EMERGENCY AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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EMERGENCY AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy and procedure is to ensure the safety of staff, consumers and others during emergencies and other service interruptions. It ensures that Bilingual Care is fully prepared for, able to respond to, and can recover from emergencies and disasters in a manner that protects the health, safety, and wellbeing of consumers, their families and supporters, and staff.

This policy and procedure establishes a coordinated, risk-based approach for prevention, preparedness, response and recovery that includes both Bilingual Care's premises as well as individual consumer planning and support, as appropriate.

It applies to all staff, consumers and their families/supporters, and other stakeholders involved in emergency planning and response. It meets relevant legislation, regulations, and Standards and should be read in conjunction with Bilingual Care's *Work Health and Safety Policy and Procedure*.

Applicable Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards

- *Standard 2. The Organisation*

Definitions

Altering or Ceasing Services – services may at times need to be altered or ceased due to emergencies. This may be due to direct risk or impact on the location itself or because travel in the area is considered too unsafe.

Catastrophic Fire Danger Day – the highest fire danger rating in Australia. These are the most dangerous conditions for a fire. If a fire starts and takes hold, lives are likely to be lost.[1]

Continuity of Care - maintaining safe, quality care during and after an emergency event. This includes planning for disruptions such as staff shortages, infrastructure failures, and access restrictions, to support consumer's ongoing safety, health and wellness.

Disaster - a severe or widespread event, such as a natural hazard (e.g. flood, fire, storm, cyclone), infrastructure failure (e.g. electricity, phones/internet, transport services down), or public health emergency (e.g. disease outbreak, animal plagues) that significantly impacts the organisation's ability to deliver safe and continuous care. Disasters can cause prolonged disruption and require coordinated, multi-agency response and recovery actions.

[1] Australian Fire Danger Rating System, 2026, *Australian Fire Danger Rating System*, AFDRS, accessed 20 February 2026, https://afdrs.com.au

Emergency - any sudden, unexpected or imminent event (e.g. accident, injury or illness, physical threats to people or property) that requires an urgent response to protect the health, safety and wellbeing of older people, aged care workers, visitors or the organisation's operations. Emergencies may disrupt normal service delivery and require activation of emergency procedures, such as calling '000' as soon as possible.

Emergency and Disaster Management Plan – a documented, organisation-wide plan that outlines how the provider and its workforce will respond to emergencies and disasters, maintain continuity of care, manage high-impact risks, communicate with consumers and families, and coordinate with emergency services and external partners. It must be regularly reviewed, practiced/tested, and updated.

Emergency and Disaster Planning – identification of potential events that could have a negative effect on an organisation and/or its services, and the actions that can be taken to minimise the impact or extent of damage.

Evacuation – the urgent movement of people (and pets where safe and practical) to a safer location in response to an imminent threat or impact of an emergency. An evacuation without warning is resource intensive and potentially detrimental to the health of participants, staff, and emergency services personnel. The main priority when deciding to evacuate is the protection of life. An evacuation must be effectively planned and executed.

Extreme Fire Danger Day – the second-highest fire danger rating in Australia. These are dangerous fire conditions. Fires will spread quickly and be extremely dangerous.[2]

Extreme Heat or Heatwave – a period of unusual and uncomfortable hot weather that could negatively affect human health. Extreme heat can also affect community infrastructure (such as power supply and public transport) and other services. Extreme heat can affect everyone, however some people, including older people, are more vulnerable.

Leaving Early – the practice of relocating well in advance of an emergency. This activity is undertaken by households in response to a range of triggers such as a weather forecast or flood warning.

Organisational Resilience – the ability of a business to rapidly respond to and recover from emergencies, critical disruptions, or threats, and continue operating with limited impact on service delivery.

Recovery - the actions taken after an emergency or disaster to restore normal operations, support the physical and emotional wellbeing of participants and staff, review impacts, and implement improvements to strengthen future preparedness.

Relocation – the planned movement of participants and an appropriate number of staff from a facility or home to alternative accommodation with a similar type of care available, in response to a forecast or warning of potential or actual emergency.

