

Emergency Management in Victoria

Part 1: Emergency Management Manual Victoria

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1.1 Introduction

Victoria has a long history of emergencies, some of them highly destructive, and has developed a capability for dealing with such events. Many organisations in the community, including the emergency services, play a part. The activities of these organisations, both voluntary and permanently staffed, need to be coordinated to avoid conflict, wastage and gaps.

The emergency management arrangements cater for dealing with emergencies of all sizes, from small to very large. In particular, they deal with emergencies where more than one organisation is involved.

Emergency management involves the plans, structures and arrangements which are established to bring together the normal endeavours of government, voluntary and private agencies in a comprehensive and coordinated way to deal with the whole spectrum of emergency needs, including prevention, response and recovery.

This part of the manual explains the background to Victoria's current emergency management arrangements, and enables the reader to gain an overview before reading the more specific and detailed sections.

1.2 Emergency Management in Victoria — A Brief History

The original Victoria State Disaster Plan (known as DISPLAN) was prepared in the 1960s, with a new edition issued in March 1982 and a revised edition in September 1987.

Apart from DISPLAN (which did not have the backing of legislation), the main standing emergency management arrangements involved the fire services and the then Forests Commission of Victoria. In addition to this, a number of government departments and statutory authorities had specific disaster-related responsibilities which they discharged more or less independently.

Following the Ash Wednesday fires of February 1983, there were a number of reviews of Victoria's disaster management arrangements. In November 1983, Cabinet agreed to a provisional set of disaster management arrangements which were embodied in the *State Disasters Act 1983* (since repealed).

1985 Review of Disaster Management

In June 1985, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services established a working party to report on Victoria's disaster management arrangements. The working party reported to the Minister in October 1985. Its main conclusions included:

- (1) Many aspects of the existing arrangements, particularly in the area of response, had been demonstrated to be effective, and that, rather than replacement, they were in need of rationalisation, in order to maximise their strengths and minimise their weaknesses.
- (2) The allocation of responsibility at government level should be given to a single minister, who should be the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

- (3) A policy of comprehensive and integrated emergency management should be adopted, as well as the establishment of arrangements to embody the policy.

Three major functional areas were recognised as necessary components of a comprehensive approach: prevention, response and recovery.

Within these areas, the key responsibilities of agencies include:

Planning: the analysis of requirements and the development of strategies for resource utilisation.

Preparedness: the establishment of structures, development of systems and testing and evaluation by organisations of their capacity to perform their allotted roles. (Unlike the view taken in some other States, the working party did not consider that preparedness is an element of emergency management in its own right.)

Coordination: the bringing together of organisations and resources to ensure effective emergency management.

The major recommendations of the working party included the following points:

The Minister for Police and Emergency Services should continue to be responsible, as Co-ordinator in Chief, for Victoria's emergency management arrangements.

DISPLAN should be redesignated as the Response Plan, given power under appropriate legislation, and have its scope widened to allow coordination (as a police responsibility) across the range of possible events from incidents to disasters.

A three-tiered framework (State, regional and municipal) for implementing emergency management should be adopted.

The Disaster Services Council and the Readiness Review Committee should be replaced by a State Disasters Council to provide policy and planning advice to the Minister on emergency management matters, and that committees be established to advise the Minister on prevention, response and recovery planning.

Recent Developments

The working party's findings led to the development of Victoria's current emergency management arrangements, and the passage of the *Emergency Management Act 1986*.

In 1987 the Recovery Plan formalised, for the first time, the arrangements for planning and management of recovery.

In 1994, the Act was amended, recognising the Recovery Plan and replacing the word 'disaster' with the word 'emergency' in most usages. More recently, the term 'emergency response' has replaced the term DISPLAN in official usage.

In 1998, the Central Government Response Committee was established in response to the Longford Gas Crisis and has become an ongoing feature of Victoria's emergency management arrangements.

In 1999, the definition of emergency was clarified, by the inclusion in the list of examples of emergencies, of 'disruption to an essential service'.

The position and role of the Emergency Services Commissioner was created by amendments to the Act in 2000.

The terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on 11 September 2001 led to an emphasis on security matters. The Security and Emergencies Unit was established within the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and Victoria has been involved in national developments such as the National Counter-Terrorism Plan and the Review of Protection of Critical Infrastructure.

Following the bushfires of 2002-03, the Victorian Bushfire Inquiry recommended greater joint response coordination and the integration of municipal fire and emergency plans.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Natural Disasters Report, released in 2004, and the funding programs initiated by the Australian Government as a result have used the word 'mitigation' in preference to 'prevention'. This usage is adopted in the name of the State Emergency Mitigation Committee formed in 2004.

Central Policy Office

The Fire Disaster Control Unit which was established in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet in 1983 after the Ash Wednesday fires, and subsequently transferred to the Ministry for Police and Emergency Services, was replaced by an Office of the Co-ordinator in Chief of Disaster Control. That office later became the Fire and Emergency Services Division of the Department of Justice.

Following the creation of the position of Emergency Services Commissioner, the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner assumed the role of central policy office for emergency management, to support the statutory duties of the Commissioner, the Minister as Co-ordinator in Chief of Emergency Management and the Victoria Emergency Management Council.

1.3 Concepts and Objectives

Emergency

The term *emergency management* is used in preference to the more traditional term *disaster management* for a number of reasons. One of these is the fact that there is no widely accepted definition of the term *disaster*. For the purposes of emergency management in Victoria, the word *emergency* also includes the concept of *disaster*.

Emergencies are characterised by some or all of the following:

- They are disruptive to individuals and communities;
- They are not part of day-to-day experience and are outside normal life expectations;
- They are unpredictable in occurrence and effects;
- They require a response for which normal local resources may be inadequate;
- They have a wide range of effects and impacts on the human, built and natural environments;
- There are complex needs in dealing with them;
- They can be of sudden onset;

- They are destructive of human, animal and/or plant life, health, property and/or the environment;
- They overwhelm normal prudent protective measures.

As major emergencies are infrequent events, in their initial stages they may be difficult to differentiate from lesser-order events. Given the normal experience and expectations of those involved, there may be difficulty in realising that an emerging situation calls for a response of a greater order.

