's Acting on Gendered Needs in Evacuation and Relief Centres Checklist provides guidance on considerations in the planning phase of evacuation planning.

Source: knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/national-gender-and-emergency-management-guidelines

Further guidance on community engagement can be found in *Community Engagement for Disaster Resilience* (AIDR, 2020).

The planning process

Evacuation planning should be considered as part of the broader emergency planning process. Tasmanian SEMPs and other hazard-specific plans act as guides to comprehensively address all elements of Prevention, Preparedness, Response, Recovery (PPRR) activities. They capture what should happen, and it should be recognised that with fast-moving, high-uncertainty events, conducting emergency evacuations and implementing the hazard-specific plan can be different.

The following matters are specific to evacuation planning:

- legislation
- responsibility for planning an evacuation
- the evacuation risk assessment
- responsibilities for evacuation management
- resources and services needed
- management arrangements and systems
- documenting and promoting the evacuation plan
- exercising evacuation arrangements in response to specific hazards or risks
- monitoring and review.

Legislation

The authority to recommend or direct communities to evacuate is found in Tasmanian emergency management legislation. An evacuation plan must consider and be consistent with the applicable legislative provisions to ensure recommendations and directions are made with appropriate authority. Where directed evacuations are considered, RMAs will need to be aware of the circumstances that must exist to trigger the authority to issue directed evacuation orders, and whether any people are exempt from any obligation to comply.

When there is a legal obligation for evacuations, any mismanagement of the evacuation process could result in legal scrutiny and liability. This includes the decision to evacuate, issuing warnings, managing the evacuation, providing shelter and deciding when to allow people to return.

Tasmanian legislation allows for directed evacuations: Under the *Emergency Management Act 2006*, authorised officers have the power to direct evacuations during emergencies to protect life, property and the environment. This includes situations such as natural disasters, significant threats to public health, or other emergencies that require a coordinated response.

Consider: The legal context of Indigenous communities, including cultural and heritage rights, must be considered in evacuation planning. Traditional Owners and cultural leaders have powers and responsibility among their communities as part of their cultural norms and practices which should be factored into planning and decision-making.

For further information on conducting an emergency risk assessment in Tasmania, see the Tasmanian emergency risk assessment guidelines & Toolbox (TERAG, 2017).

For further information on conducting a systemic risk management study, see *Systemic Disaster Risk* (AIDR, 2021).

Evacuation risk assessment

An evacuation risk assessment is conducted by the RMA and Tasmania Police. It is a crucial first step in understanding the risks to Tasmanian communities which may necessitate evacuation planning. Employing a systemic risk approach to evacuations will help emergency management committees grasp not only the potential hazard risks but also the consequences and the interconnected nature of these risks. The evacuation risk assessment should encompass all potential threats, including specific known risks (such as the regular flooding of certain areas) and other less predictable yet foreseeable events (such as bushfires threatening rural-urban interfaces or outbreaks of transmissible diseases).

The scope of the evacuation risk assessment should be focused and specific to ensure the process is efficient, effective and informs a range of state and local government functions. Key elements of the risk assessment should include:

- **Hazard Environment:** Understanding the natural and human-induced hazards specific to Tasmania, such as bushfires, floods, storms and coastal erosion.
- **Demographics and Social Makeup:** Considering the unique demographic profile of Tasmania, including the aging population, the distribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and the socio-economic factors.
- **Population Demographics:** Analysing population data to identify vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, children and those with disabilities.
- **Critical Infrastructure:** Identifying and assessing the infrastructure and assets essential for emergency management, including transportation networks, healthcare facilities and communication systems.

By addressing these elements, the evacuation risk assessment will provide a comprehensive understanding of the risks and help develop effective evacuation plans tailored to the needs of Tasmanian communities.

An outcome from state, regional, municipal or hazard risk assessments may identify a need to develop an evacuation plan or plans for a particular hazard or community, and the need to convene an evacuation planning team.

Responsibility for planning an evacuation

It is important for everyone involved in evacuation planning to understand who is in charge and what their roles are at each stage. Tasmania Police lead evacuation planning when requested by an RMA. The roles and responsibilities can change depending on the type of hazard and are detailed in the TEMA.

The TEMA explains how different agencies will work together to ensure evacuations are carried out smoothly and efficiently. Therefore, any evacuation plan should clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of all agencies involved (see Table 1).

Those developing evacuation plans should know and follow any existing emergency management plans, SEMPs, procedures and guidelines. They should work together with relevant stakeholders, including relevant emergency management committees and the local government sector, to ensure everyone involved understands their roles.

Active and ongoing engagement is crucial to effectively leverage local knowledge, expertise and resources. This helps gain commitment and understanding from all parties involved in an evacuation.

The management structure for each stage of the evacuation requires agreement and documentation in the evacuation plan, including:

1. Decision to evacuate
2. Warning
3. Withdrawal
4. Shelter
5. Return.

Responsibilities for evacuation management

It is important for everyone involved in evacuation planning to clearly understand their roles and responsibilities at each stage of an evacuation. This includes community members, emergency management agencies and other relevant organisations. These roles may change particularly if evacuation planning is dynamic, being undertaken during response to an emergency or disaster situation, so it is crucial that they are clearly outlined in the evacuation plan.

The evacuation plan should explain how each group's activities will be coordinated to ensure the evacuation is carried out smoothly and efficiently. The management structure for each stage should be agreed on and documented by all parties involved (See Table 1).

The plan should also specify who is responsible for engaging with, informing and educating the community about evacuation-related matters to promote preparedness, especially if being undertaken by an RMA as a preparedness measure. For example, bushfire protection planning. This responsibility may shift as the evacuation moves through its stages. It is important to keep communities updated after the initial warning, such as when roads are re-opened or when evacuation centres are opened and closed. A communications sub-plan can help support this ongoing communication.

Resources and services needed

The evacuation plan should identify all resources and services required to carry out an evacuation, and detail how these resources and services will be obtained.

Resources required of key emergency management agencies and other relevant organisations may be identified, and any shortfalls addressed by the responsible agencies. Those preparing the evacuation plan should take a collaborative approach to ensuring sufficient resources across different organisations are available during an evacuation.

Some critical resources, such as equipment or personnel, may be sourced from local businesses or community groups. For example, local catering companies may be engaged to assist in the shelter stage if an evacuation centre is established. Therefore, local community providers should be engaged as required, and agreements should be documented, including reimbursement of costs. Scarce local resources may need to be prioritised or shared across areas of operation.

Contingency plans should be developed to address potential resource shortfalls or the need to organise or acquire resources from other locations such as regional centres, state or interstate, including arrangements for cross-border community resource sharing and access to Australian Government resources.

Arrangements and systems

Those preparing the evacuation plan should identify and develop specific management arrangements, addressing each of the five stages of evacuation.

It is important to identify assembly points, egress routes and traffic management points, and to develop effective warning systems like the Australian Warning System (AWS). Community members with local knowledge can be invaluable in this process. They can help pinpoint assembly points and egress routes, and offer critical advice on issues like telephone blackspots, suitable radio stations, and the effectiveness of evacuation routes based on past events.

Using local knowledge can also guide hazard reduction and risk mitigation activities, such as vegetation management, road maintenance, land development and ensuring critical infrastructure is in place for evacuation routes. Additionally, local insights can help identify people with specific needs in the community, ensuring everyone is considered in the evacuation planning process.

Documenting and promoting the plan

In Tasmania, municipal emergency management plans are made available to the relevant community or communities as well as agencies and organisations with an identified role in evacuation. The existence of municipal plans are to serve as community resources, promoted to the wider community using a variety of means such as social media, websites, community radio, libraries, community notice boards, and organisational and community newsletters. A broad knowledge and understanding of these plans will assist communities to become better prepared and more responsive to evacuation warnings.

The community should understand its role in the evacuation process to improve its capability to evacuate safely.

Community members who live in high-risk settings must familiarise themselves fully with evacuation arrangements, as they are likely to encounter emergencies that require evacuation. This may be achieved through a variety of community engagement activities, including community workshops, household and community preparedness activities, community training, the development of community volunteer programs and initiatives, engagement, and consultation with community representatives.

RMAs are responsible for promoting hazard-specific awareness campaigns across the community. Where possible, existing networks, forums and other community champions can play a role in this. The promotion, exercising and improvement of the plan is a continuous cycle.

For community bushfire plans, see the Tasmanian Fire Service Bushfire Protection Plans.

For community flood plans, see the Tasmanian State Emergency Service Community Protection Flood Guides.

Exercising

For continuous improvement in readiness and response, Tasmania's emergency management plans are reviewed, exercised and updated regularly.

Different approaches to exercising may be used, including discussion or field exercises. Community engagement is a critical component of emergency management. When relevant, the community should be involved in exercises to provide local expertise and feedback promote shared responsibility, and build trust and social cohesion. Where possible, it is good practice that community members participating in the exercise reflect the diversity of the community's demographic to identify and respond to their specific needs. Local arts organisations can also provide creative inputs into exercise scenarios and their implementation.

Following any exercise, a report should be prepared with appropriate recommendations to improve emergency management plans. Those responsible for maintaining the plan should consider the report and adopt relevant recommendations into a revised plan.

The outcomes from the exercise should be shared with the community to promote the plan, keep them informed and mindful of evacuation, and advise them on how they can prepare.

Further information about managing exercises can be found in *Managing Exercises* (AIDR, 2023).

Further information about community engagement can be found in *Community Engagement for Disaster Resilience* (AIDR, 2020).

Monitoring and review

Those responsible for maintaining emergency management and hazard-specific plans should ensure the plans are regularly monitored, reviewed and updated in accordance with current evacuation practices and the emergency management plan lessons management process. Consideration should be given to:

- experience of affected communities
- lessons learned
- agreed recommendations from inquiries or reviews
- evaluation reports from exercises and from the documented experiences and lessons of other similar communities
- changes in risk assessments
- changes in contact details
- new research or best practice.

It is suggested that representatives from adjoining local government areas that have functional responsibilities for evacuation attend and observe exercises to improve practice, capability and integration.

New research can be found in the *Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, and on the AIDR Knowledge Hub.

Stage One:
Decision to evacuate

Stage One:
Decision to evacuate

The purpose of this section is to guide emergency planning to make an informed decision about evacuation. The need to document the decision-making process and communicate the decision to stakeholders is also covered.