Shelter Indoors – to remain inside a building and limit the exposure to unhealthy conditions in the air outside such as gas leaks, smoke, and other air contaminants. On receiving advice to shelter indoors, people must go indoors immediately, close all doors and windows, turn off heaters, air conditioners and exhaust fans, and listen to radio or television or monitor emergency services websites for the "all clear" message.

[2] Australian Fire Danger Rating System, 2026, *Australian Fire Danger Rating System*, AFDRS, accessed 20 February 2026, https://afdrs.com.au

Shelter in Place – to remain on site within an existing facility or home during an emergency. The decision to shelter in place is based on information from a variety of sources that confirms this option is safer or more appropriate than relocation or evacuation. The movement of participants from one facility or home to another safer building within the same location is also considered shelter in place.

Vulnerable Person – someone living in the community who is:

- older, frail, and/or physically, intellectually, or cognitively impaired and
- unable to comprehend warnings and directions and/or respond in an emergency[3].

Policy

Bilingual Care plans for emergencies and disasters to protect the safety, health, and wellbeing of consumers and staff before, during and after an emergency or disaster, and to ensure consumers have access to supports without interruption.

Engaging with consumers, their families and supporters, helps to ensure everyone understands the organisation's emergency and disaster arrangements. Bilingual Care is committed to:

- supporting consumers to develop personal preparedness strategies, including plans related to communication, medications, equipment, mobility, and continuity of care
- involving consumers, their families, and supporters in the regular review and testing of emergency and disaster plans, and
- providing clear, timely, and accessible information before, during, and after an emergency event to ensure safety and well-being, and to provide reassurance to consumers and their support network.

Bilingual Care will ensure essential services are maintained as far as is practicable and that full services are recommenced as soon as possible after an emergency or disaster to minimise disruption.

Procedures

Roles and Responsibilities

The **Leadership Team** is responsible for:

- ensuring Bilingual Care develops and maintains comprehensive emergency and disaster management plans that describe organisational and workforce responses to emergencies
- providing adequate resources (workforce, training, equipment, systems) to support preparedness and service continuity
- reviewing reports on drills, incidents, and emergency responses and ensuring continuous improvement
- ensuring Bilingual Care's consumers, their families and supporters, staff and relevant external partners are embedded in emergency planning and review processes

[3] Department of Families, Fairness and Housing 2025, *Vulnerable People in Emergencies Policy*, Victorian Government, Melbourne, accessed 20 February 2026, https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/people-at-risk-emergencies-policy

The **Managing Director** is responsible for:

- conducting risk assessments and ensuring strategies are in place for high-impact risks that may affect service continuity
- implementing training, communication processes, and resource readiness across teams
- participating in emergency drills, scenario testing, and post-event debriefs, ensuring learnings inform continuous improvement actions
- ensuring staff, consumers, and their families/supporters understand emergency procedures and know what to do in an emergency or disaster situation
- following Bilingual Care's *Emergency and Disaster Management Plan* during an event, which may include communicating with emergency services and external support partners during emergency events, as appropriate.
- coordinating all aspects of the *Emergency and Disaster Management Plan*, including updates, reviews, and reporting to the Leadership Team
- maintaining emergency equipment, documentation, contact lists, and resource inventories
- liaising with emergency services, local authorities, and external partners to ensure alignment with community-level emergency arrangements
- coordinating regular tests and drills (at minimum annually) that involve consumers, their families and supporters, staff and external stakeholders where possible, and
- leading post-event evaluations and monitoring implementation of corrective actions.

Staff are responsible for:

- understand their roles during an emergency and follow the procedures outlined in the *Emergency and Disaster Management Plan*
- actively participate in emergency and disaster management, training, testing and drills coordinated by Bilingual Care
- ensure all consumer information, including contact details for the consumer and consumers' support networks, are up to date and easily accessible
- consider consumers' needs in a range of possible emergency events and notify the Managing Director if a new hazard, risks, or change in consumer needs may affect emergency preparedness
- communicate promptly with the Managing Director during incidents/events, including issues such as access disruptions, staffing shortages, or equipment needs, and suggesting potential alternative plans for consumers if service delivery is interrupted
- encourage consumers living independently to develop their own personal emergency plan (documented in *Care Plans* and using *Emergency Planning Guides* where appropriate)
- support consumers during emergencies, ensuring their safety, dignity, and wellbeing and to follow their *Emergency Planning Guides*
- notify consumers and their support networks where relevant, of all relocations and service cessations or alterations related to emergencies and disasters, as directed by Bilingual Care or emergency services.

