

Emergency Management Planning Reform

Regional level planning

The *Emergency Management Legislation Amendment Act 2018* (EMLA Act) was passed through Parliament in August 2018, and seeks to address known and documented risks in emergency management planning by establishing an integrated, comprehensive and coordinated framework for emergency management planning.

Changes to regional level planning

- While formal planning already occurs at the state and municipal levels, planning is currently less formalised at the regional level. The new arrangements build on existing relationships and expertise to strengthen regional planning, with continuous improvement over time.
- The new arrangements involve establishing regional emergency management planning committees (REMPCs), which will be responsible for preparing new regional emergency management plans (REMPs).
- The *Emergency Management Act 2013* (the Act), as amended by the EMLA Act, provides that the new REMPCs will elect their chairperson from their membership (any organisation). Victoria Police and DHHS will continue to have a vital role in emergency response coordination and emergency recovery coordination, respectively, and remain key members of the new committees.
- Plans will be required to cover mitigation, response and recovery, and address the roles and responsibilities of agencies in relation to emergency management.
- Once all three planning levels are established, the regional level will be vital in connecting the state and municipal levels to ensure the new planning arrangements operate in both a top-down and bottom-up way.

The new arrangements build on existing relationships and expertise to strengthen regional planning, with continuous improvement over time.



Regional emergency management planning committees

- Each REMPC is responsible for the development of the REMP.
- Membership of the new REMPCs demonstrates the collaborative nature of emergency management planning.
- The new REMPCs will be comprised of a core membership from Victoria Police, Metropolitan Fire Brigade/Fire Rescue Victoria and/or Country Fire Authority (depending on the committee's geographical footprint), Ambulance Victoria, Victoria State Emergency Service, Emergency Management Victoria, all departments (except the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Department of Treasury and Finance), all councils and alpine resort management boards within the relevant region (may be represented individually or collectively), and the Australian Red Cross. Each regional committee will also include other members relevant to its geographical footprint, including additional recovery representation, and other members as appropriate, including industry representatives. All members will participate on an equal basis in the new committees.
- The new REMPCs will be required to elect a chair from their membership.
- Once the municipal phase commences, each REMPC will be responsible for providing assurance and approving all MEMPs within the region.
- It will be up to each REMPC to decide whether, and what, subcommittees or working groups it wishes to establish to assist or inform its planning functions. The REMPC is also empowered to determine its own quorum and voting requirements.
- Any sub-plans that form part of the integrated REMP will need to be prepared in accordance with the new planning arrangements. That is, they would need to be prepared by the committee, be subject to assurance, approved by the EMC, be published and be reviewed every three years.
- Importantly, it is the responsibility of the committee as a whole to deliver the emergency management plan and not that of the chair.

Regional emergency management planning guidelines

- The Minister for Police and Emergency Services can issue guidelines to facilitate and support the planning process. Emergency management planning guidelines at each level will provide further detail and practical guidance on the planning process, supported by a toolkit of resources for preparers on the EM-COP platform.
- The proposed regional guidelines and toolkit will provide further guidance on how the REMPCs operate, including governance and procedures.
- It is proposed that regional guidelines will be formally released in April 2020 and will build upon the state level guidelines.

Regional emergency management plans

- All eight emergency management regions must produce a REMP that focuses on the consequences of emergencies within their geographical footprint. Each REMP must include content that is specific to that region, without duplicating the SEMP.
- New governance arrangements require the REMPs to be prepared by the new REMPC and approved by the Emergency Management Commissioner (EMC).
- The REMP should utilise the concepts from the *Victorian Preparedness Framework*. Through this process, the REMP considers where emergency management capability would be drawn from within the region and mechanisms to escalate requests for emergency management capacity.
- Three significantly different regions are being used to test the development of a regional plan and refine the guidelines content. The three regions are Barwon South West, Loddon Mallee and Southern Metro.
- Work is underway in these three regions to start the process of developing regional plans with support and guidance from EMV.
- The development of the regional guidelines will occur in parallel to this process. This will assist in ensuring the plans and guidelines are fit for purpose.

- All eight regions will then complete their REMPs following the proposed release of regional guidelines in April 2020.
- Consultation is a requirement of the Act for emergency management plans produced at state, regional and municipal levels under the new arrangements.

Timing

- The new regional arrangements will commence after the new state emergency management plan (SEMP) is in place.
- A regional 'proof of concept' phase is underway with three regions to test the development of regional plans and the draft regional guidelines. The obligation to start preparing regional plans under the new guidelines is proposed to take effect from April 2020.

Collaboration

- The new arrangements establish an enabling environment that supports collaborative planning and gives flexibility to accommodate the different approaches across Victoria.
- Regions may collaborate in the planning process, however each REMPC is required to produce an individual plan which addresses their particular circumstances, needs and risks. It is expected that REMPs prepared under the new planning arrangements do not replicate other regional plans or the SEMP.

Assurance of regional emergency management plans (REMPs)

- The EMC is the approver of the REMPs.
- EMV is currently developing a draft assurance framework for state, regional and municipal levels under the changes made through the EMLA Act.
- As part of the new assurance requirements, each REMPC will be required to prepare a statement of assurance to indicate the extent to which it has complied with the Act and has regard to the planning guidelines in preparing the plan. This will help to inform the EMC in deciding whether to approve a REMP.

How will regions be defined for the purpose of regional level planning?

- At present, Victoria's emergency management regions are defined under the separate state emergency response plan (SERP) and state emergency relief and recovery plan (SERRP). The Act, as amended by the EMLA Act, provides for emergency management regions to be declared by Order in Council, providing a single and clear mechanism to declare regions.
- It is proposed that the eight Fairer Victoria government regions will be used for emergency management planning purposes. Further consultation on the proposed regions will occur before the regional phase formally commences.
- There are a number of unincorporated areas of Victoria that do not form part of any local government municipality. The Act, as amended by the EMLA Act, includes a specific power to declare unincorporated areas to be part of a region to ensure these areas can be included as part of Victoria's regional emergency management planning arrangements.

The new arrangements establish an enabling environment that supports collaborative planning and gives flexibility to accommodate the different approaches across Victoria.