

5.3.2 Community Evacuation

A range of hazards regularly pose a risk to communities throughout Western Australia. Evacuation of people from an area affected is one of the strategies that may be employed by relevant agencies to mitigate the potential loss of, or harm to, life.

Responsibility for Community Evacuation

The Controlling Agency (where authorised by the HMA) has overall responsibility for the management of evacuation during an incident and when an emergency response is implemented.

The Controlling Agency is responsible for the management of a recommended evacuation and/or where authorised by the HMA, responsible for the management of a directed evacuation and this continues during an emergency response (State EM Policy section 5.7).

Should there be a need for additional powers to direct the movement of persons, animals and vehicles around or out of an emergency area, the Controlling Agency can request the declaration of an emergency situation by the HMA. This will allow for the authorisation by the HMA of relevant persons to exercise the powers of HMOs.

During an emergency situation or state of emergency, the Controlling Agency must comply with the directions of the relevant HMA or the SEC, respectively. An IC who is not a HMO, Authorised Officer or Police Officer does not have the power to make a directed evacuation during an emergency situation or state of emergency.

Planning for Evacuation

The LEMAs are to include evacuation plans and information that will assist the Controlling Agency/HMA in evacuation planning. This includes specific arrangements for (but not limited to):

- unaccompanied children
- schools

- aged-care facilities
- hospitals
- caravan and holiday parks
- tourists and travellers (on tours, cruises)
- persons with disabilities
- remote communities
- culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

The Australian Disaster Resilience Evacuation Planning Handbook has a comprehensive list of circumstances for planning purposes that considers the needs of at risk persons.

The HMAs preparing State Hazard Plans are to consider emergency evacuation planning for the hazards they are responsible for, prior to an incident occurring.

Local government evacuation plans are to be made accessible to the Controlling Agency/HMA 24 hours-a-day, seven days a week. Information that can assist in the development of evacuation plans is available in the SEMC's Western Australia Community Evacuation in Emergencies Guideline.

Five Stages of Community Evacuation

In accordance with State EM Policy section 5.7, evacuation planning should include all five stages of an evacuation as illustrated in Figure 10.



Figure 10: Stages of Evacuation

Note: Print on A3 to pass print accessibility.

Stage 1: Decision

The decision to evacuate rests with the Controlling Agency, HMO, Authorised Officer or Police Officer as applicable. Criteria to be considered prior to a decision to evacuate are outlined in the SEMC's Western Australian Community Evacuation in Emergencies Guideline.

The Controlling Agency (where authorised by the HMA) will determine if the evacuation is to be recommended (voluntary) or directed (compulsory). A directed evacuation may only be made by a HMO, Authorised Officer or police officer during an emergency situation or state of emergency using powers under the EM Act.

Stage 2: Warning

The IC is responsible for providing community warnings and timely advice on the likely threat of an emergency and the required actions of the community to assist community members in recognising a threat and being able to make an informed decision as to whether to move to another location.

Where considered necessary the Controlling Agency may request, through the HMA, the use of warning systems such as the SEWS or the Emergency Alert Telephone Warning System (emergency alert). Procedures to activate SEWS are contained within State EM Policy section 5.6 and State EM Response Procedure 4.3.

Stage 3: Withdrawal

The act of an evacuation is the immediate and urgent movement of people away from a threat or actual occurrence of a hazard or emergency to a place of safety.

Self-Evacuation

Self-evacuation is the self-initiated, spontaneous movement of individuals, families or community groups when threatened by an emergency. As far as is practicable, the IC should provide sufficient, timely and relevant information to assist community members in making an informed decision to self-evacuate.

Evacuation

Evacuation is the managed movement of people from a threatened area to a place of safety. The decision to undertake an evacuation will be made by the Controlling Agency (where authorised by the HMA) or an authorised officer who will determine if the evacuation is to be recommended (voluntary) or directed (compulsory).

- **Recommended Evacuation (Voluntary)** - A recommended evacuation (voluntary) will be made by the Controlling Agency or other authorised officer when there is a possible threat to lives or property but it is not believed to be imminent or significant and the community is considered to have the capacity and capability to make an informed decision. Once a decision has been made to evacuate an area, the IC in consultation with the HMA, ensures effective communication strategies are implemented.
- **Directed Evacuation (Compulsory)** - A directed evacuation may only be made by a HMO, Authorised Officer or police officer during an emergency situation or state of emergency using powers under the EM Act. (See State EM Plan Section 5.3.2. for other relevant legislation that may be used to allow for the movement of people and animals).

A directed evacuation is most likely to occur where members of the community at extreme risk do not have the capacity to make an informed decision or when injury or loss of life is imminent.

For either a recommended or directed evacuation, the IC or person carrying out the evacuation will advise community members of the most suitable location that they should evacuate to, based on the prevailing situation.

For further details refer to the SEMC's Western Australia Community Evacuation in Emergencies Guideline.

The Controlling Agency is to provide clear instruction to persons conducting the evacuation with respect to what action should be taken where a person refuses to evacuate.