Associated Providers and **Subcontractors** are responsible for:

- aligning with Bilingual Care's *Emergency and Disaster Management Plan* and ensuring their own emergency and disaster arrangements are compatible with Bilingual Care's Plan. This includes understanding how the provider and its workers are expected to respond in different emergency scenarios.
- notifying Bilingual Care of risks that may affect continuity of care (including service interruptions, staffing constraints, or delayed access to consumers), and working together on strategies to reduce high-impact risks
- maintaining service continuity during emergency events wherever possible,

particularly where their services are essential to health, safety, or daily living supports.
- having clear and timely communication with Bilingual Care during emergencies, including notification of:
    - service impacts
    - capacity changes
    - delays or access limitations
    - safety concerns relating to service delivery
- participating in emergency planning discussions, drills, simulations, and post-incident reviews, as relevant to their role/services
- ensuring their workers are trained and capable of meeting their responsibilities during emergencies, including understanding:
    - evacuation or shelter-in-place procedures
    - communication protocols
    - risk reporting requirements
    - safety obligations when entering consumer environments
- reporting promptly any incident, hazard, or situation that may compromise safety or disrupt care delivery as per Bilingual Care's *Associated Providers Policy and Procedure* and *Incident Management Policies and Procedures*, and
- where associated providers interface with emergency services (e.g. transport providers, home-maintenance contractors), cooperating with emergency responders and support coordinated actions during an event.

Consumers are encouraged to:
- contribute to the development and review of Bilingual Care's *Emergency and Disaster Management Plan*, where appropriate
- participate in preparedness activities such as updating personal emergency information, discussing individual needs with staff to create a personalised *Emergency Planning Guide*, and engage in drills when appropriate.
- report concerns about their safety, environment, or changes in risk to the Managing Director.

As valued partners in emergency preparedness and response, **Family and Supporters** of consumers (with consent of the consumer) are responsible for:
- engaging in discussions about individual emergency preparedness plans for the consumer they support
- providing relevant information on consumers' needs and preferences that may affect emergency planning, and
- supporting communication during emergencies when appropriate and feasible.

External Response Partners (e.g. Emergency Services, community organisations, other providers) while not internal roles, play a crucial part in emergency response and collaboration. Their roles include:
- providing emergency response, advice, and support to protect consumers and staff
- participating in joint planning or review activities when appropriate, and
- supporting coordinated evacuation, transport, communication, or recovery activities during major incidents or disaster events.

Emergency and Disaster Planning

Bilingual Care must take an 'all hazards' approach when preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergencies and disasters. This includes planning for a range of possible emergencies and disasters such as fire, bushfire, flood, relocation, evacuation, and prolonged service interruption.

The Leadership Team will prepare, test, and annually review an *Emergency and Disaster Management Plan* for Bilingual Care, in consultation with all relevant staff, consumers and consumers' support networks.

The *Emergency and Disaster Management Plan*, or a summary of key elements of the plan, must be readily accessible by staff and on display in Bilingual Care's premises.

The *Emergency and Disaster Management Plan* must explain and guide how the Leadership Team will respond to, and oversee the response to, an emergency or disaster. It must include:

- contact details for key staff who have specific roles or responsibilities under the plan, for example, contingency planning, fire wardens and first aid officers
- contact details for local emergency services (e.g., police, fire brigade and poison information centre) and medical assistance
- how replacement staff will be identified, sourced, and inducted should workforce disruptions occur in an emergency or disaster
- a description of how people will be alerted to an emergency or possible emergency,
- a map of Bilingual Care's workplace, illustrating the location of fire protection equipment, emergency exits and assembly points
- evacuation procedures, including arrangements for assisting any people with hearing, vision, or mobility impairment
- how Bilingual Care will adapt, and rapidly respond, to changes to consumer supports that are required because of an emergency, disaster, or other service interruption. This includes how changes will be made and communicated to staff, consumers and consumers' support networks
- testing of emergency procedures, including the frequency of testing and
- information, training, and instruction to staff on implementing the Plan.

