

		Date	01.9.08	Policy Title	P021–Emergency & Disaster Management Policy
		Date	09.05.22	NDIS Practice Standard	2
		Date	16.05.22	ACQS	7 & 8

1. PURPOSE

To provide Carers Link management with guidance on developing and implementing emergency and disaster management plans. The Policy also provides staff with clear guidance on how to respond appropriately in an emergency or during a disaster. The ultimate purpose of the Policy is to ensure that no harm comes to customers, staff members and members of the public in their interactions with Carers Link during an emergency.

2. POLICY

It is Carers Link policy to protect the health, wellbeing and safety of its customers and staff. This means preventing and planning for emergencies / disasters and providing support to anyone who experiences an emergency or the impact of a disaster on its premises or while providing or receiving Carers Link services.

3. POLICY PRINCIPLES

1. Emergency and disaster management planning is a key element of Carers Link’s risk management framework
2. When planning for and during disasters which are long-term with no foreseeable end date – for example, during a pandemic - Carers Link will implement the most recent advice provided by authorities
3. Support and office staff are made aware of emergency procedures at Induction and during updates and regular drills
4. Customers and their families/carers are made aware of Carers Link’s emergency management framework, including plans, at sign up and throughout their service relationship with us
5. The effectiveness of Carers Link’s Emergency / Disaster Management framework is tested through analysis of responses to individual emergencies, regular drills, internal and external audit processes, policy reviews, and the company’s customer feedback framework
6. Carers Link consults with customers and their support networks on any identified needed enhancements. The Carers Link Customer Participation Committees are a valuable vehicle for gaining feedback/input from customers on emergency/disaster planning and management.

4. SCOPE

This Policy and its Procedures applies to Carers Link management, all staff and contractors, and to premises operated by Carers Link.

5. DEFINITIONS

Disaster – A *serious disruption* that causes widespread human, material, economic or environmental loss which exceeds the capacity of affected communities or societies to cope using their own resources. **Examples:** Statewide flooding; widespread bushfires; pandemics such as COVID-19; cyclones.

Emergency – A *situation* that poses an immediate risk to health, life, property or the environment. Most emergencies require urgent intervention to prevent a worsening of the situation. **Examples:** a customer having a heart attack in the presence of a Carers Link worker or a fire breaking out at the Carers Link office.

Emergency Plans targeting workers– According to Safe Work Australia Emergency Plans must provide for the following:

- Emergency procedures, including an effective response to an emergency
- Evacuation procedures
- Notification to emergency services at the earliest opportunity
- Medical treatment and assistance
- Effective communication between the person authorised to coordinate the emergency response and all people at the workplace
- Testing of the emergency procedures – including the frequency of testing and
- Information, training and instruction to relevant workers in relation to implementing the emergency procedures. www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/doc/emergency-plans-fact-sheet

Emergency Plans targeting customers

The **NDIS Practice Standards** state that emergency plans:

- Must be planned in such a way as to enable the continuity of supports that are critical to the safety, health and wellbeing of participants before, during and after an emergency or disaster
- Must be developed in consultation with participants and their support networks
- Must explain how Carers Link will respond to and oversee the response to, an emergency or disaster
- Must have mechanisms in place to test plans and adjust them in the context of a particular kind of emergency or disaster
- Must be reviewed in response to any changes in the nature of an emergency or disaster
- Must be regularly reviewed in consultation with participants and their support networks
- Must be communicated to workers, participants and their support networks
- Must be included in worker training, in particular, training in their implementation.

In terms of emergency planning, the Australian Department of Health requires **Aged Care providers** to:

- Maintain continuity of supports to customers (a requirement of the *Aged Care Act 1997*)
- Be aware of state / local emergency management requirements and resources, including ways to alert first responders to the location of vulnerable aged care customers
- Ensure key personnel have ready access to emergency services contact details
- Inform aged care customers and their families / carers about preparing for an emergency event (bushfire / flood for example)

- Monitor emergency broadcasts and the media for warnings during periods of high risk
- Use a risk assessment approach to ensure services to customers are prioritised, taking into account the most vulnerable, particularly those who live alone
- Arrange for other providers to deliver services to vulnerable customers if Carers Link's services are impacted for example, by staff shortages
- Maintain communication with customers and staff during an emergency situation
- Organise post emergency counselling for staff who have been adversely impacted and ensure aged care customers receive any required additional support through their therapeutic networks
- Review and amend risk / emergency management policies / plans if identified as necessary after an emergency event

6. PLANNING FOR EMERGENCIES / DISASTERS

6.1 DOCUMENTARY GUIDANCE ON PLANNING FOR EMERGENCIES OR DISASTERS

In terms of emergency planning, the key *internal* documents guiding Carers Link's governing body (the Executive Management Committee-EMC) are:

