

# POST THE POST IMPACT

## What is the EHO's Role?

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# What do you know?



**Improve - Maintain - Protect**

# Recovery Planning

## Setting Recovery Goals

- To reduce risks to public health following the disaster
- To facilitate the clean-up of homes
- To assist those affected with access to safe accommodation

## Develop a set of actions

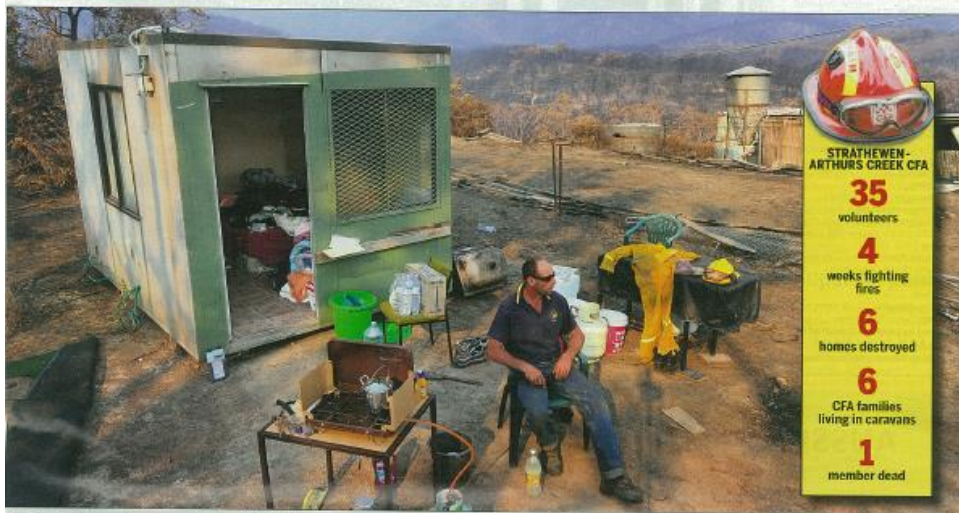
## Evaluate – Review - Document

Improve - Maintain - Protect

# Think outside the square



Environmental Health  
Professionals Australia



CFA volunteer Warren Rees among the ruins of his Strathewen home.

Pictures: CRAIG BORNOW

## The trauma sets in

Some volunteers opt to 'grin and bear it'

**William Jackson**  
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ANGRY Arthurs Creek and Strathewen firefighters have accused the CFA of letting them down in the wake of Black Saturday. Nearly two months after the justifies many of the traumatised volunteers - including six who lost their homes and are living in caravans - were yet to receive a home call from CFA headquarters. The majority has not received

counselling or psychological assessment. Some are considering quitting due to the lack of support. The CFA says help was available, but it was up to members to take up the offers. Arthurs Creek volunteer Gordon Norris said the whole brigade should have been assessed by a psychologist. "We're not asking for

handouts, but you'd at least like a phone call from someone," Mr Norris said. "The other guys are just grinning and bearing it, but I don't believe they should." He said volunteers like Warren Rees, who has been living alone near the ruins of his Strathewen home, were reluctant to seek help. "I was mentally prepared for this to

happen so I don't think it's affected me as much as some of the other guys," Mr Rees said. Region 14 general manager Gill Metz said she was surprised at the allegations. She said a welfare plan had been developed and psychologists, as well as legal support and a chaplain were sent to the staging areas. She said volunteers could

not be "forced" to undergo psychological evaluations and it was up to brigade captains to refer members in trouble for more help. Volunteer captain David McGahy said many would reject assistance, but some who are seriously affected had "slipped through the cracks". "The amount of responsibility left to captains has been inordinate and in some cases unfair," Mr McGahy said. "There has to be time for paid people to come in." > More, Page 5

- Policy development to manage and prevent issues/risks escalating

improve - maintain - protect

Policy/ guideline  
implementation **to meet  
immediate needs-**  
may require some  
flexibility to  
meet regulatory  
standards



# Business Continuity



- Redirection of staff resources
  - Recovery
  - Business as usual ( non- impacted areas)
- MOU resource sharing agreements via MAV or regional collaboration
- Be clear on what you need

**Improve - Maintain - Protect**

# Community Messaging



- Clean Up information
- Resource Guidelines
- Education and Advice
- Community Meetings
- Multiple types of communication and access

**Improve - Maintain - Protect**

# EHO Involvement

## Septic system Post-fire information



If you have a septic system there is the possibility that it may have sustained damage during the bushfire. Treatment plants that have concrete tanks should generally be okay, however it would be unlikely that sub-surface irrigation pipes would still be operational.

### What should I do with my septic system?

If you have a concrete tank with 6,000L capacity (e.g. Septech, Envirosep), with careful use the tank should be able to last three to four weeks prior to a pump-out being required.

If you have a plastic septic system (e.g. Ozkielen) these systems do not have a large holding capacity and are more likely to have been damaged by the heat.