The *Emergency and Disaster Management Plan* must be tailored to the business' location and circumstances and be based on consultation with local health and emergency services, as well as staff, consumers, and consumers' support networks.

In the event of an emergency or disaster, Bilingual Care's *Emergency and Disaster Management Plan* must be implemented. Directions from emergency services workers must also be complied with.

The Leadership Team will review Bilingual Care's *Emergency and Disaster Management Plan*, in consultation with staff, consumers and consumers' support networks, at least annually. It will also review the Plan:

- when there are changes to the workplace such as re-location or refurbishments
- when there are changes in the number or composition of staff including an increase in the use of temporary contractors
- when new activities have been introduced and
- after the plan has been tested (see also *Testing and Drills* in Operational Readiness section below).

Upon development of the *Emergency and Disaster Management Plan*, and after each review, Bilingual Care will communicate any changes as soon as practicable to all staff, consumers, and consumers' support networks.

Emergency Evacuation Plans

The Managing Director must also prepare and regularly review *Emergency Evacuation Plans*

for how people should evacuate Bilingual Care's premises, including where they should assemble if there is an emergency. Reviews should consider the choices, safety, rights, and feedback of consumers, whilst also managing Bilingual Care's need to manage risk. Where there are changes to *Emergency Evacuation Plans*, these must be promptly communicated to staff and other stakeholders who access the premises.

Emergency Evacuation Plans must be displayed prominently in Bilingual Care's premises. Each Plan must clearly indicate its current location, where the exits are and where the assembly area is. This information must also be included in staff Inductions and consumer intakes.

Operational Readiness

The Leadership Team must ensure Bilingual Care is prepared to rapidly respond in the event of an emergency or disaster. This includes:

- having an *Emergency and Disaster Management Plan* in place
- ensuring the *Emergency and Disaster Management Plan* is tested and linked to broader community emergency frameworks
- actively engaging with local emergency service agencies and local government about how to respond in different emergencies
- regularly testing emergency and disaster management and evacuation procedures
- being prepared to make informed decisions about staff and consumer safety and whether to cease or change services, relocate staff or consumers, or direct staff and consumers to shelter indoors
- considering how support for consumers can be continued if services need to be altered or ceased in an emergency
- planning how to respond if critical infrastructure (e.g., Ezihealth) fails during an emergency, such as power failures
- ensuring staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities in the event of an emergency
- ensuring all relevant contact details (such as staff, consumers, consumers' support networks, emergency services, and relevant government agencies) are up to date and available and
- training staff to implement the *Emergency and Disaster Management Plan*, ensuring they are equipped to address individual consumer needs.

Testing and Drills

Emergency and evacuation procedures must be practised with all staff at least annually, which also complies with fire safety and building requirements.

The Managing Director will coordinate testing of emergency and disaster arrangements through activities such as desktop exercises, evacuation drills, communication tests, and scenario-based simulations. Testing will be conducted in partnership with older people, their families and supporters, staff, and where appropriate, emergency services and other response partners as appropriate.

Bilingual Care will also undertake other drills throughout the year, utilising different scenarios as part of the drills, e.g., fire, flood, bomb threat, mass illness. The Managing Director will document who attended the exercise, who conducted the exercise and the date it was conducted, which will be kept with organisational records.

Outcomes from each drill will be documented, evaluated, and incorporated into continuous improvement processes using Bilingual Care's *Continuous Improvement Plan*. Consumers,

their families and supporters, staff and relevant external partners will be actively involved in the review process (through feedback and complaints and surveys) to ensure plans reflect lived experience, diverse needs, and localised risks.

The Managing Director will report any improvements or changes required as a result of testing or drills to the Leadership Team to support transparency, accountability, and compliance.

Obtaining Emergency Information

In the event of an emergency or disaster, the Managing Director will obtain information about current and forecast conditions from radio, television, the internet and Bilingual Care's local networks.

Agencies such as the Bureau of Meteorology[4] (weather forecasts), the State Emergency Service (floods and storms), Fire and Rescue services (fires and bushfires) and the Police monitor forecast hazards and provide advice and warnings.

