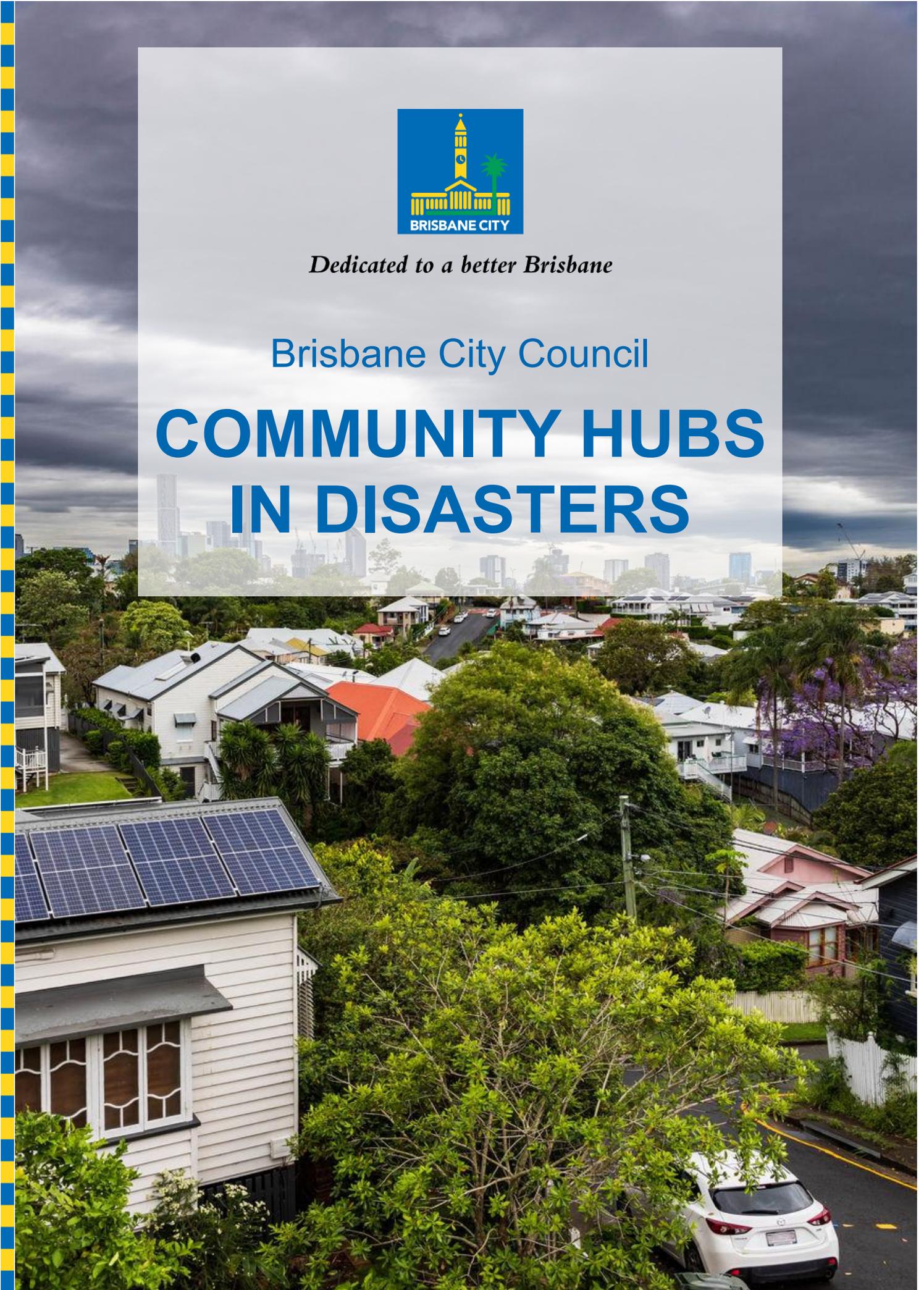




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Brisbane City Council

COMMUNITY HUBS IN DISASTERS



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INTRODUCTION

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PURPOSE

This guide aims to provide support and information to staff and volunteers working in community-led venues during times of disaster. These venues are referred to in this document as “community hubs.” The venues and associated organisations are responsive to the needs of individual local communities and function according to their own capabilities and capacity.

The guidance offered in this document covers considerations for making your venue and facilities available to residents impacted by severe weather events.

The extent of a venue’s offering as a community hub and duration of its opening is entirely at the discretion of its management. The chapters of this guide are targeted towards staff and volunteers who are familiar with the venue, its facilities and resources.