Therefore, the management arrangements to cope with major emergencies are the same as arrangements to cope with lesser-order events, and are not a separate set of arrangements reserved for a major emergency. In Victoria, there are no legal formalities or declarations required to initiate or escalate response or recovery activities.

The arrangements (particularly in response and recovery) are intended to permit the situation to be assessed, and to provide for the graduated marshalling and utilisation of the resources required to deal with it, under systems set up under the relevant overall plan and the participating agencies' own plans.

The *Emergency Management Act 1986* provides the following framework (s. 4):

“emergency” means an emergency due to the actual or imminent occurrence of an event which in any way endangers or threatens to endanger the safety or health of any person in Victoria or which destroys or damages, or threatens to destroy or damage, any property in Victoria or endangers or threatens to endanger the environment or an element of the environment in Victoria, including, without limiting the generality of the foregoing -

- (a) **an earthquake, flood, wind-storm or other natural event; and**
- (b) **a fire; and**
- (c) **an explosion; and**
- (d) **a road accident or any other accident; and**
- (e) **a plague or an epidemic; and**
- (f) **a warlike act, whether directed at Victoria or a part of Victoria or at any other State or Territory of the Commonwealth; and**
- (g) **a hi-jack, siege or riot; and**
- (h) **a disruption to an essential service.**

This framework includes the recognition that the state of the environment can be just as important to the sustainability of Victoria and Victorian communities as the protection of life and property.

Management

There is not and could not be a single organisation solely and totally responsible for dealing with all aspects of emergencies. Emergencies touch people's life experience in many different ways. Emergency management in Victoria embraces the whole of government and whole of the community.

The management task is to bring together in an integrated organisational network the resources of the many agencies and individuals who can take appropriate and timely action to prevent or mitigate, respond to and recover from emergencies.

Prevention, Response and Recovery

The objectives of the *Emergency Management Act 1986* (s. 4A) are to ensure that the following components of emergency management are organised to facilitate planning, preparedness, operational co-ordination and community participation:

Prevention: the elimination or reduction of the incidence or severity of emergencies and the **mitigation** of their effects.

Response: the combating of emergencies and the provision of rescue and immediate relief services.

Recovery: the assisting of people and communities affected by emergencies to achieve a proper and effective level of functioning.

Objectives of the Arrangements

Victoria's emergency management arrangements are designed to:

Deal with all hazards

While most attention is given to the obvious emergencies such as fire, flood and transport accidents, a wide range of hazards are dealt with using the emergency management arrangements and resources. This includes emergencies for which there has been little or no experience in Victoria, such as emergency animal disease, terrorist incidents, earthquakes or environmental emergencies.

Be integrated, (involve all people and relevant agencies)

The management of emergencies is a shared responsibility involving many people and organisations in the community. It is not something done by one sector of the community to or for the rest of society, although some organisations have specialist roles.

In addition to the emergency services, all government departments may have some role to play. The emergency response role may be a minor part of their responsibilities. However, many departments have an essential prevention responsibility. Examples include land use planning, occupational health and safety, clean water, public health and building regulations. These are part of the prevention infrastructure.

Municipal councils have essential roles in emergency management.

Voluntary organisations such as Red Cross, St John Ambulance, WICEN and search and rescue organisations play well-defined roles in emergency management.

Private sector organisations are often involved when their services and resources are needed for prevention, response or recovery activities, or where emergencies affect their buildings, equipment, personnel, suppliers or customers. In particular, essential service providers (for example, producers and distributors of electricity or gas) are expected to ensure that they can maintain continuity of supply.

Members of the community are also responsible for taking preventative, protective and restorative actions in their own and the community's best interests.

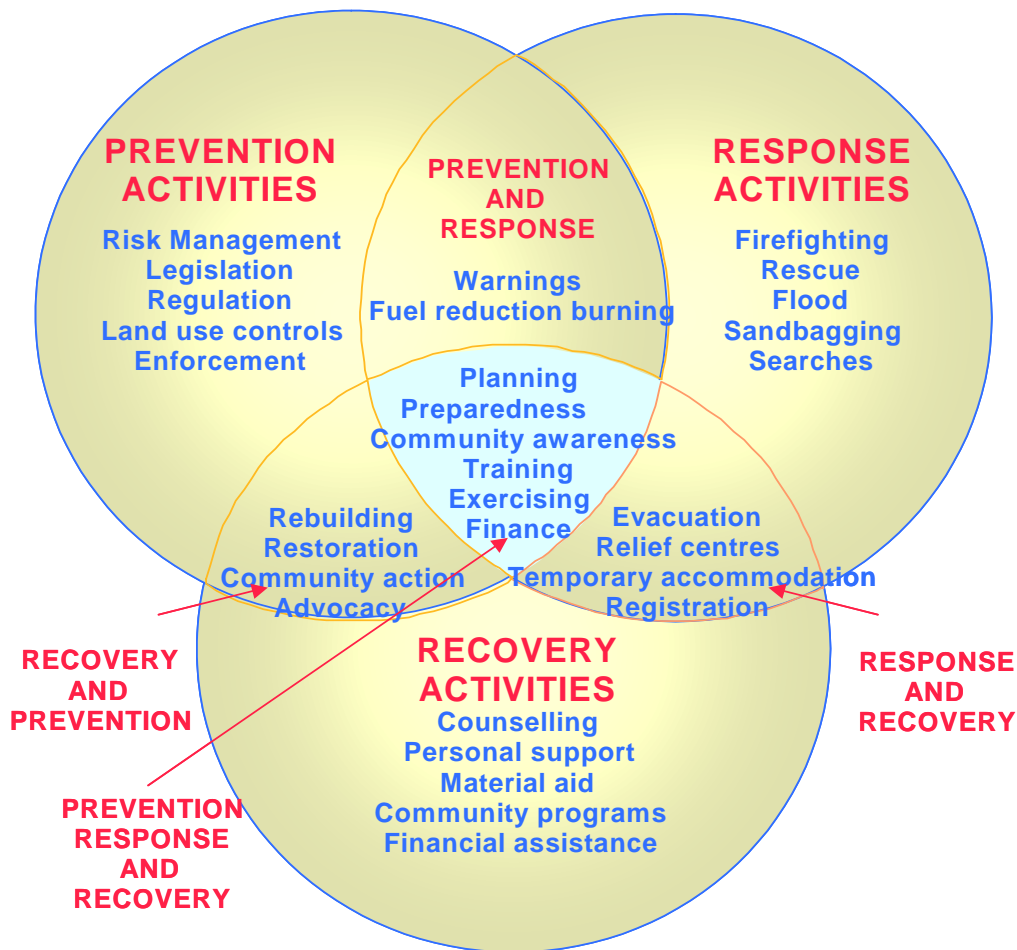


Figure 1-1: Examples of Emergency Management Activities Clustered into Groups

Be comprehensive, (cover prevention, response and recovery)

