

## Community Newsletter

### Southern Hume (Longwood) Fires – January 2026

Issued 9am Monday 12<sup>th</sup> January

#### What happened

The fire started at 3km South West of Longwood on Wednesday 7 January 2026.

The current burnt area is over 130,000 hectares, with a perimeter of 331 kilometres. Today there are 560 personnel working on the fire, with five aircraft assisting.

Six warnings remain current. Stay informed and be aware of the warnings current to you.

There are forecasted 10-20km NW winds, with a forecast SW change due to trough, this will have an impact on the northern and southern parts of the fire.

A State of Disaster has been declared by the Premier of Victoria.

#### What is happening now

There is still active fire along the northern, eastern and southern edges of the fireground. Firefighting crews are working hard to contain these edges. Residents should keep up to date on alerts and warnings particularly those in the Euroa, Strathbogie, Bonnie Doon, Eildon, Alexandra and Yea areas.

Hazard assessment teams have begun work in assessing properties. Firefighter crews will also be patrolling in and around the Ruffy township over the coming days. Tree specialists are working to make roads safe from dangerous trees. We thank the community for their patience whilst this is occurring.

Most roads within the burnt area remain closed due to fire affected and dangerous trees which continue to fall in these areas. **Vic police are in place and residents only will be able to pass once roads are reopened.**

**Until roads have been assessed and dangerous trees removed, travel on closed roads is prohibited for the safety of everyone.** This may take some time and the patience of the community is appreciated whilst emergency services work to clear roadways and make the area safe as soon as possible.

Any residents who require assistance please reach out to the relevant agencies within this newsletter.

#### Fuel

Urgent fuel deliveries will be made to the Ruffy CFA Station for isolated residents.

#### Drinking Water

The Longwood fire has impacted the operations of the Longwood Water Treatment Plant and this has impacted water supply to customers. A boil water alert is in place for residents in the Longwood area. Please boil tap water before drinking.

#### Community meetings

##### Ruffy

The Ruffy community is currently supported by Ruffy CFA who are arranging small meetings with affected residents.

##### Euroa

###### **Community Meeting – Monday 12 January 2026**

**Location:** Euroa Community Cinema, 1B Bury Street Euroa  
**Time:** 6pm

##### Other areas

Community Liaison teams are making their way to communities on the eastern side of the Longwood Fire today to provide information and answer questions.

#### Emergency Relief Centre

For immediate needs including accommodation, drinking water and support services, social support and to connect to financial assistance.

- Seymour Sports and Aquatic Centre, Pollards St Seymour
- Lilydale High School Basketball Stadium, 26 Hutchinson Street, Lilydale
- Mansfield Sports Complex, 35 Highett St, Mansfield
- Benalla Town Hall, 82-86 Nunn Street Benalla
- Whittlesea Activity Centre, 57-61 Laurel Street Whittlesea.
- City of Whittlesea Civic Centre, 25 Ferres Blvd, South Morang
- Euroa Saleyard, 58 Sutherland St, Euroa

Caged animals are accepted at all relief centres

Let friends, family and emergency services know you are safe at [register.redcross.org.au](http://register.redcross.org.au) or at a relief centre

## Agriculture and Livestock

If you have urgent animal welfare needs, please call the VicEmergency Hotline on 1800 226 226 then dial 0 (incident) then 3 (recovery).

Report livestock and property impacts online, and find info on assessing burnt stock and stock burial at [agriculture.vic.gov.au/bushlines](http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/bushlines)

Before burial of livestock, Dial **Before You Dig** by calling 1100 or go to [www.byda.com.au](http://www.byda.com.au) to avoid damaging your infrastructure.

**Emergency fodder** is available for farmers in fire-affected areas. For fodder requests, contact:

### **Nutrients Wangarratta Livestock**

Daniel Fischer 0429 165 073 or  
Hamish Falla 0429 432 771 or

**Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF)** on 1300 882 833 or visit [www.vff.org.au](http://www.vff.org.au)

Agriculture Victoria has advice for farmers who have experienced loss of stock for farming assets.

### **Livestock Relief**

- Seymour showgrounds - 55 Tallarook St, Seymour
  - Bring fencing to keep animals separate.
  - There is a relief centre nearby you can stay at.
- Mansfield Racecourse, 6165 Midland Hwy, Mansfield
  - Horses only. No other pets or livestock.
- Mansfield Zoo - Mansfield-Woods Point Rd, Mansfield
  - Bring fencing to keep animals separate.
  - Electric is okay.
  - Provide own sleeping arrangements, like a tent to stay with your animals.
- McCormack Park, 45 McCormacks Rd, Merrijig
  - Horses only. No other pets or livestock.
- Euroa Saleyard - 58 Sutherland St, Euroa
  - Bring fencing to keep animals separate.
  - Camping is not allowed. There is no relief centre nearby. Please organise your own accommodation.

## Mental health

It is normal to have strong emotional or physical reactions following a distressing event.

There is always help available through your doctor – request a Medicare Mental Health Plan.

You can also access support quickly through:

- Lifeline** - 131 114
- Beyond Blue** - 1300 224 636
- MensLine** - 1300 789 978
- Kid's Help Line** - 1800 55 1800
- Parent Line** - 13 22 89

Australian Red Cross practical tips to help you cope physically and mentally after a crisis:

<http://www.redcross.org.au/emergencies/coping-after-a-crisis/returning-home-and-coping-after-a-crisis/>

## Financial Assistance

Eligible people may receive a one-time payment to cover essentials like food, clothing, medication and accommodation.

- \$680 per adult
- \$340 per child
- maximum \$2,380 per family.

For more information or to apply:

Head to an Emergency Relief Centre

Call **VicEmergency** on 1800 226 226

Visit [emergency.vic.gov.au/relief](http://emergency.vic.gov.au/relief)

**Electricity Outage Payments** are available via Ausnet on 1300 561 171

Use Telstra's dedicated Disaster Relief line 1800 888 888 for support like pausing bills.

## Key concerns

- Residents travelling through road closures – for your safety, please head the warnings of emergency services and do not travel through any road closures.
- Access to resupply to isolated communities.

## Water Replacement

### **Essential Water**

For water used in firefighting activities, contact your local council or DEECA (Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action) to submit a claim for recovery of **Essential Water** within **three months** of the water being taken.

### **Road closures**

All roads south of the Hume Freeway and within the Longwood Fire burnt area are closed and should not be travelled by any unauthorised personnel. **Non-residents are advised to not travel to fire effected areas. Roadblocks manned by Vic-police are in place and residents only will be able to pass once roads are reopened.**

There is a significant risk of tree fall and the safety of the community is our top priority.