WHAT TO OFFER

It is important to be clear about what support you’re able to offer at your venue.

You may want to offer some or all of the following.



Somewhere for people to charge their phone



Hot drink making facilities



Free use of Wi-Fi



Food



Free use of a telephone



Space for charities or support agencies to meet with people requiring specialist assistance

OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATION

You may wish to offer overnight accommodation at your venue for people who are unable to return to their homes due to the impact of a severe weather event.

Resources covering how to set up and run an evacuation centre (a venue which offers emergency overnight shelter) and other response resources are available from [Red Cross Australia](#).

The resources cover common minimum requirements to safeguard public health, safety and general welfare for those seeking emergency sheltering.

They also include advice and best practice regarding:

- sleeping arrangements
- evacuee triage
- example floorplans
- staffing and services
- safety, security and sanitation.



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USEFUL CONTACTS

Depending on the nature of the severe weather event or disaster, power or water supplies to your venue may have been impacted. People visiting your venue may also have lost access to services they rely on or require support or contacts to help them recover.

Household utilities

Energex

Emergency 24/7 – 13 19 62

To report life threatening emergencies such as fallen powerlines or shocks and tingles.

Power outages 24/7 – 13 62 62

If you have lost power or are experiencing electricity supply problems.

General enquiries – 13 12 53

For general enquiries between 7am-5pm Monday to Friday, or after hours for planned interruption enquires.



Check with local commercial suppliers for generator hire if you require a generator. It's worth speaking with your energy provider first to understand your requirements and what sort of generator you'll need.

Urban Utilities

Faults and emergencies 24/7 – 13 23 64

General enquiries – 13 26 57

8am–5pm Monday to Friday

Telstra

13 22 00

7am–11pm Monday to Sunday

Optus

13 39 37

9am–6pm Monday to Friday. 9am–5pm Saturday

Missing pets or animals

Pets and livestock can become separated from their owners during disasters such as severe weather events.

Council maintains a register of lost and found animals and offers advice on what to do if someone needs to report a [lost or found pet](#).

You can also direct residents to local animal charities for help if their animal has gone missing.

Animal Welfare League QLD – 07 5509 9000

10am–5pm Tuesday to Friday. 10am–4pm Saturday and Sunday

RSPCA Lost & Found – 1300 363 736

Health and wellbeing support

People who experience disasters may experience short or long-term mental health impacts.

If members of your community come to you seeking support, there are several organisations you can recommend. These include:

Lifeline – 13 11 14

Beyond Blue – 1300 22 4636

13 YARN if you are an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person.



Community Recovery Hotline

1800 173 349

This is a 24/7 Queensland Government service offering urgent support, financial help (such as hardship assistance grants), housing assistance, and counselling for individuals and families impacted by disasters.

Information on Queensland Government grants, including Emergency Hardship Assistance, is available on the [Queensland Government](#) website.

Food security

Local residents may experience a loss of food security due to a disaster impacting retail supply chains and the availability of food in shops.

Some people may also be unable to work because of the disaster and require food support due to a loss of income.

Food relief charities operating in Brisbane include:

Oz Harvest – 07 3708 1380

Foodbank Australia – 07 3395 8422

SecondBite – 1800 263 283

SOURCES OF INFORMATION TO RECOMMEND

People who have been impacted by a severe weather event or disaster may ask where they can find information on what's going on.

Council's [emergency dashboard](#) has the latest warnings and alerts about outages impacting Brisbane.

The dashboard contains information on:

- road hazards and incidents, such as flooded roads and fallen trees
- weather warnings
- power outages
- evacuation centres
- flooding.

Donations and household items

People experiencing hardship or who have lost essential goods or services as the result of a disaster can contact GIVIT for support.

[GIVIT](#) is a national not-for-profit that partners directly with councils, recovery outreach teams, charities and community groups to connect needs with donors via an online donation platform.

[ABC Radio Brisbane](#) and Council's [Facebook](#) and [X](#) accounts also offer residents the opportunity to stay informed on the latest developments.

The [Bureau of Meteorology](#) website provides detailed weather information, including 7-day forecasts, rain radar and weather maps.



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CHECKLISTS

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 - > **BUILDING AND UTILITIES**
 - > **HYGIENE, SANITATION AND SAFETY**
 - > **EQUIPMENT**
 - > **OUTDOORS**
 - > **SETTING UP**



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PRE-OPENING CHECKLIST

Before opening your venue as a community hub during or after a severe weather event, it's worth thinking about who you'll tell that you're open.