Decision to evacuate

☐ **Identify authority to make decision**

During an emergency, the RMA is responsible for making the decision to evacuate. In Tasmania, this authority typically involves Tasmania Police.

☐ **Identify relevant stakeholders**

Identify relevant stakeholders involved and impacted by the evacuation decision, including local councils, emergency services, community groups and critical infrastructure providers.

☐ **Develop an evacuation risk assessment process to help decide whether to evacuate**

The RMA and Tasmania Police will conduct an evacuation risk assessment used to support the decision to evacuate or not.

☐ **Decide how to let people know that a decision has been made**

The RMA will decide how to inform the public and relevant stakeholders about the evacuation decision, using methods such as emergency alerts, social media, local radio and local or community meetings.

☐ **Communicate the decision**

The RMA will clearly communicate the evacuation decision to all stakeholders and the public through the established communication channels.

☐ **Document the decision**

Document the evacuation decision, including the rationale, risk assessment findings, and communication steps taken.

Introduction

The evacuation risk assessment informs any decision to evacuate or not. The decision to evacuate is the first of the five stages of the evacuation process. Many complex issues need to be considered in making this decision, often with limited or rapidly changing information and time available.

When an emergency occurs and the time comes to make an informed decision, the RMA is in a better position to make such decisions if they have planned for such an occurrence.

Authority to decide

Several organisations may be responsible for the decision to evacuate, the authority to evacuate and the authority to warn. There needs to be clarity and understanding of how these functions will occur seamlessly during an emergency.

A decision not to evacuate is just as important as a decision to evacuate.

The evacuation plan should identify which agency and position has the authority to decide to evacuate (for example, the RMA and Incident Controller). This agency or position may vary depending on the nature of the hazard threat and may not be the same agency or position that is responsible for managing other stages of the evacuation process (for example, the withdrawal and return phase). Reference should be made to relevant state legislation, documented emergency management arrangements and emergency management plans to identify who has the authority to make the decision.

Relevant legislation, arrangements or plans may delegate this authority to whoever is in command and control of the incident. For organisations that have adopted the Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS), this will be the Incident Controller. These arrangements ensure that a decision-maker is available when needed. There may be occasions when due to the size, scale, and expected impact of the disaster the Incident Controller may need to delegate the evacuation function to a cell within the Incident Management Team. See *Incident Management* (AIDR, 2023) for further details.

Under Schedule 1 of the *Emergency Management Act 2006*, authorised officers have the legal power to direct evacuations during emergencies. If a decision is made to use a directed approach to evacuation, it is essential that everyone involved understands these powers and how they apply. This ensures that evacuation efforts are lawful, coordinated, and focused on protecting life and property.

Stakeholder management and the evacuation risk assessment process

Assess the risk

The existence of an evacuation plan does not mean that it will be implemented under all circumstances. Before deciding to undertake an evacuation, an assessment of the risk presented by the expected hazard threat should be undertaken. Due to time constraints, this assessment will often be brief; although, if time permits, relevant stakeholders should be consulted before deciding. The evacuation plan should identify the relevant stakeholders, including Tasmania Police, other relevant emergency management organisations (see Table 1), local government and community organisations where appropriate.

The risk assessment process should include the following steps:

- establish the context
- identify the risks
- analyse the risks
- evaluate the risks
- identify risk treatment options.

Details on how to address these steps are outlined below. Where time is insufficient to undertake a detailed risk assessment, or the impact of the hazard potentially falls outside the parameters identified for a defined event (for example, if a flood level is higher than expected), a dynamic risk assessment using the time to impact severity considerations informed by the Australian Warning System matrix, will be necessary.

> Further information about risk management can be found in ISO 31000: 2018 Risk Management – Guidelines and *Systemic Disaster Risk* (AIDR, 2021).

Establish the context

To inform a decision about evacuation, the evacuation plan should document the context with reference to the following:

- nature and severity of the threat being planned for, the boundaries of the area under threat and the capacity of organisations to manage the threat (including its impact on people and their assets)
- any predictive modelling tools, specialist advice or other intelligence available to assist decision-makers with their situational awareness to reach a decision
- cultural and heritage land rights of the area under threat and associated cultural leadership responsibilities
- time required to complete the warning and withdrawal stages for the area under threat
- potential risk to life if people remain, and if they evacuate
- time of day (it is advisable to evacuate during daylight hours if possible)
- potential loss of infrastructure or assets
- existence and adequacy of an existing evacuation plan
- existence and adequacy of resources and networks (for example, transport options, egress routes)
- community characteristics, including demographics, values, mobility, presence of people who are more at risk (for example, isolated seniors, residents of nursing homes, seasonal workers, tourists), community experience with similar threats, length of residence, preparedness for the threat in question, familiarity with the evacuation plan, likely responses to the threat (with and without a warning to evacuate), community cohesion and connectedness, and resilience.

Identify the risks

To inform a decision about evacuation, the relevant risks should be identified, including but not limited to the following:

- time available until the threat impacts
- potential harm (physical and psychological) to people remaining, including any who may be particularly vulnerable to the hazard, and potential harm to people evacuating
- potential harm to emergency service personnel undertaking different mitigation strategies, including evacuation
- potential psychological harm to those outside the area of impact by loss of contact and separation from family members, as well as those who may converge on disaster-affected areas looking for loved ones

- potential cost of social and economic impacts of evacuation (such as interruption to social networks, loss of unprotected homes and businesses, loss of income, damage to unsecured property)
- potential loss of telecommunications infrastructure, which may limit capacity to warn
- potential for impact sooner and/or more severely than anticipated
- number of people likely to be unaware of the threat
- number of people unable or unlikely to respond to warnings
- recent experiences of evacuations and other threats
- number of people who may need extra assistance in responding to the threat or warnings, who face significant barriers in responding to the threat or warning or who are considered more vulnerable (for example, lone parents with babies and small children, pregnant women, isolated seniors, those with disabilities).

Analyse the risks

Analysis of the risks should consider the risks relevant to the hazard being addressed (flood, bushfire) and how those risks vary with different hazard levels (flood levels, fire danger ratings respectively), and the potential for compounding disasters (the intersection of a dual hazard such as a pandemic risk during floods or dealing with multiple and consecutive evacuations). The degree of confidence will vary according to the quality and relevance of information available, the convergence of views of those consulted, and the time available to decide.

Evaluate the risks

When evaluating risks, it is important to measure how likely they are to happen and how severe their impact could be (like the level of a flood or the danger rating of a fire). This helps to rank the risks and identify which ones need to be addressed first.

Identify risk treatment options

If evacuation is the best way to manage a risk, it is important to decide the most suitable type of evacuation for the situation. This could be a directed or recommended evacuation, and it might be total, partial or phased. Authorities may use a timeline evacuation model to help make this decision.

If there is not enough time to evacuate everyone at risk, consider a partial evacuation or focus on protecting those who cannot leave. If evacuation is not possible or is not the best option, the Incident Controller should warn residents and take steps to protect them where they are.

Communicate the decision

The evacuation plan should include a clear process for quickly and effectively communicating evacuation decisions to key organisations and stakeholders involved in the different stages of the evacuation. It is also important to share the risk evaluation with those managing the withdrawal stage.

> An electronic option for noting decisions and actions may include WebEOC. WebEOC is a web-based interagency incident management system, which is licensed to the Tasmanian Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management. The system serves as a useful emergency management tool by allowing broader emergency management stakeholders to share relevant information about an emergency event.

Communication about the decision to evacuate needs to be timely and tailored because many of the agencies involved will need to act quickly to ensure the evacuation goes smoothly. This decision should also be communicated to the people who will be affected, such as potential evacuees (see Stage 2: Warning).

The evacuation plan should also specify who will keep everyone updated on the progress of the incident, its implications for warnings, and managing the withdrawal stage.

Mobilise resources

The evacuation plan should clearly outline the resources needed for each stage of the evacuation, where these resources will come from and how they will be activated. It is especially important at the decision stage to ensure there are enough suitable resources ready to be mobilised for the warning and withdrawal stages.

Documentation

To help document the decision to evacuate or not, the evacuation plan can include a template for the risk assessment. This template will record important details like who was consulted, the decision made, which stakeholders were informed, and the dates and times of these actions.

In situations where there is little time to document decisions, it can be helpful to transmit information over a radio network or make notes at the end of the evacuation about the decision-making process.

Keeping good records will aid in learning and improving future processes. They can also be required for independent or judicial inquiries or legal processes.

Stage Two:
Warning

Stage Two: Warning

The purpose of this section is to guide the planning and development of arrangements to warn people about the need to evacuate and the steps they should take.

Warning

- [ ] Identify authority and responsibility to warn

- [ ] Timely warnings

- [ ] Identify relevant stakeholders

- [ ] Construct warning message templates

- [ ] Ensure the message tells:
  - the right people
  - when, how and where to go
  - why

- [ ] Determine warning dissemination methods

- [ ] Document it

Introduction

The second stage of the evacuation process is the warning stage. A warning provides timely information about a hazard that is currently affecting or is expected to affect communities. Warnings explain the impact and expected consequences for communities and include advice on what actions people should take. The main goal of issuing a warning to evacuate is to save lives and minimise harm by encouraging protective actions.

TasALERT is Tasmania's official emergency warning and information system. It provides real-time updates on current emergency warnings and incidents across the state. The platform brings together emergency information from various government sources, helping residents stay informed about hazards such as bushfires, floods and other emergencies.

You can access TasALERT through its website or mobile app, which offers features like interactive maps, alerts, and advice on what to do before, during and after an emergency. It is a valuable resource for ensuring community safety and preparedness. Visit: alert.tas.gov.au

Authority and responsibility to warn

In Tasmania, the RMA has the authority and responsibility to issue evacuation warnings. The RMA and/or position(s) may differ depending on the nature of the hazard threat. As such, reference should be made to relevant state legislation, documented emergency management arrangements or emergency management plans which identify the relevant RMA.

The legislative frameworks in Tasmania divide the responsibility for issuing evacuation warnings and the authority to direct evacuations across different agencies; however, given the dynamic and rapidly changing nature of disasters, it is important the evacuation warnings and their function are considered and operate at the same time.