- P016 – Risk Management Policy
- P021- Emergency and Disaster Management Policy – this Policy
- R035 – Risk Register
- G013 – Covid-19 Business Continuity Plan
- [G014 - RACQ "Prepare your Emergency Plan"](#)
- R001 – Preventative and Corrective Actions Register – to record and monitor management and outcomes of emergency situations

The key external documents are the:

- *NDIS (Provider Registration and Practice Standards) Amendment (2021 Measures No.1 Rules 2021*
- *NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators Guidelines 2021*
- *Australian Department of Health – Preparing for an Emergency Event in Aged Care – Home Care Service*

6.2 PLANNING TO ENSURE CONTINUITY OF SUPPORTS

6.2(i) Planning for the Potential Impact of Disasters on Continuity of Supports

In terms of the *potential* impact of emergencies and disasters on Carers Link's capacity to continue providing customer supports, management is guided by the *R035 – Risk Register* and in terms of reducing risk, planning adaptive responses and managing pandemics which have no given end date - the *G013 – COVID-19 Business Continuity Plan*

When it comes to specifically planning and implementing customer supports during a pandemic, staff utilise the *P052 – Covid-19 Emergency Plan* (or a similar plan developed to manage a different pandemic).

6.2 (ii) Planning to maintain Staffing during Emergencies / Disasters

Carers Link may find it difficult to fill shifts for customers during natural disasters or pandemics because large numbers of Lifestyle Support Workers are unable to safely leave their homes or are in self-isolation as a result of contracting a seriously contagious disease.

Available employees will be offered additional shifts, with care being taken not to overburden them and risk them also becoming unwell due to exhaustion.

Carers Link may access temporary worker schemes established by government - for example, during Covid-19, the NDIA contracted the Recruitment, Consulting and Staffing Association to provide workers for surge workforce placements – or liaise with customer support partners / local health authorities to identify temporary relief options. Priority for providing support with temporary workers will be given to the needs of the most vulnerable customers – *see list identifying critical vulnerabilities* on page 5 of this Policy.

If neither of these two options is available, Carers Link Planning and Support Coordinators may guide family members / carers in providing essential supports to customers, should they require such guidance.

6.2 (iii) Maintaining Customers' Daily Supports

A number of Carers Link customers rely on our assistance with daily tasks such as showering, toileting, dressing, grocery shopping and assistance with food preparation.

Observing strictest infection controls, Carers Link will endeavour to maintain as many of these services as possible during a pandemic – being mindful that some of these supports require close personal contact.

Concerned about the risk of infection, some customers may prefer family members to temporarily provide these supports. Carers Link will maintain contact with the customer / their carers to ensure the customer's needs are being addressed.

If a customer is disconnected from Carers Link support services due to a natural disaster such as a flood or bushfire and there is no friendship / family support available, Carers Link will contact available local emergency services such as the SES, Police, Fire Rescue and Red Cross to ensure the customer can be safely re-located to a local evacuation centre or provided with a temporary placement at designated safe accommodation – for example, in a motel. *See contact details for emergency services at the end of this Policy.*

Once a customer has been temporarily re-located, if safe to do so, Carers Link employees can then visit the customer and check that during their time out of home their daily support needs can be met. This may either be by Carers Link alone or as part of an agreed shared role with a community support service or another provider.

If a customer has lost their home as a result of the emergency / disaster and they have no family or friends who can accommodate them, our staff will provide supports appropriate to the Service Agreement with them to assist the customer in locating alternative housing or if that is their wish, to permanently re-locate to residential aged care or Supported Independent Living.

6.2 (iv) Ensuring Customers' Access to Food and Medicine During Disasters

If customers / their carers are unable to leave their homes to buy food because they are cut off by floodwaters for example, or they are impacted by government-imposed lockdowns, Carers Link support staff (Coordinators / LSWs) should ensure the following:

- that either food drops can be made by emergency personnel or in the case of a lockdown
- that support staff provide guidance to customers / their carers on how to order groceries / takeaway food online, if this guidance is needed.

During the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic, the NDIS ensured that Scheme participants received priority home delivery from leading supermarkets. Supermarket chains themselves also initiated priority grocery deliveries to vulnerable groups, including to people with disability and Home Care customers.

If a Lifestyle Support Worker becomes aware that a customer is in urgent need of food and groceries prior to any alternative arrangements being formalised, they should immediately contact their Coordinator who can then organise this support.

If a customer needs prescriptions filled but they cannot leave their home during the emergency / disaster, check if the government's rules allow exceptions so that a family member can leave isolation for the specific purpose of collecting medication from a pharmacy. Otherwise, contact the customer's pharmacy and ask if they can deliver Webster packs for example, during the lockdown period.

