# CRISIS ESSENTIALS

## CRISIS MANAGEMENT FOR TOURISM BUSINESSES

**PREPARING FOR THE UNEXPECTED**

**RESPONDING TO A CRISIS**

**RECOVERING FROM A CRISIS**

**EMERGENCY KIT AND CHECKLIST**

Australian Government

**Attorney-General's Department**

Emergency Management Australia

DISASTER RESILIENT AUSTRALIA

*GET READY*

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Drakesbrook Winery recovering from the Waroona-Harvey Bushfires of January 2016.

Photo Credit: WA Eco

# INTRODUCTION

In 2017 Western Australia attracted more than 30 million visitors from interstate and overseas. This is no surprise given the variety of experiences for travelers, from the sunny Kimberley Pilbara to the amazing forests of the South West.

It's important to note, that with this variety of experiences comes a range of potential hazards. This may result in many travelers being unprepared when disaster strikes.

In recent times, a number of natural crises have highlighted the necessity of preparing travelers within our iconic state.

The 2016 Waroona - Harvey bush fires lasted 17 days and scorched 70,000 hectares of land. More than 180 homes were destroyed and dozens of local businesses were impacted. Access to the South-West was heavily affected during the busy summer period, leaving thousands of travelers, holiday-makers and residents within the region displaced.

Flooding throughout the North-West and Southern Coast can isolate towns and regions for days, heavily impacting access for tourists, who may be uninformed and unprepared for such an emergency.

Creating a shared responsibility in the tourism sector begins with the operator, who in turn can empower the traveler.

# PREPARING TRAVELERS

Encouraging travelers to download emergency applications on their devices (mobile phones, tablets etc.) will promote a higher level of emergency preparedness during their stay.

**Emergency+** is available for iOS, Google Play and Android devices.

It provides users with critical location details so they can easily and effectively report an emergency and request assistance.

**EMERGENCY +**
Reporting
Emergency Advice
Your Location

# HOW WILL THIS GUIDE HELP ME WITH MY BUSINESS?

This guide aims to provide essential information to local businesses about how to prepare for, respond to, and recover from a significant event.

It encourages local tourism businesses to undertake emergency preparedness planning, including business continuity planning.

Possible crisis events that could affect your business include:

| Natural Disasters | Non-Natural Events |
|---|---|
| Bushfire | Influenza or medical outbreaks |
| Flood | HAZMAT incident |
| Earthquake | Structural fires |
| Heat Wave | Public disturbance |
| Storm | Road or public access restrictions |
| Cyclone | Power outage |

An emergency can have a significant impact on tourism businesses, regardless of whether your business is directly affected or not.

Tourism businesses are particularly vulnerable to public perceptions of security, health and safety.

An emergency in your area can potentially result in a downturn of visitors, costing your business in the short and long term.



Lightning strikes at the City of Mandurah Christmas Pageant 2012.
Photo Credit: Jon Hewson

# PREPARING FOR THE UNEXPECTED

Damage to South Coast Highway following severe
flooding in Esperance and surrounds in February 2017.
Photo provided by DFES

# HOW PREPARED ARE YOU?

This simple checklist will help you identify if you are prepared to respond effectively and recover from a crisis:

| HAVE YOU... | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Secured adequate insurance coverage for your business to cover issues such as asset damage and loss? | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2. Prepared an emergency management plan for your business that documents your responsibilities to customers and staff? | ☐ | ☐ |
| 3. Identified the emergency management arrangements or plans for your area? | ☐ | ☐ |
| 4. Found out who to contact in the event of an emergency? | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5. Developed an appropriate policy and procedures to deal with cancellations or forward bookings? | ☐ | ☐ |
| 6. Listed your business with the nearest accredited Visitor Information Centre and/or the database of your regional and local tourism association? | ☐ | ☐ |
| 7. Identified the protocol for working with the media during a crisis? | ☐ | ☐ |
| 8. Prepared a business continuity plan? | ☐ | ☐ |

If you answered **YES** to 7–8 of these questions, you are well on your way to deal effectively with a crisis.