Information on updated road closures is available via 13 11 70 or the VicTraffic website [traffic.vicroads.vic.gov.au](http://traffic.vicroads.vic.gov.au)

## Protect your health

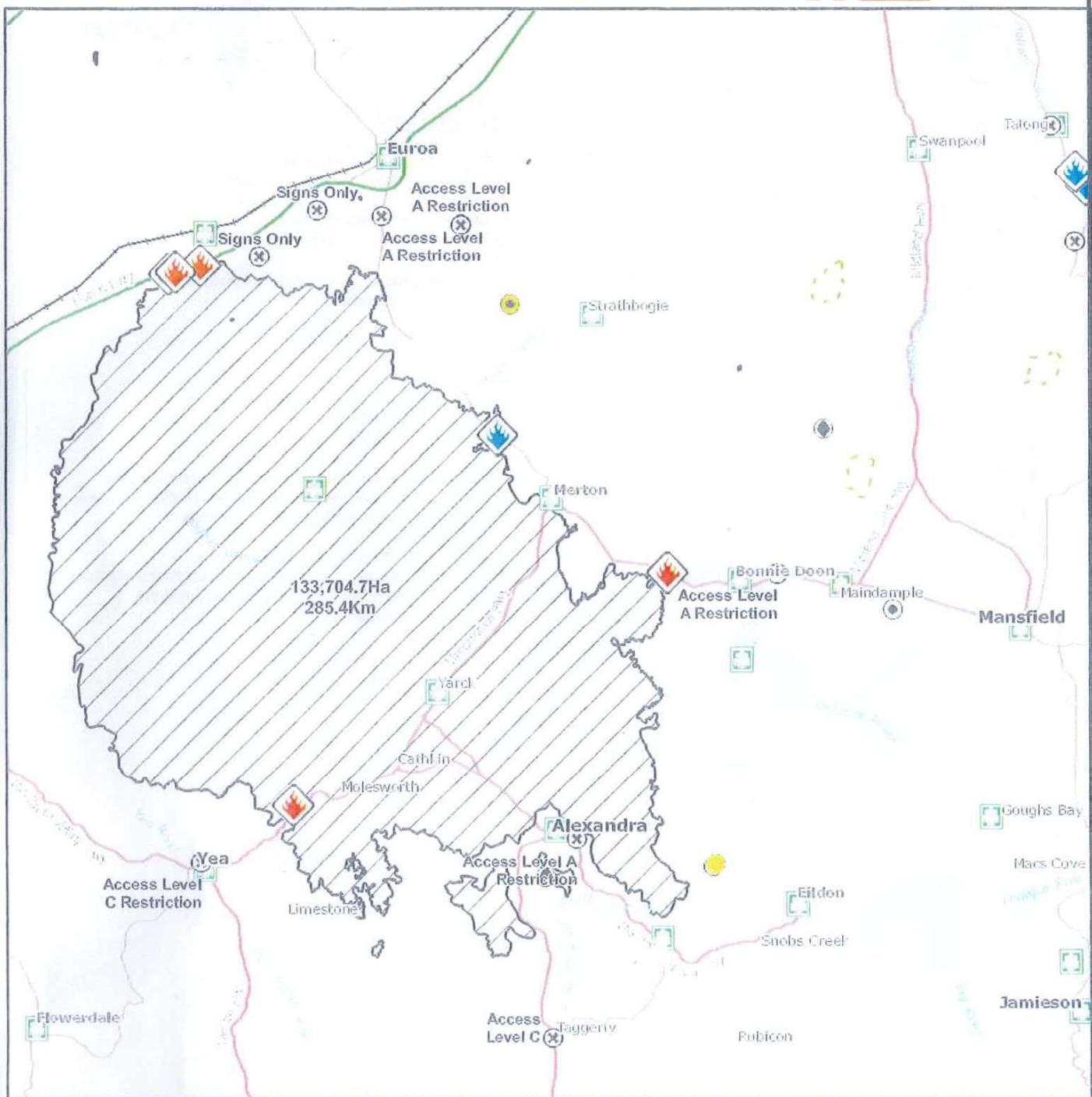
You can speak to a registered nurse 24 hours a day by calling **Nurse-on-Call** on 1300 60 60 24.

Staying hydrated helps protect your physical and mental wellbeing. Dehydration can be dangerous. Drink plenty of fluids, ideally water.

## Family Violence

There is an increased risk of family violence after an emergency. Help is available. Call 1800 737 732 (1800RESPECT) or go to [www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence](http://www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence)

# Longwood Fire Public Information Map



Obs date: 12/01/2026, 10:34

Map Notes: Community Newsletter



Disclaimer: This map is a snapshot generated from Victorian Government data. This material may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria does not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for error, loss or damage which may arise from reliance upon it. All persons accessing this information should make appropriate enquiries to assess the currency of the data.

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Coordinate System: GDA2020 Vicgrid





VIC  
EMERGENCY



### Air Quality

Air Quality is Poor or Very Poor across the region on Sunday 11 January.

- minimise time outside and skip exercise
- wear a P2/N95 mask outside
- close windows, set air-con to recirculate
- use a HEPA air purifier if you have one.
- bring pets inside
- **Call Triple Zero 000 for trouble breathing or chest pain/lightness.**

### Donations

Incident Control Centres, fire crews, and displaced community are well provided for with food and water. We cannot accept donations of food.

Contact your local Salvation Army if you wish to donate goods and find out about local needs.

Go to [www.givit.org.au](http://www.givit.org.au) to donate funds or give specific items people have requested.

Perishable foods can also be donated to foodbank  
<https://www.foodbank.org.au/vic/locations/>

### Stay informed

[www.emergency.vic.gov.au](http://www.emergency.vic.gov.au)

VicEmergency smartphone app

VicEmergency free call 1800 226 226

Emergency Radio Broadcasters:

**Southern Hume (Longwood Fires)**

UGFM

106.9 - Alexandra / Lake Eildon / Mansfield

88.9 - Yea / Highlands

Radio Mansfield - 99.7FM

ABC

91.1FM, 97.7FM – Euroa / Seymour

103.7FM – Mansfield

98.1FM – Yea / Highlands

To access this information in other languages, call the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131 450 (free call) and ask them to call VicEmergency Hotline.

If you are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech/communication impairment contact National Relay Service on 1800 555 677 and ask them to call the VicEmergency Hotline.

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# Strathbogie

SHIRE COUNCIL

## Strathbogie Council waste disposal update

Strathbogie residents can dispose of all bushfire-related waste at our transfer stations **free of charge**. This includes food that has perished as a result of the power outages.

Our transfer stations will be open for extended hours this week.

### **Euroa:**

Tuesday 8.30am – noon

Wednesday 8.30am – noon

Normal hours from Thursday

### **Avenel**

Wednesday 10am – 3pm

Sunday – as per normal opening hours

### **Violet Town**

Tuesday 8am – 11am

Thursday 8am – 11am

### **Nagambie**

Tuesday 8.30am – noon

Wednesday 8.30am – noon

### **Longwood**

Wednesday 8am – noon, 1pm – 5pm

**Please note: the Ruffy Transfer Station is closed until further notice.**

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**Longwood**

A skip bin for bushfire-related materials is now available for community use at the Longwood Rec Reserve, near the dam. This is to aid bushfire-related clean-up activities only. Bins will be replaced when full.

