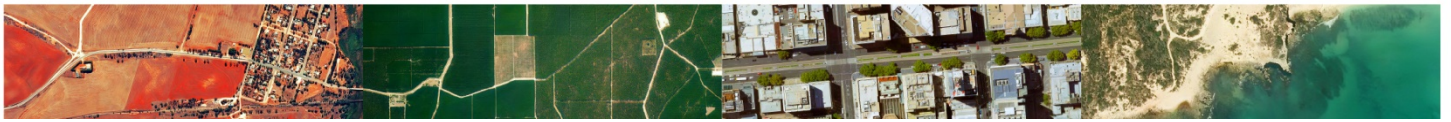# STATE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN

Part 3: Guidelines and Frameworks

Annex A: EVACUATION

Government
of South Australia

SEMP STRUCTURE

The State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP) is a four-part plan containing a range of documents that further detail strategies for dealing with emergencies in South Australia. The parts are described in more detail below.

STATE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN

PART 1: OVERVIEW	PART 2: ARRANGEMENTS	PART 3: GUIDELINES AND FRAMEWORKS	PART 4: PLANS
Provides a strategic overview of the state's arrangements for senior executive and community information.	Provides the overarching details of the arrangements and structures in place to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies.	Consists of the various guidelines and frameworks that have been developed to document known best practice for key aspects of emergency management. These guidelines and frameworks provide guidance regarding the development of arrangements, administrative functions and plans.	Consists of the standards required of the various levels of detailed plans for implementing the arrangements, including naming conventions, review guidance and templates. It also includes the suite of supporting plans for implementing the arrangements.

Figure 1: The South Australian State Emergency Management Plan is actually a series of documents split over 4 Parts with a number of accompanying annexes.

SEMP REVIEW

The SEMC shall ensure that the SEMP is subject to a full review every five years. Ongoing updates and continual improvement is to occur in the interim period. Updates will be considered as below.

SEMP UPDATES

Proposals to amend, review or update the SEMP are managed by the State Emergency Management Committee Secretariat within the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Inquiries should be directed to:

State Emergency Management Committee Secretariat
Department of Premier and Cabinet
GPO Box 2434
ADELAIDE SA 5001
Email: SEMP@sa.gov.au

CONTENTS

EVACUATION

Evacuation is a risk management strategy that may be used to mitigate the effects of an emergency on a community. It involves the movement of people to a safer location and their return. The primary reason for undertaking an evacuation is to ensure that the public is safe and free from the risk of death, injury or harm.

Evacuations are categorised as follows:
- Immediate evacuation - results from a sudden hazard impact that forces immediate action, allowing little or no warning and limited preparation time.
- Pre-warned evacuation – follows the receipt of sufficient and reliable information that prompts a decision to undertake a controlled and managed movement of people ahead of a hazard impact
- Self-evacuation – the self-initiated or independent movement of people such as individuals, families and community groups on their own volition, away from an area that is likely to be or has been impacted by an emergency, hazard or threat.

The Principles that underpin evacuations are:
- The priority when considering an evacuation will be the safety of people as it relates to possible loss of life, injury and threat of disease as opposed to damage or loss of property
- Hazard Leaders shall ensure the implementation of evacuation related community education programs and information systems for the hazards for which they are responsible. The key objective of the community education programs and information systems will be to provide the community with the capability to make an informed decision as to action(s) they may initiate to ensure their own safety when threatened by or as a result of any emergency
- It is the responsibility of the Control Agency to provide the community with timely and relevant information to enable them to recognise a threat and make an informed decision about whether to self-evacuate (well ahead of the hazard beginning to impact on their location) or stay
- The Control Agency is responsible for considering evacuation as part of their incident management arrangements and implementing immediate or pre-warned evacuations when determined appropriate
- The Control Agency is to use the existing public information and warning systems to inform the community of evacuation decisions including recommendations to self-evacuate
- A Control Agency may only cause an immediate or pre-warned evacuation to take place where it has the legislative authority to do so. If no legislative authority to undertake an evacuation exists, the Control Agency may consult with the Coordinating Agency to determine an appropriate course of action
- Any decision by the Control Agency to cause a pre-warned evacuation (or recommend self-evacuation) should be made as early as is practicable. Late evacuations may compound the risk by potentially exposing communities and individuals to greater levels of danger

- The Control Agency shall liaise with the Emergency Relief Functional Support Group or SA Police prior to and during the process of an evacuation to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for the activation of Register.Find.Reunite and the provision of support to evacuees and displaced persons. Activation of Register.Find.Reunite should also be reinforced in all public messaging
- The decision by the Control Agency to allow the return of evacuees and displaced persons to their properties should be made as early as is practicable after the hazard has passed notwithstanding there may remain secondary or residual risks
- The return of evacuees and displaced persons should be undertaken in consultation with the affected community and the Emergency Relief Functional Support Group
- A decision to effect an evacuation by a Control Agency will be communicated to the Coordinating Agency in-line with the normal provision of advice to the State Coordinator.