If you answered **YES** to 5–6, your business is engaged but you need to undertake some tasks to increase your capacity to cope with a crisis.

If you answered **YES** to 4 or less, you do not currently have adequate processes in place to respond effectively to a crisis, and your preparation requires urgent attention.

# GETTING STARTED

The steps involved in preparing for a crisis event are straightforward and should be undertaken several months prior to common hazard seasons and reviewed regularly.

## Step 1 - Planning to Manage Risk

To manage risk, consider the following points:

### 1. Understand your business

- What does your business need in order to operate successfully?

- What technology and systems do you need to keep open?

- Are there records or information your business couldn't survive long without?

- What legal or contractual obligations do you have to staff and customers?

### 2. Identify the risk

- What are the different risks that could impact your business? Consider harmful incidents occurring within the business as well as natural or manmade disasters outside the business.

### 3. Assess the risks

- What is the likelihood of these risks occurring?

- What would the possible consequences be?

- What is the likely level of impact they could have on your business?

### 4. Manage the risks

- What would need to be done to address these risks if they happened, or to reduce the chance of them occurring?

- Create checklists to ensure your plan can be quickly put into place.

### 5. Secure adequate insurance cover

- Insurance cover is very useful to help protect your business against risks. For a small business, adequate cover can mean the difference between a business surviving an emergency or going under.

- Consider insurance cover for public liability, business interruption, vehicles and property, amongst other things.

# Step 2 - Planning for an Emergency

Your next step is to develop an emergency plan which will guide your response and recovery to an emergency. Looking after your customers, staff and yourself when an emergency occurs is your number one priority.

It is important that your plan is clear, well-thought through and accepted by you and your staff. Specific procedures and activities are needed to prepare for and respond to different types of emergencies.

**Work through the following checklist for each possible emergency event:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Identify who is in charge of management the response if an emergency arises and/or an evacuation is needed. | ☐ |
| Identify evacuation routes and emergency assembly points. | ☐ |
| Identify how and who will communicate with employees and visitors if an emergency occurs, including people with disabilities and special needs. | ☐ |
| Identify staff who have first aid qualifications and update or train further staff if necessary. Ensure a properly stocked First Aid kit is available for use. | ☐ |
| Have a list of telephone numbers and addresses of staff members. | ☐ |
| Identify which staff have the skills to help you in an emergency, and who you can rely on to react calmly and professionally. | ☐ |
| Contact emergency service providers for advice on emergency management procedures. | ☐ |
| Identify how you will receive warning messages and be kept informed. | ☐ |

Your overall plan will be a collection of all the checklists and should be clearly recorded.

Everyone who works at or visits your business should be aware of your emergency procedures, even if it is by reading the evacuation procedures displayed on the back of a hotel room door.

Planning is a continuous process. To be effective in an emergency, plans must be regularly checked, tested and updated as conditions in your business and environment change.

# Step 3 – Planning for Business Continuity

Business continuity, or recovery, is the next step in the survival of your business after an emergency incident has occurred. The quicker you can get your business up and running again, the easier you can get the cash flowing back into your organization.

Developing a business continuity plan involves identifying what you would need to do if an emergency occurred in order to:

- Repair or replace damaged equipment and infrastructure
- Relocate the business to an alternate location
- Temporarily contract operations
- Multi-skill staff
- Upload computer systems with backed up data
- Arrange staff support services, e.g. counselling, taking time off
- Communicate with employees, customers and suppliers.

Business continuity plans should identify **who** will do **what** and **when**. See page 18 for further information sources.



The iconic Yarloop Hotel was destroyed in the Waroona-Harvey Bush Fires in January 2016.
Photo provided by DFES

# RESPONDING TO A CRISIS

# IMMEDIATE ACTIONS FIRST 24 HOURS

## If an emergency occurs that impacts on your business

- Activate your emergency plan
- Follow the advice given by emergency services agencies in terms of evacuations, access routes, etc.

## Stay informed

- Download the EmergencyAUS and Emergency+ mobile apps
- Stay tuned to 6PR or ABC Local Radio – your emergency broadcaster
- Further information and alerts will also be available by automated text from or consulting the website relevant to the type of emergency

## Communicate with Clients

Keep customers safe and informed - Update clients about the emergency by talking to each visiting group personally. How well you communicate can have a major impact on how comfortable clients feel through the emergency situation.