6.2 (v) Continuity of Community Access Supports

At the height of government-imposed or naturally occurring restrictions (flooding, for example) during disasters, community access may be very limited. This will require some imagination on the part of support workers in terms of finding alternative ways of engaging clients in creative activities, including exercise.

Backyards and balconies can be put to good use for exercise and there may also be events / activities available on social media channels such as YouTube. If a customer usually attends a gym or yoga group for example, those groups may well have converted their operations to provide online customer access.

Zoom meetings can be organised between the customer and the people they usually enjoy activities with so that the social connections are not lost and their emotional well-being is maintained.

6.2 (vi) Maintaining Continuity of Supports over Long Periods

When planning customer supports and linking customers' NDIS / Aged Care Plans to their goals / activities, it will be necessary to think about the possibility that long-term disaster related restrictions may remain in place for 6-18 months and severely impact customers' community access / travel / organised outdoor and indoor activities and in-person contact with family and friends.

If the impact of a disaster will have long-term consequences for a customer's community access activities, an individual community access plan will be developed with them, adapted to the nature of the disaster, the available resources and the customer's specific community access needs.

To adapt to that likelihood, and if appropriate in their individual circumstances, customers can be provided with information about the various options for maintaining contact with their personal network during the disaster's restrictions and the option of paying bills and ordering supplies online using mobile phones, tablets or laptops.

The use of telehealth services to replace face-to-face medical consultations can also be discussed. Additionally, customers can also be given information about the large range of useful support apps available on both Apple and Android devices.

6.2 (vii) Post Emergency Planning to ensure Continuity of Supports

Carers Link is aware that it is equally as important to plan for what happens *after* an emergency or disaster as it is to plan for managing *during* such events. This planning will consider the likely impacts of emergencies and disasters and the appropriate responses, including:

- Identifying the most vulnerable customers for priority post-emergency support –
 - *those living alone or with others who have similar high needs
 - *those who have medical conditions requiring regular monitoring / oxygen / doctor attendance
 - *those who are socially or geographically isolated
 - *those who may be difficult to contact due to poor telephone reception or a hearing impairment
 - *those who live in areas which are prone to disasters such as floods or bushfires
 - *those who are unlikely to be able to independently re-locate
- Using Carers Link's risk plans as a guide, assessing the impact of an event on Carers Link's operations and customers and implementing strategies to restore full service provision as a priority
- Liaising with and requesting assistance from agencies providing recovery services
- Re-establishing regular communication with staff and customers as a priority – this will lessen the sense of isolation some Carers Link customers and employees may have experienced during the emergency / disaster
- Planning to review the effectiveness of Carers Link's response to the emergency events, including obtaining feedback from customers and their families, as soon as practicable and make whatever changes are needed to plans and procedures.

7. MANAGING EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

7.1 PREVENTING AND MANAGING *POTENTIAL* EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

7.1 (i) Screening Visitors to Carers Link premises

All visitors who enter the Carers Link Office must sign the visitors register located near the entry on level 1. Visitors must sign in and out. This includes visiting staff, trainers, contractors and families.

Visitors to the Cashmere Group Home must also follow this protocol, signing the register located on the table at the Home's entry hallway. Visitors should be briefed on evacuation protocols and their nearest exits in the case of an emergency.

7.1 (ii) Unwanted Visitors at Customers' Homes

If a customer has people in their life that they do not wish to have contact with, information identifying any unwanted guests or people of concern should be recorded in a customer's database profile and the Communication Log, as well as in hard copy customer records.

This information must be clearly communicated to staff on shift by the Planning and Support Coordinator. If an identified unwelcome person attends the customer's home while a support worker is in attendance, they should be politely asked to leave. If the unwanted visitor does not leave the customer's home when requested to do so, the police should be called to attend the scene.

Once they have departed the customer's home, the Lifestyle Support Worker on shift should ensure all doors and windows are locked.

The matter should be reported to the relevant Planning and Support Coordinator, the CSE or the person on-call immediately, and an incident report (F003C) submitted.

If an identified unwelcome person appears at a place of recreation (gym, bowling alley or park for example) when a Lifestyle Support Worker is present, they should be politely asked to leave. If this request is unsuccessful and the customer appears fearful or threatened, police may be called. Otherwise, to avoid any potential confrontation, it may be less distressing for the customer to simply leave the park, gym etc with the support worker.

To maintain the security and safety of our customers and staff, their personal addresses or phone numbers should never be given to unauthorised individuals. This includes Host Home provider addresses and the Cashmere Group Home address / personal numbers.