Any evacuation process will require a dedicated public information strategy to be developed and implemented by the Control Agency.

Hazard Leaders shall develop specific policies or guidance notes to guide control agencies in undertaking evacuations.

Whilst the decision to evacuate people who are at immediate risk is reasonably clear, the decision to evacuate people based on predictive information, incomplete or unverified data in a developing situation requires significant consideration and planning.

The necessity for an evacuation will always vary according to the hazard and type of emergency being faced. An evacuation may apply to individuals, a house, a street, a large institution (i.e.: school or hospital), a suburb, a town or a large area of the State.

The role of the Control Agency is to consider and if necessary, recommend evacuation of people from potentially dangerous areas. Once a recommendation is made to evacuate, it must be undertaken in a manner that is controlled and monitored, with the primary objective being the personal safety of all involved.

The '2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission Report' stressed that a primary responsibility of an incident controller is to assess whether evacuation should be recommended to communities potentially threatened by the hazard and provide that advice through every available means as early as possible.

'A shared responsibility – The report of the Perth Hills bushfire February 2011 review' did not dispute the renewed priority given to protecting life, however, it had become concerned that the widespread use of evacuation as a strategy to protect life has the potential to disempower communities, rather than building resilience as set out in the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience. If residents believe the default response to an emergency is to evacuate, there is a risk they may choose not to engage in community level preparations, fail to consider what action they would take during an emergency or fail to take adequate

steps to protect their properties. The decision to evacuate needs to take into account prevailing conditions and the level of threat, the level of preparedness and capability of individuals and vulnerable populations within the area. These sentiments were supported by the '2013 Tasmania Bushfire Inquiry'.

On some occasions it may be assessed that people would be safer staying and sheltering in place rather than evacuating. Shelter in place should be considered as an alternative when the risk associated with evacuation is seen as greater than that of sheltering in place, for example, hazardous materials plume or where time and the situation does not permit a safe evacuation.

Purpose

This section establishes an all hazards, all incidents guide for a coordinated multi-agency response to a significant emergency where the need for an evacuation has been determined. The information is provided to assist control agencies (or the agency delegated the task of conducting an evacuation) in undertaking this task. Due to the dynamic nature of each emergency, these guidelines are designed to provide advice and information about the process and are not the definitive policy to be adopted.

It is acknowledged that these arrangements do not stand alone but are complementary to South Australia's existing emergency management arrangements.

Objectives

The objectives of the Evacuation Guidelines are to provide guidance on:
- facilitating the safe movement of people from the emergency or area of danger
- acting as a guide for decision makers when considering an evacuation
- articulating the evacuation process.

Assumptions

The following assumptions are made in relation to these guidelines:
- the responsibility for the decision to evacuate remains with the Control Agency
- the Control Agency retains responsibility for an evacuation, however the planning, implementation and management of an evacuation are tasks that may be delegated to another agency
- the Control Agency will notify the Coordinating Agency (for further advice to all support agencies) prior to an evacuation being initiated
- the existing public information and warning systems is to be used to inform the community of emergency and evacuation information
- there may be challenges in providing warnings to culturally and linguistically diverse communities, other persons with a cogitative or sensory impairment and other vulnerable or isolated community members. Plans should identify if these communities are within the expected evacuation area and take these factors into account in planning
- it may take some hours to stage sufficient resources to support the evacuation processes (including Emergency Relief Centres)
- that not all people may comply with instructions or guidance from emergency service personnel.

Evacuation

Evacuation process

Where practicable, the evacuation process described in the 'Australian Emergency Management Handbook, Evacuation Planning, Third Edition' is to be applied. The process, adjusted to meet the local context, has been adopted by the majority of jurisdictions including South Australia.