**Kerbside rubbish collections**

Kerbside bin collection services are running as scheduled, however, some limitations remain in fire-affected areas. Collections will continue as scheduled where it is safe to do so.

Please note: Strathbogie Township skips: These are recycling only skips. Please don't use the skips if they are full.

For any queries contact our Customer Service Centre on 1800 065 993 or email

[info@strathbogie.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@strathbogie.vic.gov.au)

[www.strathbogie.vic.gov.au](http://www.strathbogie.vic.gov.au)

**Strathbogie Shire Council**

Phone: 1800 065 993

## **Emergency Support Guide**

January 2026

*Please speak to your GP if you are experiencing any physical or mental health issues*

**Vic Emergency Hotline**

1800 226 226 and download the Vic Emergency app

Call or check the app for information on the Fire Danger Rating or other key bushfire information, the location of relief centres, recovery after a bushfire, community information guides and planned burning information.

**Ag Vic**

Information for farmers, industry and the community, including fire toolkit and resources

[www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/farm-management/emergency-bushfires](http://www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/farm-management/emergency-bushfires)

**Disaster Legal Assistance**

Disaster Legal Help Victoria provides free information about legal issues and options for ongoing assistance after an emergency.

1800 113 432 [www.disasterlegalhelp.org.au](http://www.disasterlegalhelp.org.au)

### **24-hour Health Support**

**Lifeline:** 13 11 14

**Beyond Blue:** 1300 224 636

**Men's Helpline:** 1300 789 978

**Kid's Helpline:** 1800 551 800

**Victorian Virtual Emergency Department**  
Register at [www.vved.org.au](http://www.vved.org.au)

**Nurse On Call:** 1300 606 024

*For 24-hour health advice for the cost of a local call from anywhere in Victoria.*

**1800 RESPECT:** 1800 737 732  
(Family Violence Support)

**Red Cross:** 1800 232 969

*Red Cross have trained volunteers across the state that can assist with;*

- *Immediate relief needs*
- *Psychological first aid (phone/in person)*
- *Advocacy for affected people*

**Further Assistance**

**Australian Red Cross:** 1800 733 276

**Victorian Legal Aid:** 1300 792 387

# Emergency relief payments

## Personal Hardship Assistance Program

### What you need to know

If you are in immediate danger, call Triple Zero (000).

If a major emergency happens where you live, like a bushfire, the Victorian Government may give you money to help you. You do not need to pay this money back.

This document has information about emergency relief payments.

#### Payment amount

Emergency relief payments are based on a fixed amount for each member of your household.

The payment is not calculated based on how much money you earn.

Payments are \$680 per adult and \$340 per child, up to a maximum of \$2380 per eligible family.

#### Who can get the payment

Emergency relief payments are available for eligible people affected by the January 2026 bushfires.

You can apply for an emergency relief payment if:

- your principal place of residence was damaged or destroyed by the fires and you can't live in it, **or**
- your principal place of residence was in an evacuation warning area, and you evacuated your property

and

- you have unmet immediate relief needs.

#### How to apply

A support officer from the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing can help you apply for emergency relief support.

Call the VicEmergency Hotline on 1800 226 226 (press 0, then 1 to talk to someone).

Or

Visit an Emergency Relief Centre. You can check if there is an Emergency Relief Centre open near you at [www.emergency.vic.gov.au/relief](http://www.emergency.vic.gov.au/relief)

Bring some ID with you if you can, like:

- driver licence
- Medicare card

- letter or utility bill showing your address.

## Help and support

If you need help, please call the VicEmergency hotline on 1800 226 226. Press 9 for an interpreter.

To receive this document in another format, email [email the Emergency Management Branch <emb@dffh.vic.gov.au>](mailto:email the Emergency Management Branch <emb@dffh.vic.gov.au>).

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Available at [January 2026 fires - DFFH Services](https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/january-2026-fires) <<https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/january-2026-fires>>

# Prepare, Respond and Recover

To ensure your business is prepared for unexpected events and is more resilient after emergencies, we have put together useful information and resources. We encourage you to keep this fact sheet in an easy-to-find place and share it with your professional contacts.

## ASSISTANCE IF YOU HAVE BEEN IMPACTED BY THE 2026 SUMMER - VICTORIAN BUSHFIRES

*Information current as of 9 January 2026.*

Emergency Relief Payments	Emergency relief payments are available for eligible people affected by the January 2026 bushfires.	1800 226 226 <a href="https://emergency.vic.gov.au/relief/#january_2026_fires">https://emergency.vic.gov.au/relief/#january_2026_fires</a>
VicEmergency	Up-to-date bushfire and emergency information and useful resources on emergency relief and recovery.	1800 226 226 <a href="https://emergency.vic.gov.au/relief">emergency.vic.gov.au/relief</a>
Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES)	Flood, storm, emergency first responders and flood preparedness.	13 25 00 <a href="https://ses.vic.gov.au">ses.vic.gov.au</a>
Australian Red Cross	Help to cope with a crisis and manage what you or others might experience after a natural disaster.	<a href="https://redcross.org.au/emergencies/coping-after-a-crisis">redcross.org.au/emergencies/coping-after-a-crisis</a>
Lifeline	13 HELP is Lifeline's 24/7 dedicated support line for people living through bushfire recovery or struggling to cope with an extreme weather-related event.	13 HELP (13 43 57) 13 11 14 <a href="https://lifeline.org.au/get-help/information-and-support/bushfire">lifeline.org.au/get-help/information-and-support/bushfire</a>

## ASSISTANCE FROM BUSINESS VICTORIA

Disaster resilience resources	Tailored resources and information to help you plan, respond and recover in the event of an emergency.	<a href="https://business.vic.gov.au/business-information/disaster-resilience">business.vic.gov.au/business-information/disaster-resilience</a>
Disaster Resilience for Business Toolkit	Framework to assess, prepare and recover effectively from disasters.	<a href="https://business.vic.gov.au/resilience-toolkit">business.vic.gov.au/resilience-toolkit</a>
Small Business Bus	The Small Business Bus provides a concierge service and expert advisers (virtual and face to face) to support businesses with general assistance, business planning and referrals to other services and resources.	<a href="https://business.vic.gov.au/grants-and-programs/small-business-bus">business.vic.gov.au/grants-and-programs/small-business-bus</a>
Workplace Wellbeing Hub	Practical resources for managing stress and building resilience all in one place.	<a href="https://business.vic.gov.au/wellbeing">business.vic.gov.au/wellbeing</a>

## ASSISTANCE FROM OTHER AGENCIES

Organisations outlined below can also help with your recovery process.