7.1(iii) If the unwanted visitor / makes threats or commits acts of aggression / violence

In the event of any threat of aggression or violence, staff must make an immediate assessment of the situation. This assessment aims to quickly gauge the likelihood of an individual acting on the threat they have made, and the consequences of this occurring.

For example, a situation would be considered high risk if it was deemed that the person is highly likely to act on a threat with potentially serious consequences. When a staff member assesses a situation as one which will likely have serious consequences for themselves or others they should:

- Remove themselves and others from the source of the threat as quickly and safely as they can
- Contact police and/or other emergency personnel (ambulance, for example) as required on '000'
- Notify the Chief Services Executive (CSE) or person on-call as soon as possible for advice and assistance
- Ensure that the customer's family members / support network are advised of the incident's circumstances, where appropriate
- Report the incident as per the *P002 - Incident Management Policy and Procedure*

The CSE will arrange any necessary support and/or debriefing for those affected by the incident.

7.1 (iv) Fire drills and evacuation planning

As part of the initial risk assessment undertaken by Lifestyle Support Workers in a customer's home (F035), staff and customers in a home (including the Cashmere Group Home) will be familiar with general fire safety procedures for that home as well as an evacuation plan which includes all exits.

The Carers Link office and Cashmere Group Home both have an evacuation plan onsite and evacuation signs showing the exits displayed on the wall. All staff and residents must familiarise themselves with the evacuation plan and their fire exits at induction/intake. The names of first aid officers and fire wardens, along with contact numbers for emergency services, are displayed prominently at both Carers Link locations

All Carers Link office staff and support workers at Cashmere House should be aware of the location of fire extinguishers and fire blankets at those premises.

Fire drills are run every three months at Cashmere Group Home and every 6 months in the office. Attendance at drills and any identified issues are recorded in R003 – Cashmere Fire Drill Register or R019 – Fire Drill Register for the Office.

7.1 (v) Safety Audits by accredited external contractors

The Chief Services Executive and Quality Officer will ensure that at the office and Group Home:

- Smoke detectors are tested annually
- Electrical testing and tagging occurs annually
- Fire extinguishers are tested six monthly.

7.1 (vi) Preventative measures as part of Carers Link's Internal Audit process

As part of the Carers Link internal audit process, regular safety inspections are conducted at both the office and Cashmere House to ensure that any issues which may potentially impact the safety of workers, residents or visitors can be identified and rectified.

Safety inspections are conducted by the Director, CSE or their delegates at the Carers Link Office every 6 months, using **F132-Office Safety Inspection Checklist** and at Cashmere House by the House Supervisor and residents every 3 months, using the **F086 – Cashmere House Safety Inspection Form**.

As part of the internal audit process, the **R007 Compliance Register** should be periodically checked to ensure that all staff required to do so have maintained the currency of their CPR and First Aid Certificates and are up to date with mandated vaccinations.

The **R001 – Corrective and Preventative Action Register** – is used to record issues identified during the Internal Audit process and to monitor their satisfactory resolution in a timely manner.

7.2 EMERGENCY SITUATION PROCEDURES

7.2 (i) Fire in a customer's home

- If you see **SMOKE, FLAMES** or hear a **FIRE ALARM**, alert everyone in the house immediately
- Quickly assess whether the fire can be contained or extinguished using an extinguisher or fire blanket
- If it is not considered possible to safely extinguish the flames, and only if it is safe to do so, contain the fire by closing windows and doors
- Evacuate customers according to the evacuation plan. If the residence has already filled with smoke, the Carers Link staff member should calmly ask all evacuating occupants to cover their noses and mouths, get down on their hands and knees and crawl toward the fire exits

- Take a mobile phone (and a torch, if at night). Ask the customer to take their mobile phone and charger too, so contact can be established with their family / support network
- Call the **fire brigade on '000'** and report the address and the fire's location
- Ensure all individuals from the house remain with you in a safe area
- Do not re-enter the building until the fire brigade indicates that it is safe to do so
- Reassure the customer and keep them comfortable while waiting for advice from the fire brigade
- Notify the relevant Planning and Support Coordinator or person on-call.
- If the fire brigade indicates that it is unsafe to return to the property, contact appropriate stakeholders, including the customer's family members / Guardians / advocates
- Document the occurrence as soon as practicable in an **incident report – F003C and / or F003W**
- Counselling will be offered to the support worker on shift at the time, including access to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

