02

DISASTER RECOVERY TOOLKIT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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VICTORIA

Recovery readiness:
preparation for recovery
before a disaster

02

DISASTER RECOVERY TOOLKIT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

This resource is one in a set of eight booklets designed as a toolkit for local councils to understand, prepare for and actively support the recovery of their communities following a disaster.

The toolkit includes an introduction to the context and complexity of experiencing a disaster; what this means for individuals and the community; and the implications for local councils. The toolkit includes practical tips and tools designed to assist local councils to undertake effective recovery activity.

Each of the booklets in the toolkit is described to the right.

Cover Image: Sandbags.

Above Image: Victorian SES prepares for floods in Terang.

	BOOKLET	CONTENT	AUDIENCE
01	**Understanding disaster recovery**	Provides a broad context and understanding of recovery from disaster and has been designed as a companion document to be read before the specialist information detailed in each of the other booklets.	Councillors, senior managers, emergency management personnel and all staff across council
02	**Recovery readiness: preparation for recovery before a disaster**	Designed to supplement municipal emergency management planning and support councils to improve recovery readiness by addressing the factors contributing to recovery success.	Councillors, senior managers and emergency management personnel
03	**When disaster strikes: the first days and weeks**	Assumes that recovery readiness will have occurred and builds on this preparatory work by addressing the factors contributing to recovery success as they relate to the first days and weeks following a disaster.	Councillors, senior managers and emergency management personnel
04	**Beyond disaster: the months and years ahead**	Builds on the immediate recovery experience to move towards medium and long-term recovery. In this stage the factors contributing to recovery success are embedded in the process of recovery planning.	Councillors, senior managers and emergency management personnel
05	**Council business matters: meeting the organisational challenges of disaster recovery**	Focuses on council business matters in recovery, including workforce planning and resource management from preparation and post-disaster perspectives.	Councillors, senior managers and emergency management personnel
06	**Regional recovery networks**	Showcases the role of regional recovery networks in finding solutions to shared challenges.	Senior managers and emergency management personnel
07	**Engaging the community in disaster recovery**	Examines how councils can support community-led recovery and engage with the community more effectively to support recovery.	Councillors, senior managers and emergency management personnel
08	**Recovery tools and other resources**	Brings together the tools that support decision making and planning described in the other booklets. It also includes additional reading and other useful resources.	Emergency management personnel

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Recovery is shaped by the initial experiences of individuals and communities. This means that recovery action needs to be swift and effective – embodying recovery principles from the moment a disaster strikes.

To do this successfully, recovery action has to be thought about, planned for and as much as possible, practised before a disaster occurs. Starting to think about recovery after the disaster event is too late.

Failure to plan and prepare effectively also puts council staff and other supporting personnel at great risk. Previous disasters where recovery roles and responsibilities have not been planned or prepared, have seen council staff assigned to tasks with ad hoc resources, little training and limited understanding of what was expected of them. This can have significant impact on their effectiveness in the community and on their own short and long term wellbeing.

To a large extent recovery readiness planning occurs under the umbrella of a Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP). Each council is required under Part 4 of the Emergency Management Act 1986[1] to produce an MEMP that deals with disaster prevention, response and recovery.

While undertaking recovery readiness activity before a disaster is a task for every council, the detail and scale might vary considerably. This will depend on geographical location, population size and distribution, available resources and disaster risks. Nonetheless, each council will need to map the characteristics and assets of their communities; delegate or agree specific disaster recovery roles and responsibilities internally and with partners; build community capacity; and understand when to reach out for assistance from others. This key information will be expressed in the relevant sections of the MEMP or in council's emergency operating guidelines.

This booklet is intended to supplement municipal emergency management planning and support councils to improve recovery readiness by addressing the five contributors to recovery success:

- community focus

- leadership and coordination

- informed decision making

- communication

- capacity building.

> **Note:**
>
> Aspects of recovery readiness that are concerned with council as an organisation, such as business continuity, workforce planning and resource sharing are detailed in:
>
> **Book 5 – Council Business Matters: managing the challenges of disaster recovery.**

COMMUNITY FOCUS

COMMUNITY-LED RECOVERY

Community-led recovery is a national principle that acknowledges and supports the resources, capacity, resilience and leadership already present within individuals and communities.

This is clearly articulated in *Community Recovery, Handbook 2, Australian Emergency Management Handbook Series: Building a disaster resilient Australia AEMI, 2011*[2], as follows:

COMMUNITY- LED RECOVERY

Successful recovery is responsive and flexible, engaging communities and empowering them to move forward. Recovery should:

- centre on the community, to enable those affected by a disaster to actively participate in their own recovery;

- seek to address the needs of all affected communities;

- allow individuals, families and communities to manage their own recovery;

- consider the values, culture and priorities of all affected communities;

- use and develop community knowledge, leadership and resilience;

- recognise that communities may choose different paths to recovery;

- ensure that the specific and changing needs of affected communities are met with flexible and adaptable policies, plans, and services; and

- build strong partnerships between communities and those involved in the recovery process.

As the level of government closest to the community and as a leader in the community, council will play a key role in both facilitating and demonstrating community-led recovery. A community focus on recovery will mean understanding, representing and supporting the needs of emergency affected communities and ensuring that communities can identify their own needs and capabilities to identify recovery priorities and actions. It also means modelling and reflecting good practice in community leadership to other spheres of government.

Note:

Aspects of community engagement both before a disaster and once a disaster strikes are detailed in:

Book 7 – Engaging the community in disaster recovery.

THE CITY OF WHITTLESEA – BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY TO LEAD RECOVERY

Among the recovery initiatives used by the City of Whittlesea following the 2013 fires that threatened the North Epping and Wollert communities were sessions conducted using pop-up information booths at local schools and the Neighbourhood House.

Feedback at these sessions indicated that the community felt underprepared and wanted to be more organised next time grass fires occurred in the area.

Council supported the establishment of a community based Local Emergency Planning Group, which is open to all community members. Since formation the Group has developed an Emergency Plan that deals with the grass fire risk in their specific area including complex access and safety issues when fires occur. From time-to-time guests such as the Country Fire Authority are invited to attend meetings and activities.