Jurisdictional statutory roles and responsibilities for warnings are identified in Table 3 in *Public Information and Warnings* (AIDR, 2021).

While the authority to issue an evacuation warning rests with the RMA, the Total Warning System (comprising relationships between scientific organisations, government organisations, emergency management organisations and the community) ensures that accurate, timely and relevant information is included within the warnings that are issued.

For further guidance on the role of an Incident Controller, see *Incident Management* (AIDR, 2023).

The warnings section of the evacuation plan should include reference to any collaborative arrangements that exist between key organisations such as the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) and relevant state agencies, and it should identify arrangements to ensure consistent message content relating to evacuations. In many cases, the relevant legislation, arrangements or plans are likely to delegate the authority to issue evacuation warnings to the person managing the incident. For organisations that have adopted AIIMS, this will be the Incident Controller. These arrangements ensure that the person with the appropriate authority is available when needed.

Timely warnings

Experience from recent emergencies suggests that lives have been lost when decisions to evacuate are left until the last minute. There is often limited time available to warn people of impending impacts. Evacuation warnings should

be communicated as early as possible.

The purpose of a warning in the context of an evacuation is to provide:

1. information about the nature and timing of the hazard impact
2. specific advice about the evacuation, including who it applies to and why, when people should evacuate, where and when they should go, and how to get to an appropriate evacuation point
3. information about the potential consequences of not evacuating, and protective measures to take if not evacuating.

Factors that may influence the effectiveness of warnings include:

- the nature and timing of the hazard impact
- the sense of urgency or relevance the warning creates
- technological limitations
- previous experience with emergency situations
- how the message is constructed
- the cognitive state and stress levels of those receiving the message
- trust in the agencies or organisations delivering the message, and whether it has been confirmed by a trusted source
- commentary in traditional and social media
- visual and auditory cues—the more immediate and more obvious the threat, the greater the likelihood that people will accept and respond to a warning.

The warning arrangements for an anticipated hazard threat should identify the:

- trigger for warnings
- content of warning message, such as specific actions people should take, location of assembly areas, evacuation centres and egress routes
- methods for delivering warnings to the community.

Further guidance on warnings can be found in *Public Information and Warnings* (AIDR, 2021).

Further guidance on community engagement can be found in *Community Engagement for Disaster Resilience* (AIDR, 2020).

For guidance on household emergency planning, see Australian Red Cross' Emergency RediPlan: www.redcross.org.au/prepare

Evacuation warnings should be issued as early as possible, giving people enough time to understand and act on the information. These warnings are most effective when communities are educated and engaged prior to an emergency. This way, people know their responsibilities, what preparations to make, what to expect, and what actions to take before, during and after an emergency.

Considerations

Australian Warning System

The Australian Warning System (AWS) was adopted by the Australia-New Zealand Emergency Management Committee (ANZEMC) in March 2021 to provide a consistent approach to warnings across Australia. The AWS uses a three-level warning system with nationally consistent hazard icons for each level. These icons are used on various platforms, like websites and apps, and include calls to action. There are specific icons for cyclones, bushfires, floods, extreme heat and storms, and separate icons for 'other'.

The icons have a consistent shape and colour scheme, getting larger as the warning level increases. Some hazards, like tsunamis, have their own nationally agreed warning frameworks. The nature of each hazard determines the levels of alert and message content. When issuing evacuation warnings, it is important to align with the AWS as much as possible.

ADVICE   WATCH AND ACT   EMERGENCY WARNING

Tasmania has adopted the AWS for fire and flood emergencies. This system uses clear, consistent icons and messages to help people understand the level of threat and what actions to take. The AWS for bushfires was implemented in September 2021, and for floods in September 2022.

Plans are in place to extend the AWS to cover storm emergencies by mid-2026. This means that in the near future, Tasmanians will benefit from a unified warning system for multiple types of emergencies, making it easier to stay informed and safe.

Guidance on the AWS is detailed in *Australian Warning System* (AIDR, 2021).

Message construction

To help people recognise and understand warnings, it is important to keep the structure, language and warning levels consistent, especially during dynamic emergencies with multiple warnings. A warning message should be relevant to the receiver's location and, if possible, tailored to their specific situation.

A good warning message should make it clear that it applies to the receiver and provide clear actions they can take to reduce their risk. Effective warning messages should have the following characteristics:

- Authority
- Credibility
- Accuracy
- Clarity
- Consistency.

The evacuation plan should include message templates and prepared scripts. These pre-prepared templates and scripts ensure that warnings contain all critical information and can be issued quickly when needed.

Further guidance on message construction can be found *in Warning Message Construction: Choosing Your Words* (AIDR, 2021).

Example 1: The risk assessment conducted during Stage 1: Decision to Evacuate may identify that it is safer for the residents of nursing homes and hospitals to remain in place rather than evacuate. Those who manage these facilities will need to be informed of this decision so they can take appropriate steps to enact their facility emergency management plan and protect their residents in place.

Example 2: The RMA, in conjunction with Tasmania Police, may determine that the withdrawal stage is to be phased with people living at home who require assistance to evacuate (such as seniors or those with restricted mobility) being assisted first, followed by residents of community A, then residents of community B. The warning message should include appropriate advice about these arrangements.

Message format

For many hazards, there are agreed standard messages and/or templates that are used. As part of the evacuation planning process, it is important to pre-prepare these messages so they can be quickly updated and issued when needed. The evacuation plan should identify and include these standard messages and templates, ensuring that all warnings follow a consistent format.

In Australia, the Common Alerting Protocol – Australia (CAP-AU) format should be used. CAP-AU ensures that the message content is clear and appropriate and the format is consistent, allowing messages to be broadcast across various communication systems.

Further information about the CAP-AU is available online: www.bom.gov.au/metadata/CAP-AU/About.shtml

Identifying relevant stakeholders

The evacuation plan should identify diverse community groups, businesses and organisations that may need to be reached. Different message content may need to be tailored to meet the specific needs of these groups. These may include but are not limited to:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- members of CALD communities
- people living with a disability (physical and intellectual)
- people with differing levels of language, literacy and numeracy
- hospitals, aged-care and health facilities
- people receiving home-based treatment or with specific healthcare needs
- rehabilitation facilities and other supported accommodation
- a parent travelling alone with infants and/or small children
- pregnant and breastfeeding women
- childcare centres, schools and other education institutions, and tertiary schools and institutions
- owners of pets and companion animals
- owners of assistance animals
- farmers with livestock and others with animal welfare responsibilities (boarding kennels, animal shelters, horse racing, private zoos, research facilities or agistment facilities)
- people who are experiencing homelessness or are socially isolated
- remote communities
- tourists and temporary visa holders
- residential camps
- correctional facilities
- commercial and industrial precincts
- people aboard boats and ships, in bays/marinas or at sea
- recreational and sporting facilities
- places of worship
- transport hubs including train and bus stations and airports
- essential infrastructure operations (electricity generating plants, communications, fuel depots)
- people attending crowded places and major events
- those without ready access to reliable or suitable means of independent transport.

It might not always be possible to create customised messages for every part of the community. However, understanding the community profile can help in preparing targeted messages. It is important to consider sending messages to community and social service organisations that regularly interact with and support hard-to-reach groups. Hazard-specific planning can also test these customised messages with different community sectors to find ways to improve them.

Message content

Effective warning messages contain:

- the name of the RMA issuing the warning
- the date and time of issue
- a description of the hazard and its potential impacts
- when and over what area the hazard is likely to impact
- the area to be evacuated, including a reference to specific 'evacuation zones' for phased or partial evacuation if they have been identified and used for public education prior to the event
- recommended evacuation routes and available evacuation centres
- how or where to validate the information and/or gain further information
- the consequence of not responding to the warning
- the time the next warning will be issued, or advice that no further warning will be issued.

Other content that should be considered for evacuation-specific warnings includes:

- the expected duration of absence
- what essential items to take
- the need to secure one's home/business before leaving, and arrangements made to maintain security of evacuated communities
- need to advise family and friends of their evacuation plans
- how to manage pets
- how to manage assistance animals
- how to protect or where to relocate livestock
- safe egress routes
- what means are available, or should be used, to evacuate
- the locations of assembly areas and evacuation centres, and registration processes
- the availability of assistance to evacuate, and assistance following evacuation
- what is being done to control the hazard
- what arrangements may be made to allow temporary re-entry to property
- advice for people not at home at the time of the warning.

Consideration should be given to providing additional information for those remaining in place about personal safety and self-sufficiency, including:

- the potential consequences of remaining in place
- the need to be physically and psychologically prepared to remain in place
- protective measures to take
- how to shelter safely
- the need to source food, water, power and other essential services, now and/or later
- the need to inform friends and/or relatives of plans
- the need to identify places of last resort in the event your plan fails.

Further guidance on message construction can be found in *Warning Message Construction: Choosing Your Words* (AIDR, 2021).

For further guidance on physical psychological preparedness, see Australian Red Cross Prepare your mind and RediPlan.

Cross-reference between authorities

When a warning includes information from more than one authority, it is important to identify each authority in the message. This helps ensure the information is clear and credible. For example, a severe storm warning might include hazard information from the BOM which provides details about the storm's intensity and expected impact. Alongside this, the State Emergency Service (SES) in Tasmania, as the RMA for storms, would provide specific instructions and safety advice tailored for the communities likely to be impacted.

By clearly identifying each authority, the warning message becomes more comprehensive and trustworthy. This approach ensures that people understand the source of the information and the actions they need to take. It also helps coordinate the efforts of different agencies, making the overall response more effective.

In addition, it is beneficial to include contact information for each authority, so people know where to get further details or assistance. This might include phone numbers, websites or social media handles. Providing multiple ways to access information can help reach a broader audience and ensure that everyone receives the necessary guidance during an emergency.

Dissemination methods and tools

The warning section of the evacuation plan should use a variety of warning methods to reach as many people as possible in the community. Not everyone has access to or uses mobile technology, and some methods might fail due to power outages or telecommunications issues. Therefore, the plan should include backup options in case the preferred methods are unavailable.

Possible warning methods include:

- websites (including digital media)
- social media
- mobile apps
- broadcast media (public, commercial and community)
- telephone
- face-to-face communication
- sirens and public address systems
- print media
- distribution lists
- community noticeboards
- roadside and variable messaging signs.

