

Emergencies in Victoria:

Managing your emotional wellbeing and
accessing Emergency Relief Payments



Have you been impacted by an emergency?

This booklet can help you take steps to manage your reactions during and after an emergency.

It also provides information on how to access financial support under the Personal Hardship Assistance Program.

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

During the emergency

Keeping informed can help you stay safe.

Stay up to date

- Check VicEmergency for warnings and incident notifications about fire, storms, floods and more. You can download VicEmergency from the App Store or Google Play, or visit the website emergency.vic.gov.au
- You can also call the VicEmergency hotline on **1800 226 226**

Let others know you are safe

- Send a message to family and friends letting them know where you are and that you are safe



If you are deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech impairment, contact us through the National Relay Service:




- TTY users phone **1800 555 677** then ask for **1800 226 226**
- Speak and Listen users phone **1800 555 727** then ask for **1800 226 226**
- Internet relay users connect to the NRS then ask for **1800 226 226**

If you don't speak English, call the Translating and Interpreting Service on **131 450** for translated information from the VicEmergency Hotline.

Managing physical, mental and emotional reactions

You may be experiencing a range of physical, mental and emotional reactions as a result of the emergency. These reactions can vary from person to person. At this time, it is important to take care of your own and your family's mental health, and where possible, to look out for friends and neighbours.

-  Stay connected with others – even if you don't want to talk about what has happened – and use coping strategies that have been helpful when you've dealt with stressful experiences in the past. Remind yourself what you did well to support yourself and others to get through safely.
-  Good physical health supports good mental health. Try to keep some structure in your day that allows you to get regular exercise and rest, eat well and have opportunities for enjoyment.

-  Avoid using drugs or alcohol to cope, as this can lead to more problems.
-  If you are experiencing strong emotions remember talking about your worries and feelings when you are ready makes them more manageable.
-  If you are feeling overwhelmed and finding it difficult to manage, reach out for help from friends and family or contact support services. If at any time you are worried about your mental health or the mental health of a loved one, call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Beyond Blue on 1300 224 636.

Finding support

There are resources available depending on what you need.

Find out what support is available to you

- Call the VicEmergency hotline
- Visit the VicEmergency website
- Call your local council or visit its website. If you aren't sure which is your local council, visit: www.vic.gov.au/know-your-council

Decide where you will stay

- If you have been told you can't return to your home, you need to find somewhere else that is safe to stay. Contact family and friends and ask for help.
- If you don't have a suitable location to go to, call your local council to discuss what emergency accommodation support options may be available to you.

Find out about financial assistance

When an emergency happens in Victoria, financial support may be available.

Find out about what support is available:

- On the VicEmergency website or via the hotline
- In person at an Emergency Relief Centre, when open.

Emergency Relief Payments



You might be able to get an Emergency Relief Payment from the Victorian Government if it is available.

An emergency relief payment can help you to pay for things you need most, including:

- food
- clothing
- medication
- accommodation.

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

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

You will need to apply for a payment. Someone from the Victorian Government will look at your application. They will let you know if you qualify for the payment.

You might be able to apply in person, at an Emergency Relief Centre near you, if open.

Find financial support at VicEmergency

VicEmergency Hotline - 1800 226 226
(press 9 for an interpreter)

VicEmergency Website -
www.emergency.vic.gov.au/relief

Next steps – Thinking long term

Managing your mental, physical and emotional reactions over time

Some things you can do to support recovery include:

- Make sure that you are in a place and location where you know that you are safe.
- Recognise that recovery often involves going through a period of stress and additional life challenges.
- Cut back on unnecessary demands to conserve energy.
- Try to maintain an optimistic and hopeful outlook, even if at times everyone needs to talk about their fears and worries.
- Keep up regular communication and connection with others. Make free time to be together with family or friends in a positive and supportive environment
- Plan regular time out and maintain activities you enjoyed before – even if you don't really feel like it. Taking time out for rest, recreation, enjoyment and relaxation supports the mind and the body to recover and to re-establish health and wellbeing.
- While it is natural to think about what still needs to be done, remember to keep track of your progress in recovery and acknowledge your achievements.
- Remind yourself that individuals, families and communities mostly get through the hard times, and are sometimes even stronger as a result.



If you've tried these strategies and things aren't improving after a few weeks, or if you are having trouble coping, talk to your general practitioner or mental health clinician about getting some professional support to help with your recovery.

Stay connected

The recovery journey is different for everyone, and people might need to access different supports at different times. Staying connected with your local community will help you understand what is happening and what support is available.



Follow your local council for local recovery information

Visit the VicEmergency Website or call the VicEmergency hotline to find what recovery support is available

Keep in contact with your local community and support networks.

Family violence after emergencies

Emergencies can put a lot of additional stress on close relationships and families as they struggle to deal with the aftermath.

People who have never been violent or controlling may find themselves behaving in ways they didn't before; or existing violent behaviour may start to increase or escalate.

Call **Triple 000** if you, or someone you know, is in immediate danger.

Where to get help

Whatever your situation, if you or someone you know needs help, there is a wide range of family violence support services available.

A full list of services is available via the following QR Code:



- If you prefer to get help over the phone, you can call Safe Steps, Victoria's 24/7 family violence response centre for confidential crisis support, information and accommodation: 1800 015 188
- You can also call 1800 RESPECT or visit 1800RESPECT.org.au for support 24/7.



To receive this document in another format, email DFFH Emergency Communications <emergency.communications@dffh.vic.gov.au>.

Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.
 © State of Victoria, Australia, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, December 2024.
 ISBN 978-1-76130-727-0 (online/PDF/Word)
 Available at DFFH Emergency relief <https://www.dffh.vic.gov.au/emergency-relief>
 (2412242)