Prevention (or mitigation see Part 2), response and recovery are all important aspects of emergency management and each should be explicitly addressed in the arrangements.

The model of emergency management shown in Figure 1-2 makes clear that there is not a strict sequence, nor a hierarchy of relationships. All activities are important, and in a comprehensive model, have a place in the overall scheme.

Emergency management activities do not take place in any particular sequence or cycle. It is now recognised that prevention, response and recovery do not follow each other in order.

They can all operate at the same time, as demonstrated by **Figure 1-2** which demonstrates the same activity clusters in a time-sequence model.

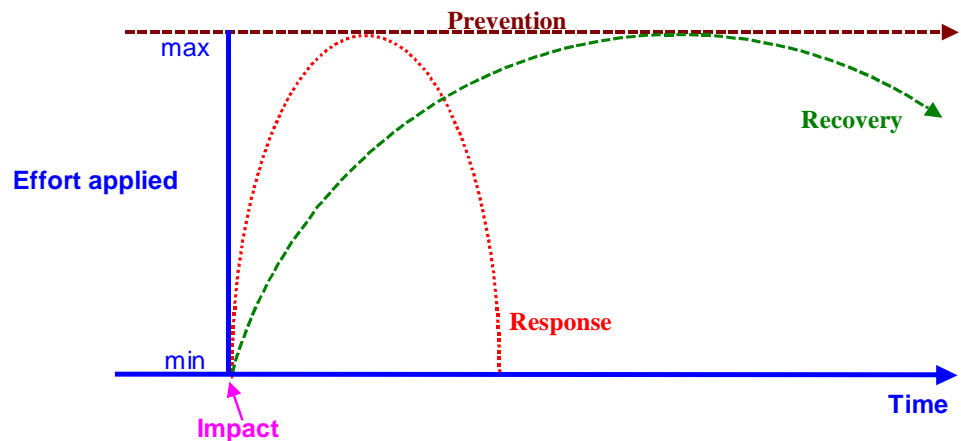


Figure 1-2: Emergency Management Activities in a Time Sequence Model

The time-sequence model in Figure 1.2 shows that prevention activities are carried out at full effort all the time, regardless of the occurrence of actual emergencies. As Figure 1.1 also shows, prevention strategies can be incorporated into recovery activities, (e.g. rebuilding wildfire-destroyed houses in a fire-safe manner).

Response activities commence as soon as possible after the time of impact, peak to full effort quickly, and often cease promptly when the emergency has been dealt with, and/or affected people have been rescued or evacuated.

Recovery activities commence at or soon after the time of impact, and peak to full effort more gradually and often later than response activities. Recovery activities may continue for a considerable period of time, gradually tapering off and merging into normal community activities weeks, months or even years after impact.

Prevention, response and recovery are *not* phases or stages of emergency management. The model sees them as *clusters of activities*. They take place as needed, and *do not necessarily follow one another in a sequential order*.

1.4 Victoria's Emergency Management Framework

There is a multi agency framework for emergency management, which enables the exercise of roles and responsibilities, and the capacity to adapt to new or changed circumstances within a systematic framework. Some elements of the structure are legislated, others have been established by agreement.

Emergency Management Act 1986

Objectives of the Act

The *Emergency Management Act* 1986 defines most of Victoria's emergency management structure, assigns significant roles and responsibilities, and provides for special needs concerned with the management of emergencies. The Act describes its objective as being: 'to ensure that [prevention, response and recovery] are organised within a structure which facilitates planning, preparedness, operational co-ordination and community participation'. (s. 4A)

The operational roles of most of the organisations which participate in emergency management are spelled out elsewhere in specific legislation or charter. For example, the operational roles of the fire services are set out in other Acts.

Role of the Minister

The Minister to whom the Act is allocated (the Minister for Police and Emergency Services) is the Co-ordinator in Chief of Emergency Management, with the Chief Commissioner of Police as deputy.

The role of the Co-ordinator in Chief is to:

- (a) ensure that adequate emergency management measures are taken by government agencies; and
- (b) coordinate the activities of government agencies carrying out their statutory functions, powers, duties and responsibilities in taking such measures.

Victoria Emergency Management Council

The Victoria Emergency Management Council advises the Co-ordinator in Chief on matters including coordination of agencies (government and non-government) responsible for prevention, response and recovery. Council membership consists of nominees of both government ministers and non-government agencies. The Act does not specify which agencies should be represented, but meetings normally include Victoria Police, the emergency services and sections of government departments closely involved with emergency prevention, response and/or recovery.

VEMC Coordination Group

The VEMC Coordination Group actively supports the Co-ordinator in Chief in providing coordination for response and recovery activities and in providing an information flow during significant emergencies.

The Group is chaired by the Co-ordinator in Chief, and comprises the State Response Co-ordinator/Deputy Co-ordinator in Chief, the State Recovery Co-ordinator, the Emergency Services Commissioner (as Executive Officer) and CEO or chief operating officers of emergency services, DSE and DHS.

Emergency Service Commissioner

The Emergency Services Commissioner has the following functions, under S. 21C of the Act:

- (a) to establish and monitor standards for the prevention and management of emergencies to be adopted by all emergency services agencies¹;
- (b) to advise, make recommendations and report to the Minister on any issue in relation to emergency management;
- (c) to encourage and facilitate co-operation between all agencies to achieve the most effective utilisation of all services;

¹ The phrase 'emergency services agency' is defined in s. 4 of the *Emergency Management Act 1986* as any of the Country Fire Authority, the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board, the Victoria State Emergency Service or any other prescribed agency.

