Frequently Asked Questions

Emergency Management Planning

for Early Childhood Services

These Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) have been developed by Department of Education and Training (DET)’s Emergency Management Division to assist **early childhood services,** with the development of their Emergency Management Plans (EMP).

### About your Emergency Management Plan

## Where should I start?

* We recommend you have a look at the **Guide To Developing Your Emergency Management Plan**. It will take you through your plan on a step-by-step basis. The Guide and other resources can be located at: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/support/Pages/emergency.aspx>

## Do we have to use the DET Emergency Management Plan (EMP) template?

* No, however you should note that the DET template has been developed after extensive consultation and feedback received from early childhood services and government schools. This template is broadly consistent with the requirements of the Australian Standard for emergency management planning, Standard 3745-2010.
* You may choose to use your own EMP template but should ensure that it is consistent with the Australian Standard for emergency management planning.
* DET has developed a comprehensive **Guide To Developing Your Emergency Management Plan** which provides clear information around the various components of creating an EMP for your service. Please use this Guide when developing your EMP.

## Will developing our EMP be a challenging task? Can we use external providers to do it?

* **Developing an EMP is not a complex task.** You as a Director or Coordinator of your service are best placed to complete your facility’s EMP as you know your site best.
* We’ve made this task as easy as possible by developing a step-by-step **Guide To Developing Your Emergency Management Plan**. This will provide you with all the advice and assistance to complete your facility’s EMP.
* The Guide will step you through:
  + Structuring your EMP
  + How to develop site and evacuation plans
  + The structure of your Incident Management Team (IMT) and roles
  + Advice on response procedures, and
  + Conducting a risk assessment for your school site, to name a few.
* In addition, we’ve populated a number of sections of your template to assist you with these. All you need to do with the pre-populated sections is to customise them to your facility’s requirements.

## The template we have been using is one that we have used for some years, is this still ok?

* If you are using the DET template developed prior to 2013 this is now out of date. That version does not contain a risk assessment and is not consistent with the current Australian Standard.

## Can we add additional information to our DET EMP template?

* The template is designed to allow you to adapt it to ensure it is relevant to your site, geographical area and specific risks.
* Don’t forget to review the pre-populated response procedures to specific emergencies and modify as required to accurately reflect your local arrangements. The response procedures to specific emergencies should reflect only the threats and hazards identified in your risk assessment. **Ensure that the risks pre-populated in the template are relevant to your service. If, for example, your facility will never be at risk of bushfire, remove this from your EMP.**
* You can also add local procedures and other information to your EMP as appendices.

## Will a primary school EMP cover our Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) or kindergarten program operating at a school site?

* The OSHC, kindergarten or holiday program must have a separate EMP that applies specifically to that service. DET has developed a separate EMP template for early childhood services. Directors/Coordinators of early childhood services co-located on a school site should ensure that the school has an up-to-date copy of your service’s EMP.
* In developing an EMP for an OSHC or kindergarten co-located with a school, the Director/Coordinator should liaise with the school first as the school site plan and possibly the off-site evacuation points would remain the same.
* It is important that the risk assessment is undertaken carefully as the risks attached to an OSHC program, for example, will differ from those of the school, e.g. reduced number of staff on-site if an emergency occurs at 5.30 pm.
* Note that any early childhood service on the Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR) is required to submit their EMP to DET by 1 September of each year.

## How do I insert diagrams and images into my EMP?

* There are tutorials available to assist you in creating images required in your EMP and can be accessed from the Department of Education and Training at: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/Pages/emptutorials.aspx>
* This site provides access to document editing tutorial videos and instructions to assist early childhood services with completing parts of their EMP document that require graphical content such as [area maps](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/Pages/emptutorials.aspx#AreaMap), [evacuation diagrams](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/Pages/emptutorials.aspx#EvacDiagram), [communication trees and Incident Management Team (IMT) structures](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/Pages/emptutorials.aspx#CommsTree).

## How often do I need to review my facility’s EMP?

* EMPs should be reviewed **at least** once a year. However, you should consider more regular reviews to ensure that contact details are up-to-date and if, for example, there are site modifications, new staff or children with additional needs commencing during the year.
* Following an emergency where you have enacted your EMP, you should always undertake a review of your Plan and consider any amendments that might be required in light of the emergency.
* Emergency response drills should be conducted each term. Ensure that any lessons learned and actions to improve your EMP or emergency response procedures identified are followed up and your EMP is updated as required.
* Note that all early childhood services on the BARR must lodge their EMP by 1 September of each year. However, if you make significant changes during the year, for example alter your off-site evacuation point please provide an updated copy to DET.

## Who should I give copies of my facility’s EMP to?

* Your EMP should be provided to all staff and committee of management at your facility.
* It is important to remember that contractors, gardeners, cleaners and other people that regularly attend your facility should be familiar with emergency procedures.
* Your plan should also be socialised with relevant agencies such as local emergency services as appropriate.
* It is further recommended that you make your EMP available to local council to ensure the local government emergency management coordinator is aware of your off-site evacuation locations.

***N.B. To ensure adherence to the provisions of the Information Privacy Act 2000, remove any information of a private nature or confidential nature, such as ‘Staff and Children with Additional Needs’ and the ‘Parent/Family Contact Information’ sections of your EMP prior to distributing copies to non-staff members and individuals or organisations outside your workplace.***

### Emergency Preparedness

## Why do I have to undertake a risk assessment?

* Your risk assessment is the cornerstone of your plan. It will identify the hazards and potential threats specific to your school and provide a framework to prepare, reduce and manage those risks.

