

## EMERGENCY AND DISASTER RESPONSE GUIDELINES

The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines and to assist AT HOME CARE workers how to respond to an emergency or disaster when they are working with clients in the home and will assist the organisation meet its obligations under the NDIS Practice Standards 2021.

### Scope

These procedures apply to all homes where AT HOME CARE is providing supports and will be reviewed annually or where there are changes to legislation or emergency practices.

### Indemnity

All AT HOME CARE workers and others shall be indemnified against all civil liabilities resulting from the emergency evacuation of a location where personnel act in good faith in the course of their duties.

## EMERGENCY PROCEDURES - FIRES

### House Fire Evacuation

- Consider the special needs of the client and whether you can safely evacuate with them. If not, immediately exit the house from the nearest door, away from the fire and **call 000** advising them about the situation and where the client is located. **DO NOT GO BACK IN THE HOUSE.**
- If you can escape from the house with the client, then proceed via the nearest door (ensure security doors can be unlocked).
- Be aware that windows can be used as a last resort (never break glass to escape)
- Move to a safe location outside the front of the property and at least 200m from the home.
- Once outside, do not go back in the house.
- **Call 000** when clear of immediate danger and wait for emergency services.



## Kitchen Fire

If oil or fat catches alight on the stove or BBQ:

- Turn off the heat source **if safe to do so**.
- Do not move flaming oil or fat.
- Place a **fire blanket** (if available) and **if safe to do so**, over the fire, or
- Cover with a lid or wooden chopping board - only if safe to do so!
- Do **NOT** use water to extinguish the fire.
- **Call 000.**
- **If the fire spreads to follow the fire evacuation procedures above**

Safety tips when cooking:

- When cooking, never leave food unattended on a stove.
- Avoid wearing loose clothing when cooking as it may catch alight.
- Never hang items such as tea towels near stoves or on cooking appliances.
- Take care when cooking with fats and oils.
- Turn off cooking appliances after use.
- Clean and maintain cooking appliances, exhaust fans and range hood filters.



## Clothing Fire

**STOP, DROP, COVER AND ROLL** is a procedure used to extinguish a person's clothing that has caught alight.

### STOP

If a person's clothing should catch on fire, they should immediately stop where they are, as running and panicking will fan the flames.

### DROP

The person should then drop to the ground immediately.

### COVER

Once on the ground, cover their face with their hands to prevent burns to the face and stop smoke entering the respiratory system.

### ROLL

To assist a person with burning clothing roll them back and forth on the ground or smother the flames with a fire blanket.



**Tip:** Never beat the fire as this only increases oxygen flow to the fire, causing the fire to grow larger.

## **Bush Fire**

Bush fires are a concern for all homes. They are a known priority for homes that are rural, on the scarp or surrounded by tress, as an example only. Bush fire evacuation procedures will be discussed with the client (and/or their representative) by AT HOME CARE and agreed for identified homes.

If you feel the home, you are working in is of concern please speak to your Engagement Coordinator and we will speak with the client and/or their representative.

AT HOME CARE will also monitor the Government Emergency websites to look at any threats or fire services in areas where our clients are located.

## **Bushfire Evacuation**

**AT ALL TIMES YOU MUST EVACUATE EARLY NO MATTER THE SITUATION  
DO NOT WAIT FOR THE FIRE TO ARRIVE!**

## **Triggers to Act**

It is important that when you are with the client that you use triggers to act before a fire even starts or approaches the client's home. You should consider the following as a guide as to whether to leave:

- If you can see or smell smoke
- If you can see a fire
- If you can hear sirens or water bombers
- If you are told by a neighbour, there might be a fire near you
- If you hear or receive a warning through your phone or the clients

If you observe any of these triggers or believe there is a potential or have a concern about a bush fire situation that may cause any risk to you or the client, then immediately evacuate to a safer location. This may involve going to a local shopping centre or to a one of the client's friends or family's home.

If you decide to leave, then call your Engagement Coordinator to advise them and if appointed the client's Case Manager and advise you are evacuating and where you are going.

