



French Island

Emergency Management Plan

JANUARY 2018

Acknowledgment of Country

EMV acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of the land. EMV also acknowledges and pays respect to the Elders, past and present and is committed to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to achieve a shared vision of safer and more resilient communities.

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Foreword

This plan is a result of the co-operative efforts of the French Island Working Group (FIWG), a multi-agency and community working group comprised of Ambulance Victoria (AV), Country Fire Authority (CFA), Department of Education and Training (DET), Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic), Parks Victoria (PV), Emergency Management Victoria (EMV), Victoria Police (VicPol), Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES) and the French Island Community Association (FICA).

The FIWG have collaborated to develop a shared understanding of their respective roles and capabilities and how to best support each other in responding to a diverse range of emergencies on French Island.

This Plan outlines the background, context and general management arrangements for responding to emergencies on French Island, ranging from a single incident to more complex, major emergencies.

It helps provide a general understanding of the resource and access challenges for responding to emergencies and details general arrangements that can be utilised to support existing processes and procedures for response.

In considering the restricted resourcing and access limitations that apply to French Island, this document details the planning arrangements to support a local response for all types of emergencies.

This is in accordance with the requirements of the Emergency Management Act, the Emergency Management Manual of Victoria and in applying the State Control priorities.

This plan is available to the community on the FICA website: www.frenchislandinfo.com.

The French Island Emergency Management Plan has been endorsed by the Southern Metropolitan Regional Emergency Management Planning Committee (SMREMP). This plan will be reviewed annually.

The Emergency Context

French Island in Westernport Bay is a unique locality in Victoria that is home to just over 100 residents with approximately 6000 visitors a year. It remains isolated from the mainland, approximately two kilometres away at its closest point. It has no connecting road, causeway or bridge.

Access to the Island is only possible by water or air. There is no mains power, water, or other utilities. The main roads are unsealed and there is no public transport.

French Island also remains an unincorporated area that is not within the jurisdiction of a municipal council to provide local services and infrastructure.

Parks Victoria has an established office on the Island and provide the only government agency presence.

CFA remains the only emergency response service with a dedicated presence on the Island.

These restrictions to access and resources for emergency services and other agencies can affect a timely response for all emergencies.

Under Victoria's emergency management arrangements councils have the legislated responsibility for developing and maintaining a municipal emergency management plan in partnership with local emergency services, government/non-government agencies and the local community. These plans detail local emergency risk mitigation, preparedness, response and relief and recovery strategies, arrangements and services to minimise the impacts to the community from emergencies. The local arrangements link in to emergency management planning arrangements at regional and state level.

In Victoria, an emergency response commences at the local level and can escalate to the regional level as the scale of the event advances.

The remoteness of French Island, the absence of local government, a regular police presence

and limited availability of other government services and onsite resources can contribute to the escalation of an emergency response to emergencies such as a road accident or medical emergency to a multi-agency level.

The resident community on French Island is aware of these resource limitations and access challenges and remain proactive to support each other as best they can.

Conversely, visitors and tourists often have limited awareness of the Island's resources and capacity to respond in the event of an emergency.

Current advice from Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, VICSES and CFA is they each respond to approximately six emergency incidents on French Island per year. Access to and travelling across French Island remains a common issue for the emergency services and government agencies without a dedicated presence on the Island.

There is a need to develop integrated and coordinated emergency planning arrangements to support an effective response to emergency incidents on French Island between the emergency services, government agencies and the community.

Victoria Police will play a leading role for coordinating a multi-agency response to emergencies on French Island through the planning arrangements detailed in this Plan.

Purpose



This plan describes the arrangements in which the emergency services, government agencies and community will work together in an integrated and coordinated way to provide an effective response and minimise the impact of emergencies on French Island.