Council provides advice and assists the Group to access funding, which has been used for initiatives such as developing a system of street and fire wardens; signage with broad messaging; and working out suitable meeting places during and after fire events.

NILLUMBIK SHIRE COUNCIL – BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND PREPAREDNESS

The 2009 Black Saturday fires demonstrated that councils have an important role in supporting and facilitating resilient communities. Nillumbik Shire Council explored this further by undertaking a literature review to identify the pre-conditions and community development interventions that make communities more resilient.

For example, council is investing in a major program of community centre refurbishment and redevelopment. Council's resilience framework highlights that investing in place activation and community skills and governance capability is as important as the 'bricks and mortar'.

Another example involved the development of the 'St Andrews Preparedness Calendar'. This community resource is designed to promote and encourage residents to take 'small, simple steps' to better prepare their properties and in turn feel more confident in their ability to respond in the event of a bushfire, grassfire or other emergency. The calendar can be used as a guide and a reminder to help residents manage their preparedness actions and includes hints, tips and advice on preparing their properties throughout the year. It was hand delivered free to approximately 400 St Andrews properties.

LEADERSHIP AND COORDINATION

LEADERSHIP

While the aim is to achieve community-led recovery, it is critical that council exhibits the leadership necessary to inspire confidence; support community initiative; and to advocate effectively with national, state and regional agencies and other organisations, particularly regarding community needs.

This leadership will come from the council chief executive officer (CEO), senior managers, those with designated recovery roles and the mayor and other elected members.

The CEO provides overarching direction and leadership and delegates operational roles as set out in: *A Guide to the Role of the Council CEO in Emergency Management* (MAV, 2012(a))[3].

The mayor and other councillors play a pivotal role in considering planning for recovery in the context of emergency preparation and in response to a disaster event. While they do not have an operational role in emergency relief, councillors provide a critical link in disaster recovery by boosting morale and providing comfort; facilitating communication; and advocating for their constituents (*A Guide to the Role of Mayors and Councillors in Emergency Management*, MAV, 2012 (b))[4].

MURRINDINDI SHIRE COUNCIL – SHOWCASING THE LESSONS LEARNED

Murrindindi Shire Council staff regularly speak at conferences, meetings and professional development events on their disaster recovery experiences. For example, key crisis recovery lessons presented to the South Queensland Tourism Industry Conference by Council's Manager, Economic Development in October 2011 included:

Five myths

- MYTH: In the early days of a major event you will be thinking about business/tourism

- MYTH: No-one has had to deal with a situation like this before

- MYTH: Tourism recovery manuals will read themselves and immediately spring into action

- MYTH: All business operators will want to get their business going as soon as possible

- MYTH: In a big incident local government and local business associations should be able to cope on their own.

Five considerations

- Use Maslow's hierarchy of needs – safety/food/shelter and loved ones first

- Every person responds and recovers in different ways and at different speeds

- Many business people will look to someone else to get their business going

- Many people struggle to make decisions – for many months

- Human behaviour becomes erratic and often irrational – many will look for someone to blame – most believe their town was the worst hit and the most forgotten.

The bottom line

Every disaster is different but most of the reactions/ responses are the same

The key question

What do we want our New Normal to look like?

PARTNERS

Communities have many and varied networks through which community members interact. These include a range of formal groups that will be well known to council, for example, progress or ratepayer associations, community hall committees, sporting clubs, service clubs and community service organisations.

There will also be networks centred on business connections, for example, in rural areas stock and station agents, rural financial counselling services, newsagents or post offices are part of the network that farming families rely upon.

Some of the people in these networks will have skills, facilities and relationships well suited to aiding the community recovery effort.

For those organisations that have a community service role, for example, the Australian Red Cross or Salvation Army, their role in disaster recovery and community engagement will be clear.

However, other groups that are drawn together by more specific interests, such as the Senior Citizens Group or the Young Farmers Club, the Craft Guild, the Netball Club, the Agricultural Show Society or Landcare group might require more creativity and lateral thinking as to the role they take, for example, a residential aged care facility was used following a bushfire to sort out and redirect a large volume of second hand clothing and household items.

Understanding and developing this potential before a disaster event will fast-track effective community recovery.

Recovery partners will also include Australian Government and Victorian Government departments that will have prescribed roles in a disaster based on their legislated responsibilities and stated objectives.

Table 1 provides a list of the potential partners and other stakeholders.

TIP

Use the five environments as a framework to identify and map recovery stakeholders.

Different business units of council might have already identified key stakeholders and community groups relevant to their area of activity and can be approached to assist with the mapping.

RECOVERY STAKEHOLDER MAPPING RESOURCE

This resource provides a template to assist identify and document recovery stakeholders along with their likely recovery roles and functions.

TABLE 1: PARTNERS AND COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS ACROSS THE FIVE RECOVERY ENVIRONMENTS

SOCIAL	BUILT	NATURAL	ECONOMIC	AGRICULTURAL
Response agencies	Road and rail authorities and operators	State and federal departments (parks, conservation and land management, stream management, environmental protection agencies)	Local industry and business	Primary producers
State and federal departments (health and human services, communities, education, housing, public health)	Public transport operators		Industry bodies (eg chambers of commerce, wine growers, tourism associations, manufacturers)	Victorian Farmers Federation
	Energy suppliers and retailers	Environment groups such as Landcare and 'Friends of …'		RSPCA
Non-profit organisations	Water and sewage authorities		State and federal departments (Attorney-General's Department, Centrelink, Australian Taxation Office)	Wildlife rescue services
Service clubs		Catchment management authorities		Australian Veterinary Association
Health authorities, doctors, community health	Communication operators	Local history society		Animal welfare organisations
	Health and education authorities	Natural heritage groups	Insurance Council	State and federal departments
Representatives of sectors or groups – ethnic, refugee, multi-cultural, rural, social and sporting clubs	Building control authorities		Banking and finance operators	Industry associations
	Professional bodies (eg architects, engineers, building surveyors)		Charitable organisations	Animal Health Australia
Returned services organisation			Employment and training service providers	Plant Health Australia
Religious groups	Waste and debris management facilities		Micro and home based businesses	
Arts and cultural groups	National trust and conservation groups			
Ratepayer and progress associations				

Note: Other stakeholders might be involved depending on the nature of local needs, for example, port or coastal authorities in the case of a disaster impacting the coast.