Dissemination methods and options are further described in Table 6, 'Common channels of communication when disseminating public information and warnings', in *Public Information and Warnings* (AIDR, 2021).

By using a mix of these methods, evacuation messaging reaches everyone, even in challenging situations.

Radio as a communication method

The 2020 Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements Chapter 13 (Emergency Information and Warnings) discussed how radio provided an important 'lifeline' to rural and regional communities that had no other means of obtaining information.

The Royal Commission highlighted:

- having a battery-operated radio improves redundancy because communities may lose power in an emergency
- ABC AM radio network is accessible to over 99% of the Australian population
- the importance of community radio stations acting as a potential source of emergency information
- there are 89 regions across Australia where Indigenous community radio stations services are the only available services in the region, with most of these broadcasting emergency warning advice to fire-affected remote Indigenous communities.

Evacuation Communication in Tasmania

In regional Tasmania, community radio is a vital channel for emergency communication, especially during evacuations. It complements the role of ABC Radio, which serves as Australia's National Emergency Broadcaster, providing verified, real-time updates during emergencies.

The Tasmanian Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management Media, Communications and Engagement team maintains comprehensive media and stakeholder distribution lists, which include:

- Digital broadcast outlets
- Print media
- Community radio stations (e.g. Hobart FM serving the greater Hobart area, City Park Radio based in Launceston, and Tamar FM based in George Town)
- Critical infrastructure media contacts.

These lists ensure timely dissemination of evacuation warnings, public safety messages, and situational updates across multiple platforms.

As part of household planning, residents should have a battery, solar or wind-up radio and spare batteries, as well as knowing the frequencies of their local radio stations.

For more information see: Australian Red Cross Prepare your mind and RediPlan, and ABC Emergency.

Documentation

To assist in documenting the warnings stage, the warning section of the evacuation plan should include (where possible):

- warnings templates
- pre-prepared scripts
- details of who needs to be warned for different hazards
- networks that may be used to deliver warnings to vulnerable groups
- relevant contact details of organisations involved in warnings
- locations of sites for face-to-face warnings and briefings
- channels to be used to warn people
- tools and templates to record dates and times that warnings were issued, the nature and content of those warnings, and details of who was warned.

Stage Three:
Withdrawal

Stage Three: Withdrawal

The purpose of this section is to guide planning on how to withdraw people safely from an emerging threat following a decision and warning to evacuate.

Withdrawal

- [ ] Identify authority and responsibility to manage withdrawal.
- [ ] Considerations for withdrawal
- [ ] Identifying relevant stakeholders
- [ ] Planning for different types of withdrawal
- [ ] Planning for contingenices
- [ ] Linking resources needed and routes to take
- [ ] Considering traffic management points and plans
- [ ] Considering security measures
- [ ] Planning communications for the withdrawal stage
- [ ] Preparing maps for withdrawal management
- [ ] Document the process

Introduction

Withdrawal is the third stage of the evacuation process, involving the organised movement of people from a dangerous or potentially dangerous area to a safer one.

Self-Evacuation and Assistance

Some individuals in the hazard impact area may choose to self-evacuate, while others may decide to stay. Authorities managing the withdrawal phase must provide guidance and assistance to those who choose to or are directed to withdraw.

Effective Management

Withdrawal is more effective when managed according to a prepared plan.

Prepared Plans

The withdrawal section of an evacuation plan should be developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including:

- local government
- community representatives (where appropriate)
- traditional Elders (where appropriate)
- Tasmania Police and other organisations such as:
    - Department of State Growth
    - Commercial transport providers
    - Ambulance Tasmania
    - State Emergency Service
- contractors (where appropriate)
- managers of local facilities (where appropriate)
- hazard management organisations (where appropriate).

By involving these stakeholders, the withdrawal process can be more organised and efficient, ensuring the safety and wellbeing of everyone involved.

Consistency with Evacuation Advice

Withdrawal arrangements should align with any advice given to people affected by the evacuation warning and the decision to evacuate.

Identifying authority and responsibility to manage withdrawal

The withdrawal section of an evacuation plan should clearly identify which agencies and positions have the authority and responsibility to manage the withdrawal stage. In accordance with the Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements, Tasmania Police are responsible for coordinating the withdrawal phase of an evacuation. This means they lead efforts to safely move people away from danger zones during emergencies, working closely with other agencies to ensure the process is coordinated and prioritises public safety.

Referencing relevant Tasmanian legislation, emergency management plans, or documented emergency management arrangements will help to identify the responsible agency or position(s).

Staying Informed

The plan should ensure that those managing the withdrawal are well-informed about the incident. This includes understanding any aspects that affect the ability to safely complete the withdrawal stage. For example, the plan should outline how updates on the incident's progress will be received and any impacts on egress routes.

By addressing these elements, the evacuation plan can be more effective and ensure a safer withdrawal process for everyone involved.

Considerations for withdrawal planning

The following factors should be considered in withdrawal planning.

Realistic Time Estimations

The evacuation plan should include realistic estimations of how long the withdrawal stage will take to complete for different scenarios.

This information helps inform the person making the decision to evacuate.

Time Constraints

In some cases, evacuation may be the only safe option, but the time available might be less than the time required to complete the withdrawal stage. The plan should include contingencies for such circumstances, focusing on:

- partial evacuation for people most at risk
- increased efforts to protect those sheltering in place where possible.

Direct Relationship

There is a direct relationship between:

- time available to conduct the withdrawal
- time required to move people at higher risk
- time of impact of the emergency.

By considering these factors, the evacuation plan can ensure a safer and more effective withdrawal process for everyone involved.

People at higher risk

The withdrawal section of an evacuation plan should identify people at higher risk where more detailed withdrawal or shelter in place arrangements may need to be prepared. For some people, specific transport arrangements and destinations may need to be identified.

For places such as aged-care facilities, schools and medical facilities, where the risk to occupants is high during an emergency, the facility's evacuation plan should be referenced within the regional or local emergency management plan. These plans should guide how people at these facilities will be managed during all stages of the evacuation process.

Those who remain

The agency responsible for the withdrawal stage should focus on managing, guiding and assisting the withdrawal of those who have chosen or been directed to withdraw. Some people will self-initiate evacuation before, during or after the withdrawal stage, and while they may present at evacuation centres, they will often self-manage their withdrawal.

Some people may choose to remain in place. This may be to protect their property, care for their animals or simply to shelter. Others will remain in place to wait and assess the situation before deciding whether to evacuate. Attempting to encourage any of these people to withdraw can be time-consuming and may endanger personnel managing the withdrawal.

Only in circumstances where it is clearly unsafe for people to remain in place should efforts be made to remove them to safety. The evacuation plan should identify the relevant legislation and formal plans or arrangements that exist to inform how people who choose to remain should be managed.

Family groups and those groups familiar with one another

Moving Familiar Groups

Whenever possible, the evacuation plan should aim to move groups of people who are familiar with each other (families, care facility residents and staff, neighbours) as a unit. This helps minimise the sense of dislocation and maintains continuity of care.

Planning for Exceptions

Some cultural practices may not allow certain family members to travel alone or be accommodated together. While these practices might need to be set aside in life-saving situations, understanding the community's demographics helps planners to address these cultural considerations in advance.

Legal and Safety Considerations

Intervention orders issued by the judiciary or police might restrict some individuals from travelling alone or being accommodated with specific others. It is important to consider the personal safety of those experiencing family violence, as evacuation routes and designated evacuation centres might bring them into contact with an individual or individuals they have an intervention order against.

By addressing these factors, the evacuation plan can ensure a smoother and safer process for everyone involved.

Infants and young children and their caregivers, and pregnant and postpartum women

Challenges for Caregivers

Infants and young children: Caregivers may need more time to evacuate, especially if they have infants or young children.

Formula-fed infants: These infants need uninterrupted access to formula, safe water and hot water for washing. Caregivers should be encouraged to keep feeding supplies in their emergency kit, though some families might not have the time or financial means to prepare these in advance.

Safety and Suitability

Parental concerns: Parents and caregivers will avoid evacuating to places they feel are unsafe or unsuitable for their children.

Pregnant and postpartum women: Walking and driving might be difficult or impossible for heavily pregnant or postpartum women, which can be a barrier to evacuation.

Single mothers: Women evacuating alone with children may need extra help in evacuation settings.

Help the Children by Supporting the Parents

Babies and toddlers are especially vulnerable during disasters like bushfires and floods. Supporting their caregivers—especially around infant feeding—is critical to protecting their health and wellbeing.

Contact and Further Help:

National Breastfeeding Helpline: 1800 686 268

Emergency Planning Resources: Available for families and responders at aba.asn.au/emergency

---

Animal management

Individuals have a responsibility to make decisions about the safety and welfare of their pets and animals, which may be affected by:

- evacuation withdrawal timings
- capacity to move their pets or animals
- availability of an appropriate location to move their pets or animals to.

Research suggests pet owners may be reluctant to evacuate if there is no provision made for their pets and animals, which may result in negative outcomes to personal safety. Some people may choose to remain in place to care for these animals rather than evacuating without them. Evacuation planners should consider this evidence when developing evacuation plans.

Ready, Pet, Go! is an initiative by RSPCA Tasmania aimed at helping pet owners prepare for emergencies. This program provides step-by-step guides and materials to ensure humans and their pets can safely evacuate during emergencies such as floods or bushfires.

Visit: https://www.rspcatas.org.au/preparing-your-animals-in-case-of-emergency-ready-pet-go/

People with assistance animals need special consideration in the evacuation plan. Under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth), people cannot be separated from their assistance animal. While this may not present a significant challenge for those managing the withdrawal stage, those managing the shelter stage need to plan for the management of any evacuated animals. Evacuees accompanied by assistance animals should be advised of the location of any evacuation centres able to accommodate animals.

For further information about the management of pets, companion animals, assistance animals and livestock, see the National Planning Principles for Animals in Disasters (Australian Veterinary Association, 2014).

Visitors and tourists

When an emergency requires evacuation, visitors, tourists and seasonal workers might need extra help. Below provides considerations on how to address their needs.

Build Relationships

Establish connections and encourage the involvement of tourism and accommodation providers, as well as major employers of seasonal workers, in the emergency planning process.