Objectives



IDENTIFY collaborative preparedness, response and relief and recovery arrangements for supporting an effective response to and minimising the impact from emergency incidents affecting French Island

SUPPORT emergency preparedness, response and relief and recovery activities for a single or multi-agency response to emergency incidents from the mainland

PROVIDE consistency and guidance for coordinating an emergency response

COORDINATE arrangements for utilising local resources in support of the emergency response to an emergency on French Island

MANAGE support that may be provided from adjoining municipalities and other agencies

ASSIST the French Island community with emergency preparedness planning

RAISE AWARENESS of the broader community visiting French Island of the restricted resource and access challenges for responding to emergencies

ENSURE CONSISTENCY with other local, regional and state planning arrangements

OUTLINE the outcomes of the planning process conducted by the French Island Working Group

Activation



The arrangements in this plan are supported by established regional and state emergency management arrangements.

Area description



General information (source PV and EMV)

French Island in Western Port Bay is a unique, nature based locality, which is in close proximity to Melbourne but at the same time remains quite remote, as a result of restricted access by water or air, with no road, causeway or bridge connecting it to the mainland. French Island is two kilometres from the mainland at its closest point.

The Island is sparsely populated, with just over 100 residents, and no township or significantly built up areas. There is no public transport and only one small general store/post office.

French Island National Park on the northern side occupies about two thirds of the Island (11,000 of 17,000 hectares) with the remainder to the south being mainly open farmland and grasslands.

All roads and tracks on the Island are unsealed and some are subject to seasonal closures or restricted access requiring 4WD vehicles.

There is a lack of utility services on the Island, there is no mains electricity, reticulated water, sewage, gas or fuel.

French Island has almost no beaches with much of the coast consisting of mangrove swamp with large stretches only accessible by water. There are restricted recreation opportunities compared to other national parks. Constraints such as its relative isolation and sensitive eco systems make it unsuitable for intensive recreational use. The main recreation activities are walking, cycling, camping and nature and heritage study.

Climate (source PV and EMV)

The region has mild to warm summers with an average maximum temperature of around 22 to 24°C near the coast and in the ranges to the east. In winter, average maximum temperatures are around 12 to 14°C and frosts occur inland, but are rare near the coast. The annual rainfall average across the region is 864 millimetres. Generally, rainfall is greatest in winter and spring. On average there are 135 days each year where at least one millimetre of rain falls.

Main recreation activities are walking, cycling, camping and nature and heritage study.

Access

(source EMV and FFMVic)

French Island can only be accessed by water or air.

The Island is currently reliant on the Tankerton Jetty – Stony Point passenger ferry and the Corinella – French Island barge, which is docked at French Island.

The Ferry operates from Stony Point daily, however on days where a wind warning has been issued or the winds across Western Port Bay exceed 35km/h the ferry does not operate.

In situations where staff and visitors have travelled to the Island and winds have subsequently increased past the threshold for the ferry to operate, they must seek informal/alternative arrangements to return to the mainland or stay at accommodation on the Island overnight.

The Corinella – French Island barge is the only current option for vehicles and heavy equipment on and off the Island and operates under the following constraints:

- It does not operate on Thursdays or during low tide (up to 6 hours, twice per day)
- It can only take two vehicles at one time or one large vehicle
- Each trip to and from the Island takes approximately 45 minutes

Visitors to the Island have limited transport options on arrival. There is no public transport available, other than what can be booked through commercial operators. Visitors to French Island National Park can only access the park on foot or bicycle, as the roads within the park are 'management vehicle only' tracks protected at all entry points by locked gates.

Emergency responders arriving from the mainland by passenger ferry are also faced with the same transport limitations. This is also an issue for the Air Ambulance if unable to land in close proximity to retrieve patients for a medical emergency. This issue can be further exacerbated by potential extreme weather events, such as fog for aircraft, which can delay any air and water response.

Additional access arrangements have been considered by the FIWG in cooperation with each other as part of their preparedness planning. This includes additional support provided through the State Air Desk and Victoria Police – Water Police Rescue Coordination Centre for movement of staff and equipment by air and water.

These additional arrangements do not guarantee similar levels of response available on the mainland as French Island is still a remote site.



Based on the 2016 census the population of French Island was 119 and is comprised of approximately 47% females and 53% males. The average age of the people living on French Island is 56 years of age.

Demography (source FICA and DHHS)

Based on the 2016 census the population of French Island was 119 and is comprised of approximately 47% females and 53% males. The average age of the people living on French Island is 56 years of age.