## OFFICIAL

FinWell (Rural Financial Counselling Service – Victoria West)	Help to develop strategies and business plans, and financial counselling for small business owners.	1300 735 578 <a href="https://finwellgroup.com.au/">https://finwellgroup.com.au/</a>
AssitSmallBiz (Rural Financial Counselling Service – Victoria North)	Help to develop strategies and business plans, and financial counselling for small business owners.	1300 032 332 <a href="https://assistsmallbiz.org.au/">https://assistsmallbiz.org.au/</a>
Rural Financial Counselling Service – Gippsland	Help to develop strategies and business plans, and financial counselling for small rural business owners.	1300 045 747 <a href="https://ruralfinancialcounsellin_g.org.au/">https://ruralfinancialcounsellin_g.org.au/</a>
Small Business Debt Helpline	Financial counsellors for assistance and referral for ongoing support.	1800 413 828 <a href="http://sbdh.org.au">sbdh.org.au</a>
Insurance Council of Australia	Advice on when to contact your insurance company and how to document damage.	<a href="http://insurancecouncil.com.au/resource/what-to-do-after-a-bushfire">insurancecouncil.com.au/resource/what-to-do-after-a-bushfire</a>
CPA Australia	Advice, resources and strategies for small businesses recovering after a disaster.	1300 73 73 73 <a href="http://cpaustralia.com.au">cpaustralia.com.au</a>
Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO)	Advice on employment conditions and leave arrangements.	13 13 94 <a href="http://fairwork.gov.au">fairwork.gov.au</a>
Australian Taxation Office (ATO)	Managing tax obligations following a disaster.	13 72 26 <a href="http://ato.gov.au">ato.gov.au</a>
Australian Securities & Investments Commission (ASIC)	Fee relief including review of late lodgement and payment.	1300 300 630 <a href="http://asic.gov.au">asic.gov.au</a>
MoneySmart (ASIC)	Free, independent help to make the most of your money.	<a href="http://moneysmart.gov.au">moneysmart.gov.au</a>
Tourism industry resources	Crisis resources to help business in the tourism industry.	<a href="http://djsir.vic.gov.au/tourism-industry-support/industry-support/tourism-crisis-support">djsir.vic.gov.au/tourism-industry-support/industry-support/tourism-crisis-support</a>
Victorian Small Business Commission	Impartial dispute resolution services for small businesses, farmers and retail tenants and landlords.	1800 878 964 <a href="http://vsbc.vic.gov.au">vsbc.vic.gov.au</a>
Partners in Wellbeing Helpline	Free wellbeing coaching for all Victorians aged 16 or over.	1300 375 330 <a href="https://partnersinwellbeing.org.au/wellbeing-coaching/">https://partnersinwellbeing.org.au/wellbeing-coaching/</a>
Victorian Worker Mental Health Support Line	Free, confidential and 24/7 mental health support for employees in businesses with 200 workers or less.	1800 318 421 <a href="https://go.telushealth.com/en-au/vic-mental-health">https://go.telushealth.com/en-au/vic-mental-health</a>

### HOW TO SEEK THE HELP YOU NEED, FAST

If you are in a life-threatening situation or emergency, please call **Triple Zero (000)** for police, fire or ambulance.

### HOW TO STAY INFORMED

- **VicEmergency** – download the VicEmergency App, visit [emergency.vic.gov.au](http://emergency.vic.gov.au) or call the hotline on **1800 226 226**.
- **Local ABC radio station** – tune in for updates and announcements.
- **Business Victoria newsletter** – subscribe to receive essential updates, advice and services specifically for businesses. [business.vic.gov.au/subscribe](http://business.vic.gov.au/subscribe)



# Are you a renter affected by a disaster such as a bushfire, flood or storm?

## **Top tip: Don't hand back your keys without understanding your renting rights**

After a disaster it can be difficult to find another rental home in your community or nearby.

Remember to hold on to your keys and seek free advice about your rights and options as soon as possible. If you hand back your keys, your lease will end, and you will lose your right to return home.

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Scan this QR code to see our videos with tips for renters affected by disasters, including how to find free legal help



For more renting and disaster information, visit  
[www.tenantsvic.org.au/disasters](http://www.tenantsvic.org.au/disasters)

# What to do next: a checklist for renters facing disaster

If you're a renter in Victoria and your property has been affected by a storm, flood, or bushfire, this checklist can help you understand your rights and guide you through the steps you can take next.

**Call 000 if you are in danger right now.**

## If you need to leave in a rush, don't forget to take important documents with you

When you leave your rental property, you may not be able to return. Remember to take important documents with you, including your ID, insurance policies, financial records, and prescriptions.

## Before you hand your keys back, understand your legal rights

If your rental property is significantly damaged, your landlord (officially called the rental provider) or estate agent may ask you to leave your home and hand back your keys.

Returning the keys will end your tenancy, which means you may lose the right to move back into the property. Finding another rental property nearby could then be difficult. Even if you decide not to stay, keep your keys and seek legal advice as soon as you can.

## Report any damage to the landlord or agent

Call your landlord or agent as soon as possible to report any necessary repairs, especially if they are classed as urgent.

Even if the problem seems likely to be resolved with just a phone call, if you can, follow up by confirming what repairs are needed in writing. This is required by law, and it will also give you proof of when you reported the problem if you need to take further action later.

For more information about reporting repairs, including if a repair is classified as urgent or non-urgent, see the [Repairs Toolkit](#) on our website.



# Checklist

## Document the damage

Take photos or videos of any damage to your home and belongings. This is important because you may need proof if you make an insurance claim or if there is a dispute about the bond with your landlord.

Save backup copies of the photos or videos in case the originals are lost or damaged.

## If you need to, find emergency or temporary housing

Check local instructions for information about where to seek emergency accommodation. You may also consider asking other residents or emergency services for guidance. If an emergency relief centre has been established information may be available there.

For crisis and emergency housing advice, contact the Housing Victoria Statewide After Hours Service:

- Phone: 1800 825 955 (free call) or (03) 9536 7777
- Hours: between 5 pm and 9 am, Monday to Friday and 24 hours on weekends and public holidays

Women and children escaping family violence should contact Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre ([safesteps.org.au](http://safesteps.org.au)):

- Phone: 1800 015 188 (free call)
- Hours: 24 hours

## Seek legal advice

- Call Tenants Victoria's renter support line on (03) 9416 2577 or visit our website at [tenantsvic.org.au](http://tenantsvic.org.au)
- Call Victoria Legal Help Victoria on 1800 113 432 or use their Legal Help Chat at [www.legalaid.vic.gov.au](http://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au)
- Find your nearest centre on the Federation of Community Legal Centres website at [fclc.org.au/find\\_a\\_community\\_legal\\_centre](http://fclc.org.au/find_a_community_legal_centre)

## If you leave, remember to cancel your utilities

See the Real Estate Institute of Victoria's [moving house checklist](#) for other things to consider: [realestate.com.au/advice/your-moving-house-checklist](http://realestate.com.au/advice/your-moving-house-checklist)