Council can help promote the availability of local support on offer to communities via its website.

You can email Disaster.Operations@brisbane.qld.gov.au or contact your local Councillor to advise that you're opening, along with any information regarding your opening hours.

i Council will never ask your venue to open if you weren't planning to, but a member of Council staff may contact you to ask if you are opening in order to share information such as your location and opening hours.

It's also worth conducting a walkabout of the premises to check for any possible issues before you open.

The purpose of this is to identify any potential hazards and associated measures required to address them before opening, to ensure the facility is suitable for what you intend to use it for.

This is particularly important if the venue is to be used for activities beyond those it would normally host, or if it is to accommodate more people than would normally be the case.

Some of the considerations below may not apply to all venues.

BUILDING AND UTILITIES

- Does the building offer adequate shelter?
Could it be vulnerable to whatever weather conditions have caused people to seek assistance? (e.g. is your car park or lower floor prone to flooding?)
- Do you have your normal power supply and do all your power points work?
- Do you have any backup power source, such as a generator? If so, what is its capacity and do you have fuel?
- Are all your amenities that rely on electricity working as normal?
 - Lighting
 - Air conditioning
 - Heating
 - Fridges / freezers
 - Wi-Fi
 - Printers, photocopiers
 - Laundry facilities
- Do you have your normal water supply? Can you supply drinking water?
- Are your fire emergency exits clearly marked, evacuation plans visible, fire alarms functioning and fire extinguishers/hydrants accessible?

HYGIENE, SANITATION AND SAFETY

- What arrangements do you have in place for cleaning of the venue? Will more frequent cleaning be required?
- Are all your toilets functioning and flushing as normal? Do you have adequate supplies of toilet paper and other supplies such as toilet bleach?
- Is water running as normal for handwashing facilities and any showers?
- If you have a septic system, do you need to make any special arrangements for it if you're staying open longer or expecting more people than normal?
- Do you have enough bins to cater for additional rubbish before your next scheduled bin collection?
- Are there separate provisions for the disposal of:
 - sharps
 - nappies
 - sanitary items.
- Do you have supplies of:
 - sunscreen
 - insect repellent
 - hand sanitiser.

EQUIPMENT

- Do you have a first aid kit? Has the equipment been checked and in date?
- If your building has a landline phone, is it working?
- If you have kitchen facilities, is all the equipment in working order?
- If you're going to offer people the chance to wash/dry their clothes, is your washer/dryer working and do you have detergent?
- Do you have enough tables and chairs for your planned activities? Is there somewhere you could borrow more from?

OUTDOORS

- Have you decided if you will allow people to bring animals (other than assistance animals) into the building? If not, is there somewhere onsite where people could safely leave their animal to check on?
- If you needed to bring in portable toilets at any point, is there somewhere on site you could put them?
- Is the surrounding area safe for children?
- Are there any nearby trees, power lines etc that could be a hazard? These may have been impacted by the disaster but may not be immediately obvious.
- Is your street/driveway access and or parking area accessible and clear of debris?
- Do you have neighbours living close to your venue? Are there any likely issues that could be caused by increased levels of activity on your property?

SETTING UP

Some considerations as you get ready to open the doors.

- Can you resolve any issues you identified from the pre-opening checklist?
- Keep in mind that the priorities of the people using your venue during an emergency may differ from the priorities of your regular users.
- If you're hosting another organisation(s), do they have any specific requirements in terms of space or resources? E.g. A counselling or mental health service may require a quiet, private space.
- Is your venue (and its toilets) accessible for people with mobility requirements? E.g. wheelchair users.
- Have you got signage in place for toilets and other amenities? This may save your staff and volunteers from answering repeat questions from new visitors to the venue.
- Keep some areas off limits to the public (for your admin, staff/volunteer briefings, storage etc).



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PEOPLE



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- > WAYS TO SHARE INFORMATION
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- > OTHER WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS
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SUPPORT FOR YOUR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Providing your staff, volunteers and other personnel with regular information about what's happening at your venue can help them to support the people coming to your community hub.

Depending on the nature of the severe weather event, updating the people working at your venue may also assist with pre-empting resourcing requirements, or possible increases / decreases in the need for support.