Based on the 2011 census 90.3% of people living on French Island were born in Australia, other countries of birth were 5.3% Italy and 4.4% England. 89.7% of people living on French Island speak English only. The other top languages spoken are 2.6% Italian, 2.6% German, 2.6% Greek and 2.6% Japanese.

57.4% of the people living on French Island over the age of 15 and who identify as being in the labour force are employed full time, 35.2% are working on a part time basis. French Island has an unemployment rate of 7.4%. The main occupations of people living on French Island are 62% managers, 24% professionals, 8% community and personal service workers and 6% labourers.

The main industries people from French Island work in are 40.4% agriculture, forestry and fishing, 23.1% education and training, 11.5% health care and social assistance, 7.7% wholesale trade, 5.8% construction, 5.8% arts and recreation services and 5.8% retail trade.

70.2% of homes are fully owned, and 29.8% are in the process of being purchased by home loan mortgage.

There are approximately 6000 visitors to the National Park throughout the year which is considered relatively low compared to other national parks.

The French Island National Park has one public campsite, Fairhaven Campground, which is located on the western shoreline of the Island, on Coast Road around five kilometres north of Tankerton Jetty. The Fairhaven Campground provides for up to a maximum of 20 individual campers, however during peak summer periods, there is potential for more than 20 individuals to camp at the site as there is no current booking or permit system. The campsite operates on a first in/first served basis. The Campground has a composting toilet on site and water can be accessed via a small rainwater tank, it is not suitable for drinking purposes without proper treatment.

Perseverance Primary School (source DET)

The Perseverance Primary School located on Centreway Road, French Island was first established in 1896 and moved to its present site in 1984. During 1997, Perseverance Primary School was annexed to be administered by Crib Point Primary School. This hub annexe arrangement details that all of the administration of the school is handled by the hub school. As an annexe school it receives all of the benefits administratively of a larger school and still retains the viability and autonomy of a small school. Perseverance Primary School has its own school council which is made up of all parents of the school's students.

The school has excellent facilities including a modern shaded playground, a new art room and a kitchen, a substantial cubby house, chook shed and a vegetable garden. There is a computer workstation for each child and fibre optic internet connection. There are currently 16 children enrolled in Grades Prep, One and Two.

Further detailed information including emergency management planning arrangements are provided by the Department of Education and Training.

Community assembly points (source CFA, FFMVic and FICA)

The following key community assembly points have been identified by the FIWG from the CFA's local response operational plan:

- Tankerton Jetty, Tankerton Road
(passenger ferry landing site)
- Point Leschenault Jetty, Barge Access Road
(barge landing site)
- French Island Community Hall and Oval,
221 Tankerton Road