**Worker Help  
Line:**  
03 9481 0655

**Legal  
Assistance  
Line:**  
03 9481 0355

### Payments available to assist with relief and recovery

- An individual impacted by disaster may become eligible for new or existing payments.
- Disaster Payments and Disaster Allowances can become available through Centrelink for specified local government areas affected by declared disasters.
  - Disaster payment is a one-off lump sum payment, and Disaster Allowance is a temporary income support payment for people who have lost income as a direct result of the disaster. The payments each have specific eligibility requirements.
  - When applying for Disaster Allowance we recommend keeping records of documents which show loss of income as Centrelink may later review eligibility.
  - More information can be found here [www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/natural-disaster-support](http://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/natural-disaster-support)
- Crisis Payment (for other extreme circumstances) is available for relocation due to a disaster. Specific eligibility criteria apply and can be found on Centrelink's website.
- State Governments will often release emergency payments to assist with relief and recovery.
  - We recommend accessing the 'VicEmergency' website [www.emergency.vic.gov.au](http://www.emergency.vic.gov.au)
  - The 'Relief & Recovery' page will show current disasters, state payments available and contact details for more information on available payments.
  - [www.vic.gov.au/emergency-recovery-victoria](http://www.vic.gov.au/emergency-recovery-victoria) also has updated information on current and past disasters and available support, including payments.

### Identification documents

- Identification documents are often required to apply for new payments. Where a person loses their identity documents due to a disaster, an Alternative Identity Form can be used to temporarily establish identity for the purpose of receiving payments.

### Updating Centrelink information - change of circumstances and postal address

- Centrelink recipients must update Centrelink within 14 days of any change in circumstances that *might* affect their payment. This includes relocation and changes in care of children. Updating changes in circumstances reduces the risk of overpayments and future debts.
- Centrelink will sometimes send important notices and correspondence via post, particularly where legislation requires. Centrelink recipients should update their postal address with Centrelink if necessary. Many post offices allow post to be sent to their care.

### Pause on mutual obligations

- Mutual obligations may be automatically paused by Workforce Australia, or can be paused upon individual request of a recipient. Workforce Australia's website will provide updated details of locations with paused obligations, check these regularly as they can be changed or extended.

### Leaving the principal home and insurance payouts – effect on Centrelink payments

- Centrelink recipients who relocate from their principal home due to a disaster, can seek to have their home be exempted from the assets test under 'temporary vacation of property' provisions for up to 24 months. These exemptions are not automatic and usually need to be requested
- There are also provisions which allow insurance payouts to be exempted from the assets test.

### Debts and compensation preclusion periods

- Being impacted by a disaster can be considered a 'special circumstance' for the purpose of seeking a compensation preclusion period reduction or waiver of a Centrelink debt.



CBA is providing Emergency Assistance to its customers

CBA Emergency Assistance, includes a range of options, including:

- Customised payment arrangements for home loans, business loans, personal loans and credit cards
- Waiving fees and charges, including waiving fees for temporary and damaged merchant EFTPOS terminals, as well as support with merchant terminal rental fees
- Temporary overdrafts, additional loans or emergency credit limit increases (subject to credit approval)
- Waiving fees and notice periods for early access to Term Deposits (including Farm Management Term Deposits)
- Temporary accommodation may be available for customers who have taken out Home Insurance provided by Hollard, distributed by CommBank, subject to making a claim and policy terms and conditions
- Helping direct claims enquiries for customers seeking support through their Home Insurance provided by Hollard, distributed by CommBank.

To access this support, customers should contact the bank through the CommBank app. Alternatively, they can call 1800 314 695.

Branch availability and further information about CBA's Emergency Assistance is available online at [commbank.com.au/support/emergency-assistance](http://commbank.com.au/support/emergency-assistance).

Need further support?			
	<b>IBGovt Premium Service Team</b> Everyday enquiries, transaction and account maintenance	P: 1800 008 747	E: <a href="mailto:ibclientservice@cba.com.au">ibclientservice@cba.com.au</a>
	<b>Victorian Government Banking Centre (For Vic State Contract)</b> Everyday enquiries, transaction and account maintenance	P: 1800 497 090	E: <a href="mailto:vgbc@cba.com.au">vgbc@cba.com.au</a>
	<b>CommBiz</b> User & Technical Support CommBiz Forms	P: 13 23 39	E: <a href="mailto:support@commbiz.com.au">support@commbiz.com.au</a> E: <a href="mailto:bankfeed@commbiz.com.au">bankfeed@commbiz.com.au</a>
	<b>Merchant Help Desk</b> Terminals and EFTPOS product & technical support	P: 1800 230 177	E: <a href="mailto:24hr_helpdesk@cba.com.au">24hr_helpdesk@cba.com.au</a>
	<b>BPOINT Help Desk</b> BPOINT technical support	P: 1300 766 031	E: <a href="mailto:support@bpoint.com.au">support@bpoint.com.au</a>
	<b>Corporate Card Help Desk</b> Corporate Card maintenance and enquiries	P: 13 15 76	E: <a href="mailto:CorpCardEng@cba.com.au">CorpCardEng@cba.com.au</a>

## Recovery after an emergency

### Information for farmers

*Following an emergency, Agriculture Victoria supports farmers who have experienced agricultural impacts such as losses of stock and farming assets.*

*Agriculture Victoria staff priority focus is to attend to animal welfare concerns, by conducting agricultural asset assessments and referring cases of urgent need to the relief incident management team.*

*Over the longer period, Agriculture Victoria provides information about managing livestock, crops, water supplies, soils and pastures affected by emergencies.*

*Agriculture Victoria staff will provide technical information and field days on topics to assist with the recovery of your farm and farming business.*

#### KEY INFORMATION FOLLOWING A FIRE

**Only return to your property once emergency services declare it safe to enter.**

#### Livestock

After an emergency an assessment of livestock for injury is essential. Livestock producers need to be aware that disease can spread more easily following an emergency.

As soon as farmers are able to safely access their properties, it is important that livestock be assessed quickly, and appropriate action taken to ensure the welfare of their animals

Livestock producers need not wait for Agriculture Victoria staff to visit to euthanise impacted livestock if they are confident they can do so humanely. We do recommend that animals be photographed for insurance purposes.

Bushfire, flood and drought may result in large numbers of animal carcasses requiring disposal.

Farmers who do not have the capability to dispose of dead stock, should contact the appropriate municipal council for assistance.

#### Managing surviving livestock

Stock that are likely to survive should be placed in a clean (not burnt) paddock that has soft soils, appropriate shade and shelter, good quality feed and water. Many animals will not be hungry for several days and may lose condition before starting to recover.



## Feed

Under the Emergency Fodder Distribution Agreement, the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) arranges the collection and distribution of fodder.

Livestock producers needing emergency fodder or wishing to donate fodder for livestock should contact the VFF on **1300 882 833** or email [fodder @vff.org.au](mailto:fodder@vff.org.au).