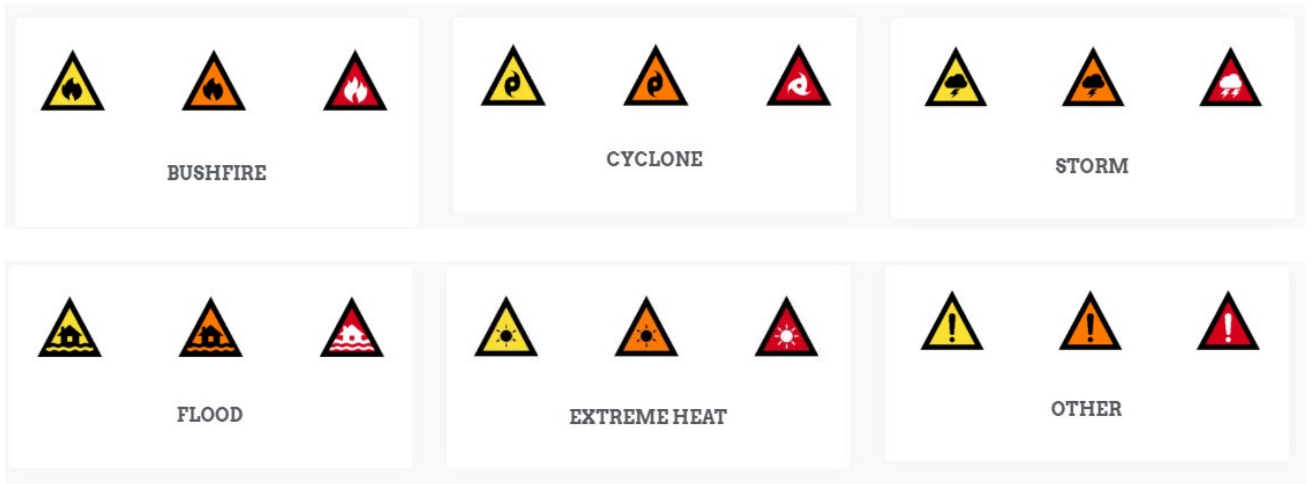
**DO NOT DELAY** in evacuating as this will place you and the client in more danger as the roads surrounding your location may be closed, covered in smoke, and be congested.

## **Bushfire Warning Systems**

During a bushfire, emergency services will provide as much information as possible through a variety of channels. However, due to the time and effort required to ensure the safety of clients and yourself during a bushfire the best option is to leave for a safer place. Do not wait and see, leaving at the last minute can be deadly.

**Australian Warning System (AWS)**

The Australian Warning System is a new national approach to information and warnings during emergencies like bushfire, flood, storm, extreme heat, and severe weather. The System uses a nationally consistent set of icons, like those below. The AWS has been designed based on feedback and research across the country and aims to deliver a more consistent approach to these types of emergencies, no matter where people are located.



**What are the meanings of these warning levels?**

**Advice (Yellow):** An incident has started. There is no immediate danger. Stay up to date in case the situation changes.

**Watch and Act (Orange):** There is a heightened level of threat. Conditions are changing and you need to start taking action now to protect the client and you.

**Emergency Warning (Red):** An Emergency Warning is the highest level of warning. You may be in danger and need to take action immediately. Any delay now puts your life and the clients at risk.

**Calls to Action**

Each of the warning levels has a set of action statements linked to them to provide clear advice about what should be do. Calls of action can be used flexibly across all three warning levels depending on the hazard. AT HOME CARE will be monitoring warnings/hazards and will work with you and the client.

Advice	Watch and Act	Emergency Warning
Prepare now Stay informed Monitor conditions Stay informed/threat is reduced Avoid the area Return with caution Avoid smoke	Prepare to leave/evacuate Leave/evacuate now (if you are not prepared) Prepare to take shelter Move/stay indoors Stay near shelter Walk two or more streets back Monitor conditions as they are changing Be aware of ember attacks (fired)	Leave/evacuate (immediately, by am/pm/hazard timing) Seek/take shelter now Shelter indoors now Too late/dangerous to leave

	Move to higher ground (away from creeks/rivers/coast) Limit time outside (cyclone, heat asthma) Avoid the area Stay away from damaged buildings and other hazards Prepare for isolation Protect yourself against the impacts of extreme heat Do not enter flood water Not safe to return Prepare your property (cyclone/storm)	
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**State by State Emergency Information Contacts** – note each state link under live warnings will allow address to be entered to see if the client and you are in an alert area.

**WESTERN AUSTRALIA - [dfes.wa.gov.au](https://dfes.wa.gov.au)**

Emergency Information Line  
 Live Warnings  
 Warning Systems  
 X (formally twitter)  
 Facebook  
 During major emergencies, tune in to local ABC radio

**13 3337)**  
[Alerts and warnings](#)  
[WA Warnings and Ratings](#)  
[WA Emergency](#)  
[Facebook link](#)  
[national ABC stations - enter location](#)

**VICTORIA - [Victoria Emergency](#)**

Emergency Information Line  
 Live Warnings  
 Warning Systems  
 X (formally twitter)  
 Facebook  
 During major emergencies, tune in to local ABC radio (Victoria also offers other stations per link opposite)