- (d) to act as Executive Officer of the [Victoria Emergency Management] Council;
- (e) any other function conferred on the Commissioner by any Act.

The role of the Commissioner is therefore pivotal in Victoria's emergency management arrangements.

Victoria's Top-level Structures

The two significant elements of the structure not mandated in legislation are the Security and Emergencies Cabinet Committee and the Central Government Response Committee.

Security and Emergencies Cabinet Committee (SECC)

The SECC is the supreme Victorian decision making body in the event of a major incident (including a terrorist related incident) requiring whole of government coordination. Its functions are:

- Management and coordination of the whole of government response to major incidents - the SECC will ensure all necessary actions are taken across Government in a consistent, coordinated and timely way. In doing so, it will consider advice on legal issues, including the powers under which emergency actions are undertaken, and the processes necessary to ensure those powers are properly exercised.
- Communication - the SECC will approve and coordinate public communication in response to a major incident, and coordinate intergovernmental communication if required.

It is not the role of the SECC to manage the deployment of emergency services. Normal operational response and recovery arrangements continue to operate.

The SECC comprises the Premier (Chair), Minister for Health, Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Minister for Finance, Attorney General and Deputy Premier.

Central Government Response Committee (CGRC)

The functions of the CGRC are:

- Coordination - the CGRC will ensure that issues are addressed consistently and comprehensively across government.
- Communication - The CGRC coordinates communications within government, and with the Commonwealth and provides materials to support public communications by the relevant Minister(s).
- Advice to Ministers - The CGRC coordinates the provision of advice and progress reports to the SECC and/or Cabinet on matters requiring a whole-of-government response.

It is not the role of the CGRC to:

- manage the deployment of emergency services; or
- interact directly with an industry or industries.

The operational management of an emergency is carried out as per the State Emergency Response and Recovery Plans.

The CGRC is chaired by the Secretary DPC and comprises a senior representative of each relevant Department at Deputy Secretary level, a senior executive from Victoria Police, the State Emergency Recovery

Co-ordinator (if different from DHS representative), and the Emergency Services Commissioner. It is supported by the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Representatives are able to commit resources within their agencies and activate specialist resources at short notice if required. Specialist advisers (for example, public health advisers), media and communications experts are co-opted to the CGRC as required.

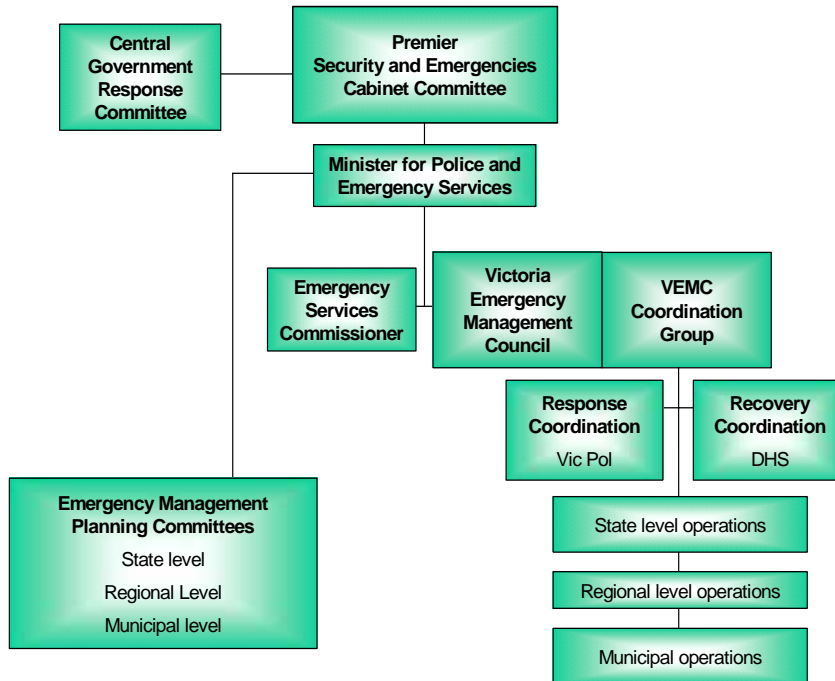


Figure 1-3: Victoria's Emergency Management Structure

Response and Recovery Plans

The Act requires (s. 10) that the Co-ordinator in Chief arrange for the preparation and review from time to time of a State emergency response plan for the coordinated response to emergencies by all agencies having roles or responsibilities in relation to the response to emergencies.

The function of arranging for the preparation and review of the response plan has been delegated to the Chief Commissioner of Police, who is also the State Emergency Response Co-ordinator.

The State Emergency Response Plan (see Part 3 of this manual) is the document which fulfils the functions of DISPLAN as required by the Act.

The Act also requires (s. 17A) that the Co-ordinator in Chief arrange for the preparation and review from time to time of a state emergency recovery plan (see Part 4 of this manual) for the coordinated planning and management of emergency recovery.

This function has been delegated to the State Recovery Co-ordinator, a senior officer of the Department of Human Services.

Municipal emergency management planning is carried out by municipal emergency management planning committees, as required by the Act. See Guidelines for Municipal Emergency Management Planning (Part 6).

Operational Management

The resources of relevant organisations are brought together at the municipal level for the response and recovery operations. If an emergency cannot be adequately responded to with locally available resources, the management will be **supported** by regional/divisional or State level personnel and resources.

At all levels, response operations are coordinated by Victoria Police personnel (in their role as emergency response co-ordinators, see 3.2), and recovery operations are coordinated by Department of Human Services personnel.

The State level is also responsible for obtaining and coordinating resource support from other States and/or the Commonwealth, when needed. Exceptions to this principle are local cross-border assistance and Commonwealth operational support in the vicinity of military bases, which can be arranged at the local level.

Overall coordination of Victorian government emergency activities is the responsibility of CGRC/SECC.