7.2 (ii) FIRE IN THE CARERS LINK OFFICE

- If you see **SMOKE, FLAMES** or hear the **FIRE ALARM, *calmly*** alert colleagues and visitors immediately
- Assess whether the fire can be contained or extinguished using the extinguisher or a fire blanket
- If it is not possible to safely extinguish the flames and only if it is safe to do so, contain the fire by closing windows and doors
- Evacuate, taking the visitors register to account for all people on the premises. Take mobile phones and personal belongings – handbags e.g. Once out of the building **DO NOT**, under any circumstances return to the building to collect anything
- If the office has already filled with smoke, the fire warden should calmly ask all evacuating occupants to cover their noses and mouths, get down on their hands and knees and crawl toward the fire exits
- Follow the **EXIT** signs on the evacuation plan to locate and leave through the nearest emergency exit and proceed to the assembly point
- Call the **fire brigade on '000'** and report the address and the fire's location in the premises
- Calmly follow instructions given by the Chief Services Executive (CSE) or the attending Fire Officers. The CSE / fire warden will account for all occupants and report any missing persons to Fire Officers. **Do not re-enter the building until you are told it is safe to do so by Fire Officers**
- If the office is deemed unsafe to re-enter, the CSE will send staff home and organise for people to work from home until such time as repairs are completed at the office or alternative premises are established
- Counselling will be offered to staff, including access to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

7.2 (iii) FIRE AT CASHMERE GROUP HOME

- If you see **SMOKE, FLAMES** or hear the **FIRE ALARM, *calmly*** alert other occupants immediately
- Assess whether the fire can be contained or extinguished using the extinguisher or fire blanket

- If it is not possible to safely extinguish and only if it is safe to do so, contain the fire by closing windows and doors
- Take the visitors register to ensure all occupants are accounted for
- Collect the evacuation kit, and take at least one mobile phone with plenty of battery charge
- Follow the **EXIT** signs on the evacuation plan to locate and leave through the nearest emergency exit and proceed to the assembly point
- If the house has already filled with smoke, the fire warden / staff member on shift should calmly ask all evacuating occupants to cover their noses and mouths with a cloth / handkerchief, get down on their hands and knees and crawl toward the fire exits
- **TELEPHONE 000** and notify the Fire Service of the address and the location of the fire within the house
- Calmly follow instructions given by the House Manager or weekend Lifestyle Support Worker or the attending Fire Officers. The Lifestyle Support Workers/Cashmere fire warden will account for all occupants and report anyone who is missing to Fire Officers. **Do not re-enter the building until you are told it is safe to do so by the Fire Officers**
- If the Home is deemed unsafe to re-enter, support workers will maintain calm and reassure the residents
- Contact the CSE / or person on-call and follow instructions
- The residents' Guardians will be notified by the CSE and advice sought on immediate actions. If appropriate, staff may be instructed to convey residents to relatives in the short-term
- Carers Link will take responsibility for finding suitable, alternative placements for residents and ensuring that they receive mental health support
- Counselling will be offered to affected staff, including access to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

7.2 (iv) BLACKOUT AND POWER OUTAGES

In the case of a local blackout, staff and customers should remain calm and follow these procedures:

Staff should use a mobile phone to access the [Energex](#) mobile phone website for regular power restoration updates

- Turn off and unplug electrical items
- Use a torch for light – the torch attached to mobile phones will be useful for short-distance use. Do *not* use candles
- If you can see or hear something that could help identify the problem like fallen powerlines or a loud bang, stay well clear and **contact Energex on 131 962**
- For safety reasons, Energex will attend to emergency jobs such as fallen powerlines or electric shocks as a priority to ensure it's then safe to restore power. Depending on the reason for the outage, they may need to perform extensive repairs to the network
- If you are with a customer and they become distressed, reassure them and contact their next of kin and/or the Cares Link CSE or on-call worker for further guidance.

7.2 (v) MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

In the event of a medical emergency involving a customer such as an asthma attack, cardiac arrest, epileptic seizure, overdose or physical injury:

- Assess the situation and ring an ambulance on **'000'**
- Provide appropriate first aid while waiting for the ambulance and keep the customer calm

- Notify the CSE or person on-call, who will advise the customer's next of kin /carer and organise other appropriate medical treatment and follow-up
- Document the event in the customer's file, **First Aid Treatment Register (R026)**, the **R001- Preventative and Corrective Actions Register** and record the incident as per the **P002 Incident Management Policy and Procedure**, submitting a **F003C-Incident Report Form**. If the emergency centred on medication the **F046 – Medication Incident Form** must be completed
- Carers Link will act in the best interests of the customer at all times and as directed by medical staff. Should customers refuse medical treatment or resuscitation or have particular emergency procedures they want to be followed, they should have already clearly described these in **the F008 (A or D) - Privacy Consent Form**. The relevant Lifestyle Planning & Support Coordinator is responsible for ensuring support staff are aware of such preferences and that the customer's in-home records provide the details
- The Chief Services Executive will arrange necessary support and/or debriefing for those affected by the incident.

