

Emergency Preparedness Handbook

For people living
in social housing



INNER SYDNEY VOICE
regional social development council

Contents

Why should I be prepared?	3
Important numbers	4
Step 1: Know the signs	6
Step 2: What can impact you?	12
Step 3: Plan now	16
Step 4: Be aware	18
Step 5: Look out for each other	19
Checklist	20

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This handbook has been developed by Inner Sydney Voice in conjunction with Redfern and Surry Hills Community Resilience committee. We believe that residents' local knowledge and lived experience of their community should be at the centre of decision making, therefore we have worked closely with the community in the development of this Handbook which contains important information on how to prepare for an emergency.

A number of emergency services, government agencies, community organisations and individuals living in social housing have contributed to this handbook, coordinated via the 'Redfern and Surry Hills Community Resilience Committee'.

To receive a copy of this handbook, or for usage permission, contact Inner Sydney Voice on:

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Why should I be prepared?

Emergencies happen at any time, and often when we least expect. Floods, storms, fires and heatwaves can damage your home and force you to leave for a period of time. Such events are disruptive, yet we can reduce the stress and hardship that follows by taking some simple steps now.

Knowing what emergencies could impact you, planning what you will do, getting your home ready, being aware of when something might happen, and looking out for each other are all important things to consider **before** an emergency happens.

This is your five step guide to becoming 'emergency prepared'.

Use this handbook to learn more about how you can be better prepared **today**.

1.

Know the signs



2.

What can impact you?



3.

Plan now



4.

Be aware



5.

Look out for each other



Important numbers

Life threatening emergency contacts



**Ambulance Service
of New South Wales**

**Ambulance
000**



**NSW Police Force
000**



**NSW Fire and Rescue
000**

Important contacts

Organisations that can provide advice or assistance



**Communities
& Justice**

**Department of Communities and Justice (Housing)
Contact Centre
1800 422 322**



**NSW State Emergency Service (NSW SES)
132 500**



**City of Sydney Council
02 9265 9333
council@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au**



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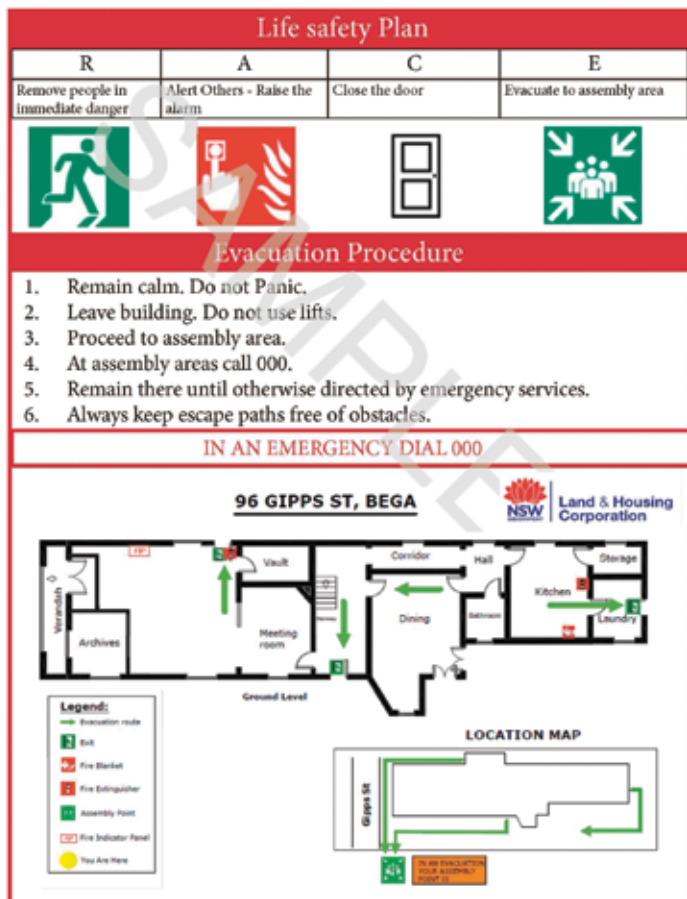
**Counterpoint Community Services
02 9698 9569**

My important numbers

Who would you need to contact in an emergency? (e.g. carers, support workers, relatives, friends, family, doctor, pharmacists, emergency contact person)

1. Know the signs

Evacuation Map Example



Generally, you will find a map on the back of your front door if your building is more than 3 storeys.