Delegations and Appointments

The Co-ordinator in Chief has made the following delegations and appointments under the Act:

- The Chief Commissioner of Police has been appointed as Deputy Co-ordinator in Chief of Emergency Management. (s. 5(2))
- The responsibility for preparing and reviewing the response plan has been delegated to the Chief Commissioner of Police.
- The Department of Human Services has been appointed as the coordinating agency for recovery. (s. 17B(1))
- The responsibility for preparing and reviewing the recovery plan has been delegated to the State Recovery Co-ordinator, a senior officer of the Department of Human Services.
- The Chief Commissioner of Police has been delegated powers under s. 24(2)(c), (d) and (e) exercisable in a state of disaster.

Planning Committees

The Co-ordinator in Chief has established the following State planning committees under s. 9 of the Act:

- State Emergency Mitigation Committee
- State Emergency Response Planning Committee
- State Emergency Recovery Planning Committee.

1.5 Components of Emergency Management

This section summarises the main arrangements for prevention, response, recovery and community involvement. Further details on

prevention and mitigation are set out in Part 2, response and recovery are set out in the State Emergency Response Plan (Part 3) and State Emergency Recovery Plan (Part 4).

Prevention/Mitigation

Prevention is defined in the *Emergency Management Act 1986* as 'the elimination or reduction of the incidence or severity of emergencies and the mitigation of their effects'. Clearly, not all emergencies can be prevented, so the concept has a much broader meaning, encompassing those strategies which can be adopted to minimise or mitigate the impact of emergencies. Mitigation is the term now widely used in line with Australian Government usage as embodied in the COAG Natural Disasters Report and funding programs. See Part 2 of this Manual.

In Victoria, risk management is the principal methodology utilised for mitigation. The *Australian/New Zealand Standard Risk Management AS/NZS 4360* (revised in 2004) has been customised for emergency management purposes in the publication *Emergency Risk Management—Applications Guide* (Emergency Management Australia, 2000, re-issued 2004).

Victoria State Emergency Service facilitates a Community Emergency Risk Management (CERM) process at municipal level.

Emergency Risk Management

Emergency Risk Management is described in some detail in Part 6 of this manual. The emergency risk management approach assumes that even though major emergencies occur infrequently and unpredictably, the risk of loss or damage caused by an emergency is always present to some extent.

Safety can be promoted by eliminating or reducing the possibility of an incident occurring; and strengthening and preparing exposed assets and communities to reduce the consequences of an emergency.

This is known as risk reduction or risk treatment. Where risk cannot be eliminated altogether, there remains a residual risk, and a need to plan and prepare for response and recovery. This relationship is demonstrated in the following diagram.

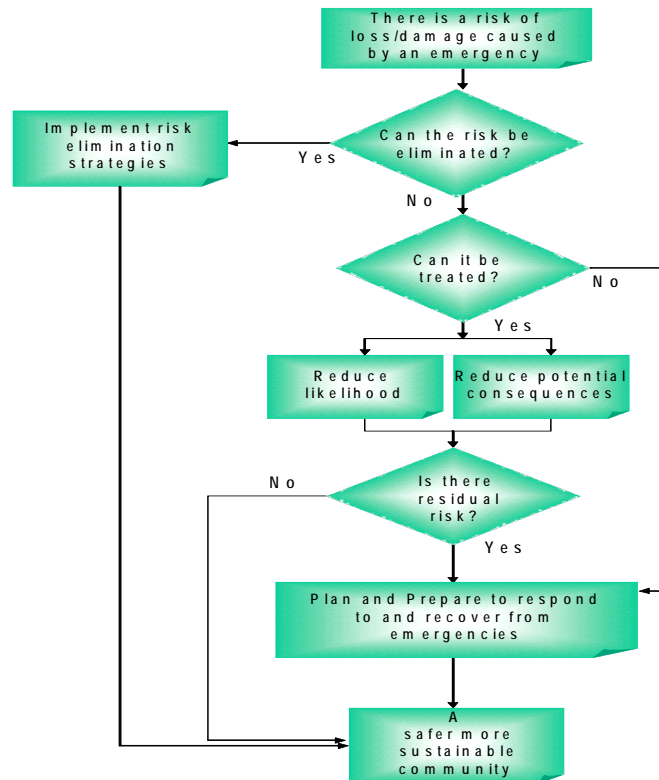


Figure 1-4: Risk Management Articulated into Emergency Management

Response

Response involves the combating of emergencies and the provision of rescue and immediate relief services to those affected.

Planning

There are State and Divisional response planning committees. Their roles and membership are set out in Part 5 of this manual.

Response Plans

In addition to the State Emergency Response Plan (Part 3 of this manual), response plans also exist at divisional level. The State Emergency Response Plan establishes the response coordination arrangements, and Part 7 of the manual sets out the roles and responsibilities of the agencies involved in emergency response.

The response plan does not contain plans for action, as these are the responsibility of the respective agencies.

A large number of public and private organisations, or sections of organisations, have roles in the response plan. In addition, many other organisations (including municipal councils) can be called upon to assist the control agencies in the response to specific events.

Divisional response plans set out the roles and responsibilities of response organisations within the division, documents coordination arrangements, and list contact details for all agencies and the resources they can provide. It also provides for the coordination of support from within and outside the region in support of municipal response operations.

Operational Coordination

Emergency response is based on a set of arrangements which are in effect at all times. Accordingly, there is no need for *activation* of response. *Agencies* or *strategies* may be activated when a need is evident. Emergency response arrangements operate in respect of any emergency, no matter how small, in which more than one organisation is involved in emergency response. Under response arrangements, responsibility rests firstly at the municipal level. Support is provided if necessary from divisional or State level.

Under response arrangements, incident control is vested in control agencies which are primarily responsible for responding to specific emergencies. Support agencies provide services, personnel or material to support or assist control agencies or affected persons. Response agencies can perform the role of either control or support agencies depending upon the particular emergency. See Part 7 for lists of control and support agencies.

The bringing together of agencies and resources to ensure effective response to emergencies, i.e. the coordination function, is vested by the *Emergency Management Act 1986* in the Victoria Police. The coordination function can include directing relevant agencies concerning the allocation of resources (s. 13(2)), appointing a single controller for a fire (s. 16), or determining the priority of responsibilities of agencies to an emergency other than a fire (s. 16A).

