Interim Extreme Weather and Emergency Management

The purpose of this guideline is to define the processes to ensure the safety and well-being of all Scouts Victoria members and supporters during extreme weather events and emergencies.

Implementing appropriate emergency planning is a requirement for any Scouting activity regardless of other factors such as program, award scheme requirements, pre-booked accommodation, financial impact, etc.

An emergency at a scouting activity is defined as a hazardous incident that may result in one or more of the following:

- Evacuation of the activity to a safe location or shelter-in-place
- Extensive external medical support or rescue operations
- Insufficient capacity or capability within the activity to manage the incident

Typical hazardous incidents that could result in an emergency include extreme weather, natural hazards bushfire, onsite fire, missing child, security incident, widespread health incident, etc. Note: this version of the guideline includes interim advice on actions to be taken when an Extreme Fire Danger Rating is in place.

Emergency Response

*In an Emergency, the **Leader in Charge** of a Scouting activity should:*

- Alert the appropriate Emergency Services (000)
- If necessary, evacuate the area or seek appropriate shelter-in-place
- Alert the Emergency Contact of affected participants (this may be arranged through the Scouts Victoria Emergency Line)
- Call the Scouts Victoria Emergency Line (03 8543 9877)
- Continue to manage the situation and notify of any updates

*Upon notification of an Emergency, the **Scouts Victoria Emergency Line Operator** or other Scouts Victoria member should:*

- Record the relevant details of the Emergency
- Alert the appropriate Emergency Services (000), if not already occurred
- Alert the Emergency notification list on emergency.incident@scoutsvictoria.com.au
- Alert the relevant District and/or Region Commissioner and State Leadership Team
- Confirm whether Emergency Contacts of participants have been informed
- Identify an **Emergency Coordinator** to coordinate Scouts Victoria's ongoing response (this may be the Scouts Victoria Emergency Line Operator themselves)

*The **Emergency Coordinator** should:*

- Act as the primary contact between the Leader in Charge and Scouts Victoria
- Inform the Emergency Contact of participants, if not previously contacted
- Identify appropriate resources and capability to assist the Leader in Charge
- Refer all media communications to the Scouts Victoria media representatives

Planning an Activity

*The **Leader in Charge** of a Scouting activity should:*

- Register the activity in Scouts Victoria scOut and About if the activity is outside of the Group's District
- Consider credible emergency risks as part of the planning of a scouting activity
- Determine trigger actions (eg date/time and conditions) to continue, modify, cancel, reschedule, or relocate the activity
- Review the emergency plans for the location of the activity (eg a campsite emergency plan)
- Develop a plan for relocation or evacuation of the activity (including transportation away from the location in a timely manner, evacuation route, nearby temporary refuge, shelter-in-place, etc)
- Where appropriate, document the emergency plans and trigger actions in the Risk Management Plan for the activity

Trigger Actions prior to and during a Scouting Activity

*The **Leader in Charge** of an activity must monitor the weather conditions leading up to and during the activity and implement trigger actions based on the conditions.*

Wherever possible, actions should be undertaken to modify, cancel, reschedule, or relocate an activity before an evacuation is required as a last resort. Having Trigger Actions (eg date/time and conditions) for the activity ensures a decision is made with sufficient time to implement the actions. The Trigger Actions should consider the location of the activity and the time required to implement the actions. Example Trigger Actions could be:

- *"By 7pm on the night we leave for the activity, if storms are forecast for the night, we will delay leaving until the morning."*
- *"First thing in the morning on the last day, if the weather is predicted to be hot, we will pack and be ready to leave early."*
- *"At the start of each day of the event, if there are strong winds expected, we will modify the activities for the day to suit the anticipated conditions."*
- *"At the end of each day on the hike, if the weather conditions for the next day are extreme, we will arrange to be picked up and taken to safe place for the day, returning to the hike only once it is clear."*

Cancel, Reschedule or Relocate an Activity

*The **Leader in Charge** of an activity must cancel, reschedule, or relocate a Scouting activity at the earliest opportunity if any of the following occur:*