No two situations of feed availability will be the same. Decisions about feed will need to be reviewed over time. Options of managing stock can be impacted by gaining access to sales at saleyards and access to fodder. Options may include:

- Agistment
- Sell stock
- Feed stock

If feeding stock is an option Agriculture Victoria staff can assist with developing a feed budget. This identifies the amount and quality of feed required for the number and type of stock and also how long it is required for.

If accepting donated feed, consider establishing a sacrifice paddock or stock containment area to reduce the spread of any potential weeds. Also be aware that the quality of feed may vary, and this will impact the amount stock require.

## Water

Water availability may be reduced by fire suppression activities and the quality may be affected by contamination from ash and soil.

Dehydration can be a problem with stock often refusing to drink water if it is polluted or tastes different from their normal supply. It's important to watch your stock carefully to ensure they are drinking adequately.

Agriculture Victoria has practical information on maintaining farm water quality and protecting surface catchment once the fire has passed on the website

Planning for water availability should include:

- Carefully evaluate current reserves
- Assess if water quality has been impacted

Staff can assist with developing a water budget to determine your stock requirements.

## Re-fencing

Consider prioritising re-fencing based on remaining stock needs, however establish boundary fencing and stock containment in the first instance. If you receive offers of assistance, identify where burnt fences need to be removed and your highest priority fencing to begin recovery.

This as an opportunity to consider internal fences, as part of a broader assessment, of how your property should be

managed in the future. Staff can provide workshops on planning your fencing to consider land class, improving access to water and fencing areas of land degradation.

## Pasture

Impact to pasture varies depending on the intensity of the fire, the species composition, soil fertility and the time of follow up rains. Pastures may not need to be re-sown, management practices such as fertiliser, weed control and grazing may assist in recovery. Assess recovery before making management decisions and don't graze pastures too soon.

## Erosion

Bushfires destroy vegetation, leaf litter and organic matter. As a result, the soil becomes vulnerable to wind and water erosion. Rainfall and storms following fires can create large movements in sand, silt, gravel and even rocks.

Temporary silt traps constructed out of shade cloth and steel posts, positioned above strategic dams can assist to halt the movement of sediment into dams. In large events dams can completely fill with sediment. If this occurs wait until good ground cover is established before cleaning out the dam.

## MORE INFORMATION

Please call the customer service centre on 136 186.

## MORE INFORMATION ON OUR WEB SITE

The Agriculture Victoria website has a range of information on general farm management as well as farm management following emergencies.

<http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/agriculture/emergencies/recovery>

Updated January 2020

## Essential Water replacement request/authorisation form

## LANDHOLDER TO COMPLETE

Name:		
Address:		
Phone number:		Email:
Fire name (if known):		
Municipality:		
Date:		

**Details of water required:**

Location of water source	Dam or tank	Quantity of essential water required in units (litres or gallons)	Essential use (e.g., stock)	Date/s water taken for firefighting

Submit this form to: [emergency.recovery@deeca.vic.gov.au](mailto:emergency.recovery@deeca.vic.gov.au)

### **IMPORTANT NOTES:**

- Essential water is defined as water that is essential for the health of affected residents and pets; the health and productivity of their stock; and agricultural and horticultural crops, permanent plantings and intensive industries. **It is a fraudulent activity to submit a false essential water replacement claim.**
- Requests must be submitted within 3 months of the water being taken.

**DEECA/CFA USE ONLY**

Water used for firefighting?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	Confirmed by/Role/Agency:
Water essential?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	Date:

### Units of water confirmed

**Approved requests to be sent to relevant municipality**

**MUNICIPALITY USE ONLY**

Date request submitted:		
Name of water supplier:		
Name of water carter:		
Date of delivery:		Landholder advised? <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
Volume of water delivered:		Water delivery confirmed? <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No
Name:		
Signature: <i>(Sign, or insert digital signature)</i>	Date:	

**Send water carter invoice (for cartage only) to: [emergency.recovery@deeca.vic.gov.au](mailto:emergency.recovery@deeca.vic.gov.au)**



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# Bushfires and your private drinking water supply

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## Summary

- A bushfire affected area is where water-bombing activities have occurred, and fire retardants, ash or debris have fallen directly onto properties.
- If you live in a bushfire affected area your private drinking water could be contaminated from debris, ash, dead animals, aerial fire retardants and water-bombing.
- If the water tastes, looks or smells unusual, do not drink, use for food preparation, brushing teeth or give to animals (pets or livestock). Use bottled water for drinking.
- There are things you can do to protect your private drinking water supply to ensure it is not affected by a bushfire event.
- In non-bushfire affected areas, smoke tainted rainwater is unlikely to be a health concern. If you are concerned about the taste of your rainwater, use bottled water for drinking and continue to use your rainwater for other uses.

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## Protect your private drinking water tank from contamination

### Before a bushfire

#### Develop a home emergency plan

Consider how to protect your private drinking water supply as part of your **home emergency plan**

(<https://www.ses.vic.gov.au/get-ready/emergency-plans-and-kits>)

- . Talk to your family to make sure more than one person knows what to do and how to manage your private drinking water supply.

#### Protect your water supply

- Know your private drinking water supply including where your water comes from, for example rainwater or groundwater supply. Advice on how to manage your private

drinking water supply is provided in **Your private drinking water supply**  
(<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/environmental-health/bushfires-and-public-health>)

- Make sure your water tank is properly sealed and tank covers are fitted.
- Install first flush diverters, leaf stoppers on downpipes, and gutter guards.
- Disconnect the downpipes from your tank as soon as there is a fire risk to avoid windblown ash, debris, fire retardants or water from water-bombing, entering the tank and contaminating your drinking water.

## **After a bushfire**

Prior to reconnecting your downpipes, hose off the roof catchment area or wait for a good flush of rain to prevent contaminants entering your tank. If you need to clean your roof manually, take care to prevent slips and falls. This can be done by a professional cleaner.

You can find out more information through your local council.

## **What to do if downpipes were not disconnected prior to a fire**

If you suspect your tank water is contaminated, or the water tastes, looks or smells unusual, do not drink, use for food preparation, brushing teeth or give to animals (pets or livestock) as it may be affected by the following:

- fire retardants or water from water-bombing, which may have been used around your property. There is a potential that these may have entered your tank
- ash or debris on your roof catchment. Disconnect your downpipes prior to a rain event. This will help prevent further debris and ash entering your tank.

Use bottled water for drinking.

Boiling water does not remove fire retardants or other chemicals from your water. Fire affected water in your tank can still be used for irrigation and firefighting purposes. Water testing is not necessary.

If your tank needs to be cleaned, get a professional tank cleaner. Never enter a tank. Tanks are confined spaces and are very dangerous; the risks include loss of consciousness, asphyxiation and death.

Once the tank has been professionally drained and cleaned, refill with water from a source known to be safe for drinking.