Once the key stakeholders are identified and their recovery roles and functions are clear, consideration should be given to formalising the relationship and arrangements you have agreed in a document such as a partner agreement or memorandum of understanding.

TIP

Roles and functions should fit with capacity and community confidence.

For example, managing cash donations is best allocated to council or a large, longstanding organisation with appropriate financial checks and balances. This task is best not left to an emerging group for whom the allocation of cash can become divisive and distracting.

YARRA RANGES SHIRE COUNCIL – FORMALISING COOPERATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

While the responsibility for the delivery and funding of case management and counselling services is not part of the role of Yarra Ranges Shire Council, the planning for these services needs to be incorporated into the Municipal Recovery Plan. This includes identifying several local agencies that are able to provide case management and counselling services.

These agencies need to be willing to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with council as part of the planning process. These agencies are then regarded as 'approved' to deliver counselling services that will support community and personal recovery in the municipality. The MOU needs to include, that, as far as possible, agencies commit to:

- ensuring that only suitably qualified and skilled staff provide counselling

- ensuring that staff involved have participated in appropriate professional development and are skilled and experienced in trauma counselling

- ensuring that staff are supported in the delivery of services, including having easy access to de-briefing services

- participating in a common referral and data management system, thus providing consistency in the overall access to the services by residents and the administration of the services

- delivering services that are based on models of best practice and that have been verified through research and evidence

- participating in a coordinating structure, such as a working group, that enables community development efforts, case management, accommodation support and counselling services to be coordinated across the municipality.

Adapted from Yarra Ranges Council Municipal Recovery Response to the February 2009 Bushfires Evaluation Report June 2012

RECOVERY DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURES

Responding effectively to the recovery challenge requires clear decision-making structures. Some aspects of this are prescribed by Part 4 of the *Emergency Management Act 1986*[5], which requires the following:

PART 4 – RESPONSIBILITIES OF MUNICIPAL COUNCILS

SECTION 21

- Councils must appoint a municipal emergency resource officer (MERO) who is responsible for coordinating municipal resources used in municipal response and recovery.

- Appoint a municipal emergency planning committee (MEMPC) which must prepare a draft MEMP for council consideration and which must give effect to State guidelines.

'*State guidelines*' referred to in Section 21 are embodied in the *Emergency Management Manual Victoria*[6]. Key disaster recovery roles are detailed in the Part 4 and Part 6 of the manual as follows:

- **PART 4: STATE RECOVERY ARRANGEMENTS**

    - Describes recovery principles, fundamentals, functions, structures

    - Describes recovery planning

    - Role of municipal councils, municipal planning

    - Transition from response, relief and recovery

    - Recovery planning priorities

    - Describes in detail the five environments of recovery

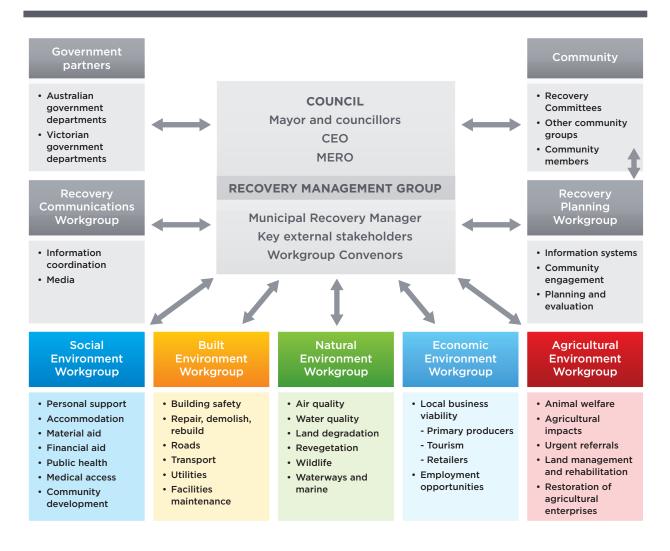   - Describes communication and engagement.

- **PART 6: MUNICIPAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLANNING ARRANGEMENTS**

    - Planning structures, process, framework

    - Role of MEMPC (including planning recovery)

    - Relief and recovery planning.

A useful model of recovery governance is to assign responsibility for the social, built, natural, economic and agricultural environments separately to a senior council officer from the most relevant content area. In major disasters it is preferable that this be the Director or General Manager – who is likely to have organisational influence and decision-making authority.

This overall arrangement is particularly well suited to scaling up or down with council or community membership based on the scope of the disaster. It can also be replicated at state, regional or community levels. See figure 1.

FIGURE 1: RECOVERY MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

Government partners	COUNCIL Mayor and councillors CEO MERO	Community
• Australian government departments • Victorian government departments		• Recovery Committees • Other community groups • Community members

RECOVERY MANAGEMENT GROUP

Municipal Recovery Manager
Key external stakeholders
Workgroup Convenors

Recovery Communications Workgroup	Recovery Planning Workgroup
• Information coordination • Media	• Information systems • Community engagement • Planning and evaluation

Social Environment Workgroup	Built Environment Workgroup	Natural Environment Workgroup	Economic Environment Workgroup	Agricultural Environment Workgroup

• Personal support
• Accommodation
• Material aid
• Financial aid
• Public health
• Medical access
• Community development
	• Building safety
	• Repair, demolish, rebuild
	• Roads
	• Transport
	• Utilities
	• Facilities maintenance
		• Air quality
		• Water quality
		• Land degradation
		• Revegetation
		• Wildlife
		• Waterways and marine
			• Local business viability
			  - Primary producers
			  - Tourism
			  - Retailers
			• Employment opportunities
				• Animal welfare
				• Agricultural impacts
				• Urgent referrals
				• Land management and rehabilitation
				• Restoration of agricultural enterprises

Led by the Municipal Recovery Manager (MRM), this structure can coordinate multi-environment or cross-environment issues – working closely with the MERO to access council resources.

