Residential Care Service – Preparing for an Emergency Event

Key activities for residential aged care providers preparing for emergency events may include:

**Before the event**

- Consider the range of hazards that are most likely to affect your facility.
- Take all reasonable measures to ensure that your facility is able to withstand the most likely hazards.
- Ensure you are aware of any state/territory or regional/local emergency management arrangements and requirements, including changes from previous seasons and possible trigger points for evacuation.
- Develop an appropriate emergency risk management plan that addresses ongoing needs of vulnerable care recipients in the event your facility becomes isolated (water, food, power, communication, medical supplies etc.).
- Determine appropriate staffing levels to meet higher care recipients needs during periods of high risk, including heat waves and evacuations.
- Develop an evacuation plan that includes realistic arrangements for transportation and alternative accommodation relevant to different scenarios (e.g. only your facility is affected or all facilities in the region are affected) and includes provision for care recipient identification and care-plan documents.
- Liaise with your local hospital/s to ensure the integration of your emergency risk management plans with its plan (particularly important in rural or remote locations).
- Develop agreements with other service providers for alternative accommodation in the instance your or the other facility need to partially or wholly evacuate residents.*
- Contact local emergency services to seek advice and ensure the service is aware of your facility’s size, location and particular needs of your residents. Provide facility and key personnel contact details to the emergency service. Ensure your key personnel have access to local emergency service/s contact details.
- During any period of high risk ensure your key personnel monitor emergency broadcasts and the media for localised warnings and advice.
- Discuss emergency risk management plans with staff, care recipients and their families.
- Develop a plan for recovery following an event including post trauma counselling for care recipients and staff.
- Undertake exercises to test key parts of your plan to identify gaps and to provide staff the opportunity to put into practice their specific responsibilities.
During the event

- Liaise with local emergency services to determine the seriousness of any emergency situation and the level of risk posed to your facility and care recipients.
- Activate emergency risk management plans; ensuring decisions are timely and informed and may culminate in a partial or complete evacuation of your facility.
- Continue to deliver appropriate care in accordance with your emergency risk management plan. This may require sourcing additional staff or volunteers.
- Keep staff, family and care recipients well informed during and after, if necessary, the emergency situation.
- When safe provide advice to the Department about any impacts of the event on your facility and care recipients.

Following the event

- Assess the impact of the event on your facility, staff and care recipients and take steps to return to business as usual.
- Liaise with and request assistance as required from local agencies providing recovery and other relevant services.
- Review and amend your emergency risk management plans, as needed.

*As part of the emergency planning process you are expected to explore and document alternative accommodation options and where possible make arrangements at a local/regional level. These arrangements may include, but not be limited to, discussions about ongoing care of care recipients, staff requirements and associated costs.

You need to give particular consideration to transport options for evacuations, recognising that ambulance services may be fully occupied responding to emergency calls, and alternative transport providers may also have arrangements with other facilities. Multiple alternate means of transport, suitable for frail, elderly residents, such as buses, vans or cars need to be considered alongside access to your site and availability at short notice and 24 hour contact details.

In an emergency event, including an event that has impacted your facility or a situation where other facilities are relocating or evacuating residents, officers from Department of Health may contact you to:

- Determine the impact of the event on your facility and whether or not any need for additional assistance is being met; and
- Ascertain the potential of your facility to provide emergency accommodation to relocating care recipients from at-risk facilities.