Remember that you are in the customer service business and the easier the emergency situation is for clients, the more likely they will be to return to your business.

If your business is not operational or access routes are closed, contact clients with forward bookings to cancel or postpone.

## Communicate with Staff

Keep staff informed about what's happening regarding the emergency through bulletins or staff meetings. Remember to also keep staff informed who are not currently at work.

## Stay calm and relaxed

This will help other staff to do the same when carrying out emergency activities. It will also reduce the level of anxiety that clients feel. Be aware of your stress levels, those of your staff and clients.

## Be prepared to be contacted by the media

You do not have to speak to the media, but if you do ensure you have taken the time and considered the key messages you would like to convey.

# SHORT TO MEDIUM TERM ACTIONS 2-14 DAYS AFTER THE INCIDENT

## Protect bookings and deal with cancellations

If your business is not operational or is inaccessible due to road closures or explicit government safety warnings then you may have no alternative other than to cancel bookings.

Even if your business is open and transport routes are clear after an incident, it is inevitable that some pre-booked clients will decide to cancel their visit, rather than postpone.

The best solution in both of these circumstances is to talk to the customer to see if you can negotiate something to suit you both. For example, hold the deposit over to be used at a different time.

Your organisation should have a policy regarding cancellations during emergencies.

## Assess your finances

A significant emergency event in your region or local area will inevitably have a financial impact on your business. One of the first actions to take after an emergency occurs is to prepare the business finances to cope with the months/years ahead.

- The extent to which your business will be affected by an emergency will depend on:
- The nature and expected duration of the event
- Your financial reserves and access to other funding sources
- Whether the business can keep trading
- Whether customers continue to come to your business
- The actions you take to reduce expenditure



Winemaker Laura Pearse surveys flood damage to her prize-winning shiraz vines at Upper Reach Winery Swan Valley
Photo Credit: Colin Murty

# Prepare a cash flow budget

When an emergency first impacts your business, it is important to develop or revise your cash flow budget for the business.
There are essentially two types of budget:

- Cash flow budget (short term cash liquidity)
- Profit and loss budget (medium-long term business success)

The cash flow budget estimates the future income and expenditure of the business, revealing any periods where it may fall short of cash. As cash is the 'life blood' of a business it is critical to survival.

By developing cash flow projections for several months in advance, you can estimate when the business will be short of money and take appropriate steps beforehand, such as promotions, revise staffing etc.

# Manage your stress levels

Emergencies are naturally a very stressful time. Your capacity to manage your stress can have a big impact on how staff and customers respond to a threat of an emergency. By focusing on your and others' physical and emotional wellbeing, you can reduce the impacts of stress.

**The following strategies* may assist you:**

- **Look after your body**
  Getting enough sleep, eating well, exercising regularly and avoiding harmful levels of alcohol and other drug use can reduce your stress levels and help you cope during an emergency.

- **Keep a diary**
  Make a list of the things you'd like to get done each day, and cross them off as you do them. Move incomplete items to tomorrow's list.

- **Pick the right place to talk with someone**
  If you feel the need to talk to someone, ensure you choose an appropriate time and place with few distractions, so you can both focus on the conversation.

- **Seek help when you need it**
  It is important to remember that there are people who can help you. This may be a family member, friend, a GP or a support service.

- **Establish a routine if you can**
  Consider starting small, and create routines for exercise, relaxation, meal times, waking in the morning etc.

*These strategies have been adapted from Think Mental Health WA.

