



Emergency Management

Introduction

We aim to ensure services are uninterrupted for our tenants. However, circumstances can arise that can impact our ability to deliver a specialist disability accommodation (SDA) service such as fire, flood or stormwater damage to a property. This policy outlines how we respond to emergencies in order to maintain the quality of service delivered to our tenants and the responsibilities of our tenants in an emergency.

Emergency management plans

Each individual property should have an emergency management plan which sets out the resources and response in the event of an emergency that results in, or has potential to, disrupt a service. Even though an SDA property is home to its residents, it is also a workplace under Australian WHS law. An emergency management plan aims to:

- Prevent loss of life
- Minimise property damage
- Establish a structured response to any anticipated or unanticipated disruption in a timely manner
- Minimise disruption to critical services.

Each emergency management plan is a complete controlled document, which should be tested and updated regularly (at least annually or following an incident). Emergency management plans should have a document owner responsible for updates. Emergency management plans should follow the same template.

When creating an emergency management plan, all relevant matters should be considered such as

- The nature of the work being carried out at the site
- The nature of the hazards at the workplace
- The unique challenges presented by each type of emergency
- The size and location of the workplace e.g. remoteness, proximity to health services
- The number and type of the workers e.g. employees, contractors, and other persons at the workplace such as visitors.

An emergency management plan should include information for workers such as:

- Emergency contact details for key management who have specific roles or responsibilities under the emergency plan e.g. fire wardens and first aid officers
- Contact details for local emergency services e.g. fire brigade and poison information centre
- A description of the mechanisms for alerting people at the workplace to an emergency or possible emergency e.g. siren or bell alarm
- Evacuation procedures including arrangements for assisting residents
- A map of the workplace illustrating the location of fire protection equipment, emergency exits, assembly points
- Triggers and processes for advising neighbouring businesses about emergencies
- The post-incident follow-up process, for example notifying the regulator, organising trauma counselling or medical treatment.



Evacuation diagrams

All SDA properties require a printed evacuation diagram prominently displayed. Evacuation diagrams clearly show the best route to take in order to evacuate in an emergency. Evacuation diagrams help:

- Reduce the effects of an emergency
- Prevent personal injuries
- Protect against loss of lives
- Prevent damage to property
- Minimise service interruptions

Personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs)

A PEEP is a personalised document prepared for each person with disability at a site in order to ensure their safe evacuation, if required, during an emergency. All residents at SDA properties should have a personalised PEEP which includes:

- The person's name and location
- A recent photo of the person
- information on assistance animals, if applicable
- Preferred method of notification of emergency
- Type of assistance or equipment required to evacuate
- How the person evacuates in an emergency i.e. route and exit
- Any designated assistants and their contact details

The PEEP document should be a standardised template. All PEEPs at site should be known by the site's fire wardens and by the emergency management team. PEEPs should be regularly reviewed by the emergency management team and by the resident's key workers.

On-call workers

Each service should have on-call workers assigned to respond to emergencies outside business hours. On-call workers should follow the steps outlined in the emergency management plan to escalate the incident as required to the emergency management team.

Emergency management team

Each SDA property managed needs an emergency management team. This team includes key management personnel responsible for the service, who are notified of escalated emergencies, and other team members where relevant. The emergency management team coordinates the response to any emergency considered major.

Types of emergencies

There are generally two types of emergencies:

- Minor emergencies which can be managed within the service by workers on duty (or with help from on-call workers) such as:
 - Leaks in a room or communal area which cannot be left without causing damage
 - Damage to furniture which needs to be removed so as not to cause injury to a tenant of worker
 - Absences of workers addressed through use of temporary or relief workers



- Major emergencies which require involvement of more than one worker or for escalation due to the severity such as:
 - Fire, flood or other water damage which requires evacuation
 - Loss of life through unnatural causes
 - Significant loss of life, e.g. through an explosion
 - Major utility failure
 - Industrial action or mass resignations of workers
 - Adverse weather conditions
 - Widespread illness/pandemic resulting in shortages of workers.

Minor emergencies

Minor emergencies may be resolved by the workers at a property. During out-of-hours, workers may need to contact on-call workers to assist in emergency resolution.

Major emergencies

In the event of a major emergency, workers must advise key management personnel as soon as possible. Only key management personnel can decide if an incident or event is considered a major emergency in line with the emergency management plan.

Mitigating business impact

Tenants – during an emergency (dependent on what has happened), tenants might be directly impacted which could cause stress, anxious or behave in ways that concern, which in turn could lead to them hurting themselves, workers or visitors. To help mitigate against this, we will:

- Ensure that emergency procedures are included in accommodation service agreements and displayed throughout the property e.g. evacuation routes in the event of a fire
- Carry out regular testing of the fire emergency system, including where tenants should evacuate too
- Rostering workers trained as fire wardens and in first aid for each shift and making these known to tenants
- Ensure that rooms and communal areas have been fitted with safety equipment e.g. smoke alarms and fire extinguishers.

People – we need suitably skilled and qualified workers to run our services. There should be sufficient workers on duty at all times to ensure tenants are supported and there is no risk to their safety or to workers or visitors. We will ensure there are sufficient workers on duty by:

- Using a roster to manage shifts with handover periods
- Putting in place agreements with recruitment agencies to source temporary and permanent workers quickly
- Recruiting multi-skilled workers to allow for redeployment between teams
- Ensuring workers receive ongoing training and development to maintain their skills
- Developing robust succession planning to reduce the risk of gaps within key management personnel.

Premises – as our properties are people's homes we are committed to providing high quality accommodation that meets their needs, even in an emergency. We will do this by:

- Identifying alternate properties where people can live if we lose access to the main property
- Enabling workers to access tenant files and other key documents remotely through a cloud-based system, ensuring continued support as agreed



- Using communal areas temporarily if it is only one or a few rooms affected
- Maintaining a list of tradespeople who we can call to quickly repair or replace damaged property or equipment, even after hours.