Signpost Routes and Centres

Clearly mark evacuation routes, evacuation centres, assembly areas and bushfire place of last resort (nearby safer place) to ensure everyone knows where to go during an emergency.

Maintain Services and Supplies

Ensure that evacuation centres in popular tourist destinations have additional services, essential supplies and enough capacity to accommodate everyone.

By considering these factors, evacuation plans can be more inclusive and effective, ensuring the safety of all community members, including visitors and seasonal workers.

Partial and phased evacuations

A partial or phased evacuation may be identified as part of the risk assessment during Stage 1: Decision to Evacuate. If a partial evacuation is possible, the evacuation plan should identify who is likely to be withdrawn, who is not and the arrangements in place to manage both groups. For example, to avoid traffic congestion, some at-risk groups may be withdrawn before the general population is encouraged to withdraw, and some may be protected in place.

> **Consider:** For a flood, upstream communities may be encouraged to evacuate before downstream communities. Similar arrangements may be made for communities in the path of an advancing bushfire.

If a phased evacuation is appropriate, the withdrawal section of an evacuation plan should identify how this will unfold, including estimated timelines and assembly areas likely to apply for hazard impacts of varying intensities.

Assembly areas

It may be necessary to escort people from the hazard impact area to ensure they are safe. For this purpose, the withdrawal section of an evacuation plan should identify traffic management points / assembly areas where people in cars, buses and other transport can assemble safely before being escorted from the hazard impact area.

The evacuation plan should identify who will attend traffic management points / assembly areas to marshal, brief and escort those who have gathered there. If practical, traffic management points / assembly areas for evacuees should consider:

- register evacuees, identifying name, address, contact details, destination, mode of transport and vehicle registration number

- provide toilet facilities, refreshments, fuel resupply (liquid and electricity)

- provide relevant information about the hazard threat, the evacuation process, shelter options and locations, likely duration until the return stage, and how/where to access further information and support.

Evacuees may have to remain at assembly areas for a significant period pending safe passage to their onward destination.

> **Tasmanian Evacuation Centre Registration**
>
> The Tasmanian Government's Evacuation Centre Registration App (ECRA) is used to register evacuees attending evacuation centres. The App collects personal information which is used to manage evacuation centres, and can also support the coordination of withdrawal and return.
>
> The Department of Premier and Cabinet (Resilience and Recovery Tasmania) manages ECRA and provides training and assistance to Municipal Councils.

Transportation options

The evacuation warnings issued during the warning stage should include advice about transport options for withdrawal. To minimise the number of people who will require transport arrangements, evacuees can be encouraged to make their own arrangements to withdraw before the hazard impacts. Typical options include:

- walking/cycling/scooters
- own or friend's car
- taxi or Uber
- boat or other watercraft
- commercial transport providers
- public transport.

Evacuation on foot or bicycle should only be encouraged where distances to be travelled are short, either to immediate safety or to a nearby assembly area.

Transportation arrangements may need to be made for some at-risk groups. The evacuation plan should identify the resources required and the arrangements that have been or must be made to transport these people to an appropriate destination. There may be a need to arrange specialist transport, such as:

- buses
- wheelchair-accessible vehicles
- cars with child seats
- ambulances
- boats or aircraft to help people most at risk and those who may be isolated or otherwise in need of assistance
- accommodation of pets/service animals.

The likely extent of self-initiated evacuation should be considered, as this will affect the number of transport resources required or the prioritisation and use of limited resources.

Implications for air traffic control should be considered where multiple aircraft may need to converge near evacuation centres. Consider seeking Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) assistance in planning for and managing the withdrawal and return stages, and the additional risks posed by the hazard for air and water transport.

Consideration should be given to cultural protocols within Tasmanian Aboriginal communities, including interpersonal relationships that may affect shared transport arrangements during evacuations. Where relevant, advice should be sought from community Elders or Aboriginal organisations to ensure culturally safe and respectful practices.

Egress routes

The evacuation plan should identify safe egress routes and alternative routes to be announced in evacuation warnings. The evacuation plan should also identify:

- arrangements to signpost egress routes that may not be obvious to evacuees
- egress routes that can accommodate expected traffic volumes
- egress routes for pedestrian/cycle traffic
- traffic management models, in the case that there are many evacuees.

Traffic management

The withdrawal section of an evacuation plan should link to traffic management plans and identify the location of appropriate places for traffic management points to help manage the flow of traffic leaving the hazard impact area, avoid bottlenecks and restrict the entry of traffic into the impact area until it is safe.

Traffic is managed by Tasmania Police or contracted traffic personnel to first facilitate entry for emergency response vehicles while the hazard is being managed, and later for people and vehicles supporting the restoration of facilities and services during the return phase.

The withdrawal section of the evacuation plan should identify who will staff the traffic management points, including relevant contact details.

To reduce the risk of high-speed collisions, consider making egress routes one-way, supported at each end by appropriate signage and/or vehicle control points, and/or introducing lower speed limits. Platooning or escorting convoys of evacuee transport is another way of managing traffic and providing reassurance to the community.

Consider: The identification of egress routes, staging areas and traffic management points should be done in consultation with local councils and other supporting agencies. They will be able to readily identify the routes and places that locals are likely to use and provide safe passage.

Contingencies

The withdrawal section of an evacuation plan should identify available contingencies to respond to vehicle breakdowns, road blockages, where vehicle fuel (liquid and electricity) can be accessed if needed and shortages of signage or personnel, and to anticipate other challenges to people withdrawing from an area. Relevant contact details should be included in the plan.

Security

Whenever circumstances permit, the security of vacated communities should be arranged to discourage theft. These arrangements, such as routine patrols by Tasmania Police, should be made in consultation with Municipal Emergency Coordination Centres and detailed in the evacuation plan. A process for identifying or recording which premises have been vacated during the evacuation can be helpful in maintaining security.

Communications

If appropriate, the withdrawal section of an evacuation plan should include a communications sub-plan that identifies how information about withdrawal will be communicated between those managing the withdrawal and how this will be communicated to evacuees. For example, providing information that planned egress routes have become unusable due to bridges being damaged, or large trees downed by strong winds.

In some circumstances, the time evacuees spend en route may be considerable. These people can be communicated with via broadcast radio about where to access fuel for vehicles (petrol/diesel and electric), food, water, cash and other services. In more remote locations, communication may be via two-way radio. Local radio frequencies could be promoted on signs on highways for travellers and people not familiar with the area.

Documentation

To assist in documenting the withdrawal stage, the evacuation plan should include:

- details of the specific plans to manage at-risk groups (including plans prepared by facility managers to evacuate and/or shelter people in place), location of facilities housing at-risk groups, and relevant contact details
- location of egress routes, including alternative routes
- location of traffic management points and assembly areas
- transportation arrangements, including contact details
- security arrangements
- communications sub-plan.

The evacuation plan should facilitate the recording of details of the evacuation plan as it unfolds. These details should include who was evacuated, at what time and to where.

Maps (preferably digitised to readily enable sharing) should clearly identify the location of at-risk groups (including those where arrangements to shelter in place have been made), preferred egress routes and the locations of assembly areas, evacuation centres and traffic management points.

STAGE FOUR: SHELTER

STAGE FOUR: SHELTER

The purpose of this section is to guide the development of arrangements to provide adequate shelter, places and spaces for any evacuees who require it. This may include self-initiated evacuees, as well as any animals accompanying evacuees.

Shelter

- [ ] Identify authority and responsibility
- [ ] Identify shelter options
- [ ] Evacuation centres purpose and features
- [ ] Evacuvee support, health safety and security considerations
- [ ] Management of evacuation centres
- [ ] Animal management and welfare
- [ ] Contingency arrangements when a shelter is compromised, or capacity exceeded
- [ ] Plan for the registration and intake of evacuees
- [ ] Keeping evacuees and others informed
- [ ] Transition to recovery
- [ ] Planning for closure
- [ ] Documentation
- [ ] Plan communications for the shelter stage
- [ ] Document it

Introduction

Shelter is the fourth stage of the evacuation process in Tasmania. It involves providing safer places and spaces to meet the basic needs of people affected by an emergency, away from the immediate or potential effects of the hazard. Shelter is critical for evacuees who cannot remain at home due to a hazard impact or potential impact and who cannot access their own sheltering solutions.

This stage offers short-term accommodation for those without alternative options. The shelter needs of individuals can vary throughout the evacuation process, and the types of shelter and spaces sought or provided can differ based on the specific circumstances and needs of the evacuees.

There are two types of shelter spaces:

1. Planned and designated spaces that are the subject of guidelines (for example, evacuation centres).

2. Informal, community-initiated sheltering solutions that may emerge in support of evacuated communities.

Those planning for and managing shelter options will need to be aware of these potential emergent sites.

Authority and responsibility to manage shelter

The shelter section of an evacuation plan should identify the lead agency with authority and responsibility to manage Stage 4: Shelter.

In Tasmania, the associated roles and responsibilities for the shelter stage may vary depending on the nature of the hazard threat. These are reflected in Table 2 below.

Reference should be made to relevant legislation, emergency management plans and documented emergency management arrangements.

In Tasmania, municipal councils are responsible for the management of local evacuation centres. Regional evacuation centres are managed by the Department of Premier and Cabinet through Resilience and Recovery Tasmania.

The State Recovery Plan outlines responsibilities for relief and recovery functions, including the provision of evacuation centres and essential relief services to meet the basic needs of evacuees. As the Coordinating Agency for social recovery, the Department of Premier and Cabinet is responsible for overseeing the planning and preparedness of evacuation centre operations and for coordinating state government support to ensure their effective delivery.

Response Management Authorities (RMAs) are responsible for determining whether an emergency necessitates evacuation. In consultation with the Regional Controller, RMAs also identify which evacuation centres will be activated to support evacuees displaced by the hazard. Advice on suitable evacuation centre options can be provided by local councils and the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Table 2: Responsibilities for Stage 4: Shelter

STAGE FOUR — SHELTER	PRIMARY SUPPORT AGENCY	OTHER SUPPORT AGENCIES
Evacuation centre activation	Municipal Council	State Emergency Service (Emergency Management Unit)
Evacuation centre management	Municipal Council	Department of Premier and Cabinet Contractors Non-Government Organisations
Environmental health and waste management (at evacuation centre)	Municipal Council Department of Health	Environment Protection Authority
Alternative emergency accommodation	Department of Premier and Cabinet	Non-Government Organisations
Registration of evacuees (at evacuation centre)	Municipal Council	Department of Premier and Cabinet
Care for children	Parents and guardians	Department for Education, Children and Young People
Animal welfare (pets and companion animals)	Owners	RSPCA Municipal Council (if facilities available)
Animal welfare (livestock)	Owners Department of Natural Resources and Environment	RSPCA Municipal Council (if facilities available)

Shelter options

The shelter section of an evacuation plan should include the range of shelter options available, their different purposes and features, and how they may be used.

