

Supported Residential Services

Fire safety & Emergency Management Proprietor obligations

Updated - December 2008

Since 1991, there have been a total of 15 fire-related fatalities in Victorian Supported Residential Services (SRS). It is important to ensure that all SRS and their staff have the capacity to effectively respond to emergencies.

SRS Proprietor responsibilities

In any residential care facility, proprietors must regard fire safety and emergency management as a priority, ensuring all necessary measures are in place to reduce the impact of a fire or emergency event on residents. These measures include maintaining both the fabric of the facility and onsite equipment, as well as availability of suitably trained staff being able to take immediate and appropriate action to ensure the safety of all persons present at the facility. SRS proprietors have a responsibility to ensure a safe environment is provided for residents. Some of the minimum standards for how a safe environment can be provided for residents in relation to fire safety and emergency management are detailed below:

SRS facility fabric and onsite equipment

In relation to fire safety, it is expected that SRS proprietors ensure the routine maintenance of basic fire safety provisions such as:

- Fire alarms and warning systems
- Automatic fire sprinklers
- Fire extinguishers and manual fire fighting equipment, and staff appropriately trained in the use of this equipment
- Emergency exits

The full fire safety requirements are set out in the *Building Act 1993* and *Building Regulations 2006*.

This includes the obligation to prepare an *annual essential safety measures report* indicating the maintenance details of all safety measures applicable to the premises. Your Local Government office can provide advice on your obligations relating to fire safety compliance with the Building Act and Regulations.

You can find your Local Government contact details on www.dvc.vic.gov.au or telephoning 03 9096 7467 for assistance.

SRS emergency procedures for ensuring a safe work place

In an emergency situation at any work place, including SRS, it is important that staff are able to take immediate and appropriate action to ensure the safety of all persons present at the facility. It is expected that SRS proprietors ensure the development of emergency procedures such as:

- Emergency contact lists (police, fire, ambulance, poisons information, resident doctors, hospital etc)
- Floor and site plans detailing the location of building safety features (fire extinguishers and warning systems, designated assembly areas)
- Staff appointed with key duties and responsibilities in an emergency
- How to proceed to the designated assembly areas

Under the Victorian *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*, employers have an obligation to provide and maintain a safe workplace. This obligation extends to all people at the workplace, whether they are employees or not. Developing an emergency management plan contributes to the duty of providing a safe working environment. WorkSafe Victoria is the regulator for occupational health and safety law and can provide further advice on emergency management planning.

Proprietor Resources:

- Copies of the relevant legislation can be found at <http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/>.
- WorkSafe have published a Guidance Note titled *Emergency Management – Developing a plan for a small organisation*, available on the WorkSafe website www.worksafe.vic.gov.au or to request a copy, please telephone WorkSafe on 1800 136 089.
- The relevant Australian Standard 3745 sets out the requirements for the development of procedures for the controlled evacuation of building, structures and workplaces during emergencies and establishes guidelines. Further information can be found by contacting Standards Australia on 1300 654 646.

DHS Supports for proprietors

FREE Training – Workplace Emergency Response Procedures Training

3-hour FREE Training where participants learn how to:

- Plan for emergencies
- Respond effectively when an emergency arises
- Identify hazards and risks
- Use basic fire equipment

In 2008, the department offered 300 FREE training places to SRS staff. A further 150 free training places will be offered in 2009, and 30 places per year from 2010. Further details available in early 2009. The department offers a staffing subsidy of \$40.00 per person for each attending staff member.

SRS Proprietor Resource Kit for Emergency Management Planning

A certified fire safety practitioner has developed the below resources that meet the requirements of Australian Standard 3745. These materials are provided by the Department of Human Services to support SRS Proprietors in fulfilling their responsibilities to residents and staff in emergency events, and additional copies are available upon request. These include;

1. A DHS published *Guide to Developing and Emergency Management Plan for your SRS.*

This contains;

- An instruction Guide for developing a site-specific Emergency Management Plan for SRS facilities. The 5 key sections include; Fire Safety, Wardens, Procedures, Plans and Checklists.
- A *SAMPLE* paper copy Emergency Management Plan
- Details of a FREE Telephone Advice Service (until 31 July 2009) for developing an Emergency Management Plan.

2. A red hard cover folder. This contains;

- A **DOCUMENTATION CD** titled *A Guide to developing an Emergency Management Plan for your SRS.* This contains;
 - A WORD document of a *SAMPLE* Emergency Management Plan to allow electronic editing / development by the SRS proprietor of a site-specific Plan.
 - This WORD document is not presented as a DHS publication, as it is a proprietor's working document which will become a site-specific Plan for your SRS. When the Plan is complete, instruction is given in the Guide regarding the printing and display of the Plan in a red hard cover folder with tabs.

NOTE: If using the WORD document to electronically develop your own plan, your printed copy should replace the existing paper copy provided in the red hard cover folder.

- Cover and Spine inserts for labelling by the proprietor as their SRS Emergency Management Plan.
- A printed paper copy of an Emergency Management Plan. Blank spaces appear to allow the proprietor to enter the details that will make the Emergency Management Plan specific to your SRS. This is offered as an alternative to completing the Plan electronically using the WORD document.
- Tabs for dividing each of the 5 key sections.

3. A DHS published Training DVD, titled *Workplace Emergency Response Training – A training resource for staff in Supported Residential Services.* This includes;

- A 90-minute recording of the face-to-face Workplace Emergency Response Procedures training offered to all SRS from April 2008.

4. A Question Sheet for SRS staff to complete while watching the training DVD.

5. An Answer Sheet for proprietors to check SRS staff answers to the above questions when completed.

DHS SRS Program contact numbers

Barwon South West Region
03 5226 4540

Gippsland Region
03 5177 2500

North & West Metro Region
1300 360 408

Hume Region
03 5722 0555

Eastern Metro Region
1300 360 452

Loddon Mallee Region
03 5434 5555

Southern Metro Region
8710 2700

Grampians Region
03 5333 6669