## In an emergency management context, what is a hazard?

* A hazard is anything that has the potential to harm students or staff at your facility. Typical hazards may include building fire, bushfire, severe weather or riverine flooding.

## What is a risk?

* A risk arises when there is a probability that a hazard will cause harm. For example, the hazard of a building fire at your facility has the risk of physical or psychological harm to children and staff.

## Our facility is on the Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR). Do we need to close on a Code Red Day?

* Yes. All facilities on the BARR must close on determined Code Red days within the designated Bureau of Meteorology district.
* Resources have been developed to assist your service in relation to this process and are sent to all BARR facilities at the commencement of each fire season.

## As a BARR facility, how do we reduce the risks during elevated fire danger days?

* You can consult with your local CFA and emergency services to seek advice on the strategies you have put in place to reduce your risks regarding bushfire preparedness, response, evacuation points and locations of shelter in place options.
* Some of the things you might like to consider include reducing vegetation around your facility, ensuring that roofs and gutters are clear of leaf matter, monitoring the CFA website and listening to ABC local radio on higher risk days.
* If you intend to close your facility on days declared Total Fire Ban, or forecast elevated fire danger rating days you should consider advising local emergency services of this intention and your DET QARD manager contact.

### Emergency Response

## Why is an IMT important?

* The Incident Management Team plays an essential role in ensuring a consistent, and service-wide understood, approach to the management of and response to an incident or emergency in your facility.
* The purpose of an IMT is to ensure that all the key functions and tasks that need to be undertaken during an emergency are properly allocated and that staff know who is responsible for what. This co-ordination is critical during an emergency.
* IMT role functions are pre-populated in the EMP template as a guide to staff. Again, you are free to modify these to take account of local arrangements including staff capacity.
* It is possible that, in the event of an actual emergency, some staff assigned roles on your IMT may be away from the workplace. This is why it is important that every staff member is familiar with your EMP, so that even the most junior staff member will have an understanding of what needs to be done in an emergency.

## We are in a small service; how do we develop an IMT?

* An IMT structure is scalable and can be used by a small or large school – and any size in between. As a rule of thumb, consider activating your IMT for every emergency situation. It will be easier to establish your IMT and scale down as required, rather than have too few people involved which may impact on your facility’s ability to respond.
* In very small teams it may be that staff take on more than one role. For example, the person who assumes the Chief Warden role may also take on a Planning role and so forth.

## How do we know when to form an IMT? What are the triggers?

* The trigger(s) to activate your IMT will be when you form the view that an actual or imminent emergency event has the potential to endanger staff and children or impact upon the whole facility.

## If the Communications role on our IMT is undertaken by another member of staff, does this mean that the Director/Co-ordinator of a facility will not deal with the media or emergency services?

* Some early childhood services Director/Coordinators feel that they must maintain control of Communications.
* However, in a major emergency, communications OUT will need to occur almost simultaneously to Emergency Services, your service provider, families etc. This will often require more than one person to undertake these tasks.
* At the same time there will be communications IN from concerned parents, media, etc. This may also require more than one person to undertake these tasks. For example, the Director/Coordinator of the facility, as Chief Warden, would then handle calls from media while the communications officer will handle calls from parents etc.

***The important thing is that everyone in the team knows the tasks for which they are responsible.***

## Is having one off-site relocation assembly point identified in our Plan enough?

* We recommend your plan include at least two ‘off-site’ evacuation locations where possible, in addition to on-site assembly areas (such as the car park).
* This is not just for bushfire, but also in case of an internal fire, gas leak or release of hazardous chemicals etc.
* If the nature of an incident prevents you from relocating to your primary off-site relocation point (for example, as a result of prevailing winds), then having at least one other secondary off-site relocation point is essential.
* You may wish to consider having one relocation point close by and another point further away (perhaps in the opposite direction).
* Please note, Australian Standard 3745-2010 recommends facilities should have an alternative assembly point for bomb threat which is unpublished.

## When I distribute our EMP to other organisations, do I need to remove the names of children and staff with additional needs and parent contact details?

* Yes. To ensure adherence to the provisions of the Information Privacy Act 2000, please remove the Staff, ‘Students and Children with Disabilities and/or Additional Needs’ and the ‘Parent/Family Contact Information’ sections of your EMP prior to distributing copies to non-staff members and individuals or organisations outside your workplace.

### Further Support

## Where can I go to get more information and support with my EMP?

* The best place to start is with the **Guide To Developing Your Emergency Management Plan**. The Guide is only accessible on the DET website. The following link will provide you with access to the Guide, templates and on-line tutorials.

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/support/Pages/emergency.aspx>

* For early childhood services should you wish to speak with someone, contact the Manager, Operations and Emergency Management at your DET region:

| **Region** | **Telephone Number** | **Mobile Number** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| South Western Region | 4334 0509 | 0407 861 841 |
| North Western Region | 4433 7585 | 0418 509 953 |
| North Eastern Region | 7505 3623 | 0448 284 749 |
| South Eastern Region | 8904 2473 | 0419 129 659 |

* Training modules can be accessed on the Emergency Management page on the DET website: http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/Pages/emptutorials.aspx

## Where can I get resources to help build the diagrams, maps and charts within the EMP?

* The DET website now has tutorials to assist with the development of your EMP, specifically for Communication Trees, IMT Structure, Evacuation Diagrams and Area Maps. These can be found at: <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/Pages/emptutorials.aspx>