

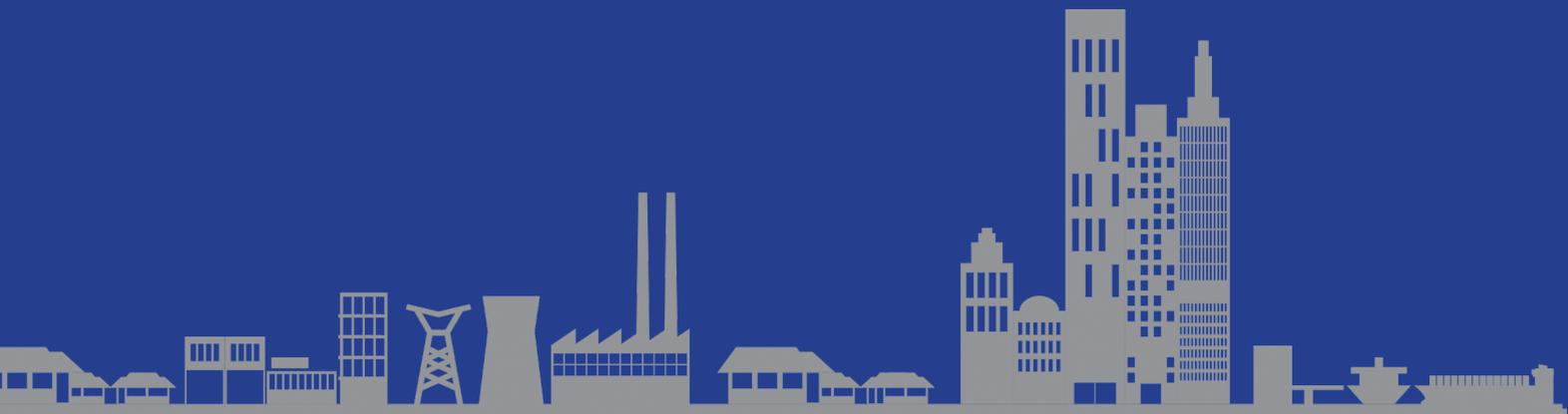


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A Modern Emergency Management System for Victoria

October 2015

**Working in conjunction
with Communities,
Government, Agencies,
and Business.**



The future of emergency management in Victoria will be shaped by global challenges and their impact. In addition to the impacts of climate change and the increased frequency of extreme weather events, we will also face changes in population, demographics and technology, coupled with the increasing potential for pandemic, biosecurity and security risks.

Community Resilience

Resilience refers to the capacity of communities and the systems and structures that support them to survive, adapt and grow in the face of challenges.

A community resilience-based approach is critical to the success of our future emergency management system.

A safe and resilient community...

- Is connected by relationships with external actors who provide a wider supportive environment, and supply goods and services when needed.
- Is organised with the capacity to identify problems, establish priorities and act.
- Is knowledgeable and healthy with the ability to assess, manage and monitor its risks, while learning new skills and building on past experiences.
- Has infrastructure and services including strong housing, transport, power, water and sanitation systems, together with the ability to maintain, repair and renovate them.
- Has economic opportunities with a diverse range of employment opportunities, income and financial services. It is flexible, resourceful and has the capacity to accept uncertainty and proactively respond to change.
- Can manage its natural assets, recognises their value and has the ability to protect, enhance and maintain them.

Adapted from 'Characteristics of a Safe and Resilient Community - Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction Study ARUP International Development - September 2011; © International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Geneva, 2012' <http://www.ifrc.org/>

A resilience-based approach recognises that the future challenges facing Victoria will impact communities and their support systems in two distinct ways - as long term chronic stresses, and increasing numbers and types of acute shocks.

Chronic stresses weaken the fabric of a community on a day-to-day or cyclical basis, such as high unemployment, inefficient public transport, endemic violence, illness, drought and ongoing food and water shortages. Such stresses impact on the way that people access and engage with their community and the services and systems that support them. At the same time, chronic stresses stretch the capacity of organisations providing critical services to the community as they attempt to respond to increasing and changing community demands.

Acute shocks are sudden, sharp events that threaten lives, property and the environment, including bushfires, floods, earthquakes, damage to critical infrastructure and security attacks. Underlying chronic stresses are predicted to compound the impacts of increasing numbers of acute shocks. This combination of events can have far reaching and long term consequences, with the potential to affect the ability for a community to recover, adapt and transform.

Chronic Stresses

- High unemployment
- Endemic violence
- Illness
- Drought

Acute Shocks

- Bushfires
- Floods
- Earthquakes
- Security attacks



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A Resilience-based Approach to Emergency Management

The development of a modern, resilience-based Victorian emergency management system requires an ongoing program of resilience building tailored to a community's unique networks, connections and structures.

Increasing a community's resilience involves a focus on the strength and sustainability of a community's infrastructure and institutions, as well as building and strengthening the links between people and the services, systems and structures that support the community to function.

It requires an appreciation of the networks and relationships through which individuals, households and communities connect to each other and their built and natural environment. It also requires an appreciation of the many and varied impacts of an emergency, which can extend well beyond the geographically impacted area and result in significant medium and long term consequences.

The objective for our emergency management system must be to understand, strengthen and utilise the networks and structures of a community. Within this system, our traditional emphasis on response becomes a 'surge' capacity that complements a program of on-going resilience building.

A community resilience-based approach requires the emergency management system to consider:

1. That every community has unique strengths, values, assets and connections, as well as safety and resilience levels that are specific to that community and context;
2. The potential impacts of chronic stresses and acute shocks on the individuals, households, businesses and services within a community;
3. The maintenance, restoration and strengthening of the connections, support services, systems and critical assets that support individuals and communities to survive and prosper;
4. The integration of community development programs and strategic partnerships into a broader emergency management system; and
5. That in this context, emergency management moves beyond its traditional phases toward a continual process of resilience building.



The concept of a modern emergency management system supports the vision of building safer and more resilient communities in Victoria. It is a step towards the integration of emergency management with the broader community resilience agenda.

The diversity of Victorian communities and the challenges they face will require emergency services to advance beyond the traditional prevention, preparedness, response and recovery process.

The future emergency management system will integrate these four traditional silos, recognising the need for a broader community resilience approach focused on community wellbeing, liveability, sustainability and viability. Such an approach appreciates that the more resilient a community is, the better equipped it will be to deal with the consequences of an emergency, whether immediate or longer term.

Reforms are already underway within the Victorian emergency management sector, with a focus on working collaboratively across communities, with government, not-for-profit service providers, and the private sector.

This document provides a frame that will advise and guide the development of initiatives for the next period. It is a vital component of planning for the future and will underpin other work including the relief and recovery framework, the resilience framework and the community planning framework.

As a contributor to and beneficiary of general community resilience, this sector will continue to work together to embed this resilience-based approach across the Victorian emergency management system.



Craig Lapsley PSM
Emergency Management Commissioner