Part of establishing such a structure is to ensure that vision, goals and objectives of the recovery effort link to the broader council vision, goals and objectives and to utilise existing structures, knowledge, resources, relationships and expertise. For example, council's Economic Development Committee should see their broad economic development directions reflected in the strategies and actions developed by the Economic Environment Workgroup.

The model is strengthened by a separate recovery planning function and a separate recovery communications function. Creating a separate recovery planning workgroup reduces the risk of individuals getting caught up in relief and recovery operations and creates a setting that supports strategic thinking and planning for the medium to longer term. Smaller councils with fewer resources might need to merge some workgroups, however, separation of the planning function would still be preferable.

Likewise the separation of a recovery communication function if practical should facilitate an objective appraisal of the messages being generated by the other parts of the structure; ensure consistency in messages to the public and other key stakeholders; and maximise the selection and use of the most effective communication channels.

The number of personnel assigned to each workgroup might vary over time – depending on the size and complexity of the recovery effort.

If there is high demand it might be necessary to call on personnel from other councils, use staff provided by other agencies or use volunteers. This is particularly relevant for smaller rural and regional councils highlighting the value in forming relationships with other councils to develop common approaches and staff sharing agreements.

The model supports a clear interface between council recovery activities and the community via Community Recovery Committees and other community groups. The structure also provides for the inclusion of representatives from partners and community stakeholders as appropriate. See **Book 7 – Engaging the community in disaster recovery** for more on structural relationships with the community.

Interaction with other tiers of government is likely to occur at several levels in the structure depending on the role of the external agencies. However, the Municipal Recovery Manager role provides a single point contact with coordinating agencies.

The structures depicted in Figure 1 are intended to oversee all aspects of disaster recovery. Therefore an effective disaster recovery leadership and coordination structure will need to be strongly connected with council and the MERO.

RECOVERY MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE TOOL

Use this resource to determine what management structure will be put in place and what personnel and positions will fill it. This structure can then be used for planning, professional development and exercising before any disaster events.

RECOVERY WORKGROUP DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE

Use this resource to refine the terms of reference for recovery workgroups as they are established.

INFORMED DECISION MAKING

USING INFORMATION

Information and data provide the basis for good decision making and enable the recovery effort to be matched to the identified needs in the community.

It is important that the information relied on to make decisions is the best available and up to date.

Disaster recovery occurs in an unstable and changing environment. Therefore as time passes, information must also be used to provide insight into:

- *What has been done for the community?*
- *What has worked well?*
- *What needs additional effort or improvement?*

This kind of questioning is often termed monitoring and evaluation. The lessons gained from answering these questions directly inform subsequent decision making and can assist in:

- demonstrating accountability for the use of resources
- building the capacity and expertise of stakeholders and the community
- recognising progress and celebrating successes.

Experience has shown that answering the above questions is easier when information is collected from the outset providing the capacity to compare information over time, between locations and by population group. It is much harder to collect information from the initial months of recovery months or years later – and the opportunities to learn and modify activity can be is lost.

In preparing for recovery it is important to design information systems including:

- identifying what information will be necessary
- identifying the sources of information and collection methods
- determining what reports might be required.

YARRA RANGES SHIRE COUNCIL – MONITORING PROGRESS AND CAPTURING THE LESSONS

Applying the knowledge that staff gain through the recovery process is critical for informing planning and learning for the future. The Yarra Ranges Shire Council Bushfire Evaluation conducted after the 2009 fires enabled staff to reflect on their experiences and consider what they had learned. Much of the information gained through this process was used in the development of the Recovery Inception Plan and in refining approaches to long-term community recovery.

In conducting this evaluation it was observed that the time that had elapsed since the fires meant that it was difficult for residents and staff to remember all the details of what could have helped. An idea to emerge from this was the development of systems to record the reflections of staff as events unfold. This might simply be a diary-type system registered on council's computer system or a database that allows the recording of narrative information at the time. This could be collated and analysed after the intense work of recovery has been completed as part of a review or evaluation.

Adapted from Yarra Ranges Council Municipal Recovery Response to the February 2009 Bushfires Evaluation Report June 2012

INFORMATION SHARING

Much of the information and data will be available through well-established channels, however, sharing or integrating information across organisations in a recovery situation might require quite different processes. For example, council would not normally share information on the rates database with external agencies, however, this might be very useful information in assisting the police to contact people who are difficult to identify or reach.

Effective information and data sharing will rely on a collaborative information network between government agencies (at all levels), non-government organisations and key stakeholders within communities.

The first challenge is identifying the required information and data and understanding how it might support the recovery effort. For example, local government are leaders in land information and the council based 'geographic information systems' might be superior to most other agencies. This land information and data can also be used for quick estimates of information on number of properties and people directly affected by the event; average property sizes and average property valuations.

Such systems can also enable quick and relatively accurate estimates of kilometres of perimeter or boundary fence affected by floods or fires in designated areas. Such information can then be used for material and labour estimates by smaller service organisations such as 'Blaze Aid'.

Sharing sensitive personal information between organisations is restricted by privacy legislation – either Australian Government legislation that applies to Australian Government departments and the private sector (including not for profits), or Victorian legislation that applies to local councils, Victorian Government departments and organisations contracted to them. This same legislation acknowledges that in the case of serious and imminent threat to individual or public health, safety, or welfare, which can occur in a disaster, exceptional treatment of information might be necessary.

Given the number of organisations involved and the potential for confusion or dispute about satisfying privacy legislation, it is critical that determining if, when and how information might be shared is agreed well ahead of a disaster.

INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Information collection systems will be necessary to establish the facts of the disaster, (what happened, where and to whom) and to enable an assessment of the disaster situation.

This will require consideration of impacts across the five environments and will use a mix of data collection techniques. Consultation with State Government should take place regarding data collection to ensure consistency.

Recovery assessments will be informed by Initial Impact Assessment reports as part of the emergency relief effort, but will need to build upon this with information coming as a result of response activities. It is likely that information data bases will need to expand to encompass the broad range of detail, experience and information that exists across many local service organisations.