There are five distinct stages in the evacuation process:
- Decision to evacuate - includes evacuation plan development
- Warning - advice to the affected community
- Withdrawal – evacuation of the affected community
- Shelter - supporting the evacuated community
- Return – managing the return of the affected community.

The evacuation process is diagrammatically shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Evacuation process

(Source: Emergency Management Handbook, Evacuation Planning Third Edition)
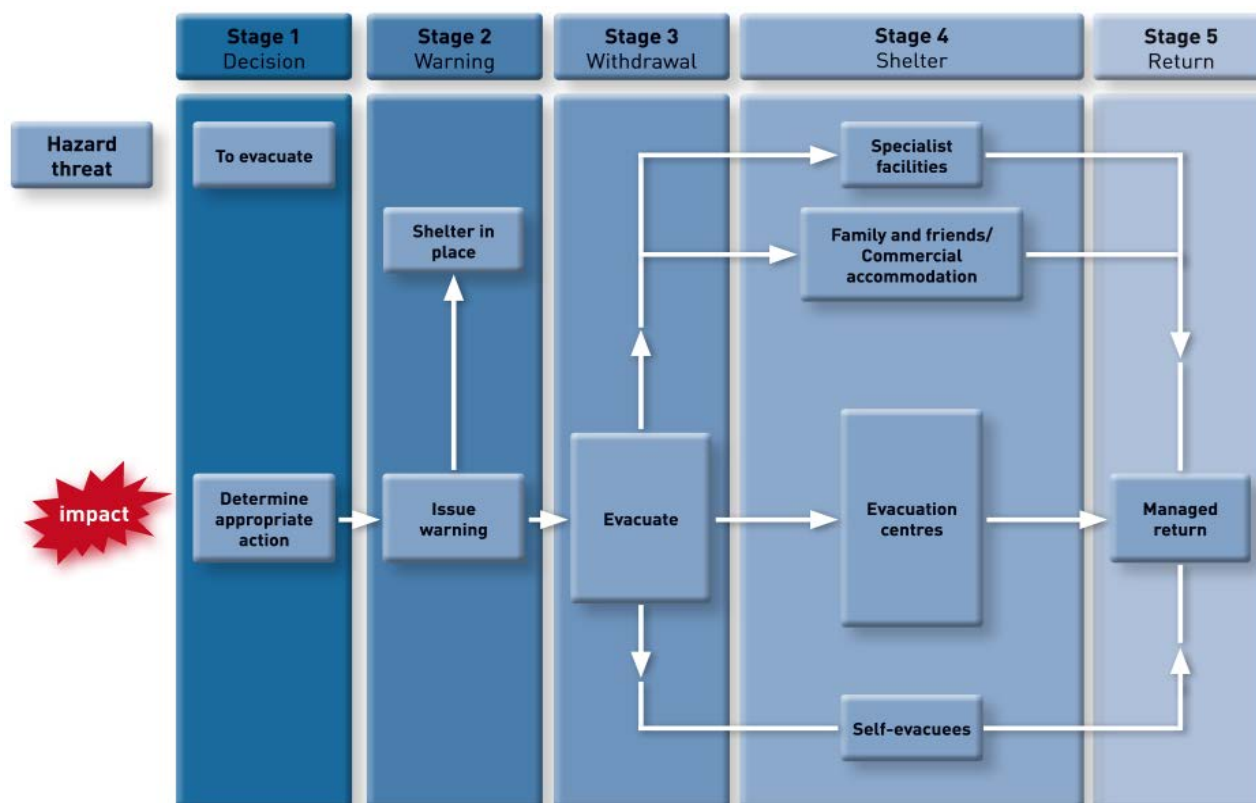
Categories of Evacuations

Immediate Evacuation (using an authority under legislation)
Where people are at immediate risk from an emergency or dangerous incident, they may be evacuated on the direction of a person holding an appropriate legislative authority. This task is carried out with little or no pre-planning with decisions being made with urgency at the front line.

A decision to effect an immediate evacuation should always be based upon a risk assessment that determines that:
- the threat to life or injury is likely or imminent
- staying is now a greater risk than leaving
- the evacuation can be undertaken relatively safely.

Examples of events that may require immediate evacuation include a hazardous material spill, air crash, bushfire or earthquake. There will be circumstances that dictate that an evacuation will not be possible due to the inherent danger of initiating the action at the given time in which case shelter in place becomes the alternate strategy.