**1800 226 226**  
[Alerts and warnings](#)  
[Vic Warning Systems and ratings](#)  
[Vic Emergency](#)  
[Facebook link](#)  
[click here](#)

**QUEENSLAND - [QLD Fire and Emergency Services](#)**

Live Warnings  
 Warning Systems  
 X (formally twitter)  
 Facebook  
 During major emergencies, tune in to local ABC radio

[Alerts and warnings](#)  
[Alerts and warnings](#)  
[QLD Emergency](#)  
[Facebook link](#)  
[national ABC stations - enter location](#)

**Emergency Warnings and weather**

Bureau of Meteorology (BOM)

[Western Australia](#)  
[Victoria](#)  
[Queensland](#)

## Road conditions and closures

Traffic/Road Conditions

[Road Closures WA](#)

[Road Closures VIC](#)

[Road Closures QLD](#)

## Emergency Telephone Warning system

Emergency Alert is the national telephone warning system used during an emergency to send messages to landlines and mobile phones within a defined area where lives and homes are deemed to be under direct and imminent threat.

A DFES Incident Controller assesses the level of danger to the community and if lives and homes are under direct and imminent threat, he or she will request an Emergency Alert be issued within that specific geographical area.

The client does not need to register to receive a telephone warning. All landline and mobile telephone numbers (including silent numbers) are automatically registered based on their service address.

In an emergency, telecommunications providers send voice messages to landlines and text messages to mobiles that have a registered service address within the affected warning area.

Text messages can also be sent to mobile telephones based on the last known location of the handset.

Please be aware however that the Emergency Alert relies on telecommunications networks to send messages and delivery cannot always be guaranteed as there may be network coverage issues. However, it is important that you ensure both your phone and the client's phones are fully charged and able to make and receive calls if possible.

No matter how you become aware of an emergency, whether it is via phone, from a client's neighbour or by seeing smoke or flames, **take immediate action for your own safety and that of the clients by immediately leaving the area and going somewhere safe.** Do not wait around or rely on receiving a warning message to your or the client's phone.

If you are leaving notify At Home Care immediately and if there is a Case Manager appointed, they should also be notified.

## PERSONAL THREAT

This may involve strangers or something occurring in the vicinity of the client's home where it is important to maintain the safety of the home.

- Keep yourself and the client well clear of the disturbance and not engage or say anything that may encourage irrational behaviour.
- Consider locking all the doors and windows to prevent any unauthorised access.
- Call **000** and report the matter.
- Call AT HOME CARE.
- Follow closely any instructions of emergency services personnel should they be on the scene.
- Evacuate the home together with the client only if instructed by emergency services personnel.



## EXTREME WEATHER EVENT

Extreme weather events although rare can lead to damaging winds which can result in damage to the home and in some circumstances flooding. AT HOME CARE will monitor the state/territory emergency websites to look at any threats or events which may impact areas where you and our clients are located and working.

The Bureau of Metrology as an APP which can be downloaded and can provide updates at the location where the client resides: <http://www.bom.gov.au/app/>

It is important when you are with the client that you use triggers to act before an extreme weather event hits or approaches the clients home. You should consider the following as a guide only as to whether discussing with the client the need to leave:

- There has been a warning issued of an extreme weather event approaching.
- If you are told by a neighbour.
- If you or the client receive a warning through your phones.

If you believe any of these triggers are relevant, believe there is potential or have a concern about an extreme weather event that may cause risk to the client and yourself, then immediately evacuate to a safer location. This may involve going to a local evacuation centre, family or friend of the client or a local shopping centre.

If you decide to leave, then call your Engagement Co-ordinator and if appointed the client's case manager to advise and where you are going.

It is important to be aware of storm alerts and warning systems and alerts as per the table at Page 4. The following is some additional information to assist for extreme events:

### Prepare – Severe weather is more than 24 hours away

- Contact AT HOME CARE together with the client to discuss options in terms of temporary relocation.
- Suggest and if safe to do so assist the client (where they are capable) store or weigh down objects around the home that could be picked up and thrown by strong winds, causing damage or injury.
- Start preparing an emergence kit, with a battery-operated radio, torch, spare batteries and first aid kit.

This should include:

- Any important documents like identification and insurance papers.
- Battery-operated AM/FM radio and torch with spare batteries
- First Aid Kit
- Toiletries and sanitary supplies
- Emergency requirements for the client (i.e., webster pack, lifesaving equipment)
- Spare clothes and shoes

### Get Ready – Severe weather is six to 24 hours away

- Review the emergency kit and make sure it has what is needed.
- If safe to do so put pets in a safe area.
- Unplug electrical appliances, using backup batteries for life saving client medical equipment, avoid using landline telephones if there is lightning.