MITCHELL SHIRE COUNCIL – MAKING THE MOST OF LOCAL EXPERIENCE

Established community groups within a bushfire affected area are an important source of local knowledge and experience. Gathering the lessons learned by these groups is an imperative to a holistic recovery effort.

The following provides a guide for database design based on data collection needs and principles:

GUIDELINES FOR DATA COLLECTION[8]

- Agreed standards, principles and indicators are used in the collection, analysis, interpretation and presentation of data and information in order to inform decisions on relevant community recovery services.

- Common/standard formats and methods are used by all field teams.

- Data is gathered from a wide range of sources and triangulated: this includes secondary data and data from key informants, community group interviews and, sometimes, rapid surveys. Sources are recorded but care is taken not to expose informants to any risk in insecure areas.

- Both qualitative and quantitative data are sought and used.

- All secondary data are systematically reviewed and evaluated in relation to: the data collection techniques used; the manner in which the techniques were applied in the field, with particular attention to the adequacy and reliability of sampling; and whether the reported findings appear to represent the true situation (and, if not, the likely direction of the bias – over-estimation or under-estimation).

- Design and encourage use of standard formats and methods by all field teams.

- Sample design and the selection of key informants ensure the coverage of, and data analysis distinguishes distinct geographical areas, ethnic groups and gender differences.

- Data collection and analysis covers capacities and resources – including the resilience of different population groups – as well as "needs", and on the current situation and how it is expected to evolve in the next six to 12 weeks.

- Special attention is given to assessing the situation of the most vulnerable populations (which are often the most difficult to assess).

- Interviewees' privacy and security are safeguarded. Personal information (e.g., names) is only recorded with consent, and such information is not shared outside of the team unless necessary.

- Data on the current situation are compared with both national standards and local pre-crisis seasonal norms. Changes are identified compared with the pre-crisis situation/baseline in relation to demographics, health status, and health care systems.

- Analysis is initiated in real time concurrent with data collection; initial findings should be discussed in open dialogue with all involved parties.

Much of the design work and information collection, particularly in relation to baseline data (for example, community profiles) might be completed and available through other planning mechanisms, such as a council community plan or municipal health and wellbeing plan. However, the nature of the disaster will prescribe the quick collection of some new data alongside the review of other relevant existing data.

This new data might require the collection of information direct from affected communities for example, using observation, survey, interview or other direct techniques (such information is typically generated through emergency service providers, outreach personnel, resident contact and field sampling).

The use of direct home-based outreach services (such as Australian Red Cross and Victorian Council of Churches) can be an excellent way for council to receive detailed information on issues plus make residents feel more acknowledged and included.

The following table provides an outline of useful information and data sources, in addition to those held by council, that might be largely set up ahead of a disaster and expanded and refined as events unfold.

TABLE 1: POTENTIAL DATA INVENTORY: WHAT DATA MIGHT BE AVAILABLE?

WHAT DATA MIGHT BE AVAILABLE?	WHERE CAN THIS DATA BE FOUND?	ENVIRONMENT				
		SOCIAL	BUILT	NATURAL	ECONOMIC	AGRICULTURAL
Demographics of vulnerable people	Home and Community Care providers / Meals on Wheels / Immunisation providers / Education department	●				
Children attending school	Education department	●				
Major language groups	Migrant and refugee support services / Bureau of Statistics	●				
Primary producers	Farmers and industry associations / Bureau of Statistics / Primary industries department	●	●	●	●	●
Home and property equity ratios	Banks and financial institutions / Primary Industries department	●	●		●	●
Insurance claim averages and totals and cash payout ratios	Insurers / Insurance Council of Australia	●	●		●	●
Disaster related damage and loss	Emergency services / Insurers	●	●	●	●	●
Stakeholder lists	VCOSS / Local Service Provider networks	●	●	●	●	●
Volunteers and volunteer organisations	Volunteer Resource Centre	●	●	●	●	●
Property valuations	Valuer General / Real Estate Institute/Agents	●	●		●	●
Construction age and type of buildings	Bureau of Statistics / Valuer General		●		●	
Land tenure and zoning	Planning Department	●	●	●	●	●
Road and bridge infrastructure type and status	State Transport Authorities / VicRoads	●	●		●	

		ENVIRONMENT				
WHAT DATA MIGHT BE AVAILABLE?	**WHERE CAN THIS DATA BE FOUND?**	**SOCIAL**	**BUILT**	**NATURAL**	**ECONOMIC**	**AGRICULTURAL**
Communication black spots – radio, TV and mobile	Broadcasters Telecommunications providers	●	●			
Waste and hazardous materials locations	Site licencing authorities	●		●	●	●
Vegetation types and locations	Sustainability and Environment department			●	●	●
Vulnerable animal and plant populations Natural resources such as soil types and ground water	Sustainability and Environment department Primary Industries department			●	●	●
Risk zones such as erosion and weeds	Primary Industries department Landcare groups Catchment authorities			●	●	●
Heritage asset lists	National Trust Heritage groups Sustainability and Environment department	●	●		●	
Key employer and employment Key economic drivers	Chamber of Commerce and Industry Small Business Council Trade and Industry Development department Bureau of Statistics Regional Development and Tourism Associations	●	●	●	●	●
Household income levels Households on income support	Bureau of Statistics Centrelink	●			●	●
Degree of resident dislocation	Post office redirections Centrelink Banks	●	●		●	●
Availability of trade supplies and professionals	Housing Industry Association Master Builders Association	●	●		●	●
Health and safety risk and impacts	Doctors Hospitals Medicare Locals Health department	●	●		●	

DRAFT RECOVERY GOALS

Once a disaster strikes, there will be little time to plan immediate recovery activities.

However, because the sorts of immediate needs of affected people are largely predictable it is possible to develop draft recovery goals as part of recovery readiness planning. These can be simply refined in the days and weeks following a disaster allowing the recovery response to be more thorough and more quickly activated.

This approach is quite unlike other council strategies and plans where goals are derived from an extensive analysis of needs. However, preparing draft recovery goals will provide a valuable head start at a time when relief activities will also be pressing. They will also provide a focus for capacity building and other preparation.

While some additional goals might emerge in response to the particular needs that emerge and the capacities of local communities, identifying a generic set of recovery goals will allow council to sort easily through what goals are relevant when a specific disaster strikes and determine what action it might take.