PUBLIC DOCUMENT

Pre-warned Evacuation (using an authority under legislation)

Pre-warned evacuation is the preferred option if time and circumstances permit. This planned type of evacuation enables greater control and coordination due to the increased ability to obtain accurate information and sufficient resources to carry out the task.

Pre-warned evacuation may also allow recommendations to be made to the public to create opportunities for individuals to:

- evacuate in a controlled manner, notifying friends and relatives that they have moved
- evacuate in a timely manner and obtain alternative accommodation with friends or relatives
- evacuate with assistance of family and friends.

This decreases reliance upon the emergency services and other agencies, allowing them to concentrate on the actual hazard or to assist more vulnerable people within the community.

Examples of the type of event when pre-warned evacuation may be used include bushfire, flood, cyclone and storm surge.

Self-evacuation

People may choose to self-evacuate away from an area that is likely to be impacted by an emergency, hazard or threat with or without formal advice from a relevant authority. These people may require support and assistance, along with others who are part of a formal evacuation process, if there are road closures or other circumstances preventing their return. The use of self-evacuation by the Control Agency is one of the preferred options for action before a hazard impacts.

Management of Evacuations

Irrespective of the hazard being faced, the management of an evacuation is the responsibility of the respective Control Agency. Where the Control Agency is unable to facilitate the necessary components required to implement an evacuation, they must liaise with the Coordinating Agency to identify a suitable support agency to perform or assist with the required task.

Authority to Evacuate

The authority to effect an evacuation rests with the Control Agency under their respective legislation, the Emergency Management Act or other relevant legislation. For example, the Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005 provides certain members of MFS, CFS and SES with the authority to cause or undertake evacuations (refer to Sections 42, 97 and 118 respectively). The Emergency Management Act 2004 provides a similar authority to authorised officers upon a declaration of an identified major incident, major emergency or disaster (refer to Section 25).

PUBLIC DOCUMENT

Once the decision to evacuate is made, the Control Agency must communicate that decision to the Coordinating Agency (SAPOL) in line with the normal provision of advice to the State Coordinator.

Stages of Evacuation

The key aspects and changes to the evacuation process described in the Australian Emergency Management Handbook, Evacuation Planning, Third Edition to meet the South Australia context are described below:

Decision to Evacuate

The decision to evacuate will be made by the Control Agency when the members of the community at risk do not have the capacity to make an informed decision, there is a material risk of loss of life or injury not preventable by other means, and there is sufficient time and resources to safely undertake the evacuation.

Evacuations to be based upon, but not limited to, consideration of:
- nature, type, size and severity of the emergency
- location of the emergency
- time of the day
- weather conditions
- population density
- identified vulnerable people
- appropriate evacuation transport corridors
- physical resources available to carry out the evacuation
- access to safe places to evacuate to
- capacity of agencies and others to facilitate a safe evacuation
- level of pre-planning and community education/engagement
- expert advice from agencies including:
- Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure in relation to traffic flow, road conditions and capacity
- Emergency Relief Functional Service in relation to support and relief facilities
- Bureau of Meteorology in relation to current and future weather predictions
- Engineering Functional Service for infrastructure considerations.

The evacuation is to be based on a continuous risk assessment model, taking into consideration the availability of timely and relevant information. If the decision is made too early and the hazard recedes, the evacuated community may have been exposed to unnecessary risk, inconvenience and cost. If the decision is made too late, the affected community may have no other option but to evacuate under high-risk conditions or shelter in place.

Due to the complex nature of an evacuation operation it should be treated as a separate response operation and appropriately planned and resourced, including delegating the

responsibility to a particular person (ie: Evacuation Manager) who in turn, depending on the size of the task, may need to build their own team to manage the process. The evacuation plan would become an attachment to the Incident Action Plan (IAP).

Warning

Once a decision has been made to evacuate an area, it is imperative that the Control Agency, in collaboration with the Coordinating Agency, ensures effective communication strategies are implemented. The provision of consistent and clear advice is critical in reducing panic and facilitating an effective and coordinated evacuation. This includes general advice and directions to all potential evacuees and specific advice to appropriate sections of the community.

The Incident Controller is responsible for ensuring that any evacuation recommendation to a community is provided appropriately in the most timely and effective manner and in accordance with their agency's standard operating procedures.