## **What to do if you live in a non-bushfire affected area and your rainwater tastes of smoke**

The smoke taint alone is unlikely to be a health concern. However, if you are concerned about the taste of your rainwater, use bottled water for drinking and continue to use your rainwater for other uses.

## **What to do if there are dead animals in your drinking water system**

Wear gloves to remove dead animals from your roof, your gutters, or in your tank. Dispose of gloves after use and disinfect your tank water before re-using it. Never enter a tank.

Water can be disinfected by bringing the water to a rolling boil, or by using chlorine.

To boil water for drinking purposes, bring water to a rolling boil by heating water till a continuous and rapid stream of air/bubble is produced from the bottom of a pan or kettle. Kettles with automatic shut off switches are suitable. Caution should be taken to prevent **scalding**

(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/burns-and-scalds>) from boiled water. Allow to cool before use.

To disinfect your tank water using chlorine, use the following instructions.

For every 1,000 litres of water in your tank you can safely add:

- approximately 125 mL or 125 g of chlorine household bleach (4% available chlorine), avoid bleaches that contain detergents or perfumes, or
- approximately 40 mL or 40 g of liquid pool chlorine (12.5% available chlorine), or
- approximately 8 mL or 8 g of granular pool chlorine/calcium hypochlorite (65% available chlorine).

Note: one teaspoon is approximately 5 grams.

After chlorinating, wait at least 24 hours before using the water to allow time for microorganisms to be destroyed.

## **Where to get help**

- Environmental health section of your local council (<https://knowyourcouncil.vic.gov.au/councils>)
  - for local water carters or tank cleaners
- EPA Victoria's Fire retardants and health publication 1721 (<https://www.epa.vic.gov.au/1721-fire-retardants-and-health>)
  - for further information on fire retardants

- VicEmergency [\(http://www.emergency.vic.gov.au/\)](http://www.emergency.vic.gov.au/)  
Tel. 1800 226 226 – for general information on fires in Victoria
- For more information about private drinking water supplies:
  - Victorian Department of Health – Your private drinking water supply  
(<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/environmental-health/bushfires-and-public-health>)
  - enHealth – Guidance on use of rainwater tanks  
(<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/resources/publications/enhealth-guidance-guidance-on-the-use-of-rainwater-tanks>)

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## References

- Private water sources in bushfire-affected areas  
(<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/environmental-health/bushfires-and-public-health>)  
, Bushfires and public health Environmental Health Unit, Department of Health, Victorian Government.
- After a fire: private drinking water and water tank safety  
(<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/publications/after-a-fire-private-drinking-water-and-water-tank-safety>)  
, Bushfires and public health Environmental Health Unit, Department of Health, Victorian Government.
- Rainwater  
(<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/water/rainwater>)  
, Water Unit, Department of Health, Victorian Government.
- Drinking water in Victoria  
(<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/water/drinking-water-in-victoria>)  
, Water Unit, Department of Health, Victorian Government.

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This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:



Department  
of Health



Department  
of Health

(<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/>)

View all environmental health →

(<http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/healthyliving/environmental-health>)

## Content disclaimer

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Reviewed on: 06-12-2022



The Victorian Government acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of the land and acknowledges and pays respect to their Elders, past and present.

The Department of Health celebrates, values and includes people of all backgrounds, genders, sexualities, cultures, bodies and abilities.

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## Programs and services

**ARC Justice provides legal help to people in central and northern Victoria.**  
*We work with people who experience disadvantage relating to their housing, family, relationship, consumer, economic, social and civil rights.*

● Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre  
● Goulburn Valley Community Legal Centre

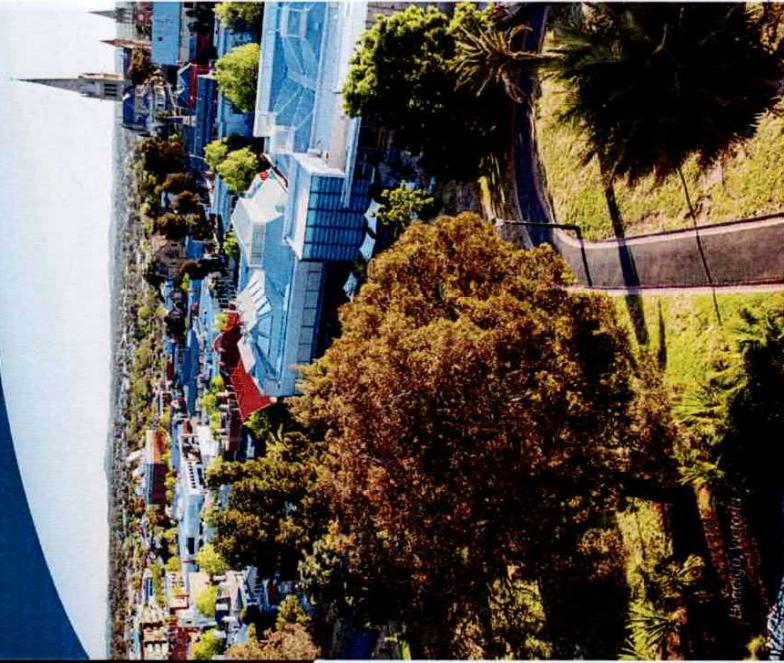


### Courts and tribunals we appear in

- Magistrates' Courts in Bendigo, Echuca, Maryborough, Kyneton, Castlemaine, Seymour, Benalla, Cobram and Mansfield
- Bendigo Specialist Family Violence Court, Shepparton Specialist Family Violence Court
- Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia
- Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)
- Childrens' Courts in Bendigo, Echuca, Maryborough, Kyneton and Castlemaine



We exist so rights are known and acted upon, and communities are fairer



- **Free legal advice** – Free legal advice appointments for help with various legal issues.

**Justice partnerships** – Free legal advice appointments available at the Centre for Non-Violence, Bendigo Community Health Service, Maryborough District Health Service and Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative.

**Specialist family violence legal services** – Free help for people with family violence intervention orders and related legal issues.

**Renters' rights, information and advocacy** – Free help for private, public and community housing renters, including those who live in caravan parks or boarding houses.

**Education sessions** – Free in-person sessions on various legal topics available to community groups and organisations.



### Contact

Bendigo: (03) 5445 0909  
Shepparton: (03) 5831 0900

Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm  
Offices open until 5pm

[www.arcjustice.org.au](http://www.arcjustice.org.au)

Advocacy and Rights Centre Ltd

Trading as Arc Justice ABN 23 082 541 240



*AFC Justice recognises that social and cultural diversity is an integral and valuable component of Australian society. We acknowledge and respect cultural differences and embrace diversity within our organisation and the communities in which we work. AFC Justice acknowledges Maralinga Peoples as the traditional and current custodians of the land upon which we work. We respect that their land is always and always will be Aboriginal land. Aboriginal sovereignty has never been denied.*

### Free legal assistance to people in central Victoria

Loddon Campaspe Community Legal Centre is based in Bendigo and provides free legal information, advice and representation\* to people living in central Victoria.