In the event of a medical emergency occurring *in the office*:

- Assess the situation and if necessary, ring an ambulance on '000' or transport the person to their regular doctor's surgery
- Provide the appropriate first aid (first aid kits located at both premises) until an ambulance arrives or the person recovers
- If an ambulance attends, telephone the affected person's emergency contact to inform them about the emergency & the name of the hospital to which the person has been taken
- Record details in a F003C or F003W Incident Report Form
- The Chief Services Executive will arrange necessary support and/or debriefing for those affected by the incident

In the event of a medical emergency at Cashmere House

- Assess the situation and if necessary, ring an ambulance on '000' or transport the resident /staff member to their regular doctor's surgery, (the latter only if on-site staffing is adequate to support remaining residents)
- Provide the appropriate first aid (first aid kit located in the office) until an ambulance arrives or the resident /staff member recovers
- If an ambulance attends, telephone the affected person's emergency contact to inform them about the emergency & the name of the hospital to which the person has been transported
- Record details in a F003C or F003W Incident Report Form
- The Chief Services Executive will arrange necessary support and/or debriefing for those affected by the incident

7.2 (vi) TELEPHONED BOMB THREAT

If you receive a bomb threat by telephone at the Carers Link office:

- Keep the caller talking for as long as possible – take note of background noises, the person's accent – anything that might help to identify them
- Try to establish the location of the bomb
- Attract the attention of a colleague and write them a short note explaining you are receiving a bomb threat, ask them to advise the CSE.

- The CSE should immediately call the police on '000' & calmly evacuate the office staff to a safe distance and notify immediate neighbours as a precaution
- Do not return to the office until police / the bomb squad advise that it is safe to do so.

8. DISASTER MANAGEMENT

8.1 CARERS LINK PROCEDURES RELATING TO DISASTER MANAGEMENT

8.1 (I) EXTREME WEATHER CONDITIONS E.G. TSUNAMIS, FLOODS, CYCLONES AND POST-CYCLONIC STORMS

All staff are provided with [G014 - an RACQ "Prepare your Emergency Plan"](#) at Induction.

- Cashmere Group Home, Host Homes and the Carers Link office must maintain this Plan and review it annually.
- A copy of this Plan should be kept in support workers' cars at all times as it provides information on what to do in the case of a tsunami, flood, severe storm or cyclone.

In the case of natural disasters, staff must ensure they are prepared and take all the necessary precautions outlined in the Plan. Lifestyle Planning and Support Coordinators will advise Lifestyle Support Workers of any road closures where possible, however all staff should tune in to their local ABC radio or TV station to listen for warnings and weather updates and local community safety announcements.

Office staff will keep up to date with Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) reports, and are subscribed to the Brisbane City Council, Moreton Bay Council, and Logan City Council weather warning alerts.

Mobile phone apps are available for the BOM, SES Assistance Qld and ABC Radio sites, via either the App Store (iPhones) or Google play (Android phones).

After disasters have occurred, Carers Link customers and staff can access a very useful *Self Recovery* app. It provides information on insurance, personal and family support, and business support.

When extreme weather events occur:

- If either the Carers Link office or Cashmere House is threatened by extreme weather events, staff and residents will be evacuated
- After establishing that there is a safe route away from either of the two locations, staff will be sent home. Office staff may work from home until advised it is safe to work from the office
- In the case of Cashmere tenants, their Guardians will be notified by the CSE and advice sought on immediate actions. If appropriate, staff may be instructed to convey residents to relatives in the short-term
- If Cashmere House is damaged during an extreme weather event, Carers Link will take responsibility for finding suitable, alternative placements for residents and ensure that they receive any necessary mental health support and that details of their medication needs accompany them
- Emails and texts are to be sent to staff and customers advising them of emergency precautions, including the importance of maintaining a charged mobile phone to retrieve emergency updates

/ maintain contact / access a torch if necessary. In the event that mobile coverage is interrupted, having a battery-operated radio and torch is recommended as backup

- Customers should also have bottled water, regular medications and at least one change of clothing packed in the event that they need to be evacuated
- The email from the CSE to Lifestyle Support Workers will include advice about mobile phone apps and/or links to QLD Traffic website <https://qldtraffic.qld.gov.au/>, Qld Traffic Hotline 13 19 40 and the BOM
- Lifestyle Support Workers are asked to communicate any hazards they encounter, eg. if road closures or safety concerns prevent them from making it to a rostered shift, they must advise the office immediately
- If staff members on shift require assistance with evacuation, they can contact the office to arrange support for this
- Coordinators will continue to communicate with Lifestyle Support Workers as any updates are provided
- Staff are advised to exercise caution on the roads – and must NEVER enter flood waters or go near fallen power lines – “if it’s flooded, forget it”
- Customers may be contacted and asked if they are aware of flooding or road closures in their areas which will prevent access to them, but to be safe, the above Qld traffic website / telephone number and the BOM / SES websites should be accessed by the Planning and Support Coordinators and the latest information conveyed to the relevant Lifestyle Support Worker.