Response co-ordinators are also responsible for initiating or continuing ancillary operations which are necessary in the public or community interest.

Emergency response plans also provide for the operation of emergency response coordination centres at state, regional or municipal levels, where response co-ordinators and liaison officers from control and support agencies may be located to receive, collate and disseminate intelligence, and coordinate the provision of resources.

Recovery

Recovery is defined in the Act as 'the assisting of persons and communities affected by emergencies to achieve a proper and effective level of functioning'. It is a developmental process of assisting individuals and communities to manage the re-establishment of those elements of society necessary for their wellbeing. The process involves cooperation between all levels of government, non-government organisations, community agencies and the private sector in consideration of:

- the emotional, social, spiritual, financial and physical wellbeing of individuals and communities;
- the restoration of essential and physical infrastructure;
- the rehabilitation of the environment;
- the revitalisation of the economy of the community

to ensure as far as possible that the wellbeing of a community is increased.

During recovery, governments and communities work together to assist affected individuals and communities to move towards a healthy, safe and functioning environment..

Planning

There are State and Regional Recovery Planning Committees. Their roles and membership are set out in Part 5 of this manual.

Recovery Plans

In addition to the State Emergency Recovery Arrangements (Part 4 of this manual) recovery plans also exist at regional level.

The State Emergency Recovery Arrangements plans for the coordination of agencies involved in recovery, describes the management principles for recovery planning, outlines the services which may be required in recovery situations, and provides information on the considerations involved in operational recovery. It also establishes a framework within which recovery agencies, regions and municipal councils can prepare their own recovery plans.

Regional recovery plans set out agency responsibilities and coordination arrangements applicable to each region, with specific resource listings and contact details. In addition, they describe arrangements for establishment and support of community recovery committees.

The specific roles of recovery agencies are set out in Part 7 of this manual.

Operational Coordination

Recovery is managed at the level closest to that of the affected community, which may or may not be located within one municipal district. Recovery activities are commenced as soon as possible after the impact of an event, and operate concurrently with response activities.

Recovery is normally managed at municipal level by the council, possibly with involvement of one or more community recovery committees, which integrate the work of the government and non-government agencies taking account of the needs of the community during the recovery process. These committees are usually chaired by council personnel.

The Co-ordinator in Chief has nominated the Department of Human Services as the coordinating agent for recovery under s. 17B(1) of the Act. DHS supports councils in local management of recovery, and coordinates recovery operations at regional and state levels.

1.6 Community Safety

The ultimate goal of emergency management is a safer more sustainable community, a goal it shares with many other activities such as crime prevention or occupational health and safety. Seeing emergency management as one element of community safety promotes the building of links with other agencies and programs which may have similar objectives. Figure 1.5 shows some of the elements of community safety.



Figure 1-5: Contributors to Community Safety

Seeing emergency management as one element of community safety promotes the building of links with other agencies and programs which may have similar objectives.

This in particular applies to activities by which people in the community are supported in becoming more self-reliant and active in promoting their own safety generally. Emergency management should not become a silo of activities unrelated to other safety programs.

1.7 Community-Centred Emergency Management

Emergency management is not something done *to* or *for* the community by specialist agencies, but something done *in conjunction with* the community. Emergency management can be seen as a unifying theme within which a wide range of community functions operate from time to time. As an alternative to the emergency-centric understanding of emergencies (prevention *of emergencies*, response *to emergencies* and recovery *from emergencies*) a community-centric understanding of emergencies puts community at the centre, as shown in Figure 1-6.

Emergency management objectives are no longer limited in scope to coping better with emergencies and disasters, but are instead seen in the broader context of the ongoing everyday life of the community.

Emergency management is a key contributor to community 'triple bottom line' outcomes by its specific contributions to safety and sustainability.

Contemporary emergency management:

- embraces the whole of government;
- emphasises sustainability as a key purpose of emergency management;

- sees emergencies as manifestations of vulnerability not simply as a function of the presence of hazards;
- recognises the need to create many focal points for interdisciplinary and intersectoral partnerships.

