



BUSHFIRE PREPAREDNESS

5 October 2023

The Bureau of Meteorology has declared that an El Niño and a positive Indian Ocean Dipole are underway. These two climate drivers typically mean warmer and drier temperatures and an increased fire danger period. This document has been created to provide help to health services to be bushfire ready.

Update your emergency response documents	<p>Preferably use the Emergency Response Planning Tool (free to general practices until December) and ensure staff are familiar with it.</p> <p>If using a paper system, store a copy off site.</p> <p>This will not only help you to stay focused and respond under pressure but get your business back up and running more quickly.</p>
Consider a plan for staying and evacuation	The Preparing a General Practice for a Disaster HealthPathway has useful information on how to prepare before a disaster happens.
Consider the role of your practice in an emergency	RACGP's emergency response in general practice document includes tips for practices to consider.
Know the fire rating	<p>Victoria: https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/warnings-restrictions/total-fire-bans-fire-danger-ratings</p> <p>NSW: https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/fire-information/fdr-and-tobans</p>
Safeguard your building	Prepare your site by removing excess rubbish, litter and leaves and keeping your grass short.
Protect your data	<p>Ensure that your practice software is backed up, ideally to the cloud, to reduce the risk of data loss.</p> <p>Upload patient information to My Health Record.</p>
Plan for power outages, water supply, gas	Consider alternate power sources in the event of power outages for cold chain management, or clinical record access. Could you relocate vaccine / medicines or access a generator if needed?
Ensure emergency contact details are up to date	So that Murray PHN can assist in coordinating support with government agencies during an emergency, make sure to let us know who your emergency contacts are via your Quality Improvement Consultant or: primarycareresponse@murrayphn.org.au
Communicate service closures or impacts	<p>Use social media and other platforms. Prepare a message or email to patients using appointment confirmation system or Pen CS if needed. Consider sending other important alerts, for example: to patients with asthma during epidemic thunderstorm asthma days.</p> <p>Use Pen CS and CAT Plus recipes to identify relevant patient groups and send an SMS message to those patients who have not opted out.</p>

	<p>You will need to <u>set up your account</u> and ensure you have enough credits in the system to send the messages.</p> <p>Inform Murray PHN of service closures or impacts: primarycareresponse@murrayphn.org.au</p>
Plan staffing	<p>In the event of no or reduced access to your site or staff absences, consider alternate models of work, alternate sites and equipment needs (ERPT can guide you through these considerations):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it safe for practitioners to work remotely from home? Explore if there are alternate health services or locations that they could work from. • Does the practice have a telehealth platform that practitioners can use remotely? • Are the practitioners set up with ePrescribing so patients can obtain scripts immediately and remotely? Ensure paper scripts/prescribing pads are also available in the event that no internet is available. • Does the practice have an alternate contact number, or can you temporarily divert your practice number, so patients can call if the building is closed, and the phone system is inaccessible? • Can admin and clinical staff access your practice management and clinical software systems off site to facilitate remote models of care? • Ensure clinicians are able to create pathology and imaging requests if working remotely.
Plan how to manage emergencies	<p>See RACGP's <u>managing emergencies in general practice: a guide for preparation, response and recovery</u></p>
Keep up to date with alerts and information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Subscribe</u> to heat and thunderstorm asthma alerts • Learn more about bushfires and asthma <u>here</u> • <u>Preparing patients for a disaster</u> HealthPathway • <u>Post-natural disaster health</u> HealthPathway • Prepare for or report <u>gas and electrical outages</u> • Road closures <u>VicRoads - VicTraffic</u> or <u>Live Traffic NSW Incident List</u>
Have emergency response kits ready	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Torches in event of power outages and spare batteries • Important documents • N95 Masks for bushfire smoke • Contact lists for all staff and contractors. • Burns kit • Practice mobile, which may provide temporary internet access through mobile data hotspot • Eye wash kit • Respiratory medications – e.g. bronchodilators, tools to deliver • Vulnerable population list of patients ready and handy • Hard copy radiology and pathology requests • Script pads • Water.
Join the emergency volunteer list	<p>If you have capacity to support in an emergency event, register your interest using the <u>online form</u>.</p>
Do emergency exercise training	<p>Undertake mock training incidents to ensure staff are competent and aware of their roles in the event of an emergency.</p>

Encourage patients to be fire ready	<p><i>In Victoria</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire Ready Kit • Emergency app <p><i>In NSW</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bush fire survival plan • Emergency app <p>Advise patients to plan in advance, so they do not run out of medications during an emergency, particularly if they are unable to access the local pharmacy or cannot travel to an alternate location.</p> <p>Do they have an action plan for any conditions that may be exacerbated by extreme heat conditions and or fire?</p>
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Other useful links

- [Where to get information in an emergency in Victoria](#)
- [Subscribe to Victorian heat health warnings](#)
- [Survive the heat partner kit](#)
- [Guidelines for use of face masks](#)
- [CFA Leaving early: Bushfire survival planning template](#)
- [CFA Information and advice for your local area](#)
- [The role and Inclusion of general practitioners in evacuation centres](#)
- [Using air conditioners when it's smoky outside](#)
- [After a fire: using your personal protective kit](#)
- [After a fire: private drinking water and water tank safety](#)
- [Service continuity and emergency events in aged care](#)
- [NSW evacuation decision guidelines for private health and residential care facilities](#)
- [Victoria emergency preparedness in residential aged care services](#)
- Critical infrastructure industry pre-season preparedness PowerPoints (3 October 2023):
 - [Victorian seasonal outlook](#)
 - [Biosecurity and emergency animal diseases update](#)

Resources to share with patients

- [My Health Record](#)
- [Alternative after hours and emergency care options](#)
- [Survive the heat](#)
- [Heat related illness and preventing heatstroke](#)
- [How to cope and stay safe in extreme heat](#)
- [Bushfires and asthma](#)
- [Smoke and your health](#)
- [Air quality in Victoria](#)
- Road closures - Victoria: <https://traffic.vicroads.vic.gov.au/> NSW: <https://www.livetraffic.com/>
- [Bureau of Meteorology forecasts and warnings](#)
- [Better Health Channel bushfire fact sheets and advice](#)

Contact us

For more information or support email primarycarerresponse@murrayphn.org.au