Victoria has a long history of flooding, with many flood-prone areas in our landscape.

Flooding occurs most commonly from heavy rainfall when watercourses do not have the capacity to convey excess water. Riverine flooding occurs in low-lying areas adjacent to streams and rivers, where water can spread over wide areas and last for some time. Flash floods can occur almost anywhere there is a relatively short intense burst of rainfall such as during a thunderstorm where the drainage system has insufficient capacity or time to cope with the downpour. Storm surges and high tides may also cause flooding along coastal areas and estuaries.

It is important for all services to understand what type of flooding could affect your service and the chances of a flood event occurring. Information may be obtained from your local council or State Emergency Service (SES) about the flood history of your area, and how high the nearest watercourse must rise before floods threaten your service. These local agencies will also be able to advise the flood evacuation plans for your area. If your area has a history of flooding, residential aged care providers need to prepare plans for such events that are linked to broader local community and emergency planning frameworks.

Where there is a risk, the Bureau of Metrology (BOM), in consultation with other services such as water authorities, the SES and local councils issue advice about flooding that can help services prepare. In particular, the BOM issues a Flood Watch if flood-producing rain is expected to happen in the near future. When flooding is occurring or expected to occur in a particular location or area, a Flood Warning is issued with information about the likely effects of the flood and what you should do. When flash flooding is expected, a Severe Weather Warning or Severe Thunderstorm Warning is issued to alert to communities of the possibility.

> The Bureau of Meteorology and State Emergency Service work together to alert communities of the threat of flooding. The BOM uses the flowing flood terms and it is important to know what they mean.
>
> **Minor flooding:** Causes inconvenience. Low-lying areas next to watercourses are inundated, which may require removing stock and equipment. Minor roads may be closed and low-level bridges submerged.
>
> **Moderate flooding:** In addition the above, the evacuation of some homes may be required. Main traffic routes may be covered. The area of inundation is substantial in rural areas.
>
> **Major flooding:** In addition to the above, extensive rural areas and/or urban areas are inundated. Properties and towns are likely to be isolated and major traffic routes likely to be closed. Evacuation of people from flood-affected areas may be required.
>
> **Local flooding:** Used where intense rainfall could be expected to cause high runoff in limited areas local to the rainfall but not necessarily leading to significant rises in main streams.
>
> **Flash flooding:** Flooding occurring in less than six hours of rain; usually the result of intense local rain and characterised by rapid rises in water levels. They are difficult to predict accurately and give little time for effective preventative action.

Flood warnings may be issued by radio and television stations, as well as the BOM's public access systems, which includes recorded telephone services, weather by fax, the internet, calling the VICSES Flood and Storm Information Line on **1300 842 737**, and other public media systems. You may also receive an emergency warning from a number of sources including telephone, Emergency Alert (fixed line and SMS), or from a local source such as door knocking or a loudspeaker operated by local authorities including the police and emergency services.

Apart from flash floods, most other floods allow some warning time. When you are informed that a Flood Warning has been issued for your local area, it is essential that you put your facility's plans into action.

The decision to relocate or shelter in place needs to be made through a comprehensive assessment of your service's capacity and available resources well before any flood event. If your service cannot ensure the safety of residents from the impacts of flooding, early relocation will be the safest option.

SES crews are trained to respond and work together with other emergency services including police, ambulance and fire brigade during a flood emergency.

In some situations, you may be able to keep flood water from entering your service, if you are have taken the necessary action early. If residents and staff are sheltering in place it is important to follow any instructions given by emergency authorities and be prepared to act on changing circumstances.

Floods can disrupt a range of utilities including electricity, gas, water and sewerage systems, as well as cause damage to a range of community infrastructure. As a result, services may be isolated so providers also require well-practised contingency plans for sheltering in place and emergency evacuation.

> **In order to protect the health and safety of residents and staff, residential aged care providers are responsible for having plans in place for:**
>
> - **preparing for flooding**
> - **responding to a flood warning**
> - **during a flood emergency**
> - **after a flood.**

For useful information on being ready for a flood refer to:

Bureau of Meteorology
<www.bom.gov.au>

Department of Health – Better Health Channel
<www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Environmental_health?open>

Department of Health – Environmental Health
Information on flood hazards, animal and insect hazards, mould growth, power blackouts and septic tanks
<www.health.vic.gov.au/environment/emergency_mgmt/flood>

Department of Health / Department of Human Services
Emergency information on flood and recovery **<www.health.vic.gov.au/flood>**

Emergency Alert
<www.emergencyalert.gov.au>

State Emergency Service – FloodSafe
<www.ses.vic.gov.au/prepare/floodsafe>

VicRoads
<http://alerts.vicroads.vic.gov.au>

Victoria Online
<www.vic.gov.au/emergencies-safety>