



Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing

Aged Care Complaints Investigation Scheme
Risk Management for Emergency Events Fact Sheet

Overview

This document is in response to questions asked of the Department of Health and Ageing (the Department) by approved providers of residential aged care and community care in relation to risk management for emergency events.

Q: Will the Department find alternative accommodation in the event of a decision by an approved provider to relocate or evacuate care recipients?

A: Approved providers should explore alternative accommodation options as part of their emergency planning process, and where possible make arrangements at a local level.

The Department will assist approved providers with options when sufficient alternative accommodation is not available for evacuating or relocating care recipients. For example, the Department of Health and Ageing will be able to help you identify aged care services or other facilities that have the capacity to accommodate care recipients.

Q: How can approved providers contact the Department for general advice on emergency management, or to access information about accommodation?

A: At this point in time, the Department can be contacted via the Aged Care Complaints Investigation Scheme on 1800 550 552, in all states and territories except Victoria and New South Wales, where the Department has dedicated emergency response numbers. Approved providers in Victoria can contact 1800 078 709 and in New South Wales approved providers can contact 1800 852 649.

In the event of a significant emergency, approved providers should always contact their local emergency service to determine an appropriate response.

Q: Will approved providers be subject to compliance action if care recipients are moved to accommodation which does not meet the standards in line with their care classification, or accommodation that has not been assessed for the purposes of the provision of residential aged care?

A: No. If care recipients are relocated temporarily and then returned to their home facility, then care will be taken to have continued at the home facility.

Q: Will approved providers receive additional aged care funding for costs incurred during an emergency (e.g. additional staffing and/or additional or specific equipment, supplies, and alternative accommodation)?

A: No. Approved providers are responsible for meeting the care needs of their care recipients. Additional aged care funding will not routinely be provided by the Department; however emergency response funding may be made available by Commonwealth and/or State and Territory government decision following significant emergency events.

Q: Will additional aged care funding be made available to approved providers for capital works or equipment to prepare for emergency situations?

A: No. Approved providers are responsible for meeting the care needs of their care recipients, including the provision of appropriate and safe accommodation. Additional aged care funding will not be provided for capital works or equipment.

Q: Relocating care recipients imposes extra costs on both the relocating and receiving facilities. Will additional funding or resources be made available to approved providers for relocating care recipients in line with community warnings (irrespective of whether the emergency is a bushfire)?

A: No. In the event of relocation or evacuation, subsidies will continue to be paid to the approved provider responsible for the ongoing care of the care recipients. Any arrangements for reimbursing the costs of caring for relocated care recipients should be negotiated between the approved provider and the provider of alternative accommodation. Approved provider responsibilities for a care recipient do not transfer to a new provider in the case of a temporary relocation.

Q: What are the expectations of the Department, in relation to aged care services assessing risk and responding to different levels of threat in accordance with advice from local emergency authorities?

A: The Department will not be providing advice or direction on relocation or evacuation as it is not fully aware of the nature of the threat to a facility, the vulnerability of the facility and its care recipients, or the appropriateness of relocating. In an emergency situation any decision to relocate or evacuate should be made in the context of the facility's emergency plan which should be prepared in line with their responsibility as an approved provider to ensure a safe and secure environment for their care recipients, staff and visitors. Approved providers should utilise the resources available to the general community to assist in emergency planning, and make connections with local emergency response planning agencies.

Q: What advice can you provide on whether approved providers should plan to relocate care recipients on occasions where staff have indicated they will not be able to attend work due to the threat of an emergency?

A: Approved providers should consider staffing pressures resulting from an emergency threat in the development of their emergency plan, and ensure options for sourcing replacement and additional staff are identified within the plan.

Q: How should an approved provider respond if volunteers do not have a police check or they are unable to substantiate that they have one?

A: An approved provider must not allow a person to become a volunteer unless they are satisfied the person has had a police check that does not record that the person has any precluding offences.

A volunteer is defined as a person who is not a staff member and who provides care or other services in circumstances where the person has, or is reasonably likely to have, unsupervised access to care recipients.

In a bushfire emergency people who volunteer their services can provide assistance, provided that they are supervised to the extent that is reasonable given the circumstances.

Q: What are an approved provider's powers and responsibilities if a care recipient refuses to relocate or evacuate?

A: Approved providers should consider including a clause in residential agreements enabling them to relocate or evacuate care recipients in emergency situations, and should seek individual legal counsel on the wording of such a clause.

Q: Is it appropriate for approved providers of community care packages to utilise package funding to assist care recipients to respond to an emergency threat, for example with transportation or accommodation?

A: Yes, approved providers of community care may utilise package funding to cover transportation and/or accommodation costs in emergencies where it would ensure continuity of care for the care recipient.

Q: What are the expectations of the Department for approved providers of community based care?

A: Approved providers of community care are expected to assess the risks involved in the continuation of community service provision in the context of an emergency, and to plan to maintain, modify or limit service provision in the context of that risk assessment. It is expected that ensuring the safety of service delivery staff will be a significant consideration in developing an emergency response plan, and that plans will be developed in consultation with local emergency response agencies. An approved provider of community care should communicate emergency plans to their care recipients and other approved providers in the area within which they operate.

It may be particularly appropriate for approved providers of community care to consider their capacity to provide additional support to their care recipients during a bushfire threat. Such additional support may include assisting individual care recipients with bushfire preparedness, and planning or providing additional assistance during a bushfire threat to those care recipients who require it.