

INFORMATION SHEET

PREPARING FOR EMERGENCIES



ACT
Government

FAMILY, FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS HELPING EACH OTHER

Disasters and the ACT

Disasters have the potential to cause disruption, damage property and take lives.

Canberra's location and environment mean we must be prepared for a range of disasters including bushfires, storms, heatwaves, terrorist acts, earthquakes and floods.

In some cases, we will have notice of an impending disaster, but they can also strike without warning.

Many disasters will affect essential services and possibly interrupt the ability to travel or communicate with others.

You need to be prepared to cope on your own for up to two days or more following a major disaster. This is when you will be most vulnerable.

During this time, try and help your family, friends and neighbours respond to and recover from the disaster.

Helping your family and friends

Get your family or household together and agree on an emergency plan. You should consider who may need assistance in the event of an emergency.

Explain to your children who will help them during a disaster — which family member or friends will be there to help if you are unable to care for them.

Explain the roles of the various emergency services and support agencies so that your children can identify them and won't be scared if they arrive on your doorstep.

Agree on a personal support network to check in on family members in an emergency. Ensure your family and friends know who to turn to for assistance.

Questions you might want to consider are:

- If an emergency requires family or friends to evacuate temporarily, could they stay with you?
- If a family member or friend is away, can you check on their home or look after children or pets?

Know your neighbours

There may be people who need more help than others in an emergency — help that often can be provided by neighbours.

You should consider what you can do to help neighbours and vulnerable community members who may not have the support of family or friends. A connected community is a strong community.

It is important to remember many people value their privacy and should not be pressured to provide information or receive assistance.

Do you know someone who needs help?

Think about people in your neighbourhood who might need your help.

You can begin a conversation with your neighbours by asking if they think they may need additional assistance to prepare for a storm or days with a Severe, Extreme or Catastrophic fire danger rating. Would they need help to evacuate their home? You could ask if they need special arrangements to receive warnings.

INFORMATION SHEET

PREPARING FOR EMERGENCIES



ACT
Government

FAMILY, FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS HELPING EACH OTHER

Some people in the community may need more help than others in an emergency:

- Older or frail people
- People who live alone
- People with disability
- Those who are injured or ill
- People with mental health conditions
- Single parents with young children
- Large families
- People who are new to the area
- People who do not speak English

As our population ages, the proportion of people who may require assistance is growing. While it is important to note that older people or people with disability are neither helpless nor dependent, this group is more vulnerable in an emergency.

Older people living by themselves might not truly understand the situation because of vision or hearing difficulties. Some people may choose to believe they won't be affected because they have survived previous events during their lifetime.

People who have difficulties leaving their house may need special consideration during an emergency. This could include people with mental health conditions such as agoraphobia, personality disorder, social anxiety, or obsessive compulsive disorder.

When discussing emergency plans, make sure you understand each other's expectations. You don't want someone to rely or wait on assistance that may not be provided.

How you can help

Neighbours can help each other by:

- Checking to make sure they have heard emergency warnings
- Providing information on what is happening and where emergency information can be found
- Helping to clear gardens and gutters before the bushfire season
- Helping to move furniture or loose items under cover before a storm
- Making arrangements to check on pets
- Providing shelter when an emergency occurs
- Helping in the clean up after a disaster
- Sitting down with your neighbours and having a cup of tea and chat about what has happened.

Accessibility

The ACT Government is committed to making its information, services, events and venues, accessible to as many people as possible.

If you have difficulty reading a standard printed document and would like to receive this publication in an **alternative format** – such as large print or audio – please telephone **(02) 6207 0334**.

If English is not your first language and you require the **translating and interpreting services** – please telephone **131 450**.

If you are deaf or hearing impaired and require the **Text telephone (TTY) Service**, phone **133 677 then ask for 133 427**.