

SUMMER PREPAREDNESS

9 October 2023


Purpose of the document

The Bureau of Meteorology declared that an El Niño and a positive Indian Ocean Dipole are underway. These two climate drivers, typically mean warmer and drier temperatures, leading to an increased fire danger period. This document has been created to provide help to primary care services to be summer prepared and to understand what supports are available from Western Victoria Primary Health Network (WVPHN).

Suggested Actions for Practice/Services

Action	Support and information
Update your emergency response documents	<p>Preferably use the Emergency Response Planning Tool (free to general practices until December) and ensure staff are familiar with it.</p> <p>If using a paper system, store a copy off site.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Principle Medical Practitioner• Practice Manager• Home internet/cloud options• To WVPHN via email emergency.management@westvicphn.com.au <p>This will not only help you to stay focused and respond under pressure but get your business back up and running more quickly</p>
Consider a plan for staying and evacuation	<p>The Preparing a General Practice for a Disaster page in HealthPathways will provide information on how to prepare before a disaster happens.</p> <p>There are also useful links on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preparing Patients for a Disaster• General Practice Management During a Disaster• Post Natural Disaster Health
Consider the role of your practice in an emergency	<p>RACGP's emergency response in general practice document includes tips for practices to consider.</p>
Know the fire rating	<p>Victoria: https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/warnings-restrictions/total-fire-bans-fire-danger-ratings</p> <p>South Australia: South Australia https://www.cfs.sa.gov.au/warnings-restrictions/restrictions/total-fire-bans-ratings/</p>
Safeguard your building	<p>Prepare your site by removing excess rubbish, litter and leaves and keeping your grass short.</p> <p>How to Prepare your Property</p>
Protect your data	<p>Ensure that your practice software is backed up, ideally to the cloud, to reduce the risk of data loss.</p>

	<p>BestPractice – When a disaster strikes</p> <p>MedicalDirector – backup for Clinical/Pracsoft</p> <p>Zedmed – Back up current database</p> <p>Upload patient information to My Health Record:</p> <p>Clinical Software Summary Sheets for My Health Record</p>
Plan for power outages, water supply, gas	Consider alternate power sources in the event of power outages for cold chain management, or clinical record access. Could you relocate vaccine / medicines or access a generator if needed?
Ensure emergency contact details are up to date	So that WVPHN can assist in coordinating support with government agencies during an emergency make sure to let us know who your emergency contacts are via your Practice Facilitator or contacting emergency.management@westvicphn.com.au
Communicate service closures or impacts	Use social media and other platforms. Prepare a message or email to patients using appointment confirmation system if needed. Consider sending other important alerts, for example: to patients with asthma during epidemic thunderstorm asthma days.
	<p>Inform WVPHN of service closures or impacts:</p> <p>emergency.management@westvicphn.com.au</p>
Plan staffing	<p>In the event of no or reduced access to your site or staff absences, consider alternate models of work, alternate sites and equipment needs (ERPT can guide you through these considerations):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it safe for practitioners to work remotely from home? Explore if there are alternate health services or locations that they could work from. • Does the practice have a telehealth platform that practitioners can use remotely? • Are the practitioners set up with ePrescribing so patients can obtain scripts immediately and remotely? Ensure paper scripts/prescribing pads are also available in the event that no internet is available. • Does the practice have an alternate contact number, or can you temporarily divert your practice number, so patients can call if the building is closed, and the phone system is inaccessible? • Can admin and clinical staff access your practice management and clinical software systems off site to facilitate remote models of care? • Ensure clinicians can create pathology and imaging requests if working remotely. <p>Contact WVPHN for training on digital health platforms:</p> <p>digitalhealth@westvicphn.com.au</p>
Plan how to manage emergencies	See RACGP's managing emergencies in general practice: a guide for preparation, response and recovery
Keep up to date with alerts and information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subscribe to Heat and thunderstorm asthma alerts • Incidents and Warnings: https://emergency.vic.gov.au/respond/ • Learn more about bushfires and asthma here

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare for or report gas and electrical outages • Road closures VicRoads - VicTraffic or South Australia Traffic
Have emergency response kits ready	<p>Have you packed your emergency kit?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Torches in event of power outages and spare batteries. • Important documents • N95 Masks for bushfire smoke • Contact lists for all staff and contractors. • Burns kit • Practice mobile, which may provide temporary internet access through mobile data hotspot • Eye wash kit • Respiratory medications – e.g. bronchodilators, tools to deliver • Vulnerable population list of patients ready and handy • Hard copy radiology and pathology requests • Script pads • Water
Join the emergency volunteer list	<p>If you have capacity to support in an emergency event, register your interest with WVPHN:</p> 
Training/ Emergency exercises	<p>Undertake mock training incidents to ensure staff are competent and aware of their roles in the event of an emergency.</p> <p>Summary of plausible scenarios developed</p> <p>Managing Exercises Handbook</p>
Encourage patients to be summer ready	<p>Victoria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire Ready Kit here • Emergency app here • Heatwave readiness here • Thunderstorm Asthma here <p>South Australia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire ready kit https://www.cfs.sa.gov.au/plan-prepare/ • Emergency App https://www.alert.sa.gov.au/ • Heatwave ready here • Thunderstorm Asthma here <p>Advise patients to plan in advance, so they do not run out of medications during an emergency, particularly if they are unable to access the local pharmacy or cannot travel to an alternate location.</p>

Other useful links:

FAQ & Resources from Department Bushfire preparedness presentation 2023

[Using air conditioners when it's smoky outside - Better Health Channel](#)

[after-a-fire-using-your-personal-protective-kit .docx \(live.com\)](#)

[bushfire-guidelines-for-use-face-masks.docx \(live.com\)](#)

[after-a-fire-private-drinking-water-and-water-tank-safety-february-2021.docx \(live.com\)](#)

Resources for Practices

- [Service continuity and emergency events in aged care | Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care](#)
- [CFA Bushfire Plan Leave Early \(2022\).pdf.aspx](#)
- [Your Local Area - Info and Advice | CFA \(Country Fire Authority\)](#)
- Vic Emergency - [Prepare and Get Ready - VicEmergency](#)
- [Subscribe to heat health warnings.](#)
- Survive the heat partner kit [here](#)
- [Emergency preparedness in residential aged care services](#)
- [The role and Inclusion of general practitioners in evacuation centres](#)
- Critical infrastructure industry pre-season preparedness PowerPoints (3 October 2023):
 - [Victorian seasonal outlook](#)
 - [Biosecurity and emergency animal diseases update](#)
- [Quality Improvement and management of Thunderstorm Asthma](#)
- [Checklist for mobile/outreach immunisation clinics or emergency storage of vaccines](#)

Resources to share with patients

- [My Health Record](#)
- Alternative after hours and emergency care: [After Hours | Western Victoria Primary Health Network \(westvicphn.com.au\)](#) (Page under review October 2023)
- [Survive the heat](#)
- [Heat related illness and preventing heatstroke](#)
- [How to cope and stay safe in extreme heat](#)
- [Bushfires and asthma](#)
- [Smoke and your health](#)
- [Air quality](#)
- Road closures – [Victoria](#) and [South Australia](#)
- [Bureau of Meteorology](#)
- [Better Health Channel bushfire fact sheets and advice](#)

Contact us

For more information or support, email:

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