

# Emergency Management Planning Reform

## Municipal level planning (councils and alpine resort management boards)

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 for councils

When the municipal level amendments take effect:

- Responsibility for municipal level planning is transferred from councils to new multi-agency municipal emergency management planning committees (MEMPCs).
- When the municipal phase commences, the municipal emergency resource officer (MERO) will no longer have legislative backing. Instead, the *Emergency Management Act 2013* (the Act), as amended by the EMLA Act, provides for the new role of municipal emergency management officer (MEMO) and formalises the role of municipal recovery manager (MRM).
- The role of the municipal fire prevention officer (MFPO) will continue under the planning reforms, but will no longer include a specific planning function. Instead, fire planning will fall under the new integrated planning arrangements.
- VICSES audits will be replaced with a new assurance framework that applies at all planning levels.
- Plans will be required to cover mitigation, response and recovery, and address the roles and responsibilities of agencies in relation to emergency management. Plans are also intended to be integrated and comprehensive.
- The roll out of the new arrangements is beginning first at the state level, and then the regional and municipal levels. Once all three levels are in place, the arrangements promote a top-down and bottom-up approach so that information from the municipal level informs planning at the regional and state level, and vice versa.



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## Changes for alpine resort management boards

- As with the current arrangements, alpine resort management boards will have the same emergency management planning responsibilities as councils. This means an alpine resort management board is required to facilitate emergency management planning for its alpine resort/s.
- However, an alpine resort board will be able to appoint a council or another alpine resort board to undertake planning functions on its behalf. This arrangement recognises the smaller size and capacity of some alpine resort boards.

## Municipal emergency management planning committee

- The Act, as amended by the EMLA Act, transfers responsibility for municipal level planning from councils to new MEMPCs. This reflects significant feedback from councils that councils should not own the plans, as they should be multi-agency plans.
- Councils will convene and chair the committees, recognising councils' particular expertise and networks within their municipalities, and their ability to coordinate across agencies at this level. Chairing a committee does not mean the chair is responsible for the committee's work.
- Planning is a shared responsibility of the MEMPC, and as the chair the council performs functions on behalf of the committee.
- Core membership for MEMPCs includes the council or alpine resort management board, Victoria Police, Country Fire Authority and/or Fire Rescue Victoria (to be established by the time the municipal phase takes effect), Ambulance Victoria, Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES), Australian Red Cross and the Department of Health and Human Services. The MEMPCs also require at least one additional recovery representative, one community representative, and one other representative (for example, industry).

- The new MEMPCs will be responsible for integrated emergency management planning for its municipal district, including planning for mitigation across all emergencies.
- Importantly, it is the responsibility of the committee as a whole to deliver the emergency management plan and not that of the chair.

## Municipal 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 of planning will provide further detail and practical guidance on the planning process, supported by a toolkit of resources for preparers on EM-COP.
- Municipal guidelines will be formally released after 1 December 2020 and will build upon the state and regional level guidelines.

## Municipal emergency management plans (MEMPs)

- Each municipal district or alpine resort is required to have a MEMP that is consistent with the relevant regional emergency management plan (REMP) and state emergency management plan (SEMP).
- MEMPs are required to be developed by the new MEMPC and approved by the relevant regional emergency management planning committee (REMPC).
- Municipal plans should not replicate the regional plan or other municipal plans. Rather, they should provide specific information tailored to the municipality's context and risk.

## Timing

- The new municipal emergency management planning arrangements will take effect on 1 December 2020. Until then, existing arrangements continue to apply. In particular, VICSES audits of MEMPs continue.
- Once the municipal planning arrangements take effect, the current municipal plans will continue as a transitional measure until new plans are prepared under the new framework. A rolling schedule to prepare and undertake assurance of the new plans will be established from 2021.

## Collaboration

- The new arrangements establish an enabling environment that supports collaborative planning and gives flexibility to accommodate the different approaches across Victoria.
- MEMPCs may work jointly or in 'clusters' to develop common elements of their plans.
- However, each MEMPC is required to produce an individual plan which addresses their particular circumstances, needs and risks.

## Consultation

- Consultation is a requirement for emergency management plans produced at state, regional and municipal levels. MEMPCs are required to consult the community in developing their MEMPs.
- Councils will have the opportunity to contribute to the development of new plans through their MEMPC and consultation on the draft guidelines in 2020.
- There may also be an opportunity to pilot the development and assurance of a number of municipal plans within the three proof of concept regions.

## Assurance of municipal emergency management plans

- The municipal planning and audit process should continue as normal until the municipal phase of the EMLA Act commences. Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) will work with VICSES to transition from the current audit requirements to the new assurance framework.
- Once the municipal phase commences, the relevant REMPC will be responsible for providing assurance and approving the MEMP.
- 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 MEMPC 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 REMPC in deciding whether to approve a MEMP.

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