The following table provides a range of potential draft recovery goals, some will overlap with relief goals (it will be a matter of timing where the recovery aspect takes over) and some might not require immediate action but will guide medium and longer term planning as needs emerge over time.

TABLE 2: DRAFT RECOVERY GOALS BY RECOVERY ENVIRONMENT

SOCIAL GOALS

- To assist those affected by the disaster with access and referral to personal support and counselling services
- To assist those affected by the disaster with access to safe accommodation suitable to their needs, including access to their own properties as soon as practicable
- To assist those affected by the disaster with opportunities to reconnect with their communities
- To provide access to timely information about post-disaster circumstances and recovery activities
- To assist with the coordination and distribution of material relief to those affected by the disaster
- To reduce risks to public health following the disaster
- To build trust in council in the affected communities
- To identify emerging social issues for incorporation into medium and long term recovery plans

BUILT GOALS

- To reinstate or replace infrastructure that is critical to the delivery of recovery services and/ or the functioning of communities, taking into account the protection and preservation of heritage or cultural sites.
- To facilitate the clean-up of homes
- To assist those affected by the disaster to rebuild following the disaster should they choose to do so
- To consider the future disaster resilience of infrastructure as part of reinstatement plans
- To identify emerging built issues for incorporation into medium and long term recovery plans

NATURAL GOALS

- To minimise public risk and make roads and public land areas safe for emergency services, utilities agencies and residents to enter the disaster affected areas
- To minimise the effects of erosion
- To assist with overcoming air, water and soil contamination issues
- To facilitate the re-establishment and rehabilitation of the natural environment following the disaster, taking into account the protection and preservation of heritage or cultural sites
- To identify emerging natural environment issues for incorporation into medium and long term recovery plans

ECONOMIC GOALS

- To support local businesses to re-establish themselves after the disaster, especially those critical to community re-establishment

- To retain and improve the local employment opportunities

- To attract customers back to local communities

- To reduce immediate and ongoing economic impacts to the community of restoration and rebuilding

- To identify emerging economic environment issues for incorporation into medium and long term recovery plans

AGRICULTURAL GOALS

- To support the wellbeing of rural communities

- To revitalise the economy of rural communities through reestablishment of agricultural enterprises

- To address the animal welfare needs of livestock, pets and wildlife in the affected areas

- To identify emerging agricultural environment issues for incorporation into medium and long term recovery plans

TIPS

Develop your own draft recovery goals as a starting point.

Cross check against Regional Recovery Plans for consistency.

DRAFT GOALS AND ACTIONS TOOL

Use this resource to refine a set of draft recovery goals in consultation with relevant staff across council, which can be used to guide other preparation and immediate recovery action.

COMMUNICATION

Communication is a vital and continuing need of affected communities and individuals following a disaster. It is also a prime tool of successful recovery. This national principle is found in *Community Recovery Handbook 2* – Australian Emergency Management Handbook Series: Building a disaster resilient Australia, AEMI, 2011[9] and is described as follows:

EMPLOYING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Successful recovery is built on effective communication with affected communities and other stakeholders. Recovery should:

- ensure that all communication is relevant, timely, clear, accurate, targeted, credible and consistent;

- recognise that communication with a community should be two-way, and that input and feedback should be sought and considered over an extended time;

- ensure that information is accessible to audiences in diverse situations, addresses a variety of communication needs, and is provided through a range of media and channels;

- establish mechanisms for coordinated and consistent communication with all organisations and individuals; and

- repeat key recovery messages because information is more likely to reach community members when they are receptive.

In Communicating in Recovery[10], the Australian Red Cross adds to these principles pointing out that communication should also respect that affected people are:

> *'…rational beings able to make decisions for themselves. Materials that forget this principle can be viewed by the community as paternalistic and patronising.'*

It is important to remember that communications post-disaster will most likely require different communications mechanisms to those commonly used by councils. Often the information needs to be much more frequent (at least daily in the early stages) and so might require the use of more immediate or direct avenues such as internet, email, social media or text messaging. Such technologies can also make it easier for community members to spread information and respond accordingly no matter where they are.

To enable this to happen, it will be important to have a system designed to collect contact information for affected persons and communities immediately after a disaster.

It is also important to remember that the disaster itself might result in loss of power, telephone and internet access or restricted physical access to affected locations for newspapers, notices and word of mouth.

It will therefore be necessary to consider contingency plans in the event that communication channels are destroyed or disrupted.

RECOVERY COMMUNICATION MAPPING TOOL

Use this resource to map communications channels for the whole municipality before a disaster.

The roles of the mayor and other elected officers can be particularly important in linking the council with the community – they can provide a strong, authoritative voice in the community following disasters, particularly in helping to broker that relationship between council and those areas of the community that might have had little to do with council services.

In the context of recovery it is not uncommon for significant pre-existing and new community tensions and conflicts to surface.

Effective two way communication and the trust that this produces can greatly assist council in limiting the negative impacts to a recovering community.

TIPS

Review or develop communication policies that facilitate the use of all media channels, including website, mobile and social media. Be sure to include approaches for the immediate distribution of information and rapid updates.

Develop clear communication guidelines for the mayor and other elected officers and for the Chief Executive Officer and designated officers

See:

A Guide to the Role of the Council CEO in Emergency Management (MAV, 2012(a))[11].

A Guide to the Role of Mayors and Councillors in Emergency Management, (MAV, 2012 (b))[12].

WELLINGTON SHIRE COUNCIL – COMMUNICATING THROUGH COMMUNITY INFORMATION BOARDS

Community surveys and Community Emergency Planning Group sessions, coordinated by Wellington Shire Council, identified that 16 communities had concerns with the high number of tourists visiting their areas who are not well prepared for an emergency event.

To assist and inform tourists with local and generic emergency information, a joint project was established with the communities involved and the Fulham Correctional Centre to design and erect Community Information Boards in these areas. The Boards describe local risks and provide advice on how to respond in an emergency.