For more information, visit www.thinkmentalhealthwa.com.au

Be prepared to work with your regional response and recovery group and the media as they can also be a key partner in the recovery process.
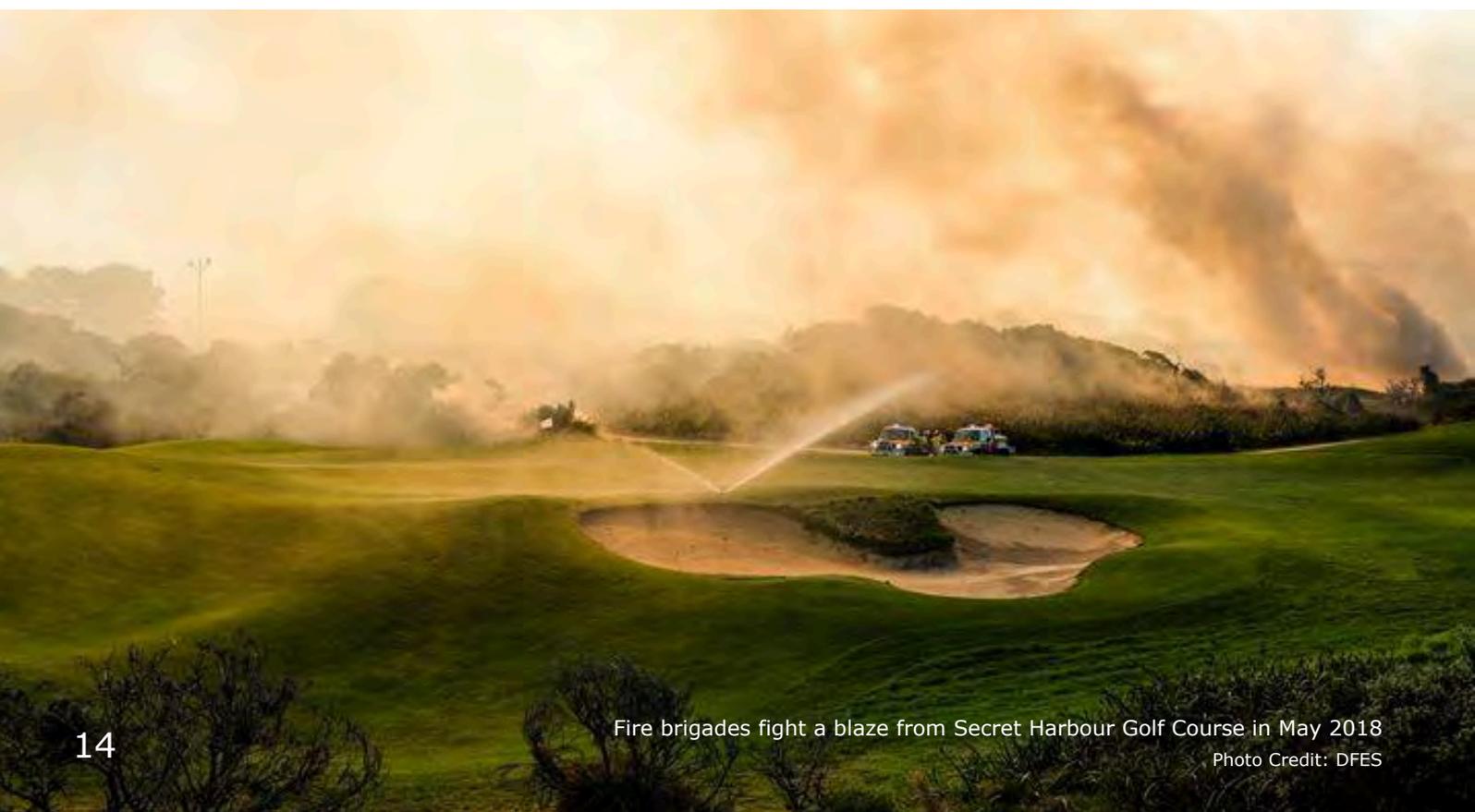
As far as practicable, an appointed spokesperson for the tourism region should be the only person who communicates with the media on behalf of the tourism industry. This will ensure that a consistent message and style is related to the media, as opposed to conflicting information from multiple sources.

Sometimes it may be necessary for a tourism operator who is directly impacted upon by an emergency to talk to the media.