This map shows you the route you need to take in an emergency to get safely from your place to the assembly area outside your building. That's where you will wait with your neighbours while emergency services deal with the incident.

It's important that you move quickly and calmly to the assembly area so it's a good idea to check out the map and get familiar with where to go and how to get there.

Emergency services staff (Police, Fire and Rescue, SES) will be on hand to assist and show people what to do. DCJ Housing staff (your Client Service Officer) may also be involved – particularly if the emergency occurs during work hours.

If the Evacuation Map in your place is damaged, unreadable or missing let your Client Service Officer know or call the Housing Contact Centre so it can be replaced. One day you may need it!

Once you get to the assembly area you will need to stay there until it is safe to leave. The emergency services workers will let everyone know when and how you can return home. Your Client Service Officer may also be on hand to help out.



It is important to know what safety systems your home has, what they mean to you, and how they can protect your home and self during an emergency.

Alarm Sounds

Alert – ‘Beep Beep’



Be aware of possible emergency situation occurring. Prepare for possible evacuation.

Evacuate – ‘Whoop Whoop’



When you hear this sound, evacuate building using nearest safety exit, and proceed to assembly area.

Evacuate – Continuous Ringing



Your building may also have a continuous ringing fire alarm bell.

2. What can impact you?



Storm

Storms can happen at any time and can cause damage from heavy rain, winds, hail and lightning. They can affect trees, powerlines, roofs, windows and outdoor items. Creeks, rivers and other waterways can rise quickly and cause flooding in areas that do not usually flood.

What to do before?



Listen to your local radio station and other media for weather warnings. ABC 702 is the official SES broadcasting service for floods and storms.



Designate the room without windows where you'll take shelter.



Park your car under cover away from trees, powerlines or drains likely to flood.

What to do during?



Close your blinds/curtains and move away from windows.



Move indoors, bringing children and pets with you.



If caught outdoors, shelter away from lightening, hail, falling branches and rising floodwater.



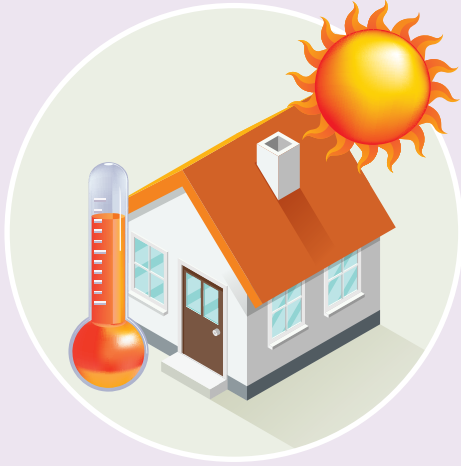
Secure any loose items on your balcony that could blow away.

Need help?

The NSW SES has volunteers who can assist by providing emergency, short term assistance to help prevent further damage to your property. For urgent assistance contact NSW SES on 132 500. But if the issue is related to repairs and maintenance contact the Department of Communities and Justice (Housing) Contact Centre on 1800 422 322.



Think about the area you live in and the types of emergencies that could affect you.



Heat Wave

Heat waves or long periods of extreme heat can have serious impacts on people's health. You may develop heat cramps, heat exhaustion or even heatstroke. If you suffer from any chronic health conditions, your condition may become worse during a period of hot weather.

What to do before?



Close your curtains, blinds and awnings at the start of the day to keep as much sun out of your home as possible.



Check your fridges, freezers, fans and air-conditioners to make sure they work properly.



Check your home can be properly ventilated without compromising security.



Consider buying cool packs to keep in the fridge or freezer to help you cool down if needed.



Seek medical advice on how extreme heat may affect your medication or medical condition.

What to do during?



Go to a "Cool Spot" in your community and arrange a cool mode of transport to get there, e.g public or community transport. Libraries and shopping centres have large air conditioned spaces you could visit for a period of relief from the heat.



Take small sips of cool fluids. Cool shower, bath or sponge bath.



Put cool packs under armpits, on the groin, or on the back of the neck to reduce body heat.



Avoid dehydration by drinking plenty of water. Avoid tea, coffee or alcohol.

Need help?

The Bureau of Meteorology predicts heatwave events and advises Health NSW. Health NSW will issue warnings and advice through the media and to local councils affected by the potential heatwave. In life-threatening emergencies call **TRIPLE ZERO (000)** and ask for an ambulance.

