



Media Fact Sheet Emergency Services

What is an emergency?

An emergency could be a bushfire, flood, storm, cyclone, earthquake, war, terrorism event, plane crash, chemical spill or a technological disaster.

In Western Australia, the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) makes arrangements for emergency and disaster situations.

Agencies on the SEMC include Police, Fire and Emergency Services, Premier and Cabinet, Health Department and the Department for Child Protection and Family Support.

What role does the Department play in managing emergencies?

- Emergency accommodation – temporary shelter and where necessary, the provision of short to medium term accommodation.
- Emergency catering – for the evacuees, casualties and welfare workers.
- Emergency clothing and personal items – essential clothing and personal items, such as toiletry packs.
- Personal support – such as counselling, information and advice, to cope with the affects of loss, stress, confusion and family disruption.
- Registration and reunification – a system which allows people to be traced, families reunited and inquiries answered.
- Financial assistance – personal hardship, distress relief and other forms of emergency assistance.
- Welfare centres – The Department helps the emergency services set up evacuation centres in buildings such as recreation centres, town halls and schools which are used as temporary shelters during emergencies
- Reception operations – following the evacuation of Australian citizens and other approved people when foreign countries become unsafe.

Department staff can be identified at the scene of a disaster by their bright, purple jackets emblazoned with the words 'welfare support'.

The Department is assisted to provide support services by several other government and non-government organisations to ensure that Western Australian are supported to recover from disasters.

These agencies include Australian Red Cross, Salvation Army, Country Women's Association, Centrelink, St John Ambulance, Department of Education and Adventist Development and Relief Agency.

Donations

In times of disaster, Western Australians are extremely generous. But before donating goods people are encouraged to find out what is really needed by calling an advertised hotline number.

When support services receive unnecessary donations, such as thick winter blankets in the middle of a Western Australian summer, resources are stretched to the limit and people can miss out on essential supplies.

By publicising hotline numbers, the media can play an important role in making sure the donations do not go to waste.

Everyone reacts differently to different experiences. People may feel stressed, unhappy, unsettled, shaken, shocked, numb, lost, or disorientated, and that the world they know and trusted is now turned upside down.

Children can be especially traumatised by events that can destabilise their beliefs about themselves and their world. People need time and support to recover, cope, heal and start to make sense of it all. The privacy and feelings of people who have experienced trauma should be respected.

The Department can organise personal support for people dealing with trauma resulting from disasters and advertises a hotline number at the time of the incident.

All contact for the Department should be made through the Senior Media & Communications Officer on 9222 2825 or 0418 951 460.