ALPINE SHIRE COUNCIL – COMMUNICATING WITH THE COMMUNITY THROUGH LOCAL HALLS

Community halls are an important facility following a disaster. After Black Saturday 2009, community halls became focal points that local communities felt comfortable and familiar with. There was always someone there and the hall became a communication and information hub – the local 'telegraph', with information available, someone to talk to, a place to take donations or find food and supplies.

'Choosing the right local facilities for disaster recovery enables a lot to be done with just a few people'. (Council officer)

LATROBE CITY COUNCIL – LINKING COMMUNITIES WITH COUNCIL THROUGH TOWNSHIP ASSOCIATIONS

Latrobe City Council operates a Township Liaison Program that works with established incorporated township associations as a two-way conduit for local issues and information between council and small communities. Eight such groups have been established by communities supported by council – seven in small rural communities and a group for the larger centre of Churchill.

Council's Community Development staff carry out the role of a Township Liaison Officer attending township meetings, acting as the contact point for the communities when they bring items to council and working to a documented and agreed role statement. The role also is a key conduit for sharing important information about activity within council, such as grants, training and development opportunities for community groups and the development of draft strategies and plans, seeking their input. Each group normally meets monthly and are legal entities in their own right.

Township associations take on a broad community development role that includes providing local knowledge and established structures in times of disaster relief and recovery. These leadership groups have proven to be important and effective partners in emergency preparedness, response, recovery and in building community resilience.

The model, which has been operating for about 12 years, has proven to be an effective method of working with local communities and strengthening and supporting the communication links between communities and their local elected members.

Over the years, council has successfully sought Federal and State Government grants for small town development and employed local people as part-time small townships facilitators to resource the project.

Council assists the associations to access grants and offers training and skill development opportunities for township association members. Representatives of the associations come together on an annual basis to learn from each other by showcasing achievements, sharing resources and detailing key local issues and how these have been addressed. This also provides an opportunity to highlight future challenges, opportunities and their aspirations.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Capacity building for recovery is concerned with making sure that the structures and processes that have been developed to support recovery are well understood by those expected to use them and that they have the skills and experience to use them successfully.

Participating in the management of community recovery can be extremely challenging and can have significant impacts on personal health and wellbeing on those involved if they are not prepared with appropriate training, information and resources.

Time will be at a premium once a disaster occurs, hence whatever can be done beforehand on capacity building will be a great advantage to an affected community and potentially can reduce the need for much intervention.

Having mapped federal, state and other local government partners and existing community stakeholder groups and clarified their recovery roles, the next stage is to establish what skills and professional development is required to build the capacity of key partners and stakeholders and the network of organisations as a whole – before the event.

For example, if the Rotary Clubs in the municipality have been identified as a potential recovery resource: What do they need to know and what skills, systems and practices need to be developed to prepare them for and support them in that role?

The capacity building council undertakes will depend on several factors including the resources available to partners to address their own capacity building; the level of priority given to recovery planning; and how much council can invest. Capacity building action will therefore vary considerably and need to be customised for each individual organisation or group.

Nonetheless, providing an introduction to recovery for the personnel from all of these potential recovery support organisations can be provided to multiple organisations together, and on an individual organisation basis. Where there are benefits in building relationships across several organisations, joint sessions might be considered.

TIP

Consider forming clusters of like-organisations for professional development activities designed around the five environments or council's' recovery management structure.

For example, an economic cluster of the local Chambers of Commerce, traders associations, industry groups and employment agencies might be formed. Or an animal care cluster might include key organisations such as wildlife rescue, RSPCA, the local agricultural show society, dog walkers, equestrian and livestock transporters.

Where the role of an organisation is likely to be quite specific, or there are benefits in building the teamwork and capacity of a single organisation, the introduction session might be best conducted for that organisation on its own.

Such a session would include:

- understanding what recovery actually is (covering the five environments)

- the basics of emergency management, disaster recovery structures and operating arrangements (this is broader than recovery – including the role of council, police and others in emergency management)

- understanding recovery management structures, roles and responsibilities,

- creating awareness of the likely emotional and psychological experiences that people in the community are going through

- providing guidance on how staff and volunteers can conduct themselves so as to help the recovery of individuals, families and the community

- providing guidance on how to look after themselves and their co-workers.

Capacity building also results from practicing designated roles. Council has a key role in developing and conducting exercises and simulations to test and further build capability in an action-learning or developmental way.

Such exercises should include structured and skilled debriefing to maximise the learning from these events and ensure that the outcomes are incorporated into future planning, capacity building and skill development activities.

Council can lead this community development and capacity building effort. There might be funding and grants available from time to time to support such activity and the development and production of recovery materials suitable for distribution to potential recovery support organisations.

TIP

Develop capacity building programs, including introduction to recovery sessions for all council officers and community organisations.

Conduct recovery exercises for key personnel in recovery positions and recovery partners to practice their roles.

Building relationships during planning and preparation is key to developing the trust essential during complex emergencies.

BAW BAW SHIRE COUNCIL – DEVELOPING INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

As an addition to the development of the community recovery plans for the four main fire affected townships, Baw Baw Shire Council supported the development of Local Emergency Action Plans for four towns (Longwarry, Drouin West, Jindivick and Labertouche) with another six almost completed.

The plans are small flip charts that can be put on the fridge with tabs highlighting key pieces of information required in the event of an emergency, such as emergency numbers; a list of minimum items to take with you if you are evacuated; what documentation to pack; what to have in your personal evacuation kit; and so on. These charts are accompanied by a USB stick with space to hold scanned images of important personal documentation (insurance, medical reports, bank account details, photos), personal contact numbers, a list of things you might need to take and do and other useful prompts.

These resources were tested recently when council ran a practice evacuation at Noojee. Very good reports were received with positive exposure on local radio and in the newspapers.

MOUNT ALEXANDER SHIRE COUNCIL – WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS

The Mount Alexander Volunteer Network used the *Mount Alexander Volunteer Day of Thanks* to celebrate and acknowledge the extraordinary contribution volunteers make throughout the community, especially in the face of natural disasters.