- Family violence; intervention orders & other related legal issues
- Family law; prioritising parenting arrangements
- Child protection
- Elder abuse and decision-making
- Fines, debt & problems with goods or services

\*subject to means test

### Free legal assistance to people in northern and north-east Victoria

Goulburn Valley Community Legal Centre is based in Shepparton and provides free legal information, advice and representation\* to people living in northern and north-east Victoria.

- Family violence; intervention orders & other related legal issues
- Family law; prioritising parenting arrangements
- Fines, debt & problems with goods or services
- Elder abuse and decision-making

\*subject to means test



Shepparton, Victoria

### Information and advocacy services to renters

Housing Justice stands up for the rights of tenants, helping them to solve their tenancy problems and stay in their rental homes.

#### Help for those:

- Struggling to pay rent
- Finding it difficult to keep their rental home clean & tidy
- Settling into a new rental home or wanting to connect with community support
- At risk of eviction or challenging a Notice to Vacate
- In a dispute with their property manager or landlord
- Experiencing other issues that are affecting their tenancy
- Negotiating with a government or community housing agency
- Attending the Victorian Civil & Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)



171 Hargreaves St, Bendigo, Victoria  
Phone: (03) 5445 0909  
FREECALL: 1800 450 990

Suite 1/1 High St, Shepparton, Victoria  
Phone: (03) 5831 0900  
FREECALL: 1800 310 900

171 Hargreaves St, Bendigo, Victoria  
Phone: (03) 5445 0909  
FREECALL: 1800 450 909

# Extreme weather guide

You can get free and independent legal advice about your car, building and contents insurance from the **Insurance Law Service 1300 663 464 (Mon-Fri 10am-1pm)**.

For more info use our website menu to go to **Getting Help > Extreme Weather** or scan the QR code on the right.



If you have not had any damage but you are in a disaster prone area, take time now to collect your insurance information and take videos and photos of your property and contents. Save this information and evidence somewhere safe and easy to access, such as on a Cloud service, in case you need to evacuate.

## After a disaster, think about:

- Contact your insurance company to:
  - Register a claim as soon as possible with your insurance company. It doesn't matter if your policy documents have been lost, your insurer can check what cover you have. If you can't remember who your insurer is, you can [contact the Insurance Council of Australia \(ICA\) by completing this web form for help to find your insurer](#). You can also ring the ICA on 1800 734 621.
  - Visit the Insurance Law and Extreme Weather topics on our website to read fact sheets about storms, floods and bushfire. Learn about common issues with insurance claims and how to complain. ([financialrights.org.au](http://financialrights.org.au)).
  - Find out whether you are entitled to temporary emergency accommodation under your policy and for how long.
- Are you in urgent financial need?
  - Tell your insurer and ask for help. Your insurer must fast-track your claim if you are in urgent financial need, and make an advance payment if appropriate. Remember that any advance payment will be deducted from the total value of your claim. Insurers will be triaging claims to assist the worst affected first.
- If you have a question about claiming on your insurance policy or you have a dispute with your insurance company further down the track, you can call the Insurance Law Service on 1300 663 464 or find free legal help on our More Help webpage ([financialrights.org.au](http://financialrights.org.au)).
- If you have a complaint about with your insurer, take it to their complaints department – find their details on the AFCA website: [my.afca.org.au/ff-search/](http://my.afca.org.au/ff-search/)
- If your complaint isn't resolved, complain to the Australian Financial Complaints Authority (AFCA) on 1800 931 678. This is a free and independent complaints service.
- Do you have a mortgage or bills? Contact your lender immediately to ask for hardship assistance. If you need help, talk to a free financial counsellor by calling the National Debt Helpline on 1800 007 007. If you receive any legal notices like a statement of claim get legal advice – in NSW, ring the Credit & Debt Legal Advice line on 1800 844 949.

# Insurance claim checklist

**Your safety is the priority. Only enter damaged buildings if it is safe to do so, and always follow directions of emergency services.**

- Minimise your loss:** When it is safe to do so, protect your belongings. You are required to take reasonable steps to prevent further damage.
- Make your claim:** Contact your insurer as soon as you can, and seek advice about the claim process under your policy, as well as what you're covered for. Many insurers have 24-hour call centres.
- Insurance documents:** Insurance companies only need your name and address to find your policy. Ask them to email or post you another copy, so you can check what you are entitled to.
- Inventory:** Sometimes an insurer will ask you to make an inventory of damaged possessions room by room. If everything is lost, ask the insurer to just pay your total sum insured. If they insist on an itemised list, ask for reasons why and get advice.
- Evidence:** Take pictures of damage to the property and possessions as evidence for your claims assessor.
- Repairs:** Speak to your insurer before authorising repairs. Emergency repairs should only be undertaken in the first instance to make the property safe.
- Cash settlements:** In large disasters, insurers will prioritise repairs for those most in need and may offer cash settlements. Get advice before taking a cash settlement, it may not be your best option. If you have already accepted one, and change your mind, contact your insurer and get legal advice.
- Claims Management Services:** For home claims the use of a claim services company is usually not necessary. If you are thinking of using one, get some free advice first.

## Important Disaster Resources

**Insurance Law Service:** 1300 663 464

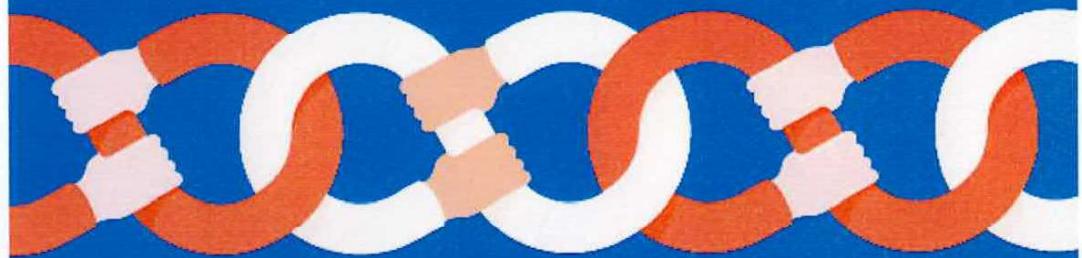
**Legal Aid NSW Disaster Response Hotline:** 1800 801 529

**Disaster Legal Help Victoria:** 1800 133 432

**National Debt Helpline:** 1800 007 007

**Insurance Council of Australia's Disaster Hotline:** 1800 734 621

**More Help web page:** [www.financialrights.org.au/getting-help/more-help](http://www.financialrights.org.au/getting-help/more-help)



# We're here for you

In a natural disaster, we know how important it is to call or send a text message to friends and family. Remember, our payphones are free to use and many offer Wi-Fi, too.

**Call 1800 888 888 to contact the Telstra Response Team on our 24/7 dedicated disaster assistance line.**