Assets and values

Perseverance Primary School – 49 The Causeway

Fairhaven Camp Ground – up to 30 campers – 445 Coast Road

French Island General Store – 289 Tankerton Road

Telephone Exchange – behind General Store

Telstra Radio Link – Tankerton Road near Harrops Hill

French Island Eco-Inn (Guest House) – up to 50 guests – 10 Tankerton Road

Point Leschenault Jetty (Barge Landing site) – Barge Access Road

CFA Fire Station – 219 Tankerton Road

French Island Community Hall – 221 Tankerton Road

Parks Victoria Office – 120 Bayview Road

Tankerton Creek Bridge – Coast Road

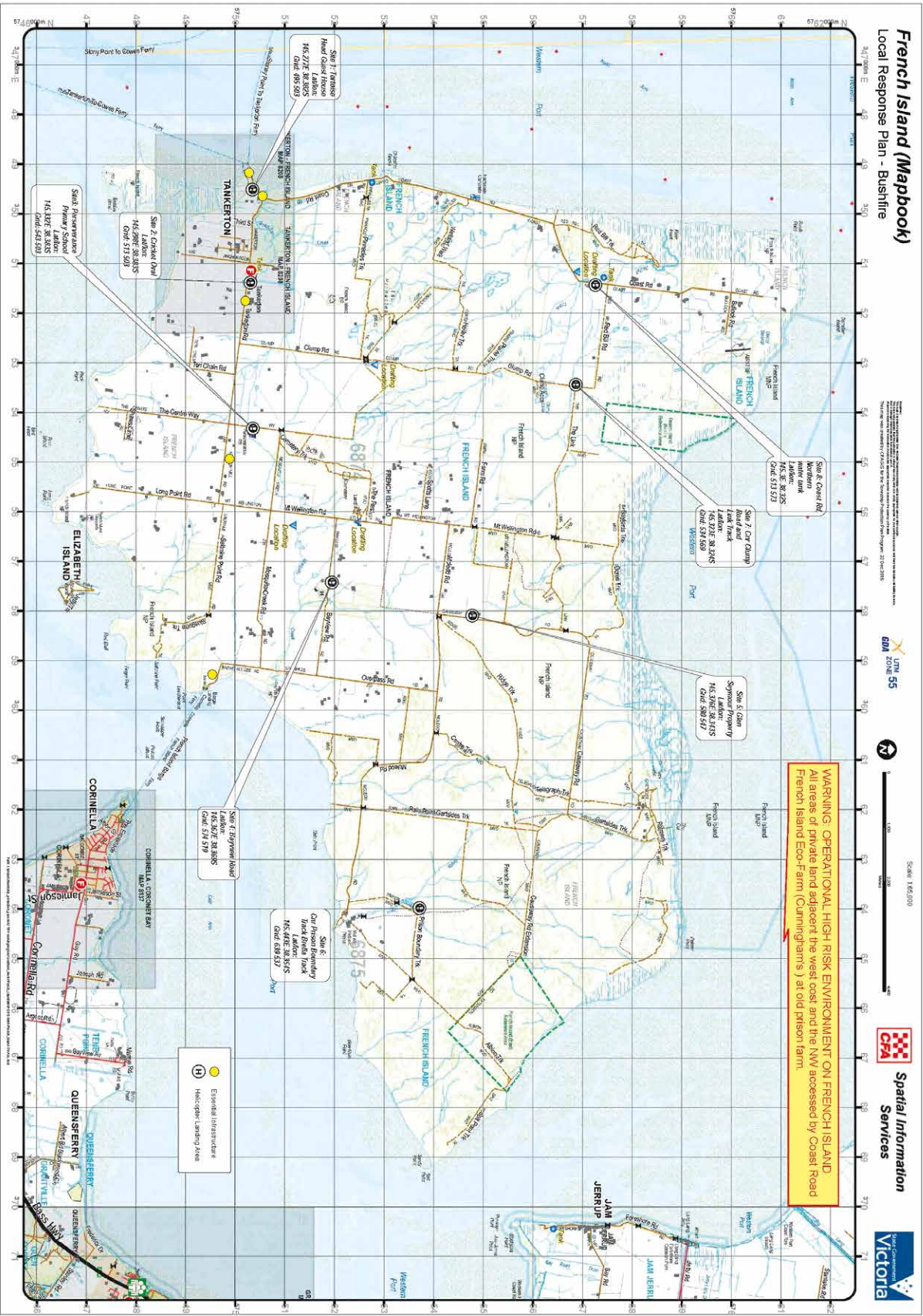
French Island Glamping – up to 20 guests – Barge Landing Road

Bayview Chicory Kilns – up to 15 campers – 59 Bayview Road



Source: Parks Victoria Visitor information board – French Island

Map



Source: CFA Local Response Plan

Recent history of emergencies

AGENCY	EMERGENCY EVENT
Ambulance Victoria	<p>There are approximately six reported ambulance responses and extractions per year on French Island since 2009. There are an estimated additional eight to 12 responses per year called in once a patient arrives on the mainland from the Island.</p>
Forest Fire Management Victoria	<p>Since 1991 there have been 25 reported fires on French Island that FFMVic (and its predecessor organisations) have attended. The average number of fires is approximately one per year. Recent significant fires included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A deliberately lit fire that escaped into the National Park in 2014 • A planned burn that escaped in 2010 • A lightning strike in 2007
Country Fire Authority	<p>Recent significant incidents include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A light aircraft crash in 2017 • The search for two missing people • Assisting AV with a number of patient evacuations from a house to a helicopter • Assisting with a storm damaged house, including supplying tarpaulins • Assisting police investigating a vehicle accident • Arranging for a boat and transporting patients to the wharf when Air Ambulance was not available
Victoria Police	<p>In the four year period from September 2013 to September 2017, Victoria Police received a total of 26 calls for assistance on French Island, an average of 6.5 calls per year. These calls included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 criminal matters • 2 family violence matters • 8 boat incidents • 1 missing person • 6 Public Order matters • 2 traffic accidents
Victoria State Emergency Service	<p>VICSES has received three requests for assistance in the last 10 years. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a bus crash • an ultra-light making a forced landing • assisting Victoria Police in coroner duties