The day featured a Volunteer Expo that showcased the diverse work and roles of volunteers in local community groups and not for profit organisations. The Volunteer Expo was launched with a public morning tea and special thanks from State MP Maree Edwards. 120 members of the community attended and 32 community groups were represented including the Salvation Army, Castlemaine SES, St Johns Ambulance and Castlemaine Lions Club. The Volunteer Expo, conducted in a central location, remained open to the public for a further three days.

In the evening a corporate cocktail hour was attended by 80 community members, bringing local businesses together with community groups to further celebrate the role that volunteers play and to strengthen the connection between small business and the not for profit sector.

A Volunteer Thank You Dinner was held at the Castlemaine Town Hall and attended by 230 volunteers from throughout the region. Volunteers were acknowledged, thanked, fed a delicious two course meal and entertained by local musicians.

The feedback from attendees was universally high, with guests enjoying the networking opportunities and ability to discuss their volunteer experiences with other community members. Guests were also very appreciative of the gesture and time taken to acknowledge their roles and contribution and the high quality of the event provided for them.

Council and the Community Recovery Committee funded and supported the Volunteer Network to provide several training packages to upskill volunteers dealing in emergency and recovery situations. The sessions included:

1. Working Together: Effective communication and good conflict resolution

2. Avoid Burn Out: From Survive to Thrive

3. Good Communication: person centred counselling skills

4. Food Handling training

5. First Aid training

The training was very successful for the Volunteer Network that has also grown in size and report they feel better prepared for the realities following an emergency.

NEXT STEPS

To prepare for recovery before a disaster review your council's existing recovery processes, plans and other emergency management documentation.

Use the following checklists to assess the status of recovery pre-planning.

MAYOR AND COUNCILLOR RECOVERY PREPAREDNESS REVIEW

Roles in an emergency and in recovery are understood ☐

Satisfied that their council is as prepared as possible for recovery following a disaster ☐

CEO RECOVERY PREPAREDNESS REVIEW

Legislative responsibilities are met, including emergency management delegations and up to date Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP) that addresses recovery ☐

Governance mechanisms are clearly described and understood across council and by partners ☐

Adequate resources (physical, financial and human resources) are allocated to emergency management including recovery to meet legislative responsibilities ☐

Recovery plans are able to be implemented and are tested or practiced ☐

All other recovery preparedness activities in hand ☐

CROSS-COUNCIL RECOVERY PREPAREDNESS REVIEW

Hazards and risks assessments are current (available in the MEMP) ☐

Governance mechanisms are clearly described and understood across council and by partners ☐

Arrangements and agreements with partners are prepared and up-to-date ☐

Draft Goals and actions are agreed and in place across each of the five environments to deal with immediate impacts for municipality and neighbouring areas ☐

Goals and actions are reviewed and updated to reflect experience of recent disasters elsewhere ☐

Adequately skilled people are identified, inducted and trained and available to implement these actions ☐

Contact details of all these people (including out of hours) are confirmed and updated ☐

Facilities and resources are maintained to meet their role in recovery ☐

Roads and other transport access infrastructure is maintained to meet their role in recovery ☐

Geographic and demographic characteristics of local communities are up-to-date ☐

Vulnerable populations have been identified and recovery implications planned for ☐

Local communities are adequately informed of disaster preparedness and the role
of council and partners ☐

Local businesses, including primary producers, are adequately informed of disaster preparedness
and the role of council and partners ☐

Recovery actions have been tested, exercised and updated ☐

Communication channels have been reviewed and updated ☐

Take action to address any gaps or deficiencies in recovery readiness by using the resources referred to in this booklet. They can be found in **Book 8: Recovery tools and other resources** which also includes additional reading such as existing recovery resources; materials and web links.

TIP

Remember to review recovery readiness documentation routinely (at least annually) and ahead of any known periods of local danger such as fire or flood.

Re-check if conditions are forecast that make the risk of disaster high.

ENDNOTES

1   *Victorian Emergency Management Act 1986*
    http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol_act/
    ema1986190/. This should be read in conjunction
    with the *Victorian Emergency Management
    Act 2013*, which establishes new governance
    arrangements for Emergency Management in
    Victoria but does not revise the responsibilities
    of local councils.

    Available at www.legislation.vic.gov.au.

2   Australian Emergency Management Institute, 2011,
    Community Recovery, Handbook 2, Australian
    Emergency Management Handbook Series:
    Building a disaster resilient Australia, AEMI,
    Canberra http://www.em.gov.au/Documents/
    AEMHS%202%20Community%20Recovery.PDF

3   MAV, 2012(a) is available in hardcopy from
    Municipal Association of Victoria, (03) 9667 5555

4   MAV, 2012(b) is available in hardcopy from
    Municipal Association of Victoria, (03) 9667 5555

5   Victorian Emergency Management Act 1986
    http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/vic/consol_act/
    ema1986190/. This should be read in conjunction
    with the Victorian Emergency Management
    Act 2013, which establishes new governance
    arrangements for Emergency Management in
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6   Emergency Management Victoria, 2014,
    www.emv.vic.gov.au/policies/emmv/

7   Office of the Victorian Privacy Commissioner,
    2010, *Info Sheet on Emergencies and Privacy*,
    OVPC, Melbourne

    www.privacy.vic.gov.au/privacy/web2.nsf/files/
    emergencies-and-privacy/$file/info_sheet_
    02_10.pdf

8   Gurtner, Y. Cottrell, A. & King D., 2011, *PRE &
    RAPID: Community Impact Assessment for
    Disaster Recovery*, Centre for Disaster Studies,
    James Cook University, Townsville

    http://eprints.jcu.edu.au/23172/

9   Australian Emergency Management Institute, 2011,
    Community Recovery, Handbook 2, Australian
    Emergency Management Handbook Series:
    Building a disaster resilient Australia, AEMI,
    Canberra http://www.em.gov.au/Documents/
    AEMHS%202%20Community%20Recovery.PDF

10 Australian Red Cross, 2010, *Communicating in
    Recovery*, ARC, Carlton http://www.redcross.org.
    au/files/Communicating_in_recovery_resource.
    pdf

11 MAV, 2012(a) is available in hardcopy from
    Municipal Association of Victoria, (03) 9667 5555

12 MAV, 2012(b) is available in hardcopy from
    Municipal Association of Victoria, (03) 9667 5555