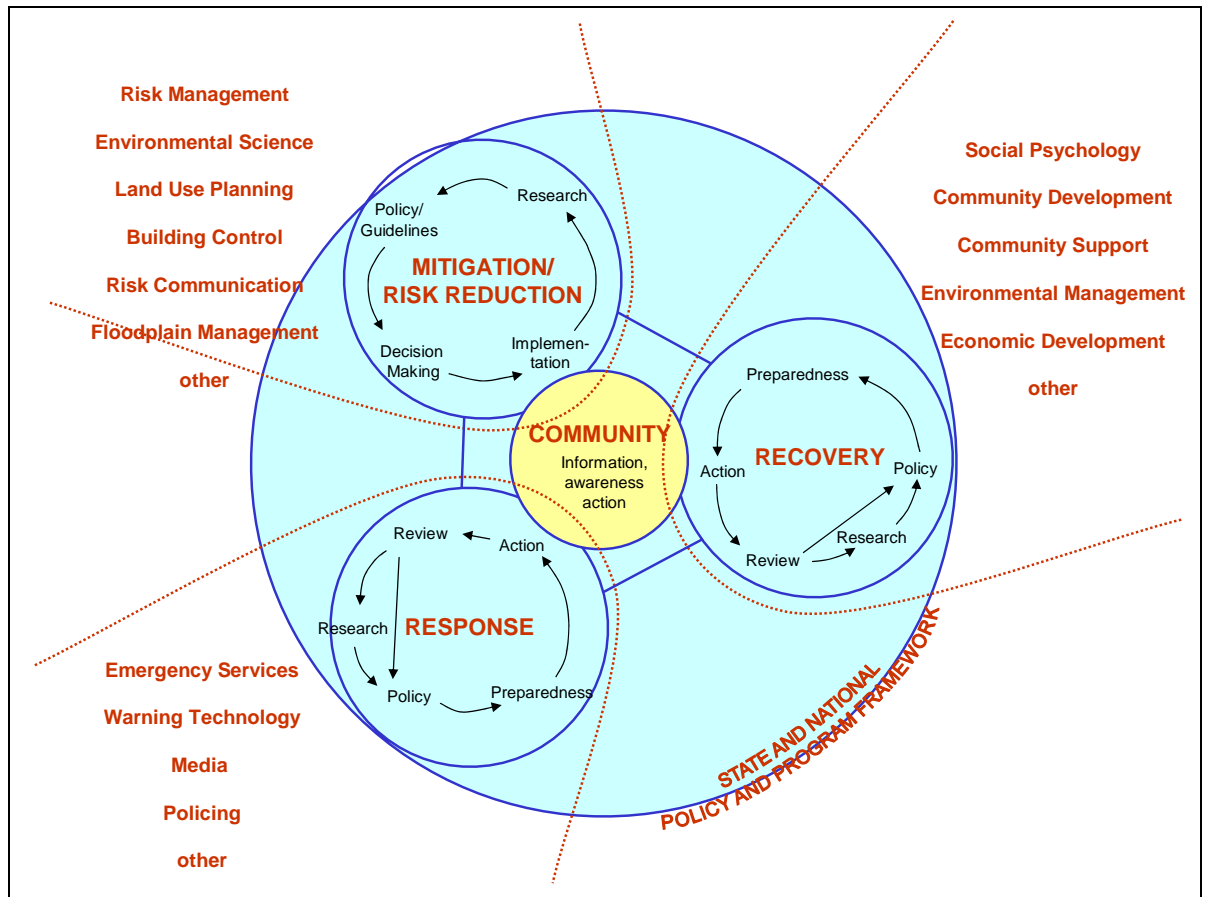


Figure 1-6: Community-Focused Emergency Management

1.8 Civil Defence

Civil Defence, from which our current model of emergency management evolved, can still be seen as an element of community safety. The term means the performance of some or all of the basic tasks intended to protect the civilian population against the dangers, and help it recover from the immediate effects, of hostilities or disaster and also to provide the conditions necessary for its survival. Although not explicitly mentioned in the *Emergency Management Act 1986* the inclusion of 'warlike acts' within the definition of 'emergency' (s.4) reflects the concept. It is based on the assumption that a significant source of threat to the civilian population is the possibility of warlike acts by another national government. The emergency management resources of the States and Territories are Australia's civil defence resources.

1.9 Terrorism: Issue-Based Violence

Following the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States, the terrorist threat is seen as a greater risk than the 'warlike acts' of the Civil Defence concept. The *Terrorism (Community Protection) Act 2003* describes as 'terrorist act' as an act done or threat made 'with the intention of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause' by 'coercing or influencing by intimidation' an Australian or foreign government or the public. The definition is aligned to that in Part 5.3 of the *Criminal Code* (Commonwealth).

The National Counter-Terrorism Plan (June 2003) outlines responsibilities, authorities and the mechanisms to prevent, or if they occur manage, acts of terrorism and their consequences within Australia. In Victoria, linkages between national security agencies and the State are managed through the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

State responsibilities and initiatives in respect of counter-terrorism include:

- the maintenance of crisis and consequence management capabilities to respond to terrorist incidents. These capabilities, consistent with the all hazards approach, are capabilities relevant to responding to any emergency;
- the identification of critical infrastructure and the development of plans to manage the risk to it; and
- the maintenance of policies, legislation and plans relevant to counter-terrorism.

There is need to ensure that *crisis management* and *consequence management* are effectively coordinated with each other. In a threat environment which includes issue-motivated violence, emergency services and other non-military teams such as health workers will usually be at a scene before specialist military and security personnel, and both groups must work together effectively. For this reason, the role of the SECC/CGRC covers all types of major incidents or crises.

1.10 Special Provisions of the Emergency Management Act

The Act provides specific emergency powers which can be applied when the circumstances require. Special declarations are not required for standard emergency operations to occur. The Act also has some special provisions to increase the effectiveness of emergency response activities.

Emergency Area

In some emergency situations police may need to restrain people from participating in typical day-to-day activities or to exclude them from an area or restrict entry to it if their presence is dangerous or not desirable. A chemical spill or gas leak, for example, may involve a hazard not evident to the untrained person. For further information, see Part 3-13 to 3-15, or sections 36A, 36B and 36C of the Act.

Appendix 5 (Part 8) gives advice about evacuation in wildfire emergencies.

State of Disaster

Part 5 of the Act provides for extreme measures to be exercised by the Government in situations which present a 'significant and widespread danger to life or property' in part or all of Victoria. The declaration of a State of Disaster creates a legal condition applying to a specified area only in extreme circumstances, as it is a fundamental principle underlying the Act, and Victorian arrangements, that normal emergency actions take place when the need is evident, and do not require special administrative decision or declaration.

The provisions for a State of Disaster have never been used and are only likely to be invoked in extreme circumstances in which there is a breakdown of the normal systems of government and emergency management, and it is necessary to override normal civil rights to deal with an emergency.

Upon the Premier's declaration of a State of Disaster, the Co-ordinator in Chief has powers to:

- direct government agencies;
- suspend Acts or regulations;
- commandeer any property;
- control movement into and within, and departure from the disaster area;
- compel evacuations from the disaster area (except where a person claims pecuniary interest in the land, buildings, goods or valuables therein).

The latter three powers are delegated to the Chief Commissioner of Police.

The Act provides for compensation to be paid to any person whose property is taken or used in a State of Disaster.

Offence of Obstruction, and Legal Immunity for Volunteers

The Act creates the offence of obstructing an emergency worker (s. 36), and also gives volunteer emergency workers (the same group entitled to the compensation provisions) legal immunity in cases of loss or injury sustained by others, except in cases of their wilful default or negligence (s. 37). For further information on legal protection for volunteers, see Appendix 7 (Part 8).

Control of Response to Fire

The Act makes provision for chief officers of fire suppression agencies, of their own volition or at the request of a response co-ordinator, to appoint an officer of one of their agencies to have overall control in relation to a fire then burning, or in relation to any fire which may occur in a specified area. (s. 16) This ensures that suppression of any fire in Victoria is under the control of a single agency.