- A fire danger rating of "Catastrophic" is declared for the fire district in which an activity is planned, and the activity is in a designated "Bushfire Prone Area"
- A fire danger rating of "Extreme" is declared for the fire district in which the activity is planned, and the "Fire Danger Rating Trigger Actions" cannot be complied with.
- An "Emergency Warning", "Watch and Act Warning", or "Recommendation to Evacuate" is issued for the location of the activity
- A warning is issued against travel to the location of the activity

Fire Danger Rating Trigger Actions

*Based on the Fire Danger Rating, the **Leader in Charge** of an activity or **campsite** should implement the following trigger actions for activities or campsites within a Bushfire Prone Area:*

Fire Danger Rating	Leader in Charge of an activity or campsite
Catastrophic	***Activities*** – cancel the activity, leave the night before or first thing in the morning ***Campsites*** are closed for visitors / hirers – all camp occupiers to leave the night before or first thing in the morning
Extreme	**Interim Advice** ***Activities*** - cancel, reschedule, or relocate an outdoor activity in a bushfire prone zone ***unless:*** • the Leader in Charge has two-way communication with all participants • the activity is no further than 30 minutes from a safe location • weather conditions are continuously monitored • the program is adapted to suit the conditions • an evacuation and/or shelter-in-place plan is in place and considers travel through bushfire risk areas • sufficient transport is available to relocate or evacuate the area if required ***Campsites*** should close for visitors / hirers ***unless*** there is an approved Emergency Management Plan that describes the conditions under which the campsite can remain open, and considers: • Weather conditions at campsite vs fire district • Fuel type and fuel load at and surrounding the campsite • Type of visitors / hirers and activities • Distance to safe place • Ability to evacuate or shelter-in-place Seek advice and approval from ***State Commissioner – Risk and Safety***
High	• Consider rescheduling or relocating the activity • Adapt the program to suit the conditions • Implement a plan for regular communication with remote participants • Monitor weather conditions throughout the activity • Be alert for fires in your area. • Decide what you will do if a fire starts
Moderate	• Stay up to date and be ready to act if there is a fire • Monitor weather conditions throughout the activity
No Rating	• Standard principles apply

Extreme Weather warnings, Fire Danger ratings and bushfire notifications can be accessed from the Vic Emergency app, which allows you to set a watch zone around your activity location. You can also access this information at www.emergency.vic.gov.au

To determine if your activity or campsite is in a bushfire prone area, go to https://mapshare.vic.gov.au/vicplan/ and enable Bushfire Prone Areas layer. (*Note that areas with a Bushfire Management Overlay are also defined as Bushfire Prone Areas.*)

Information on Victorian Parks that are affected by fire can be obtained here https://www.parks.vic.gov.au/get-into-nature/safety-in-nature/fire-affected-parks

Emergency Management Plans for Campsites and Major Events

*A Scouts Victoria managed **campsite**, or any facility that is regularly used by members of more than one formation, must have an Emergency Management Plan.*

*The organising committee of a **Major Event** must develop an Emergency Management Plan for the major event that works in conjunction with the site Emergency Management Plan. A Major Event is a State run event or any event with 200 or more participants.*

*The Emergency Management Plan for a **campsite** and/or **major event** should include:*

1. Consideration of the types of incidents that may occur that could require evacuation or external assistance from emergency services. This includes:
   - Extreme weather or natural hazard
   - Bushfire or onsite fire
   - Severe injury requiring onsite medical or rescue operations
   - Onsite security incident
   - Missing Child
   - Widespread health incident, etc

2. A clear definition of who is responsible for undertaking all actions defined in the emergency plan, especially those actions that trigger emergency response and/or evacuation. The responsibilities should consider whether the site has:
   - Permanent Ranger / Warden / Emergency Team who will be onsite to coordinate the response
   - Part-time Ranger / Warden who might not be onsite during an incident
   - No onsite Ranger / Warden

3. Criteria for the closure of the site for visitors / hirers due to forecast weather conditions:
   - A fire danger rating of "Catastrophic" is declared for the fire district, and the site is in a designated "Bushfire Prone Area"
   - Requirements that must be in place for the site to remain open if a fire danger rating of "Extreme" is declared for the fire district, and the site is in a designated "Bushfire Prone Area"
   - A procedure for informing current and future participants in relation to closure due to Fire Danger Rating