2. What can impact you?



Fire

The leading cause of home fires in NSW is leaving cooking unattended. Heaters, candles, portable gas cylinders and stove tops, and smoking are the other most common causes of fire. Fires can spread quickly.

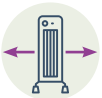
What to do before?



Never leave your cooking unattended, move flammable items away from the stovetop and switch off when not in use.



Put out cigarettes completely in a deep ashtray.



Keep everything 1 metre from the heater and switch off when leaving the room.



Make sure your smoke alarms are working through regular testing and maintenance.



Keep exit paths and passageways clear by keeping household clutter to a minimum.



Never place items in fire stairwells, it's illegal.



Know the fire evacuation exit of your building.

Need help?

In life threatening emergencies call TRIPLE ZERO (000) and ask for Ambulance.

What to do during?



For cooking fires:

Turn off the stove (if safe to do so) and use the lid to cover the flame.

Never use water to put out a fat or oil fire.

Leave the kitchen, close the door, and call Triple Zero '000'.



If you hear the smoke alarm and there's a fire in your home:

Keep calm and act quickly, get everyone outside as soon as possible.

Use the fire stairs to go outside.

Once out, stay out. Never go back inside a burning building.



Protect yourself from bushfire smoke:

Follow your doctor's advice about medicines and your asthma management plan if you have one.

Spend more time indoors. Keep doors and windows shut to keep the smoke out.

Avoid indoor sources of air pollution like cigarettes, candles and incense sticks.



Think about the area you live in and the types of emergencies that could affect you.



Flood

Flash Flooding regularly occurs in Urban areas, it is fast-moving, happens without warning and is extremely dangerous.

What to do before?



Monitor the situation and act early. You may not get any official warnings of floods.



Talk with your family, friends and neighbours about what you will do in a flood.



Know how you'll get the warnings of possible flooding. You could download the ABC 702 APP on your phone or use a battery operated radio to get flood information from SES.



Know your evacuation routes and timings if you may be asked to evacuate.

What to do during?



If flash flooding is likely, evacuating **before** it floods is the safest action.



Never drive, ride or walk through floodwater – find another way.



If you are trapped by rising floodwater, seek refuge in the highest part of a sturdy building. Then call 000 if you need to be rescued.

Need help?

For emergency help call the NSW SES 132 500.

For life threatening situations call TRIPLE ZERO (000).

If you are deaf, or have hearing or speech impairment contact the NSW SES through the National Relay Service and give 132 500 as the number you want to connect to.

2.

What can impact you?



Power Outage

Emergencies can bring about loss of utilities such as electricity, gas and water. Power loss can be caused from natural hazards such as floods, cyclones or other storms with high winds, heatwaves, and fires.

What to do before?



Take an inventory of the items you need that rely on electricity.



If your home phone won't work in a power outage, have a battery as back up.



Keep mobile phones and other electric equipment charged.



Have a torch.



Have alternative plans for refrigerating medication or power dependent medical equipment.



Have a battery operated radio so you can receive emergency warning information on the radio station, ABC 702.

What to do during?



Don't use a gas stove to heat your home.



Unplug appliances and electronics to avoid damage from electrical surges.



If safe, go to an alternate location for heat or cooling.



Check on neighbours.



Use food supplies that do not require refrigeration.

Need help?

In life threatening emergencies call **TRIPLE ZERO (000)** and ask for Ambulance.



Think about the area you live in and the types of emergencies that could affect you.



Personal/Community Threat

Personal threat emergencies can affect your safety and security. They may involve a person who is behaving in an aggressive, threatening or violent manner, or any other situation that may affect your safety or require an evacuation.

Need help?

If your personal safety and security are under threat call **TRIPLE ZERO (000)** and ask for Police.

My Other Risks:

Write down any other risks that may impact you and how you could prepare for this situation.

3. Plan now



How prepared are you for an emergency?

Now that you have become familiar with the types of emergencies that could affect you, let's think about what you will do when they occur.

Make important decisions such as when to leave, what to take, and what to do with animals. Know your capabilities and seek early assistance if required. Don't leave it until the last minute. Emergencies can happen with little or no warning.

Planning **now** so that you know your risks and what to do if there is an emergency can save your life, the life of your family members and the lives of others including your pets.



Sit down and talk with your family and plan for what you will do if an emergency affects your area.