Control of Emergency Responses other than Fire

Section 16A makes provision for officers in charge of agencies responsible for the response to an emergency, either of their own volition or at the request of a response co-ordinator, to determine the

priority of the agencies in dealing with or planning for emergencies. In the absence of agreement, a response co-ordinator may determine the priority of the response roles of the agencies.

1.11 Volunteer Compensation Arrangements

The Act makes provision for compensation, under normal WorkCover arrangements, for volunteer emergency workers who suffer personal injury or death while engaging in, training for, standing by to perform, or travelling to or from, duties performed for agencies under the response plan or the recovery plan.

Volunteers covered are those who are members of voluntary organisations which do not have statutory compensation schemes, and cover also applies to those people who, on a casual basis, assist an agency under the response plan or the recovery plan to deal with an emergency. Compensation for loss of or damage to property is also provided for. See also Appendix 7 (Part 8).

A detailed statement on the voluntary emergency workers' compensation scheme is available from:

Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner
GPO Box 4356QQ
MELBOURNE 3001

or on the Internet at <http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/emergency>.

1.12 Involvement of Australian Government Agencies

Victoria's emergency management arrangements are part of a larger picture which includes other States and the Australian Government. Under the Australian Constitution, the Commonwealth has the responsibility for military defence and for the provision of support to the States in defined circumstances. The Commonwealth also accepts responsibility for the provision of physical and financial assistance to the States in developing and supporting their capability to manage emergencies, and for the provision of physical assistance in responding to them.

The Commonwealth role in emergency management has been increasing for a number of reasons including

- the increased importance of security issues which are the direct responsibility of the Commonwealth
- the expansion of Commonwealth funding programs (requiring matching funds), especially in mitigation activities
- overseas deployments
- development of specialised national plans, for example for dealing with mass Australian casualties overseas.

Victoria makes resources available to other States and the Australian Government and other States make resources available to Victoria under certain circumstances, as set out in Appendix 4 (Part 8).

Planning Arrangements

Emergency Management Australia (EMA)

Emergency Management Australia is a Commonwealth agency responsible to the Federal Attorney-General. It assists in developing, coordinating and supporting effective national emergency management arrangements. Its tasks include the coordination of Commonwealth physical response in emergencies, the provision of specialised emergency management training, and the development and production of training and policy manuals and the support of public awareness campaigns. It also provides advice on emergency management matters to Commonwealth agencies, the States, industry and the international community. As agent for the Australian International Development Assistance Bureau it coordinates the provision of Commonwealth physical emergency response and emergency management assistance to countries in the South Pacific region.

Australian Emergency Management Committee (AEMC)

Representatives of the peak State bodies, supported by EMA, form the AEMC, Australia's peak consultative emergency management forum chaired by the Secretary of the Federal Attorney-General's Department. The Emergency Services Commissioner is Victoria's representative.

It is charged with responsibility for managing national strategic disaster and emergency management issues and policies. The AEMC has decision making authority as well as the authority to make recommendations to Ministers.

Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management – Emergency Management (MCPEM-EM)

The Ministerial Council for Police and Emergency Management – Emergency Management has been created to provide a structure at the highest national level for ministers from all Australian jurisdictions with emergency services/emergency management responsibilities to:

- oversee the implementation of the Natural Disaster Reform Package
- provide national leadership and strategic direction on emergency management (all hazards), including national policies and priorities
- encourage best practice in emergency management among jurisdictions.

It is chaired by the Federal Attorney-General.

Operational Arrangements

The Commonwealth is able to make available resources from the defence forces and other Commonwealth organisations when needed for emergency response purposes by the States when State resources are inappropriate, exhausted or unavailable. Arrangements for acquisition of Commonwealth resources are set out in Appendix 4 (Part 8).

Some Commonwealth organisations have established roles under Victoria's normal arrangements. For example, the Bureau of Meteorology and Centrelink (see Part 7).

Training and Research Support

The EMA Institute at Mount Macedon provides specialist and advanced training in emergency management for the whole of Australia. In addition, EMA uses the Institute to host national workshops and seminars of relevance to the States.

Financial Support

State Support Package

EMA provides financial support for Victoria's emergency management activities. The State Support Package provides for training by the Commonwealth, and subsidises some salaries, equipment and facilities. It is administered in Victoria through the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner. See Appendix 1 (Part 8) for details of other Commonwealth funding programs.

Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA)

The NDRRA are designed to reduce any excessive financial burden on the States of the recovery costs of defined natural emergencies (bushfires, cyclones, earthquakes, floods, storms and landslip). Under the arrangements, the Commonwealth reimburses the States, in accordance with a funding formula, for expenditure towards:

- grants for emergency food, clothing and shelter;
- grants in situations of personal hardship towards restoration of the family dwelling or contents;
- grants for restoration of certain public assets;
- concessional interest loans to businesses and non-profit organisations.
- other acts of relief and restoration adopted to alleviate distress or damage

It is important to note that under the NDRRA the Commonwealth supports only the State itself, and does not directly benefit recipients of financial assistance provided by Victoria. The responsible Australian Government department is the Department of Transport and Regional Services.

Refer to Appendix 1 (Part 8) for further detail about Victorian Government Post-Emergency Assistance Measures

Project Funding Programs

Funds are provided to approved projects under specific funding programs, including:

- EMA Research and Innovation Program: (refer www.ema.gov.au)
- Natural Disaster Mitigation Programme, a recommendation of the COAG Natural Disasters Report. The Australian Government makes available approximately \$9.0 million per annum with Commonwealth, State and local governments each contributing one-third to approved mitigation projects. Therefore total national expenditure is approximately \$27 million per annum. The Natural Disaster Risk Management Studies Programme has been incorporated into the NDMP. (refer www.dotars.gov.au/naturaldisasters)
- The contact in Victoria is the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner.
- Regional Flood Mitigation Programme. The contact in Victoria is the Floodplain Management area of the Department of Sustainability and Environment. (refer www.dotars.gov.au/regional/rfmp/index.htm)

The latter two programs are provided by the Australian Government Department of Transport and Regional Services. See also Appendix 1 (Part 8).