For any high risk or high needs consumers, the Managing Director will also contact local emergency services to advise of the situation and potential support that may be needed.

Fire Safety

The Managing Director must ensure that fire equipment is installed, suitable for risks specific to Bilingual Care's workplace and readily accessible in accordance with the relevant Australian Standards. Fire extinguishers must be placed away from heat sources and regularly maintained, with at least 1 metre of clearance to access the extinguisher.

Signage within Bilingual Care's premises must assist people to find fire equipment quickly and identify what type of fire it can be used on.

Bilingual Care will determine which staff require training in the use of first response procedures and fire equipment, based on the nature of their position and on risk assessment. Refresher training will be provided annually.

The Managing Director must ensure fire equipment is regularly tested by Bilingual Care's local fire authority or fire equipment supplier in accordance with *Schedule 2. Internal Review and External Audit Checklist*.

Emergency exits must be kept clear at all times. Emergency doors must be kept unlocked and unblocked and all exit signs must be maintained and kept illuminated.

<u>Catastrophic and Extreme Fire Danger Days</u>

Catastrophic and Extreme Fire Danger ratings forecast the worst conditions for bushfires. Catastrophic and Extreme Fire Danger Days may pose a significant risk to Bilingual Care's consumers.

Ceasing and relocating services are required on or the day before forecast Catastrophic Fire Danger Days.

[4] The Bureau of Meteorology 2026, *Discover Your Weather*, Australian Government, accessed 20 February 2026, http://www.bom.gov.au/

Bilingual Care must monitor fire weather forecasts and fire danger ratings and prepare to enact its *Emergency and Disaster Management Plan* and any related Bushfire Survival Plans as necessary.

Power Failure

Power failures can be common and unexpected so the *Emergency and Disaster Management Plan* should include a plan to ensure supports can continue to be provided during a power failure. Strategies include:

- having access to a phone, such as a charged mobile phone or land line that does not rely on electricity to operate
- having access to alternate lighting, such as a torch or a battery-operated light
- having access to a battery-powered radio
- having access to fresh water
- considering the safety of food supplies and alternative cooking arrangements if the electricity in a consumer's residence has an outage, including a plan for consumers who require vitamised meals
- where consumers require an uninterrupted power supply (for instance, for life support equipment) considering how they can be supported (such as contacting their electricity retailer and ensuring the retailer has the consumer's up-to-date contact details), or letting the consumer's support network know to do the same and
- if a consumer's medication may have been compromised, contact the Managing Director to organise new medication to be dispensed.

Extreme Weather

The *Emergency and Disaster Management Plan* should also plan for extreme weather (such as extreme heat or cold) that is likely to occur where Bilingual Care supports are delivered. The plan should help staff identify which consumers are most at risk and the support they may require.

To support consumers on extreme heat days or during heatwaves, staff must be aware of the following:

- which consumers are most at risk
- how to assist consumers to reduce the risk of heat related illnesses
- how to recognise heat related symptoms and
- what to do if a consumer is heat affected.

On days above 30 degrees Celsius, staff should encourage consumers to:

- drink plenty of water, even if they do not feel thirsty
- spend as much time as possible in cool or air-conditioned buildings (shopping centres, libraries, or community centres)
- wear light-coloured, loose-fitting clothing
- stay out of the sun during the hottest part of the day
- wear a hat and apply sunscreen
- avoid alcohol and caffeine
- close curtains or blinds to block out the sun and
- use wet towels and cold foot baths to cool themselves down.

Similarly, for days above 30 degrees Celsius staff are encouraged to have discussions with consumers about suitable activities based on their circumstances and support needs. Where required, they should avoid strenuous activity, cancel, or postpone outings.

Bilingual Care also requires all staff to follow the same precautions when working on hot days to ensure their health and wellbeing is maintained.

Organisational Resilience

In addition to planning for the safety and wellbeing of staff and consumers in an emergency, Bilingual Care's emergency planning is also based on strengthening its organisational resilience – or building the business' capacity to continue providing necessary services during emergencies.

To support this, Bilingual Care undertakes organisational risk assessments related to business continuity and emergency and disaster management and recovery. It also develops specific *Business Continuity Plans* to complement its emergency planning activities. See the *Risk Management Policy and Procedure* for more detail.