### What happens if the lid of my septic is damaged?

If the lid to your septic system is damaged it may be possible to put a temporary lid on the tank and use it as a pump-out system. However this will only be possible if just the top of the tank was damaged.

### What happens if the top box is damaged?

The top box and blowers in your treatment plant system are likely to be damaged due to the heat and will need to be replaced. Your system may need to be recommissioned by the manufacturer or checked by a licensed plumber.

### What about my sub-surface irrigation and lines?

Sub-surface irrigation, pumps and electrical components will probably be damaged by the heat and fire. Owners can dig up part of their lines and assess the damage. Once your electricity is reconnected and there is water in the tank, the system can be turned on to ascertain if wastewater is able to get through the irrigation lines; however your system may need to be recommissioned by the manufacturer or checked by a licensed plumber. The pump alarm should sound if the irrigation lines are damaged or blocked.

### My septic system has trenches

Trenches should generally be okay, especially if in a grassed areas (treed areas will have been exposed to higher temperatures). Damaged trenches will show signs of failure quickly by overflowing out of the distribution box.

### What if my system looks okay?

If your system looks okay then you should check when the next service or pump-out is due. You could consider requesting an earlier service (which will already be paid for as part of the owner agreement) to check the system.

### Protecting your septic system

It is important that your septic system (e.g. septic tank and disposal areas) are fenced off to prevent vehicles driving over them and causing damage. This may be undertaken using tent pegs or wooden stakes and coloured rope (anything which can be identified by an on coming vehicle).

### Where can I go for further information?

It is best to speak with Council's Environmental Health Officers and arrange an inspection prior to using your system, or if your trenches fail. Please phone Council's Public Health Unit on 9433 3340 to make an appointment, or to obtain further information.

Information regarding your septic can also be obtained through the manufacturers. They will be able to give advice regarding your septic system.



## Temporary accommodation on fire-affected properties Post-fire information



Many owners and occupiers in bushfire-affected areas of the Shire will want to return to their property, and maybe live in some form of temporary accommodation prior to rebuilding. Residents must contact Council's Public Health Unit before moving any temporary accommodation onto their property.

For safety reasons Council, in line with the Victorian Government and Building Industry Commission, recommends that any reoccupation of affected sites does not take place until the site has been cleared of dangerous structures and unstable trees, and the clean-up of debris has been completed.

### Temporary buildings

A temporary building is one that:

- is only intended to be located on a site temporarily (for example 12-18 months – after which it must be removed)
- is readily transportable and able to be removed within 24 hours
- does not have permanent footings.

### What types of temporary accommodation can be used on a fire-affected site?

#### Transportable buildings

Transportable buildings are fabricated buildings delivered to the site. Usually they are delivered complete and do not require any further fitting out. The transportable building must be removed after completion of your new home. If this is not possible, you should discuss these arrangements with Council's Planning Department.

#### Caravans/campervan

If caravans do not have cooking, sanitary and washing facilities such as kitchens, toilets and showers, these facilities will need to be provided on site. This can be in the form of a portable building or the use of an existing or purpose built freestanding structure less than 10m<sup>2</sup> in floor area and not constructed of masonry. Any caravan placed on a fire-affected area must also have a manufacturer's compliance plate attached to the vehicle. This ensures caravans have been manufactured to the relevant Australian standards.

### What types of temporary accommodation cannot be used on a fire-affected site?

#### Tents

Tents are not a suitable option for temporary accommodation. Enquiries should be directed to the Public Health Unit as tents will not be permitted.

#### Sheds

Sheds and garages (new or existing) are considered non-habitable buildings which cannot usually be lived in. If you wish to convert a shed or garage into a habitable building you must obtain approval from Building Services and Council's Statutory Planning Unit. A shed is not considered a temporary structure and therefore does fall within these exemptions.

#### Shipping containers

Shipping containers are not suitable structures for accommodating residents. While they do provide protection from most environmental conditions, they are generally unable to meet health and amenity considerations. Shipping containers may be used as a storage facility on a temporary basis only.

### Location of the temporary building

The most appropriate location of each temporary building will obviously depend on a variety of factors. Some of these considerations will be:

- the natural slope of the land
- vehicle access to the temporary building
- existing or retained vegetation
- access to services such as electricity and a septic tank system.

Accordingly, the location of each temporary building will need to be site specific. Please contact Council's Public Health Unit for assistance to ensure the best outcome is achieved.

It is recommended the following locations are avoided:

- not within one metre of side or rear boundaries
- not constructed over easements
- not constructed over or within close proximity of septic tanks or drainage pits
- not constructed near fire-affected or unstable trees that could potentially pose a health risk
- not constructed near other fire-damaged building/s or structure/s on the allotment that could potentially pose a risk. The setback of the temporary building from other fire-damaged buildings or structures will depend of factors such as risk of collapse or debris.