The LSW may already be on their way to a customer so they can pull over and use their mobile phones or tune their car radios to the ABC to access current updates.

8.1 (II) BUSHFIRES

- If Carers Link is aware that a vulnerable customer with limited support is living in an area which is likely to be impacted by a current bushfire, the relevant Coordinator will make contact to check on their wellbeing and ensure that their carers have a plan to evacuate them if necessary. The customer should be reassured and advised of the various information sources for bushfire updates – ABC radio / TV, websites, Apps, emergency service phone numbers
- If either the Carers Link office or Cashmere House is threatened by bushfire, staff and residents will be evacuated.
- After establishing that there is a safe route away from either of the two locations, staff will be sent home. Office staff may work from home until advised it is safe to work from the office.
- Updates on bushfire threats can be accessed via mobile phone apps for ABC radio, Qld Rural Fire Service (RFS) and SES Assistance Qld – available from the App Store (iPhones) or Google Play (Android phones).
- In the case of Cashmere residents, their Guardians will be notified by the CSE and advice sought on immediate actions. If appropriate, staff may be instructed to convey residents to relatives in the short-term.
- If Cashmere House is damaged during a bushfire Carers Link will take responsibility for finding suitable, alternative placements for residents and ensure that they receive any necessary mental health support and that details of their medication needs accompany them.

8.1 (iii) LONG-TERM, WIDESPREAD DISASTERS

It is unusual but possible, that large scale disasters which have national / international implications and no foreseeable end date for emergency conditions will impact Carers Link's customers, staff and business. The COVID-19 virus pandemic is one such example.

In terms of managing and reducing negative impacts of long-term disasters on staff and customers, Carers Link will always be guided by the advice of the Commonwealth, state and local government authorities managing the disaster, follow its own emergency plans and comply with its own relevant policies and procedures.

Infection Control during Widespread Infectious Disease outbreaks

People with disability and the aged require the strictest infection protection. This applies to in general to wound management etc but is absolutely critical during widespread infectious disease outbreaks such as annual winter influenza epidemics or the Covid-19 pandemic.

Staff receive regular reminders about infection control measures such as use of PPE (e.g. facemasks and gloves), hand sanitiser, and social distancing, whenever the latter is possible.

Staff at Cashmere House must be mindful of the fact that they are in ongoing close contact with the residents and observe strict hygiene both at Cashmere and in their own homes, to ensure they do not bring an infection into the group home.

Carers Link receives daily emailed health information from government agencies during these types of disasters, so is always operating on the very latest advice. We require all staff to undertake any online training provided by either the Commonwealth Department of Health or Queensland Health.

The need for staff to stay home if they have a contagious disease is critical. Staff must contact the Carers Link office or the person on call to advise that they are unwell. If the symptoms match those of a widespread disease currently circulating, they should advise the CSE / person on call immediately. They will then be instructed to get tested / seek medical help as a matter of urgency and notify the CSE of the outcome as soon as it is available.

If tests return a positive result, staff will isolate for the current government mandated period and Lifestyle Planning and Support Coordinators will advise any customers with whom the employee has had contact during the incubation period of the disease and offer whatever support may be required.

8.2 COMMUNICATIONS DURING EMERGENCIES AND DISASTERS

When seeking to protect the health and wellbeing of customers and staff during an emergency or disaster, one of the most important aspects of Carers Link's response is accurate and regular communication. Information provided by Carers Link must be based on the official advice provided by Australian, Queensland, and local government agencies.

Information should be provided in plain, easy to understand language including diagrams where appropriate, and consideration given to communication with customers who are hearing or sight impaired or who do not access online information. For customers whose first language is not English, references / links should be made to multilingual information available from government agencies.

During the Covid-19 pandemic for example, *My Aged Care* produced information in 63 community languages.

To ensure maximum coverage, all available communication pathways should be used by Carers Link to communicate with customers and staff, including social media and newsletters. Carers Link's Chief Service Executive can make factual, reassuring videos to be placed on the company's website.

It is important to convey Carers Link's accessibility if customers or their carers have any concerns or queries.

Regular telephone welfare checks should be made with vulnerable customers, particularly those living alone, to ensure they are coping physically and emotionally with any enforced isolation during disasters.

9. DEBRIEFING AFTER EMERGENCIES / DISASTERS

9.1 DEBRIEFING WITH STAFF

A debriefing should occur to assess the successes / shortcomings / risks which were revealed as a result of the disaster or emergency situation and to identify strategies / policy updates which may be needed to address those risks in future.