Make a personal emergency plan



1. How would you get the information about when and where to evacuate?

Flood/storm:

- Evacuation Warnings and Evacuation Orders are issued by the NSW SES for storms, floods and tsunami through the NSW SES website www.ses.nsw.gov.au and local media.
- Keep listening to your local radio station ABC 702 for information, updates and advice from SES.

Building emergency:

- Seek advice from your building security officers if you have them.
- If the fire alarm goes off, leave your property through the fire stairs to the assembly area.



2. Where will you go and how would you get there?

- It is always safest to move to a location away from the affected area early.
- You should leave early before roads and evacuation routes are cut off or closed.
- Know your evacuation routes and assembly areas.
- Before you leave your home turn off the electricity and gas.
- Stay with family or friends in a safe area.
- You could go to an evacuation centre for temporary accommodation, financial help, personal support, refreshments and meals, clothing and personal needs, help in contacting family and friends.
- If you need assistance evacuating make arrangements for your transportation.

3. Plan now

Prepare an emergency bag



What to keep in your emergency bag:

- Medication/assistance equipment
- Copies of your important papers (hard copies or stored on a USB)
- Take with you important valuables and mementos
- Important phone numbers including your next of kin
- A change of clothes
- Personal care items (toothbrush, toothpaste, comb, etc)
- A bottle of water, a torch and other things you may need

Keep your emergency bag in an easily accessible place and remember to replace the batteries and water as needed.

As you evacuate, you can add medications, wallet, mobile phone, charger and other important items to your emergency bag.



Sit down and talk with your family and plan for what you will do if an emergency affects your area.

Pets and assistance animals



In a emergency, your animals are your responsibility. It is up to you to prepare for their safety and welfare.



Be prepared

If you're a pet owner you should include your animals in your emergency plan.

Your pets need to be properly identifiable. For example, name tag and microchip. It is a legal requirement for NSW residents to microchip and register their pets.

Ensure they are on a lead or in a carry bag and you carry plenty of food and water.

Animals will behave differently when emergencies hit, will pick up on your stress levels, and may panic and run. Removing them early will eliminate this issue.

4. Be aware



Websites



Weather

www.bom.gov.au/nsw/warnings



NSW Government

Information from Fire and Rescue, NSW Rural Fire Service, SES and Police on this website: www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/Pages/for-the-community/alert-NSW/warnings-alerts.aspx

Information on Air Quality from NSW Health:

www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/air/Pages/aqi.aspx



Pets

<https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/what-preparations-should-i-make-for-my-pets-in-case-of-an-emergency/>

www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/community/health-and-safety/prepareemergencies/emergency-advice/pets-emergencies



Apps

Red Cross Get Prepared app: www.redcross.org.au/getprepared

MyHousing App can be downloaded from the App Store or Google Play. You can view and update contact details (including emergency contacts), request maintenance repairs, access support services and much more.



Radio

Emergency Broadcaster Sydney AM 702:

www.abc.net.au/news/emergency/state/nsw



Emergency Welfare Organisations

Key organisations to add to your Contacts:

- The Salvation Army: www.salvationarmy.org.au
- Red Cross: www.redcross.org.au
- Lifeline Australia: www.lifeline.org.au

5. Look out for each other



A connected community is your best asset in an emergency



Looking out for neighbours, supporting people around us, taking time to chat and extend a hand of friendship to others – these are all ways we can contribute to a harmonious supported community.

When the unexpected happens or when an emergency strikes, the community that looks out for each other and knows how to care for other people will be equipped to respond in the best way possible.

Your local Community Centre is a good way to connect with neighbours, local community groups and to get help in accessing other services.

To find your local Community Centre, contact your local Council or the Local Community Services Association (LCSA), who are the peak body for Community Centres on 02 9660 2044.

Build relationships and networks that can be called upon during an emergency.

There are many ways to do this:



Get to know your neighbours. Neighbours often turn to each other for information and assistance during an emergency.



Think about the connections and networks you already have in your community as these can be vital during an emergency.



Participate in events and activities in your local community so you can continue to grow your network of support.



Checklist

I am prepared!

because...

- ☒ I know the risks that surround me ☐
- ☒ I have a personal emergency plan ☐
- ☒ I've got a list of emergency contact numbers ☐
- ☒ I have an emergency bag packed and ready ☐
- ☒ I know my evacuation route ☐
- ☒ I know who to contact to get assistance during an emergency ☐
- ☒ I know how to contact my Client Service Officer ☐

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