4. A description of the process for monitoring extreme weather conditions during an event, including the geographic area that should be monitored, who is responsible for monitoring and the trigger actions to be taken based on the monitoring

5. Fire protection tasks that are routinely undertaken to prevent fires and to mitigate the effects of external fires impacting on the site, and who is responsible for those tasks

6. A description of the resources onsite to prevent and deal with emergencies

7. A description of the process for evacuation of the site including:
   - triggers for commencing an evacuation of the site and who is responsible for declaring an evacuation
   - register of participants onsite and who is responsible for maintaining the register
   - method for alerting participants
   - evacuation procedures, including transport arrangements

- location of onsite assembly areas, access points and egress points
- location of offsite emergency evacuation location including directions and time to travel
- actions to be undertaken after the evacuation (eg whether it is safe to return)

8. A description of the process for shelter-in-place (if applicable) including:
   - triggers for commencing the shelter-in-place option
   - register of participants onsite and who is responsible for maintaining the register
   - method for alerting participants
   - shelter-in-place procedures including location and description of shelter-in-place building

9. Procedures for evacuation or shelter-in-place of any Residential Ranger / Warden, etc.

10. A review date or review frequency for the Emergency Management Plan

For **campsites** or **major events**, Emergency Procedures should be made available to participants prior to attending the site and at key locations around the site. Emergency Procedures should include the following from the Emergency Management Plan:
- What participants should do to prevent fires or other emergencies onsite
- How to raise an alarm if an incident occurs
- What scenarios will trigger closure or evacuation of the site
- What participants must do in an emergency
- How to evacuate the site
- How to shelter-in-place (if applicable)

Final Decision-Making Authority

The **Chief Commissioner** has ultimate authority over the program operations of Scouting and can, if considered appropriate, override the decision of the Leader in Charge of any Scouting activity with respect to the continuation, cancellation, or modification of a Scouting activity during hazardous weather conditions or extreme weather events.

State-Wide Monitoring

The **State Commissioner, Risk & Safety**, or delegate, should review the weather forecast at least weekly by the Thursday prior to any weekend and:

- Determine if the weather conditions trigger the need for a state-wide warning and if necessary, issue a state-wide weather warning in consultation with the Chief Commissioner (refer below)
- Confirm that activities and locations within regions with Extreme or higher weather warnings are aware of the conditions
- Notify the *Scouts Victoria Emergency Line Operator* of any activities registered in scOut and About that may be of concern

Continue to monitor conditions using the Scouts Victoria Fire and Emergency Management Common Operating Picture (SVFEM-COP) and advise relevant Groups if the situation changes.

Typical State-Wide Severe Weather Alert

Severe Weather Forecast for the Weekend

The weather forecast for this weekend indicates that there will be a fire danger rating of XXXX.

All Leaders in Charge of activities should take the following precautions:

1. Register the activity in Scouts Victoria [scOut and About](#) if the activity is outside of the Group's District.
2. Download the Vic Emergency app or check the [Vic Emergency website](#) for active fires and fire danger ratings in the vicinity of your activity.
3. If you are undertaking an outdoor activity in a bushfire prone area:
    - If the fire danger rating is Catastrophic, the activity must be cancelled, rescheduled, or relocated.
    - If the fire danger rating is Extreme, you should seek advice and approval from our State Commissioner – Risk and Safety, (sc.risk@scoutsvictoria.com.au), to ensure we can appropriately help you manage any risks.

If your activity is in a National Park or similar, you can check the status of the park at https://www.parks.vic.gov.au/get-into-nature/safety-in-nature/fire-affected-parks

Fire Danger ratings and bushfire notifications can be accessed from the Vic Emergency app, which allows you to set a watch zone around your activity location. You can also access this information at www.emergency.vic.gov.au

To determine if your activity is in a bushfire prone area, refer to https://mapshare.vic.gov.au/vicplan/ and enable Bushfire Prone Areas layer.

Was this notification useful? Feedback or questions to State Commissioner – Risk and Safety, (sc.risk@scoutsvictoria.com.au).