Self-shelter options

The evacuation plan should include arrangements to promote self-organised shelter options, encouraging evacuees to make their own accommodation arrangements away from the hazard impact area. This should be part of household emergency preparedness campaigns and activities (see Australian Red Cross' Emergency RediPlan). This promotes self-efficacy and reduces the burden, particularly where assisted accommodation options may be in short supply.

Self-organised options

Self-organised options may include evacuees:

- staying with family or friends
- using commercial or other forms of accommodation, such as hotels, motels, guest houses, or mobile or holiday homes.

Some people cannot organise their own shelter options if they do not have financial resources for commercial options or transport, or if they do not have strong social networks within the community. Some households that experience overcrowding may not be able to act as host options.

Plans should be made to communicate with those who have elected to make their own accommodation arrangements to help manage the return stage and future recovery activity.

> The unique needs of Aboriginal people in Tasmania should be considered when determining sheltering solutions. This may include:
>
> - Observing cultural protocols for accommodation, engagement, and support of community Elders and Traditional Owners.
> - Ensuring family connection and structure is maintained, including placing extended families together where possible.
> - Facilitating culturally safe arrangements, which may include managing interpersonal relationships and ensuring appropriate separation or grouping based on community advice.
> - Advice should be sought from Aboriginal Elders or recognised community organisations to ensure culturally respectful and safe practices.

Assisted accommodation options

For those who cannot access their own shelter arrangements, plans should be made to provide the following options:

1. Evacuation centres: The shelter component of the evacuation plan should document the arrangements that have been made with municipal councils for facilities to be used as evacuation centres. Details should include how they will be activated and by whom, the responsibilities of the facility owner, and the responsibilities of the organisation responsible for the shelter stage. A Municipal Council may opt to provide commercial accommodation instead of opening an evacuation centre. For example, where low numbers of evacuees make opening and operating an evacuation centre impractical. Municipal Councils broker commercial accommodation in these circumstances.

2. Commercial accommodation: In certain circumstances, evacuees may be placed in commercial accommodation. For example, when a person is required to evacuate from, or is unable to return to, their primary residence and because of specific needs cannot be accommodated at an evacuation centre. This may include individuals experiencing family violence or safety concerns, people with disability or limited mobility, aged or frail persons, and those with specific health conditions, as well as some cultural groups with specific needs. Prioritisation is often necessary based on individual needs, risk factors, and the person's suitability for sheltering in an evacuation centre. The Department of Premier and Cabinet usually brokers commercial accommodation in these circumstances (Emergency Accommodation Policy, July 2025).

3. Specialist facilities: It is recognised that not all evacuees' needs can be appropriately met in an evacuation centre or commercial accommodation. This includes residents of care facilities, prisons, hospitals and other similar arrangements. For example, the NDIA and Aged Care Commission require organisations providing aged care and disability services to provide continuity of service during emergencies. For services that include residential care, this includes ensuring appropriate arrangements for the evacuation and sheltering of their residents. Aged care providers must evacuate residents to an alternative shelter pre-approved by the Aged Care Commission, noting that this will generally exclude evacuation centres and commercial accommodation. In addition to planning and providing alternative shelter arrangements, aged care and disability service providers are also responsible for ensuring continuity of care arrangements for their clients for the duration of the evacuation.

Evacuation centres

The purpose of an evacuation centre is to temporarily house evacuees who have limited capacity to find alternative accommodation following withdrawal from an area of risk. Evacuees may feel vulnerable, stressed and/or traumatised by the uncertainty of the emergency experience. This may manifest in a range of reactions and behaviours within the centre. The evacuation centre should be a safe and secure place of shelter that provides for their basic needs and where they can start their recovery.

Unlike other shelter options, an evacuation centre is often not purpose-built for accommodation but is adapted for this purpose infrequently or as required.

Evacuation centres must be capable of being activated at short notice, including outside standard business hours. While initial services and facilities may be limited upon activation, additional support and resources should be progressively established as the situation evolves.

As a general guide, the following services and amenities may be available during the early stages of activation:

0-1hrs: Indoor space; toilet facilities

1-6hrs: Registration, seating, information, power, basic refreshment, signage

6-12hrs: Personal supports become available to evacuees

12-24hrs and beyond: Sleeping facilities (bedding), regular meals, facilities for animals.

Evacuation Centre Operational Planning

Local councils are responsible for making sure evacuation centres can be set up quickly and run safely during emergencies. This planning is led by Municipal Emergency Management Coordinators, with support from Municipal Recovery Coordinators. It's part of ongoing preparedness and happens separately from planning for specific emergencies.

The Department of Premier and Cabinet (Resilience and Recovery Tasmania) and the State Emergency Service (Emergency Management Unit) support councils by providing guidance, tools, and training to help with evacuation centre planning and management.

The Department of Premier and Cabinet (Resilience and Recovery Tasmania) also oversees planning for regional evacuation centres and maintains standard operating procedures for each facility.

Resources such as the Australian Red Cross Evacuation Centre Handbook, the Tasmanian Regional Evacuation Centres Guideline, and the Municipal Evacuation Centre Guidelines provide detailed advice on how to support these groups.

Evacuation centres are usually not purpose built facilities. When developing evacuation plans, consideration should be given to:

-   Location and Safety: Centres should be situated outside hazard impact zones.

-   Operational Separation: Where possible, centres should not be co-located with emergency control centres or operational staging areas.

-   Availability and Agreements: Centres should be available for the duration of the shelter phase and beyond, with formal agreements in place to confirm access.

-   Basic Amenities: Centres should provide adequate space, bedding, power, water, communications, heating/cooling, and sanitation facilities as required.

-   Accessibility and Inclusion: Facilities should be accessible to people with disabilities and mobility needs, and support diverse cultural, gender, and family requirements.

-   Safety and Wellbeing: Centres should include safe spaces for children and vulnerable individuals, and be designed to minimise risks such as family violence or interpersonal conflict.

-   Support Services: Provision should be made for health, psychosocial, and community support services, as well as pet care where appropriate.

-   Logistics and Infrastructure: If practical, centres should have secure access, sufficient parking, transport links, waste management, and appropriate insurance coverage.

In Tasmania, Municipal Emergency Management Plans identify the locations of designated evacuation centres within each municipal area. These plans are publicly accessible via local council websites or by visiting your local council office.

Evacuation centres are established to provide safer shelter during emergencies. The specific centre activated will depend on the nature, scale, and location of the emergency.

Evacuee support

Planning to support evacuees should account for the diverse needs of individuals and communities, particularly those who may require additional support due to age, health, cultural background, identity, or personal circumstances. Considerations may include:

Health and Wellbeing: Ensure access to physical and mental health services, psychosocial support, and culturally appropriate care.

Family and Child Safety: Provide safe, supportive spaces for families, children, and infants, including facilities for infant care and feeding.

Accessibility and Inclusion: Design spaces and services to be inclusive of people with disabilities, diverse gender and sexual identities, and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Safety and Protection: Implement measures to safeguard vulnerable individuals, including clear behavioural expectations and zero tolerance for violence, discrimination, or antisocial behaviour.

Communication and Signage: Use inclusive signage and provide information in multiple languages to ensure accessibility and cultural safety.

Support Services: Facilitate access to essential services, including health assessments, referrals, and community support networks.

Planning should be informed by consultation with relevant community representatives and service providers to ensure respectful, inclusive, and effective support for all evacuees.

Further information on infant feeding in emergencies can be found with the Australian Breastfeeding Association: www.breastfeeding.asn.au/resources/feed-baby-emergency

For further resources to assist in establishing child-friendly spaces, visit: knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/handbook-evacuation-planning

Practical guidance on supporting gendered needs can be found in the Acting on Gendered Needs in Evacuation and Relief Centres Checklist: knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/national-gender-and-emergency-management-guidelines

Further resources for establishing and managing evacuation centres, including details of essential, recommended, and desirable features, are available on the Australian Red Cross website: www.redcross.org.au/emergencies/resources

Health, safety, and security

The shelter section of the evacuation plan should identify measures to ensure the health, safety and security of shelter staff and evacuees. Considerations may include:

- appropriate induction of staff, volunteers and evacuees into the premises
- environmental health issues including food safety, waste management and the prevention and control of communicable diseases
- local health network for the purpose of accessing specific critical pharmaceuticals, mental health support, primary health support and mental health medications
- applying protective distancing and hygiene measures during a public health emergency or outbreak
- fire safety
- site safety and safe work practices
- site security, which may include support from Tasmania police, private security services or other authorised persons
- management of evacuees who must meet parole and bail requirements
- management of evacuees who have intervention orders taken out against them, and evacuees who are registered sex offenders
- evacuees and approved personnel who have a role at the shelter site which assists in maintaining safety, security and privacy of evacuees.

For further information on common reactions and behaviours in emergencies, see Australian Red Cross' Coping with a Major Personal Crisis.

People with Disability Emergency Preparedness

The People with Disability Emergency Preparedness (P-CEP) resources developed by Tasmania State Emergency Service helps individuals with disability prepare for emergencies like bushfires, floods, and storms. Using a person-centred approach, it supports people to create tailored emergency plans that fit their lives, involving family, support providers, and community networks. The project offers workshops, resources, and scenario exercises to build inclusive preparedness across Tasmania.
Visit: https://www.ses.tas.gov.au/pcep/

Management of evacuation centres

Effective management and operation of evacuation centres requires support from multiple organisations and services. It is recommended that evacuation centre operational plans include details of the management and reporting structure to be used and determine accountability and governance arrangements. Roles and responsibilities of all supporting organisations should be clearly documented, together with arrangements for ensuring the seamless delivery of services over an extended period. The services required at an evacuation centre are likely to change over time, and accommodation for some or all evacuees may be shifted offsite as more suitable accommodation options become available.