## Hints when talking to the media

- Be factual – don't speculate
- Be calm, reassuring and positive (avoid terms such as 'emergency' or 'crisis')
- Acknowledge the responsibility to visitors and community
- Acknowledge the importance of visitor welfare (if appropriate)
- If appropriate, empathise with the victims of the incident
- Keep informed/updated

To receive the latest information about the emergency response and recovery process for the tourism industry, make sure you are listed with local tourism and applicable industry associations.

Fire brigades fight a blaze from Secret Harbour Golf Course in May 2018
Photo Credit: DFES

# RECOVERING FROM A CRISIS

# Key Tips

Assuming you are open for business after an emergency, implementing these tasks in the weeks and months following will substantially assist with the recovery process.

## Protect your existing business

Protect the business 'on your books' by contacting people with existing bookings to reassure them that you are open. This action can prevent cancellations.

Post up-to-date information on your website and prepare bulletins for staff to respond to telephone inquiries about the emergency situation.

## Monitor your cash flow

Monitor your budget carefully in the weeks and months following a crisis. Compare your estimated turnover with actual figures so you can modify outgoing expenses accordingly.

## Review your products and services

If your business has been directly affected by the emergency, confirm the products/services that you do have to sell. You may need to come up with new options if your existing product has been damaged. Be creative and flexible.

Allow yourself to venture into new territory

Look at ways of adding extra value to your existing products/services to encourage people to visit your business. Develop packages and remove minimum stay requirements.

As a number of products and experiences in your region may no longer be operating, do some research to identify alternative options for visitors.

## Revise your target markets

Reconsider your target markets in light of the product you have to sell. Identify markets that are most likely to visit your region/business after an emergency, such as your previous guests. You may need to devise new experiences to appeal to new markets if your normal markets are staying away.

## Promote your business

Prepare a brief marketing action plan to guide your promotional activities.

Promote your business as soon as it is open for trade again. Consider low-cost options, such as public relations activities, email blasts to your guest database, Google Adwords, regional marketing initiatives, etc.

## Keep staff engaged

Involve your staff in the process of restoring your business to normal. Regular communication can help them to feel part of the team and to understand the reasons behind any tough decisions.

## Review your staffing plan

Assess whether you need to adjust your staffing arrangements to cut down costs.

## Review your emergency plan

Review your plan after an emergency and incorporate what you have learnt from your experiences into your future planning. Crisis preparedness is an ongoing process.

# Emergency Kit

The Emergency kit will assist businesses in maintaining operations if there is damage to a building or an evacuation is required.

The kit should be regularly reviewed and updated and it recommended that one is stored at the premises and another safely off-site.

Items that you may wish to include in your emergency kit are:

**Documents**

Business continuity plan

Insurance company details

List of employees with contact details (include next of kin contact details)

Contact details for customers, suppliers, utility companies etc.

Financial and banking information

Building site and engineering plans (include gas, electricity and water)

Product lists, specifications, formulas and any trade secrets

**Equipment**

Computer back up tapes / disks / USB memory sticks or flash drives

Spare keys / security codes

Mobile telephone with credit and charging devices

General stationery (pens, markers, message pads, paper, flip chart)

Torch and spare batteries

Basic First Aid Kit

Business credit cards, cheque books and cash

# Emergency Checklist

This checklist is designed to be used as a guide for your business.

**On receiving an emergency alert**

Alert staff and stakeholders of potential disruption

Fuel up vehicles and charge mobile devices

Back up work and essential documents

Staff Availability

- Confirm rosters (consider safe rostering of overtime)

- Plan alternate work during lengthy outages or extreme weather

Print procedures and forms required for critical business functions

Update and print communications lists

**During an emergency**

Advise staff of alternate payroll methods (if required)

Provide support to staff and clients

Set up work station at an alternative venue

Communicate with stakeholders (via website, phone and social media etc)

Adjust staffing requirements

- Consider safety of staff in extreme weather

- Consider mental and physical capabilities of affected staff

# More Information

**Emergency Alerts**

www.emergency.wa.gov.au

**Emergency  Planning**

www.dfes.wa.gov.au

www.redcross.org.au

**Business Continuity Planning**

*Business Continuity & Disaster Recovery Workbook*

www.cciawa.com

www.business.wa.gov.au

# Notes

City of
MANDURAH