Management arrangements



In the absence of a Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee (MEMPC)

The small residential community manages its own affairs under the jurisdiction of the Victorian Government as the default governing authority in the absence of a municipal council to provide local services and infrastructure.

There is currently no municipal emergency management plan for French Island nor is French Island part of an adjoining municipal emergency management planning process under the Emergency Management Act.

In the absence of a municipal council, EMV facilitated the planning process through the establishment of the French Island Working Group, comprised of AV, CFA, DET, DHHS, FFMVic, PV, EMV, VicPol, VICSES and FICA to develop an emergency management plan for French Island.

The multi-agency nature of the planning process, assisted by the community, provides better integration and coordination of the emergency management planning arrangements to provide an effective response and minimise the impact of emergencies on French Island.

Current management arrangements

Two thirds of French Island is national park managed by Parks Victoria.

Parks Victoria is the only government agency with a permanent office/depot and staff presence. The Parks Victoria staff base varies from two to three permanent staff over the winter and shoulder periods, with up to eight staff over the peak summer months which includes three Project Firefighters.

Parks Victoria has three vehicles located permanently on the Island, with two of these vehicles being dedicated firefighting resources.

FFMVic has road management and fire management responsibilities on the Island. This includes maintenance of approximately 55km of roads across the Island, and coordination of fire prevention and planned burning activities within the National Park.

CFA has a permanent station on the Island including two vehicles (one tanker and one slip on) and 20 volunteers. An extra tanker is allocated to the Island over the Fire Danger Period. The local CFA brigade is the only permanent emergency service on the Island, with firefighters often called upon to provide first aid until additional medical support arrives.

Bass Coast Shire hold an Instrument of Delegation under the *Health Act 1958* and the *Food Act 1984* for food safety and provide regular monitoring of commercial premises on French Island.



French Island Community Association

Residents have established a non-profit organisation to provide representation for the community's interests. This group, the French Island Community Association, is voluntary. The committee meets regularly throughout the year, usually on a monthly basis, to discuss on-going community management needs and issues. Any French Island resident can arrange to attend a meeting, approach committee members with concerns and offer help and expertise.

More FICA information is available from the website: www.frenchislandinfo.com

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Prevention and mitigation arrangements



Introduction

In the absence of a municipal council, no formal all hazard risk assessment process such as the Community Emergency Risk Assessment (CERA) has been undertaken for French Island. The risk assessment process has instead been guided by agency specific hazard assessment e.g. FFMVic and CFA for bushfire.

A summary of identified risks has been prepared by the agencies involved in the planning process.

Preparedness

Agencies such as Forest Fire Management Victoria have detailed planning arrangements in place for French Island for specific risks such as bushfire.

All other agencies involved in the French Island Working Group have reviewed their existing planning arrangements to include additional consideration for response requirements for French Island.

This Plan also acknowledges the important role the resident community on French Island plays in supporting each other to prepare for emergencies and in contributing to the emergency service and other agencies planning and preparedness arrangements.

Community awareness and resilience

The French Island resident community is generally recognised for their resilience in managing their own day to day needs with the limited resources and local infrastructure available. The emergency services also acknowledge the community is proactive in supporting each other as best they can and the emergency services during emergencies. Statistically, 20% of the resident community are volunteers in the French Island CFA Brigade.

FICA community emergency information is available here: www.frenchislandinfo.com along with other practical community services and resources information for French Island.