To ensure effective communication and minimise disruption to service delivery as evacuation centre services evolve, reporting lines can be detailed in the evacuation plan, as well as arrangements for communicating between service providers and for managing disputes.

Operational plans for evacuation centres can also identify sources for all goods and services that will be required during evacuation centre operations, including food, water, bedding, hygiene products, animal supplies, infant supplies and other necessary supplies, as well as health and welfare services.

Food supplies may be compromised in circumstances such as widespread damage, road closures, or a population surge (tourists/holidaymakers) in the impacted area. It is recommended that evacuation centre operational plans consider and identify supply contingencies, which may include arrangements between state and local governments and supply chain managers to address these circumstances. Further support may be required from the Australian Government in addressing large-scale supply issues.

Evacuation centres often bring large numbers of people unknown to each other into proximity, sometimes for extended periods. Managing appropriate behaviour in these circumstances can be a dynamic and challenging process. Operational plans for the management of evacuation centres should include communication to shelter staff and evacuees about expected behaviour, and contingencies to manage antisocial behaviour.

Multiple evacuation centres may be activated. It is important there are adequate numbers of trained and culturally competent staff available to operate these centres. Effective planning includes the identification of a surge workforce which may be drawn from a range of organisations, including community volunteers. Consideration may be given to arranging mutual aid agreements to share resources when demand exceeds supply.

For further information on managing spontaneous volunteers refer to *Communities Responding to Disasters: Planning for Spontaneous Volunteers* (AIDR, 2017).

Animal management and welfare

Some people may refuse or be reluctant to evacuate if they cannot bring their pets and companion animals to an evacuation centre or commercial accommodation. The shelter section of an evacuation plan should consider at least one site that will cater for pets. Owners of pets and companion animals should be advised that they retain responsibility for the welfare of their animals, including feeding, cleaning up and control. The location of evacuation centres that cater for pets should be included in the content of warning messages.

Assistance animals

Assistance animals are not classified as pets, but rather are highly trained disability support assets that enable a person with a disability to safely participate in private and public life activities. There are a range of disabilities that might require the use of an assistance animal.

An assistance animal with an evacuee should not be denied access to any form of emergency shelter, including evacuation centres. All plans should consider how evacuees with assistance animals are supported and assisted during an evacuation. The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) sets out the legal definition of an assistance animal and provides other relevant supporting information.

Additional services for evacuees

Registration of evacuees

The separation of family members during an emergency is highly stressful and can have long-term mental health impacts. Facilitating reunification reduces this stress as well as long-term impacts and reduces the potential for convergence on the emergency site of people seeking their missing family members.

Tasmanian Evacuation Centre Registration App (ECRA)

The Evacuation Centre Registration App (ECRA) is a digital tool developed by the Tasmanian Government to support the efficient registration and management of evacuees attending evacuation centres. The app collects essential personal information, with appropriate protections in place to safeguard identity, to assist with:

- Coordinating shelter operations and resource allocation

- Facilitating communication and follow-up services for evacuees.

ECRA is managed by the Department of Premier and Cabinet (Resilience and Recovery Tasmania), which also provides training, technical support, and implementation assistance to Municipal Councils responsible for operating evacuation centres.

Supporting Diverse Needs in Evacuation Centres

A range of resources are available to guide the planning and operation of evacuation centres in Tasmania, particularly in supporting individuals and groups with specific needs. These include:

The Australian Red Cross Evacuation Centre Handbook, which provides nationally recognised best-practice guidance on the setup, management, and support services required in evacuation centres, with a strong focus on inclusivity and psychosocial wellbeing.

Tasmanian Regional and Municipal Evacuation Centres

The Regional Evacuation Centres Guideline outlines how regional evacuation centres are set up, managed, and operated during emergencies. The Department of Premier and Cabinet (Resilience and Recovery Tasmania) is responsible for developing standard operating procedures for these centres and maintaining the systems that support their effective management.

DPAC also provides advice and support to help local councils plan and operate municipal evacuation centres.

These resources offer information on how to support vulnerable populations, including people with disabilities, older adults, children and families, culturally and linguistically diverse groups, and LGBTQIA+ individuals. They also provide practical tools for ensuring accessibility, safety, cultural sensitivity, and appropriate service delivery during emergencies.

Keeping evacuees and others informed

An operational evacuation centre plan should include a communications sub-plan that identifies how evacuees will be kept informed about shelter and recovery matters. Community leaders can play a valuable role in informing and sharing community messaging.

Plans should be made to keep evacuees informed about:

- the evolving emergency
- known impacts on the community
- road closures and access restrictions
- any risks associated with early return, and how to mitigate them
- services, resources and financial assistance available to evacuees
- recovery plans and progress
- expected closure date of any evacuation shelters, and plans and dates for return
- opening of a recovery centre and access to recovery support services.

Evacuees in an evacuation centre may be communicated with using a noticeboard and regular face-to-face briefings. Any communications sub-plan should identify how widely dispersed evacuees and those who chose to remain in place will be kept informed with consistent messages, such as through social media and community meetings.

All communications should be open, honest, relevant and up to date. Any information about damage to specific homes and properties should be dealt with sensitively, and only directly with affected property owners and occupants.

In addition to evacuees, messages should be tailored to meet the needs of the owners of any facilities being used, and their staff, as well as those managing the evacuation centre.

Plans should also be made so that relevant information from organisations responsible for the evacuation stages can be shared with the surrounding community and emergency management personnel.

Key message: People under stress may struggle to receive and process information. Further guidance on effective communication is available in *Public Information and Warnings* (AIDR, 2021) and *Community Engagement for Disaster Resilience* (AIDR, 2020).

Contingency arrangements when a shelter is compromised, or capacity is exceeded

An evacuation centre may become compromised or exceed capacity, requiring the activation of contingency arrangements. Alternative shelter sites with the appropriate capacity, infrastructure and support services should be identified in the shelter section of the evacuation plan. If appropriate shelter cannot be safely provided locally, the plan should identify arrangements for the movement and shelter of evacuees to neighbouring communities or larger population centres.

The shelter component of an evacuation plan should also account for the early identification of escalation points where the ability to provide additional resources exceeds existing service and organisational capacity.

Continuity of sheltering arrangements

The services available to evacuees throughout the shelter phase may transition to those available under recovery plans and arrangements, being many of the same organisations. This will assist with a seamless transition to recovery, noting that relief recovery centres may be established to provide recovery assistance.

Planning for closure

Transition planning for recovery should include a clear exit strategy for the provision of an evacuation centre. Consultation with evacuees, supporting organisations and those responsible for managing the evacuation process will assist in determining and applying appropriate closure strategies. Safe access to community support, housing support and local social support services is often a key inhibitor to evacuees returning home, which impacts on timings for the evacuation centre closure. The evacuation centre may be the first point at which someone has had contact with support services, and they may need referral to additional support. Targeted solutions may be required to support access to alternative accommodation solutions and ongoing recovery supports and services (see Stage 5: Return).

The closure of evacuation centres involves significant logistical effort by all stakeholders and requires that the facility is restored back to its original function. Detailed briefing and tasking of centre personnel is required to ensure that all resources are demobilised and appropriate document management protocols are observed.

Documentation

To assist in documenting the shelter stage, the evacuation plan should include details of the facilities available for sheltering evacuees, including floor plans. Operational evacuation centre plans / guidelines should include agreed arrangements with the owners and managers of those facilities to set up, activate and operate those facilities as shelters, as well as relevant contact details. A template document or software application for registering evacuees should also be included.

A communications sub-plan should be prepared to ensure appropriate information continues to be communicated to evacuees via suitable media. Communications should be available in multiple languages in accordance with the demographic profiles of the area.

STAGE FIVE: RETURN

STAGE FIVE: RETURN

The purpose of this section is to guide informed decision-making about the safe and timely return of evacuees to their homes and businesses, and the development of a plan to manage the return effectively and efficiently.

Return

☐ Identify authority and responsibility to manage return

☐ Do it early and when safe to do so

☐ Identify and engage relevant stakeholders

☐ Develop risk management processes for return

☐ Identify return options

☐ Plan communications for the return stage

☐ Link with recovery plans

☐ Document it

Introduction

Return is the final stage of the evacuation process, where those who left the hazard impact area can come back or relocate temporarily or permanently. This stage should be planned and managed to ensure it happens as soon as possible and as safely as practicable.

Managing Risks

Returning is not without risks, but delaying return in the hopes of eliminating all risks is unrealistic.

Delays can negatively affect the wellbeing and recovery of returnees.

Stress and Trauma

Returning can be stressful, especially for those who have lost loved ones, pets, employment or property.

Damaged landscapes can be disorienting and distressing, changing people's mental maps.

Misinformation or tension due to differing experiences of the emergency can cause psychological trauma and increased conflict.

Community Involvement

Community support for the timing of the return will be stronger if community representatives are involved in developing the evacuation plan and informing the decision.

Strategies for Reconnection

The return section of an evacuation plan should include strategies to promote reconnection and manage potential conflicts. These include the following:

- providing timely and accurate information to promote shared understanding
- ensuring support services are available
- providing trained professionals to support distressed or traumatised community members
- engaging the community meaningfully in the return process.

By considering these factors, the return stage can be managed more effectively, ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all returnees.

The TasALERT Recovery webpage provides information and resources to support individuals and communities in Tasmania recovering from emergencies. It outlines the types of assistance available—such as financial aid, mental health support, and housing help—and connects users with relevant government services and community organisations. Further information: https://alert.tas.gov.au/recovery/

Not all evacuees will return permanently to their home or business. Some will choose to relocate, and others may be resettled elsewhere at the directive of government (as followed the Christchurch earthquake in New Zealand).

The return stage is not complete until all evacuees have either returned to their primary place of residence or have relocated or resettled in another location. In circumstances where people have lost their primary accommodation or it is uninhabitable, it is important that transitional arrangements are in place for temporary or alternative accommodation.

Authority to decide and responsibility to manage return

The evacuation plan should clearly identify the authority and specific position(s) which have the power to decide when people can return after an evacuation and to manage the return process. The authority may change depending on the type of hazard of phase of the emergency (response versus recovery phase). It is important to refer to Tasmanian legislation, emergency management and recovery plans or documented arrangements to identify the correct authority to safely manage the return stage.

