

BE “MOBILE PHONE PREPARED” FOR A DISASTER

There are things you can do with your mobile phone so when a disaster occurs in your local community you will be well prepared. During a major disaster affecting your area, being wise with how you use your mobile phone can reduce the load on mobile networks, may benefit other users, and will assist in the operation of vital emergency services such as **Triple Zero (000)** (www.triplezero.gov.au) and the national telephone-based emergency warning system, **Emergency Alert** (www.emergencyalert.gov.au).

Before a disaster

- 1. Save important phone numbers to your phone**, including the contact details of disaster information lines, the State Emergency Services (SES) and Police Assistance Line (PAL) in your state or territory, and your “In Case of Emergency” (ICE) contacts. Having ICE contacts programmed into your phone may make it quicker and easier for emergency services workers or passers-by to get in contact with someone who can help with vital information about you. Let your ICE contacts know they are programmed into your phone and inform them of any medical issues or other special needs you may have.
- 2. Prepare a family contact sheet.** Include at least one out-of-town contact who may be able to reach family members on your behalf if you are affected by a disaster in your community.
- 3. Download informative smartphone apps** to help you prepare for a disaster, and so you can keep up to date with emergency information (a list of disaster preparedness smartphone apps is available on the Australian Emergency Management website www.em.gov.au).
- 4. Keep charged batteries and car-phone chargers** available as back-up power sources for your mobile phone.

What you should know about mobile phones

Mobile phones are an effective way of staying in touch with loved ones and emergency services during a disaster— but they can have limitations, especially if local mobile phone towers have been damaged, or if you are in an area with limited mobile phone coverage. It is important that you have an emergency plan in place that identifies a number of modes of communication in the event of a disaster in your local community.



During a disaster

- 1. Only call Triple Zero (000)** if someone is in need of urgent medical help, or if your life or property is being threatened.
- 2. Do not call Triple Zero (000) for information.** Seek reliable disaster information from local TV and radio and refer to emergency services websites, social media sites and information hotlines for advice (preferably using landlines and fixed internet and not mobile devices if possible).
- 3. Resist using your mobile device to watch streaming videos,** download music or videos, or play online games. These activities can add to network loading and may affect network use by emergency services in your area during a disaster.
- 4. Conserve your mobile phone battery** for essential use by reducing the brightness of your screen, placing your phone in airplane mode, switching off 'push' mail and notifications, and closing background apps you are not using.
- 5. Limit the number and duration of mobile phone calls and SMS text messages.** This can help potentially life saving emergency voice calls get through to Triple Zero (000) and can help speed up the transmission of telephone-based Emergency Alert warnings from emergency services to disaster-affected communities. Reducing the load on telecommunications networks is something everyone in a disaster-affected area can do to help those trying to help the community.
- 6. Charge your digital camera,** or have extra batteries on hand as backup, if you need to document any damage following a disaster, rather than taking photos on your mobile phone camera and draining its battery.
- 7. If you lose power, you can charge your mobile phone in your car.** Ensure your car is in a well-ventilated place (remove it from the garage) and do not go to your car until any danger has passed. You can also listen to your car radio for important news alerts.

Important emergency phone numbers

Here are some suggested contacts you may wish to save to your mobile phone in case of a disaster in your community:

- State Emergency Service (SES) – 132 500
- Police Assistance Line (PAL) – 131 444 (except Victoria)
- Disaster information lines in your State / region (ie. bushfire information line, cyclone action advice line, Bureau of Meteorology)
- Electricity / gas / water / telephone providers
- Roads and traffic agency
- Local Council office
- Workplace and dangerous goods advice line
- Neighbours
- Interstate family contact
- Family members' workplaces
- Children's school / childcare
- Local doctor's surgery
- Local hospital or health service
- Poisons information line
- Veterinary practice