Summary of identified risks

The public land area of French Island is assessed as having Extreme fire risk (Victorian Fire Risk Register Review September 2016).

Private homes and community infrastructure are isolated in areas of varying bushfire or grassfire threat (sourced from current CFA French Island Local Response Plan).

Other identified risks are structure fire and extreme weather events.

Road accidents are another risk as are medical emergencies for providing a timely emergency response.

Marine accidents and pollution incidents are also likely.

Medical emergencies

Residents are aware of the difficulties in relation to seeking medical attention in a timely manner.

The community often utilise the services of either the Stony Point Passenger Ferry or private vessels for transport to the mainland for the purposes of attending a local doctor or to call for ambulance attendance once ashore.

Residents are encouraged to have Ambulance Victoria Membership due to the cost of ambulance helicopter services in the event they are required in an emergency. Ambulance Victoria has provided an 'Air Ambulance Helicopter Safety' video for recommended viewing by emergency services, government agencies and the general public at youtu.be/rjflOuFsZXk.

It is recommended that residents consider undertaking first aid training to render basic medical assistance.

'Nurse on Call' is a phone service available to the community that provides immediate, expert health advice from a registered nurse, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If any situation is considered a life threatening emergency, Triple Zero (000) should always be called.

Calling 1300 60 60 24 is charged at the cost of a local call from anywhere in Victoria for health advice 24 hours a day (calls from mobile phones may be charged at a higher rate).

The 'Poisons Information Helpline' is also available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to provide information on what to do when someone has been poisoned, overdosed or made a mistake with their medication.

This phone service is provided through the Victorian Poisons Information Centre and can also help if someone has been bitten or stung by marine animals (such as jellyfish), snakes, spiders or insects (such as bees or wasps). Trained staff will give you first aid information, tell you if you need to call an ambulance or they may refer you to a doctor for treatment.

Calling 13 11 26, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week is charged at the cost of a local call, excluding mobiles.

If the situation is life threatening, i.e. the victim has collapsed, stopped breathing, is fitting or is suffering an anaphylactic reaction, Triple Zero (000) should always be called for an ambulance.

Bushfires

Community awareness and preparedness information for bushfires is provided in the CFA French Island Community Information Guide – Bushfire www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/community-information-guides/#DG.

The French Island CFA Brigade remains an important contact to assist community bushfire preparedness.

Parks Victoria rangers actively promote bushfire awareness to campers and visitors on French Island during the Fire Danger Period along with distributing information sheets and erecting temporary Fire Danger Rating signage at pre-determined points such as the General Store and Tankerton Jetty.

Community information

Educational materials, including website updates and social media are useful tools for residents and visitors to be prepared and kept informed about major emergencies.

Keeping informed

VicEmergency is a centralised website for Victorians to find emergency information and warnings. It is also valuable for accessing preparedness and recovery information related to emergencies. Information can also be accessed via the VicEmergency hotline (1800 226 226) or through using the VicEmergency smartphone app. www.emergency.vic.gov.au

Emergency + App is a Triple Zero (000) smartphone app that provides key phone numbers for the emergency services and displays the GPS coordinates of your location so you can read it out to the emergency operator. This is a useful tool to assist locating and directing emergency responders on French Island due to challenges with identifying specific emergency locations. www.triplezero.gov.au/Pages/EmergencySmartphoneApp.aspx

Emergency Alert is the national telephone warning system. It is one of many ways emergency services can warn a community of a likely or actual emergency. Emergency Alert is not used in all circumstances. Whether emergency services decide to issue telephone warnings through Emergency Alert will depend on the nature of the incident.

The warning system sends voice messages to landline phones and text messages to mobile phones within a specific area defined by the responsible emergency service organisation. Messages may be issued in response to likely or actual emergencies such as fire, flood, or extreme weather events.

www.emergencyalert.gov.au

Community requests for emergency assistance

There are currently three streams for activating an emergency response by the community on French Island:

- Residents calling and assisting each other
- Residents contacting local agencies directly
- Through calling Triple zero (000)

It is strongly recommended that when community members seek the assistance of the emergency services for a life threatening situation Triple Zero (000) is always used to ensure a response is effectively coordinated.