WAYS TO SHARE INFORMATION

- Information board for personnel – this is best located away from general public view.
- Bulletins for personnel – these may be printed at a set time each day or emailed out to your staff and volunteers.
- Ensure your staff and volunteers are aware of this document and where they can find it.
- Make staff and volunteers aware they can contact psychological support and counselling services if they need to.
- Rotate staff and volunteers through different roles where possible.
- Maintain a supportive atmosphere with regular check-ins.
- Make sure everyone gets regular breaks.

WHAT INFORMATION TO SHARE

Depending on the nature of the severe weather event and its impact on your local community, your personnel may benefit from updates on:

- The latest developments on the weather event.
- Which of your staff or volunteers are in that day.
- How many people have come to your venue for assistance so far.
- Overview of what your venue or organisation has supported people with so far. This may give them an idea of what to expect from people arriving at your venue, or an understanding of what issues are common to the local area.
- Any resources you anticipate being delivered that day.
- Any resources that you anticipate running out of soon and details for ordering more.
- Any activities planned at your venue that day (e.g. hosting volunteers for a community working bee).

OTHER WAYS TO SUPPORT YOUR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Supporting people who have been impacted by a severe weather event can take a toll on your staff and volunteers.

There are a number of different ways you can offer support to your personnel.

HOSTING VOLUNTEER CLEAN-UP ACTIVITIES FOLLOWING A SEVERE WEATHER EVENT

Your venue may have facilities or resources you wish to offer to assist local volunteer clean-up or recovery activities.

This may be at your venue itself, or another location nearby that has been impacted by the severe weather event.

Volunteer clean-up or recovery activities often need:

- outdoor space to use as a mustering point
- a car park for volunteer vehicle parking
- catering equipment such as barbeques.