The level of debriefing relating to a situation will vary according to its severity but the following actions are recommended as a minimum standard:

- Initial debriefing to occur within 48 hours
- Further follow up to occur two weeks after initial debrief
- Debriefing is generally managed internally by the CSE but referrals to third parties may be appropriate for major incidents
- Any staff member who experiences distress as a result of emergency situations / disasters will be referred to their GP to access an appropriate counselling service or be referred to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

9.2 DEBRIEFING WITH CUSTOMERS

Carers Link's vulnerable customers can be severely impacted by the emergency situations or disasters they experience, more so than the general population. They may need additional support to 'move on' from the event and to re-embrace the life goals they had been working toward. Carers Link staff should actively listen to customers as they recount their experience of the emergency or disaster.

During telephone and in-home contact with customers, close attention should be paid to the customer's mood and expressed anxieties. Apart from reinstating the supports that were provided prior to the emergency or disaster, it is critical to assess whether additional emotional support or medical intervention is necessary to support impacted customers through the emergency's aftermath. Discuss the customer's well-being with their family / support network to assess what additional supports may be considered appropriate.

10. EMERGENCY AND EMERGENCY SUPPORT NUMBERS

These numbers are available 24 hours / 7 days:

- 13 HEALTH 13 43 25 84
- Beyond Blue 1300 224 636
- Brisbane City Council 3403 8888
- Community Recovery Hotline 1800 173 349
This service is particularly useful for vulnerable Queenslanders who are unable to leave their homes for urgent assistance or supplies and don't have anyone to help.
- National Coronavirus Hotline 1800 020 080
- Qld Health Covid Hotline 134268
- Covid-19 support line for Senior Australians 1800 171 866
- Workforce Response Team 1800 943 115
NDISworkforce@rcsa.com.au
- Energex 13 19 62 / 136 262
- Ergon Energy 13 16 70
- Lifeline 13 11 14
- NDIA Emergency Line 1800 800 110
- Poisons Helpline 131 126
- Police / Fire / Ambulance 000
- Qld Traffic Hotline 13 19 40
- RSPCA 24/7 Animal Emergencies 1300-264 625
- State Emergency Services (SES) 132 500
- Translating and Interpreters 13 14 50
- Tsunami Warning 1300-878-6264

11. REFERENCES

[CH006 - Fire Evacuation Sign Downstairs Wynnum](#)
[CH008 - Fire Evacuation Sign - Upstairs Wynnum](#)
[CH012 - Evacuation Sign Cashmere](#)
[F003C - Incident Report Form-Customer](#)
[F003W - Incident Report Form-Worker](#)
[F004 - General Report form](#)
[F008 A - Privacy Consent Form \(Aged\)](#)
[F008 D - Privacy Consent Form-Disability](#)
[F086 - Cashmere Safety Inspection Checklist](#)
[F132 - Office Safety Inspection Checklist](#)
[G013 - COVID-19 Business Continuity Plan](#)
[G014 - RACQ – Prepare Your Emergency Plan](#)
[M001 - Fire and Evacuation Plan - Low Occupancy Building 2](#)
[M005 - Fire Evacuation Plan – Low Occupancy Building - Cashmere](#)
[P002 - Incident Management Policy](#)
[P052](#)
[R003 - Fire Drill Register Cashmere](#)
[R004 - Visitors register](#)
[T045 - Cashmere Visitors Log](#)
[R019 - Fire Drill Register](#)
[R026 - First Aid Treatment Register](#)
[R035 - Risk Register](#)

[Australian Government Department of Health](#)
[Covid-19\COVID-19-Management & Operational Plan for People with Disability.pdf](#)
[Covid-19-Guide for Home Care providers](#)
[Home Care Service-preparing for an emergency event](#)
[NDIA disaster response](#)
[Person-Centred Emergency Preparedness – A Process Tool and Framework for Enabling Disaster Preparedness with People with Chronic Health Conditions and Disability](#)
[Queensland Health](#)
[Rural Fire Service Qld](#)
[Safe Work Australia – Emergency Plans Fact Sheet](#)
[Standard for Disaster Management in Queensland – Office of the Inspector-General Emergency Management – June 2019](#)
[Supporting people with vulnerabilities in disasters-A framework for an effective local response. Qld Dept of Communities 2016.pdf](#)

12. LEGISLATION

[Building fire safety regulation 2008 \(Qld\)](#)
[COVID-19 Emergency Response Act 2020 \(Qld\)](#)
[Disaster Management Act 2003 \(Qld\)](#)
[Work Health and Safety Act 2011 \(Qld\)](#)