### Take Action – Severe weather is less than 6 hours away

- Close curtains and blinds and stay inside away from windows.

- If outside, find safe shelter away from trees, powerlines, storm water drains and streams.
- Unplug electrical appliances and avoid using landline telephones if there is lightning.
- If driving –
  - Do not drive into water of unknown depth and current
  - Slow down, turn on your lights and keep a safe distance from other drivers.
  - Be alert and watch for hazards on the road (i.e loose debris)
  - If it is raining heavily and you cannot see, pull over and park with the hazard lights on until the rain clears.

### **Cancellation – The severe weather has passed**

- Keep away from fallen powerlines, flooded drains, rivers, and streams, fallen trees and damaged buildings.
- If safe to do so, assist the client check their property for damage.
- If damage has occurred, assist the client if necessary to take photos (using their phone or other electronic equipment) and suggest they contact their insurance company.
- If the client's home is damaged and needs temporary emergency repairs to make the home safe, such as a badly damaged roof or flooding, call AT HOME CARE and we will work with the client and/or their representative to support them finding alternative accommodation if required. We will also suggest they contact State Emergency Services (132 500) which is a national number for assistance.

### **Extreme Weather Warning Systems**

During an extreme weather event, emergency services will provide as much information as possible through a variety of channels as listed on page 5. However as with bushfires it is suggested you discuss with the client it might be best to leave or for them to contact AT HOME CARE to discuss.

### **FLOOD**

A flood is an overflow of water that submerges land that is usually dry. It doesn't necessarily have to be raining where you are located for a flood to occur. There are several causes for a flood:

- Flash Flooding: from lots of rain falling within a short period of time, which can cause water to flow quickly and without warning.
- Storm surge: from abnormal rise in sea level, over and above the normal tides, which can occur from a tropical cyclone or storm.
- Widespread Flooding: caused by large amounts of rainfall falling over a wide area of land.

Floodwaters are very dangerous. Water can be deep, fast flowing with strong currents and have sharp submerged objects that can injure or trap people. Floodwaters can also contain toxic waste, chemicals, and dangerous animals. You should never drive or walk through a flood.

Not only can floodwater be unsafe personally, but it can also damage infrastructure such as buildings, bridges, and roads.

AT HOME CARE will monitor the state/territory emergency websites to look at any threats or events which may impact areas where you and our clients are located and working.

The Bureau of Metrology as an APP which can be downloaded and can provide updates at the location where the client resides: <http://www.bom.gov.au/app/>

It is important when are you with the client that you use triggers to act before flooding may occur. You should consider the following as a guide only as to whether discussing with the client the need to leave:



- There has been a warning issued of likely flooding in the area.
- If you are told by a neighbour.
- If you or the client receive a warning through your phones.

If you believe any of these triggers are relevant, believe there is potential or have a concern about possible flooding that may cause risk to the client and yourself, then immediately evacuate to a safer location. This may involve going to a local evacuation centre, family or friend of the client, or a local shopping centre.

If you decide to leave, then call your Engagement Co-ordinator and if appointed the client's case manager to advise and where you are going.

It is important to be aware of storm alerts and warning systems and alerts as per the table at Page 4. The following is some additional information to assist for flooding events:

### Prepare

- Contact AT HOME CARE together with the client to discuss options in terms of temporary relocation and what route will be taken.
- Consider preparing an emergency kit is required and should be taken. This might include critical life support equipment, medications, important documents, first aid kit.
- Monitor emergency services.

### Take action now for flooding / Prepare to evacuate

- Prepare to leave.
- Know where you will go, which you and the client should have decided at the Prepare Stage and have the emergency kit ready to go.
- If leaving obey road closure signs and be careful at crossing and flood ways as river levels may rise rapidly.
- If client unable to leave unassisted immediately call emergency services on 000.
- If safe to do so secure any loose objects and turn off the power, water, and gas supplies (if instructed by emergency services)

### Evacuate – leave immediately

- Leave immediately to a safer place.
- Obey road closure signs and be careful at crossing and flood ways as river levels may rise.

### Cancellation

- Watch for changes in water levels so you are ready if you need to act.
- Never walk, swim, or play in floodwaters as they are dangerous and avoid storm drains and pipes, ditches, and ravines.
- Obey road closure signs and do not drive into water of unknown depth and current.

During a flooding event, emergency services will provide as much information as possible through the variety of channels as listed on page 5. However as with other events it is suggested you discuss with the client it might be best to leave or for them to contact AT HOME CARE to discuss.