Consumer Readiness

Bilingual Care's services may need to be changed, ceased, or relocated in the event of an emergency, disaster, or other service interruption. Support planning for all consumers must consider how services can continue to be provided in these situations. This includes, for instance, considering how changes to services will be communicated to consumers and their support networks, and alternative supports that could be provided should Bilingual Care be unable to deliver normal services.

To support the planning and delivery of services during an emergency or disaster event, Bilingual Care will develop a *Consumer and Services Prioritisation Matrix* to help identify and prioritise consumers based on their essential needs and services.

Consumers receiving services in their home will be encouraged and supported to develop personal emergency plans that cater for all types of emergencies and address their needs.

Bilingual Care staff will support consumers with personal emergency planning in the following situations:

- where Bilingual Care provides most supports required by a consumer, and these supports are provided in the consumer's home
- where multiple providers support the consumer and it is agreed by all providers and the consumer that Bilingual Care will support the consumer with personal emergency planning and/or
- where assessment and planning activities identify that the consumer requires support with personal emergency planning.

Staff will support consumers to exercise choice and control in emergency planning by listening to their needs and preferences and involving them and their support networks in the planning process. Where consumers agree, the Managing Director will work with them and their family and supporters to develop an *Emergency Planning Guide*, which can be completed together and kept in a location easily accessible to the consumer.

Key considerations include:

- health needs
- transportation
- supports that are critical to the consumers' health, safety, and wellbeing
- location of the consumer's home with respect to fire or flood risks and
- ensuring emergency information is available and relevant for the consumer.

Personal emergency management plans should:

- be appropriate to the location, physical environment and consumer and staff profile
- include planned emergency responses for different emergency situations, such as options for altering or ceasing services, relocation, sheltering and evacuation
- include clear triggers for when the plan is activated, including processes for maintaining situational awareness and sourcing accurate and up-to-date information
- be tailored to meet the culturally and linguistically diverse needs of consumers, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities, to ensure a culturally responsive approach
- outline clear authority for decision making and communication arrangements and
- include arrangements for continuity of supports and options should emergency services be unable to respond immediately.

Personal emergency plans should be reviewed and updated regularly as part of the consumer's *Care Plan* reviews.

For services provided to a consumer in their own home (whether rented or owned by the consumer), Bilingual Care expects that they (and where appropriate, the owner of the home) will be responsible for their own fire safety and ensure the home meets all relevant building laws, regulations, and legislation, such as the installation of smoke detectors/alarms.

Reporting

Incidents relating to emergencies and service interruptions should be reported in accordance with Bilingual Care's *Incident Management* policies and procedures.

Supporting Documents

Documents relevant to this policy and procedure include:

- *Work Health and Safety Policy and Procedure*
- *Risk Management Policy and Procedure*
- *Workplace Incident Management Policy and Procedure*
- *Consumer Incident Management Policy and Procedure*
- *Schedule 2. Internal Review and External Audit Checklist*
- *Emergency and Disaster Management Plan*
- *Emergency Evacuation Plans*
- *Business Continuity Plans*
- *Consumer and Services Prioritisation Matrix*
- *Consumer Emergency Planning Guide*
- *Care Plans*
- *Continuous Improvement Plan*

Monitoring and Review

This Policy and Procedure will be reviewed at least annually by the Leadership Team. Reviews will incorporate staff, consumer, and other stakeholder feedback, and assess the adequacy, accuracy, and practicality of procedures, communication pathways, training requirements, and resource allocations.

Additionally, formal reviews of Bilingual Care's *Emergency and Disaster Management Plan* will occur:

- after any emergency or disaster event, including small-scale incidents that necessitate activation of emergency procedures
- following scheduled drills, exercises, or simulations conducted to test the plan's effectiveness and
- when there are significant changes to service operations, workforce arrangements, facility infrastructure, or external risk profiles.

Emergency and Disaster Management Plan reviews may also trigger a review of this Policy and Procedure.

Bilingual Care's *Continuous Improvement Plan* will be used to record improvements identified and monitor the progress of their implementation. Where relevant, this information will be considered as part of Bilingual Care's service planning and delivery processes.

DOCUMENT CONTROL

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