Information technology – tenant files may be stored in hard copy at a service but should also be stored electronically. It is important files are accessible e.g. support plans, to ensure tenants receive the right support to meet their needs. We ensure workers can access files by:

- Storing records securely on the cloud and completing regular back-ups
- Maintaining paper-based files containing key information about each tenant in the service
- Keeping a register of key contacts who also hold information on a tenant e.g. family members and their NDIS support coordinator and who we can contact if needed to provide information.

Supplies/equipment - each property has supplies and equipment needed for running the service. While some of this is non-essential, some is needed to maintain high-quality provision for our tenants e.g. wheelchairs or communication tools. We will resolve issues related to a loss of or damage to supplies or equipment by:

- Keeping a full inventory of essential supplies and equipment which can be cross-checked during an emergency
- Developing relationships with other providers who may be able to loan or share equipment in an emergency
- Maintaining a list of suppliers able to provide replacement supplies or equipment at short notice, even after hours

Bush fire prone areas

If SDA properties are located in bush fire prone areas, additional precautions should be taken to ensure workers know when to evacuate tenants in the event of bush fire. This should be documented in a bush fire survival plan. Workers in these properties should be trained in the bush fire survival plan and know:

- Where to get up-to-date information on a bush fire
- The different bush fire alert levels
- When to evacuate
- Evacuation routes.

Key management personnel should seek advice from the local bush fire authority if unsure about risk of bush fires to a property.

Pandemics

Pandemics present a wide variety of organisational risks. Pandemics can create an unstable working situation when workers are absent if they are sick or need to self-isolate. In the event of a pandemic, key management personnel must coordinate their response by developing an appropriate pandemic management plan. All workers must also be familiar with the pandemic management policy in order to correctly support participants during a pandemic.

Stakeholders

As an SDA provider, we are bound by government regulatory requirements and must meet all our responsibilities to tenants and their families. During an emergency, we may not be able to deliver the service in the way originally agreed. We will address this issue by:



- Clearly communicating what has happened and how we are working to resolve the situation as soon as possible and keeping all stakeholders updated on progress
- Including emergency procedures in contracts and accommodation service agreements and working to these procedures
- Maintaining a list of all key stakeholders' contact details
- Managing external communications e.g. with the media, to maintain a consistent message which provides reassurance

Training and testing

All workers receive training during their induction on how to respond to an emergency. This is also part of a worker's ongoing professional development. Understanding of the emergency management plan is tested during team meetings, which will also be used to share update to the processes.

We will hold regular fire drills to ensuring all workers and tenants know the evacuation procedures and where to evacuate to in the event of a fire.

Reporting

Following an incident, workers are required to complete an incident report which outlines:

- The nature of the emergency (what happened)
- The level of emergency e.g. minor or major
- Workers involved in managing the emergency
- Actions taken to resolve the issue, including whether emergency services were called or the emergency management team contacted
- Whether any follow-up actions are needed; if the emergency management plan requires updating
- If specific work needs to be done with tenants e.g. to reassure them that this was a one-off incident and will be unlikely to re-occur.

This report is reviewed by key management personnel, shared with relevant teams and used to update the emergency management plan, if required.

Applicability

When

- Applies when participants are provided specialist disability accommodation services.

Who

- Applies to all workers, supervisors and key management personnel supporting participants living in specialist disability accommodation.

Documents relevant to this policy

- Pandemic management plan



Regulations relevant to this policy

- NDIS (Specialist Disability Accommodation) Rules 2020 (Cth)
- NDIS (Specialist Disability Accommodation Conditions) Rule 2018 (Cth)
- NDIS (Quality Indicators) Guidelines 2018 (Cth)

Key management personnel responsibilities for emergency management

- Ensure all properties owned or managed comply with relevant state or territory WHS codes of practice regarding emergency management
- Ensure fire safety equipment, such as alarms and extinguishers, are installed and maintained
- Respond to requests for maintenance of safety equipment in a timely fashion
- Ensure all sites have printed and displayed evacuation diagrams
- Ensure workers are appropriately trained to respond to emergencies
- Ensure properties in bush fire prone areas have a documented bush fire survival plan (check with local state or territory bush fire authority if unsure)
- Ensure the grounds of properties in bush fire prone areas are regularly maintained to minimise risks from bush fires

Emergency management team responsibilities

- Review each site's emergency management plan and update if necessary
- Review each site's bush fire survival plan (if the site is located in a bush fire prone area)
- Decide if an emergency is major and, if so, enact the emergency management plan
- Contact emergency services, if required
- Conduct a full review after any major emergency
- Arrange tests of emergency management plans e.g. fire drills.

Worker responsibilities for emergency management

- Being familiar with approved emergency management plans
- Being familiar with approved bush fire survival plans (for sites in bush fire prone areas)
- Respond to any minor emergency according to the emergency management plan
- Ensure each resident has a customised PEEP
- Evacuate tenants from the site as per their PEEP, if evacuation is required
- Evacuate tenants from the site as per PEEP and bush fire survival plan (for sites in bush fire prone areas)
- Escalate major emergencies to on-call workers or the emergency management team as soon as possible
- Contact emergency services, if required
- Follow directions from on-call workers or key management personnel during an escalated emergency



On-call worker responsibilities for emergency management

- Respond to emergencies reported and escalated by workers
- Escalate major emergencies to the emergency management team
- Contact emergency services, if required
- Coordinate the emergency response if the emergency management team is unavailable

Responsibilities of tenants during an emergency

- Provide access to their room to deal with emergency repairs
- Follow emergency evacuation procedures as directed by workers.