The Controlling Agency is to ensure, as far as practical, that those who refuse to evacuate understand the risks of staying and are capable of making an informed decision. Where practicable, procedures should be developed to track remaining residents' wellbeing.

Legislative Powers

Provisions for the movement of people and animals are not restricted to the EM Act. Other legislation may be used by emergency management agencies where appropriate. The legislative authority for Controlling Agencies to initiate a directed evacuation or restrict access to an area can come from a number of Western Australian statutes, including, but not limited to the:

- *Fire Brigades Act 1942*
- *Fire and Emergency Services Act 1998*
- *Bush Fires Act 1954*
- EM Act
- *Coroner's Act 1996*
- *Criminal Investigation Act 2006*
- *Criminal Investigation (Identifying People) Act 2002*
- *Road Traffic Act 1974*
- *Terrorism (Extraordinary Powers) Act 2005*
- *Criminal Code Act Compilation Act 1913 (WA)*
- *Health Act 1911.*

Stage 4: Shelter

Shelter is a dynamic social process providing for the temporary respite of evacuees, including immediate sheltering, temporary sheltering and temporary housing.

Evacuation Centre

When the Controlling Agency/HMA establishes an evacuation centre, they must ensure evacuees are properly received and supported via emergency relief and support partner agencies or other relevant organisations coordinated by the Department of Communities. The Department of Communities, representing these agencies and organisations, should be included as a member of the ISG and OASG, if formed.

Children in Evacuation Centres

Supervisory staff or members of agencies, organisations or educational and care facilities with responsibility for the care, supervision or provision of services to children who evacuate or otherwise attend an evacuation centre must remain at the centre and continue to supervise and provide services until such time as alternative arrangements are made. This may include children being returned to parents or other responsible adult approved by that agency, organisation or educational and care facility. Unaccompanied children, without direct parental or responsible adult supervision, should be evacuated into the care of the Department of Communities at the evacuation centre.

Stage 5: Return

The IC, in consultation with the HMA, is responsible for the provision of timely and accurate situational information to the displaced community (e.g. current activities being undertaken, timeframe for return of community and assistance available to evacuees) and should ensure there is an effective plan in place for returning the displaced community, including provision for at-risk persons.

The return phase of evacuation may be executed in stages and should be subject to planning. This should include issues such as community safety, restoration of essential services and provision of emergency relief and support services.

The Controlling Agency should manage any risk from other (non-prescribed) hazards (e.g. structural integrity, site contamination, hazardous materials and

health threats) arising from the emergency, before returning a community following evacuation.

5.3.3 Traffic Management During Emergencies

In order to ensure community safety, it is often necessary to alter the normal flow of traffic through an area affected by an emergency or its immediate surrounds.

It is acknowledged some agencies have traffic management responsibilities under legislation other than the EM Act. It is recommended these agencies conduct those activities consistent with the framework created by the State EM Policy, plans, procedures and guidelines.

Emergency management agencies should implement appropriate agency-specific procedures and training in accordance with State EM Policy section 5.8 and the SEMC's Traffic Management During Emergencies Guideline, for the conduct of immediate traffic management.

Responsibility for Traffic Management

The IC has overall responsibility for the management of traffic during an incident, and this continues during emergency response. Traffic management planning is undertaken by the planning function within the IMT. The Traffic Management Plan (TMP) is to be approved by the IC and reviewed to meet the changing circumstances of the incident.

Where an incident is more widespread, one or more IMTs may be established within the operational area. Traffic management will continue to be applied within incident areas as required by the IC and a wider Traffic Management Strategy developed to strategically manage traffic across the operational area.

The responsibility for the provision of public information in relation to traffic management during an emergency is the responsibility of the IC. This information should be distributed in partnership with the asset owners and include Main Roads WA's traffic advice.

If additional powers to close roads or direct or prohibit the movement of persons, animals and vehicles within or around an emergency area are needed:

- the Controlling Agency can request the declaration of an emergency situation under the EM Act by the HMA or the State Emergency Coordinator (SEC). This will allow for the authorisation of relevant persons to exercise the powers of Hazard Management Officers (HMO) under the EM Act.
- during a State of Emergency, appointed Authorised Officers (AO) have access to the same additional powers under the EM Act.

Traffic Management Planning

Traffic management includes the control of the movement of all vehicles, persons and animals within the affected emergency or operational area. It is not limited to the restriction of access to an emergency or operational area, the closure of roads or the diversion of traffic around an area affected by the emergency by an alternative safe route.

Where practicable, traffic management planning should be conducted in consultation and collaboration with the road asset owner such as local government and/or Main Roads WA to ensure the suitability and capacity of alternative routes. These strategies will be used to develop the Traffic Management Plan for that emergency.

In support of the Traffic Management Plan, the WA Police Force, Main Roads WA, local government or traffic management contractors may be requested to perform traffic management tasks approved by the IC, such as the establishment and staffing of vehicle control points. Traffic Management Plans must be approved by the IC prior to implementation. They should not be altered without the approval of the IC (except in life threatening situations).

Where a Traffic Management Plan is altered without the prior approval of the IC (due to a life threatening situation), the IC is to be advised of the action immediately.