Withdrawal

Evacuees may be requested to:
- evacuate under their own means
- evacuate with assistance (their own or other)
- move to a designated safer area
- move to specific locations for transport out of the area (Assembly Area)
- move to an emergency relief centre○
- identify themselves if they have specific needs.

In planning an evacuation, consideration must be given to the following:
- where they will be evacuating to
- possible duration of the evacuation
- items evacuee to take with them, eg: wallet/money, mobile phone, medication
- limitation of other items an evacuee is allowed
- type and number of animals permitted to accompany an evacuee
- management of road convoys, if used
- information releases to evacuees
- return policy / procedure for evacuees
- any best practice guidelines that may be available.

There needs to be close and on-going liaison between the person delegated responsibility for the evacuation process and the Incident Controller as it may be necessary for the Incident Controller to divert resources to safeguard the lives of those being evacuated or circumstances of the hazard may have changed requiring changes in the evacuation plan.

PUBLIC DOCUMENT

Refusals to Evacuate

It is recognised that some people will refuse to comply with a lawful request to evacuate. When confronted with this situation it is important for the member faced with the refusal to accurately report the status of the hazard being confronted and the decision to maintain primacy of life over other considerations. In situations where a constant refusal is faced, a risk assessment is to be undertaken based on achieving the 'greater good', for example, available time and resources are spent on notifying and evacuating others.

In this situation a member should only exercise their authority to forcible evacuate if there is no detriment to other community members and they have the capacity and ability to do so without further endangering themselves or others.

Traffic Management

The evacuation process may require the implementation of traffic management plans and establishment of traffic management points to control the flow of traffic. This can be a significant task and may need to be delegated to a particular person to manage. Specialist support from the South Australia Police and Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure, Traffic Management Centre may be required.

Shelter

Emergency Relief Functional Service may be tasked with preparing for and supporting persons evacuated from a designated hazard. Pre-determined sites may be utilised by the support agency in this endeavour, with support from government and non-government agencies as required.

It is imperative that evacuated persons that are situated in 'emergency relief centres' are:
- registered
- maintained in family groups
- have the needs of their pets considered
- are provided with information about the situation
- have access to psychosocial support.

In situations where evacuees or displaced persons must remain away from their homes for an extended period of time, temporary accommodation may be required. Arrangements for this support are managed under the:
- Displaced Persons Accommodation Support Plan
- State Recovery Arrangements.

The sheltering process includes supporting displaced people (absent from the evacuated area at the time the withdrawal was undertaken) but are now prohibited from returning to their home or business. The level of support required will be dependent on the circumstances. For short term events, support in the form of providing information about the emergency and when one can return to an evacuated area may be sufficient.

Return

The Control Agency is responsible for determining when the community can return to an evacuated area. Whilst this decision is reasonably clear for emergencies which have caused minimal damage, it is not clear when significant damage occurs or there remain secondary or residual risks. For example, following a bushfire there may be various levels of risks from falling trees or branches, integrity of structures, site contamination, hazardous materials and health threats.

The objective is to return the affected community at the earliest opportunity after the principal hazard(s) has been negated, when it is reasonably safe to do so, and the returning people are aware of the likely secondary risks and are prepared to manage them.

Delayed returns and inconsistent practices of agencies have adverse effects on the recovery and resilience of the impacted community. For example:
- people who choose to stay rather than evacuate being allowed to move about the cordon area while evacuees had to wait considerable time to be allowed in
- the media provided access to show the destruction of homes long before owners were permitted to return home to see the damage for themselves.

Return of evacuees to the impacted area should be managed and co-ordinated on a case by case basis. The type, scale and location of the incident may result in a staged return of people as sectors of the evacuated area are made relatively safe whilst other areas continue to be isolated or restricted. On-going support may be needed for those who have experienced property loss or injury.

The Guidelines for Managing Road Closures during Emergencies, contained in the *SEMP – Part 3 – Guidelines and Frameworks* should be used in planning for a return operation.

Vulnerable People

People with significant health issues and those who care for them, including specific care facilities, face numerous challenges because they may need more time, resources, support and assistance to safely evacuate. Specific care facilities should have existing evacuation plans in place to appropriately plan for and effect evacuations when this is recommended.

There will be vulnerable people who neither identify themselves as vulnerable nor have appropriate support through carers, friends or families to respond appropriately to a decision or direction to evacuate. Evacuation plans need to be flexible to cater for circumstances where these people or groups are identified.

DOCUMENT CONTROL

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