Prevention and mitigation

Many of the identified risks have controls (measures) in place through previous planning to prevent or mitigate their impact e.g. French Island CFA Bushfire/Grassfire Local Response Plan for limiting the spread of bushfire/grassfire once started and Parks Victoria Emergency Management Plan in reducing fuel loads before the fire season.



The French
Island CFA
Brigade remains
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Response arrangements



Most incidents are of local concern and residents assist each other where practicable.

Restricted access issues for French Island, as a remote location, presents additional logistical challenges to the emergency services in providing a timely and effective emergency response.

This applies to a diverse range of emergencies of varying scale and complexity ranging from single incidents such as a vehicle accident or medical emergency to major bushfires. All events require effective, collaborative and coordinated planning across all agencies with defined roles, responsibilities and task requirements.

The Victorian emergency management planning arrangements provide for and support an integrated and coordinated emergency response that is adaptable to the circumstances and environment for all emergencies. The additional planning work undertaken through the French Island Working Group aims to better integrate and align emergency and agency services' delivery outcomes for the French Island community.

The Victorian emergency management planning arrangements provide for and support an integrated and coordinated emergency response that is adaptable to the circumstances and environment for all emergencies.



Phases of activation

The Triple Zero (000) service will contact the appropriate emergency service depending on the nature of the request to coordinate an emergency response on French Island.

All emergency services and other government departments and agencies with roles and responsibilities in emergencies are contacted as needed, to support an emergency response on French Island under pre-determined planning arrangements. This applies to services required during and after emergency incidents such as relief and recovery.

The 6 C's

Command, Control and Coordination are important functions under Victoria's emergency management response arrangements.

'Command' is the internal direction of its own personnel and resources by each agency in responding to emergencies.

'Control' is the assignment of the lead role to a nominated agency to direct a response to an emergency on behalf of all agencies. Agencies with a lead role are referred to as the 'Control Agency' e.g. the fire services for fires and VICSES for floods.

For French Island, 'Control' could be exercised from a suitable location on the Island, from the mainland or from an Incident Control Centre (ICC) or Regional Control Centre (RCC). This will be determined for each emergency.

'Coordination' is bringing together agencies and resources to effectively respond to and recover from emergencies. For French Island, to mitigate the risk associated with emergency services gaining access to French Island two mainland coordination centres have been identified, either of which can be activated to coordinate services on and off the Island:

- Primary Emergency Co-ordination Centre – Port of Hastings Development Authority, Stony Point Road facility, Crib Point; and
- Alternative Emergency Co-ordination Centre – Hastings Police Station.

In addition to Command, Control and Coordination, the changing complexity of emergency events has seen Victoria add Consequence, Communication and Community connection as part of the shift to a more community centric approach in emergency management.

The 'Six Cs' approach is central to building a sustainable emergency management system that recognises the key principles of wellbeing, liveability, sustainability and viability for communities and contributes to building safer and more resilient communities for all Victorians.

The Six Cs model incorporates:

- ongoing planning for emergency events
- management of and response to emergency events
- relief and recovery, and
- connecting with and being part of the community.

Relief and recovery arrangements



In the absence of a municipal council to lead relief and recovery coordination at the local level, DHHS will coordinate relief and recovery activities at the regional level and EMV will be responsible for coordination at state level.

Relief and recovery activities may include:

- Emergency shelter
- Emergency financial assistance
- Psychosocial support
- Food and water
- Register Find Reunite

The DHHS Regional Recovery Manager will work closely with the emergency services and other government departments and agencies to ensure relief and recovery needs are considered and incorporated into the emergency response in support of the French Island community.

The size and nature of the relief and recovery assistance coordinated by DHHS will depend on the emergency, and may include liaison with mainland municipal councils to access local resources that may be required to support the relief and recovery needs of the community. This may include utilising municipal facilities on the mainland for use as relief or recovery centres if required.

For further information about the emergency management planning arrangements for French Island please contact the French Island Community Association, the French Island CFA or the EMV Regional Emergency Management Planning Team for Southern and Eastern Metropolitan Regions email: frenchisland.emworkinggroup@justice.vic.gov.au