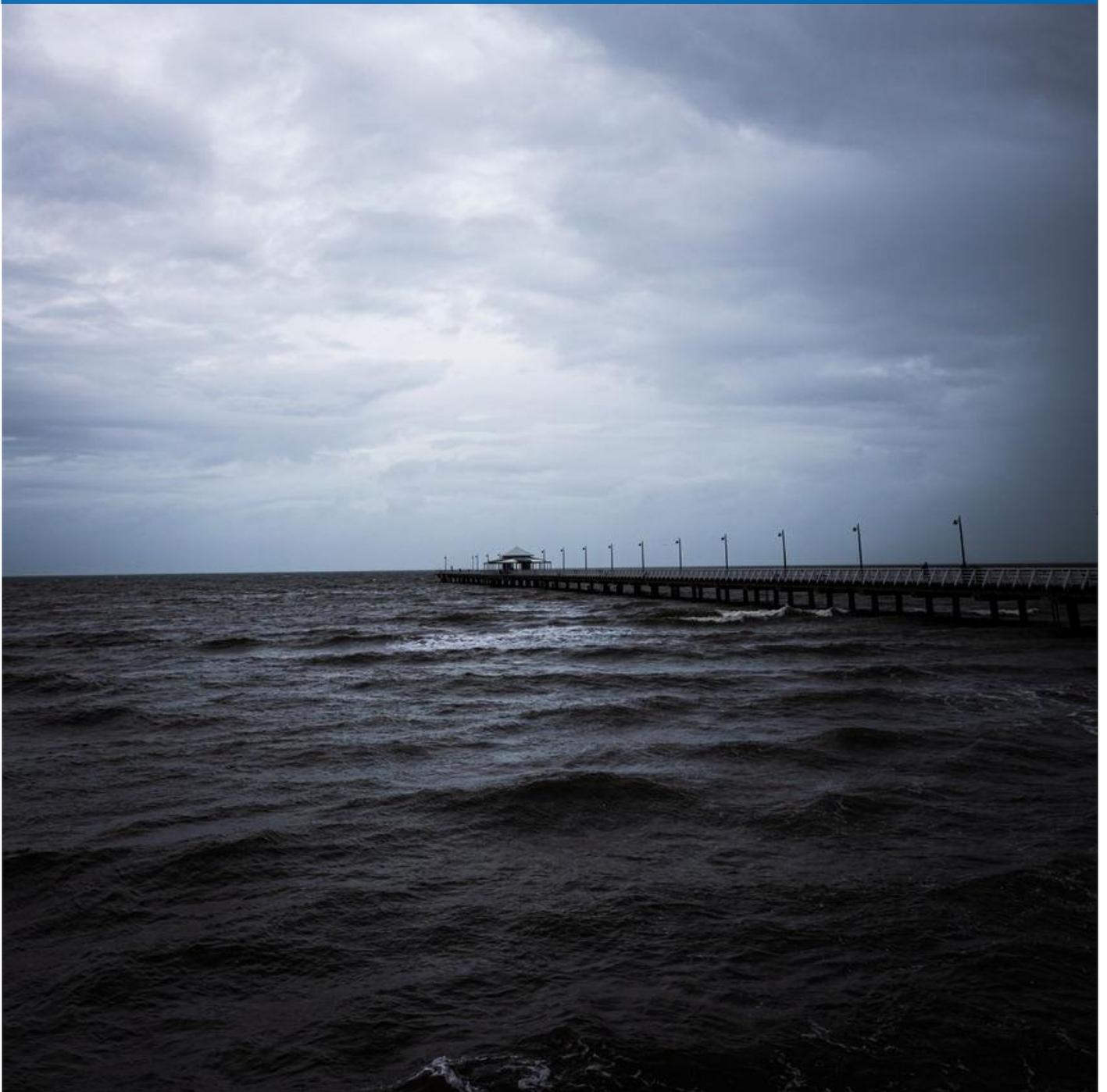


If your organisation is not the lead agency organising the clean-up or recovery activity, ensure you agree with the organiser what resources they require from you.

If your venue has been impacted by the severe weather event and you wish to advertise for volunteers to participate in a clean-up activity you are organising, you can do so via [Volunteering QLD's disaster platform](#). Note that this emergency volunteering portal is only activated during disasters.

4

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS





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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Below are some common questions that may arise during and after a severe weather event or disaster.

What is Council's role in an emergency?

In the event of an emergency, Council's role is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the community.

We coordinate other government, non-government and community organisations in responding to the impacts from disasters in the Brisbane Local Government Area.

Our job is to help you prepare, respond and recover from emergencies and natural disasters.

Everything we do is guided by our [Local Disaster Management Plan](#).

When should I call the SES?

Call the SES on [132 500](#) for non-life-threatening flood and storm emergency assistance during severe weather events. For example, if you need help with:

- emergency storm damage repairs to your home
- access to your home if it's blocked by a fallen tree
- flooding or the immediate risk of flooding in your home
- emergency sandbagging if you are elderly, frail, have a disability or medical condition.

Phone Triple Zero ([000](#)) for other emergency situations such as:

- fire
- medical emergency
- rescue
- lost persons
- vehicle accidents.

I have animals that aren't domestic pets. Who can I call for help in an emergency?

During a disaster, animal owners can contact:

- Queensland Government Department of Primary Industries (for zoos and wildlife handlers) on [13 25 23](#)
- Office of Racing (for the racing industry) on [13 74 68](#).

Council's animal disaster management guidelines offer information and advice for the commercial animal industry. [Use the guide](#) to plan and prepare for a potential emergency.

My home and/or business is flood damaged. I have insurance. What should I do?

Contact your insurer to discuss what your policy covers. They will advise on what to do next.

Keep records and photos of any damage to your property or contents.

The [Insurance Council of Australia](#) has more information on what to do during and after a natural disaster.

My damaged home contains asbestos. How do I remove it?

Always get a professional to safely remove asbestos from your home.

Asbestos fibres are a dangerous health hazard.

For more information on asbestos safety, visit the [Queensland Government](#) website.

Will Council provide direction on when to open facilities or offer services to the community during a disaster or severe weather event?

Council will not direct community-led response and recovery activities or ask your venue to open if you weren't planning to. These decisions are completely at the discretion of your organisation.

Council may contact you to ask if you are open in order to share information about your location and opening hours.

Will Council provide staff to come and assist at community hubs during an event?

Council will not usually have staff available to assist at community-led venues but can pass on requests for assistance and services to other agencies who may be able to help, such as Red Cross.

What times should community hubs open or close during a disaster or severe weather event?

It's entirely up to your organisation to decide when to open or close your venue, and what services you provide.

Can Council provide community hubs with services such as catering, signage, or generators etc?

While Council does not have a ready stockpile of supplies to provide community hubs with during an event, we will try to source items and services requested by hubs during operation in a declared disaster.

How do I contact Council during a disaster?

During a disaster, the best way to contact Council is via the Contact Centre on 07 3403 8888.

The Contact Centre operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Contact Centre staff will ensure your enquiry gets to the relevant Council staff as quickly as possible.

During a disaster, Council staff directly involved in the disaster response will work shifts based on a 24/7 roster. Contacting individual members of Council staff directly may mean you don't get a response as soon as possible if that person is not on shift at that time.





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