



Becoming a Community Emergency Broadcaster

Background

Emergency Broadcasters play an important role in Emergency Management. Through broadcasting emergency warnings, broadcasters help to provide alerts to the public, so communities can make informed decisions to plan for and survive emergencies.

The Victorian Government has formal arrangements for the broadcast of emergency warnings and information to the community. To become an Emergency Broadcaster, you must apply and if successful a Memorandum of Understanding is signed between the State of Victoria and the broadcaster.

Victoria has Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with a number of broadcasters. The Emergency Management Commissioner is the administrator of Victoria's emergency broadcasting policy on behalf of the emergency services.

During emergencies, Victoria's emergency broadcasters will broadcast information, including updates and community alerts, which will help the public to make decisions based on the advice of the emergency services.

If necessary, emergency warnings will interrupt normal programming on the radio and television station.

Emergency broadcasters include ABC Local Radio, commercial radio stations across Victoria, some Community Broadcasters and SkyNews television.

A complete list of official emergency broadcasters and can be downloaded from www.emv.vic.gov.au

Community Broadcasters

Community Broadcasters play a particularly useful role as some are able to broadcast in areas where other broadcasters cannot reach. They are also able to target specific local communities, providing information specific to the area.

Representative organisations, including Southern Community Media Association (SCMA), Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA) and the Australian Narrowcast Radio Association (ANRA) can provide further assistance in relation to the MOU.

Input from other representative organisations

We consult with a number of different parties on matters relating to Emergency Broadcasting, for example determining the application process, assessing applications and gaining an understanding of broadcaster requirements. Some of the parties we consult with, when relevant, include:

- Southern Community Media Association (SCMA)
- The Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA)
- The Australian Narrowcasting Radio Association (ANRA).
- The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV),
- The police and emergency service agencies
- Individual Broadcasters

Obligations of an Emergency Broadcaster

An Emergency Broadcaster is an important and accountable role and it has therefore been necessary for the State to adopt strict requirements for becoming an official Emergency Broadcaster.

Below are the key obligations of Emergency Broadcasters under the MOUs. To become emergency broadcasters, community broadcasters must demonstrate that they are able to:

- Broadcast emergency warnings and information at any time (i.e. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year), as directed by the emergency services. These messages must be broadcast in the form provided and in a timely manner.
- Break into ordinary scheduled programming to broadcast emergency warnings, and in collaboration with emergency services, move to continuous coverage during a major emergency as required.
- Broadcast the Standard Emergency Warning Signal (SEWS) when directed by the emergency services, and comply with the SEWS Guidelines (these are available at www.police.vic.gov.au). SEWS is an audio signal used to alert members of the community to danger in their area.
- Where possible broadcast emergency recovery information at the request of the emergency services. This is information that will help the community recover after a major emergency.
- Provide 24/7 contact details for the emergency services to use, including mobile, email and fax. Email is essential because emergency warnings and information will normally be emailed to broadcasters. These communication systems must be capable of handling a large number of messages.
- Establish a system to record emergency warnings and information that is received from emergency services, and communicates confirmation of receipt back to the sender.
- Provide emergency services with information about their broadcast coverage area.
- Use best endeavours to make sure information that is broadcast during emergencies is accurate, particularly in situations involving talkback callers.

- Put in place disaster contingency plans if emergency broadcasting procedures break down.
- Test and exercise all arrangements for emergency broadcasting at the local level.
- Participate in meetings at the local level to review emergency procedures and arrangements, particularly after major emergency events.
- Take part in pre-season and post-season debriefs at the local level.
- Access sufficient resources, capacity and training, on an ongoing basis, to fulfil obligations under the MOU.

Although the MOU is not legally binding, it is still a legal document, and it is recommended that broadcasters obtain independent legal advice in relation to their obligations under the MOU before they agree to sign it.

Application process

Expressions of interest to become an emergency broadcaster can be submitted at any time.

If approved, you will then be issued with an application form on the first business day of April. You will then have three months to complete and return the application form.

The application process can take up to ten months from the time Emergency Management Victoria receives the application to the official signing of the MOU between the Emergency Services Minister and the Emergency Broadcaster.

If you believe your organisation would be able to comply with the above requirements and are genuinely committed to becoming an official Emergency Broadcaster, please complete and return an expression of interest form.

Unsuccessful applications

Broadcasters that do not meet the criteria for an MOU are still able to access emergency information and warnings via the VicEmergency website or app:

www.emergency.vic.gov.au

We would also continue to work with you, to help you reach the obligations required to become an Emergency Broadcaster in the future.

Contact details

W: www.emv.vic.gov.au

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