Considerations

Context

A managed return of people indicates that evacuees have remained outside the hazard impact area pending a formal decision that will enable them to return. Experience has shown that many will have returned earlier, despite recommendations and arrangements against this. These actions suggest that people undertake their own risk assessment based on their needs, access to local information, and risk appetite. For example, farmers and people with animal welfare responsibilities may need to return quickly to attend to their livestock, and business owners will be keen to restore their means of making a living as quickly as possible. Households that have lost most of their possessions will often want to return to see what remains, salvage items and secure the property.

Risk assessment

When to start the formal return stage should be based on a risk assessment process like that described in Stage 1: Decision to Evacuate. The evacuation plan should include a template that facilitates the conduct and documentation of the risk assessment. Once the risk assessment has been completed and the risks treated to the extent required, the return stage should commence.

The return component of an evacuation plan should detail arrangements to ensure that properly trained and equipped teams are in the field gathering data to enable the risk assessment to take place as soon as the RMA managing the incident authorises it. Teams should include representatives of government organisations, infrastructure owners and affected communities whose local knowledge and diverse representation will add value to assessments and credibility to the analysis and evaluation of the event. The evacuation plan should document how data will be captured and analysed and should include either data capture forms or an electronic application.

Risks to be assessed may include:

- the residual hazard, or the possibility of the hazard returning
- availability of emergency services and health services in line with pre-disaster levels
- new hazards (for example, ground, air or water contaminated by asbestos, sewage or deceased animals, and dangerous and distressed wildlife)
- safety of access and egress routes
- safety of structures
- safety of electrical and gas facilities and infrastructure, fuel storage and other hazardous facilities
- the capacity to reconnect services to damaged buildings

and treat contaminated water supplies
- the availability of facilities, utilities, services, food and water necessary to sustain returnees
- evidence of crime.

Temporary re-entry

The return component of an evacuation plan should provide for the temporary re-entry of people (such as households, business owners and farmers) to the hazard impact area prior to opening the area to the broader community. Temporary re-entry may be enabled to assess damage, collect belongings or attend to livestock, and it should only follow an appropriate assessment of the risk.

Consider issuing permits to those temporarily re-entering (see section below regarding a Permit System).

Phased return

A phased return should be considered in the evacuation plan. Enabling those with homes, employment and businesses (agricultural and commercial) to return as soon as it is reasonably safe to do so should be facilitated, while continuing to restrict access to anyone who merely wants to visit the hazard impact area. In instances where entry is restricted, vehicle control points may be used to assess people seeking to return to the hazard impact area.

To inform a staged return and speed up the return process, the evacuation plan should identify the range of services and infrastructure that may be interrupted by the hazard impact. The plan should also include details of key contacts to enable service providers to enter impacted areas for the restoration of services and infrastructure as soon as practicable following risk assessment, and the implementation of necessary risk treatments applicable to their operations.

Permit system

A permit system may be appropriate to facilitate the re-entry or return of some people prior to complete resolution of the hazard. For example, farmers and people with animal welfare responsibilities (such as boarding kennels, stables, agistment facilities and feedlots) may require urgent access to attend to injured animals, locate and contain wandering stock, and to provide water and feed.

Traditional Owners may also require access to assess damage to cultural sites of significance and undertake cultural business. Permits should only be issued following an appropriate assessment of the risk in the area being accessed. In addition to a risk assessment, the following should be considered:

- the identification of high risk 'no-go' areas
- times of entry and exit

- mode of transport, and speed and load restrictions
- confinement of activities to specific properties and access/egress routes
- any limitations due to infrastructure restoration activities
- legal indemnity and responsibility for safety.

Any existing emergency management arrangements that guide the process of permitted access to hazard impacted areas should be appended to the return component of an evacuation plan.

Restricted access to high-risk areas

Risk treatment may include identifying areas that cannot be accessed by the public until the risk has been eliminated (such as hazardous trees, road washouts, or areas contaminated by asbestos or sewage) but enabling access to other parts of the hazard-impacted area as soon as possible. The evacuation plan should identify how to restrict access to areas that still pose a threat to health and safety. Signage, roadblocks and/or vehicle control points may be appropriate.

Communication

To help evacuees make well-informed decisions before returning and remaining in hazard impact areas, the evacuation plan should include a communications sub-plan for sharing relevant information with returnees prior to and after their return.

Information should be provided about:

- what to expect when they return (for example, what they will see, smell and feel, and impacts to essential services such as sewerage and power)
- the residual risks that returnees face
- mitigation strategies that organisations have put in place, and additional strategies returnees may put in place to augment them
- travel and accommodation arrangements for those requiring assistance to return
- location of and reason for restricted areas
- support services available in the vicinity (health, welfare, banking, insurance, education, childcare)
- food and water supplies
- access to fuel and hardware stores.

Evacuees should be encouraged to weigh up this information and consider if and when they will return given their own needs, capacities and circumstances.

How this information is delivered should be described in the communications sub-plan. Returnees should continue to be consulted about their information needs, which will vary over time. This consultation should identify when communication is no longer required.

For further information on returning home, see Australian Red Cross' Returning home and coping after a crisis: www.redcross.org.au/emergencies/coping-after-a-crisis/returning-home-and-coping-after-a-crisis

Documentation

To assist in documenting the return stage, the evacuation plan should include a template enabling risk assessment to be undertaken quickly, as well as a template or software application to facilitate data collection and analysis of risks. It should identify essential infrastructure likely to be impacted, and key contact details for infrastructure owners/managers. Vehicle control points should also be identified in the plan, including location information.

Include a communications sub-plan to ensure returnees receive ongoing appropriate information through suitable media. Given the importance of this stage, provisions should be made to include a feedback loop from the community to inform the actions of those controlling the return.

Return and recovery

Some elements of the return stage may overlap with components of the recovery phase and associated recovery activities. During the recovery phase there will be a transition of control and coordination.

The return stage of an emergency evacuation should be coordinated between the RMA and the agency responsible for recovery coordination. The integration of return and recovery should be described consistently in the evacuation plan and the recovery plan associated with the emergency event. The point at which the return stage is completed should be agreed between those managing the return and recovery.

Some evacuees will be unable to return permanently until their home or business is restored or rebuilt, and some will not wish to return at all. The needs of these two groups will remain a strong focus for those managing the recovery process.

Further information about the recovery process can be found in *Community Recovery* (AIDR, 2018).

Glossary of Acronyms

AIDR	Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience
AIIMS	Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System
ANZEMC	Australia-New Zealand Emergency Management Committee
AWS	Australian Warning System
BOM	Bureau of Meteorology
CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
CAP-AU	Common Alerting Protocol – Australia
CASA	Civil Aviation Safety Authority
CERM	Community Emergency Response Model
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
EMSR	Emergency Management Special Response Command
GAD	Gender and Disaster Australia
GEM	Gender and Emergency Management
ICCS	Incident Command and Control System Plus
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
NEMA	National Emergency Management Agency
PPRR	Prevention, Preparedness, Response, Recovery
RMA	Response Management Authority
SEMC	State Emergency Management Committee
SEMP	Special Emergency Management Plan
SES	State Emergency Service
SES-EMU	State Emergency Service Emergency Management Unit
TEMA	Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements

References – useful websites and resources

Australian Journal of Emergency Management: https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/collections/australian-journal-of-emergency-management/

Australian Red Cross – Coping with a major personal crisis: https://www.redcross.org.au/globalassets/cms/downloads/pdfs/disaster-plan/coping-with-a-major-personal-crisis-booklet.pdf

Australian Red Cross – Emergency Preparation (RediPlan): https://www.redcross.org.au/prepare/

Australian Red Cross - Evacuation Centre and Emergency Sheltering guides:https://www.redcross.org.au/sheltering/

Australian Red Cross – Resources (RediPlan): https://www.redcross.org.au/emergencies/resources/

Australian Red Cross – Returning home and coping after a crisis: https://www.redcross.org.au/emergencies/coping-after-a-crisis/returning-home-and-coping-after-a-crisis/

Australian Warning System: https://www.australianwarningsystem.com.au/

Communicating in recovery (Red Cross, 2022): https://www.redcross.org.au/globalassets/cms-assets/documents/emergency-services/communicating-in-recovery-resource.pdf

Gender and Disaster Australia - Acting on Gendered Needs in Evacuation and Relief Centres Checklist: https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/media/10158/gendered-evacuation-and-relief-centre-checklist-final_.pdf

National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework (Australian Government, 2018): https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/emergency/files/national-disaster-risk-reduction-framework.pdf

National Planning Principles for Animals in Disasters (Australian Veterinary Association, 2014): https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/ajem-apr-2015-national-planning-principles-for-animals-in-disasters/

National Strategy for Disaster Resilience, (COAG, 2011): https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/emergency/files/national-strategy-disaster-resilience.pdf

RSPCA – Ready, Pet, Go!: https://www.rspcatas.org.au/preparing-your-animals-in-case-of-emergency-ready-pet-go/

TasALERT – Helping you get ready for an emergency: https://alert.tas.gov.au/get-ready/

Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements (TEMA): https://www.ses.tas.gov.au/emergency-management-2/tasmanian-emergency-management-arrangements-tema/

Tasmanian emergency risk assessment guidelines & Toolbox (TERAG, 2017): https://d2tv960yzi0spr.cloudfront.net/uploads/2018/10/TERAG-Guidelines-V-1.0-Web.pdf

Tasmanian Fire Service – Bushfire Protection Plans: https://www.fire.tas.gov.au/Show?pageId=colCommunityProtection

Tasmanian State Emergency Service – Community Protection Flood Guides: https://www.ses.tas.gov.au/plan-prepare/flood-plan/

Legislation

Disability Discrimination Act 1992: https://www.legislation.gov.au/C2004A04426/2018-04-12/text

Emergency Management Act 2006: https://www.legislation.tas.gov.au/view/whole/html/inforce/current/act-2006-012

Proposals for amendment should
be submitted to Tasmania Police,
Emergency Management Special
Response Command via email at:
EMSR@police.tas.gov.au

**Tasmanian Emergency Evacuation
Framework | Issue 2**

DPFEM: A25/55076