

Disasters and emergency incidents

Department of Health Standard

QH-IMP-315-2

1. Statement

The Department of Health (the Department) must develop and maintain effective risk-based policies, programs, plans and procedures to ensure system-wide preparedness, and the capability to respond to, coordinate and manage health-related aspects of disasters and emergency incidents.

2. Scope

The requirements in this standard align to and support the:

- principles and requirements of Department Policy QH-POL-315 'Disasters and Emergency Incidents'
- principles and requirements of Health Service Directive QH-HSD-003 'Disasters and Emergency Incidents'
- principles and accountabilities in the Queensland Office of the Inspector-General Emergency Management's (IGEM) Emergency Management Assurance Framework (EMAF).

This standard applies to all employees, contractors, and consultants within the Department.

3. Requirements

Governance

The Department will achieve effective administration of disaster and emergency incident management activities and clear, consistent and appropriate decision-making by:

- Developing and coordinating a strategic policy and planning framework for Queensland Health to support effective disaster and emergency incident management that aligns with Queensland's disaster management plans and arrangements¹.
- Developing and maintaining a Health Service Directive (HSD) to ensure Hospital and Health Services (HHSs) fulfil legislated and other recognised functions, roles and responsibilities for disaster and emergency incident management, and regularly review the HSD to ensure it is fit for purpose².
- Ensuring that arrangements are established and maintained between Queensland Health and appropriate health-related departments and committees of the Australian Government³ with the Department represented as appropriate.

¹ Aligns with the Queensland Disaster Management Committee (QDMC) functions under the Disaster Management Act 2003 s.18 (a)(b)

² Aligns with the IGEM functions under the Disaster Management Act 2003 s.16c (d)(e)

³ Aligns with the QDMC functions under the Disaster Management Act 2003 s.18 (c)



- Ensuring the Department is represented on state level disaster management groups, and that representatives contribute to the group on behalf of the health system.
- Ensuring the roles and responsibilities of external entities involved in the Department's response and recovery for disasters and emergency incidents are included in plans and arrangements.
- Establishing executive level disaster and emergency incident management committee governance:
 - has clearly documented terms of reference, roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities
 - has appropriate membership with the authority to make decisions and commit resources on behalf of department functions or capabilities represented
 - conducts meetings at least bi-annually, with a quorum of at least one half plus one members or proxies, and decisions and business recorded in minutes
 - provides reports to the Department's executive regarding disaster and emergency incident preparedness and activities.
- Establishing operational level disaster and emergency incident management governance, with representatives from across the Department and all HHSs, to act as a collaborative working unit to support the executive level governance and promote cohesive and effective health service alignment at all levels of Queensland's disaster management arrangements.
- Documenting and maintaining information about appointments to internal and external disaster and emergency incident decision making bodies, key roles, and positions.

Doctrine

The Department will ensure roles, responsibilities, actions and activities are based on relevant doctrine that is agreed and shared between entities and aligned to legislation and best practice by:

- Developing effective disaster and emergency incident plans and arrangements, including a Queensland Health Disaster and Emergency Incident Plan, that consider:
 - the Queensland State Disaster Management Plan
 - relevant frameworks and guidelines for disasters and emergency incidents, both within Queensland Health and through the disaster management system
 - the Emergency Management Assurance Framework and the Standard for Disaster Management in Queensland.
- Developing effective plans and arrangements to enable all stakeholders to prepare for, respond to and recover from the hazards for which Queensland Health is the primary agency, namely pandemic, biological (human related), radiological and heatwave⁴.
- Ensuring disaster and emergency risk management processes are based on recognised methodology:
 - considering the hazards and functions that are the responsibility of Queensland Health, the Department and/or HHSs in the Queensland State Disaster Management Plan
 - aligning with recognised state-level disaster risk management processes and outputs
- Facilitating the provision of expert advice to stakeholders through effective plans and arrangements on health-related aspects of disasters and emergency incidents, including:
 - health system coordination and medical services

⁴ See hazard specific planning in the QSDMP
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- public and environmental health
- mental health
- emergency medical retrieval
- mass casualty and mass fatality management⁵.
- Ensure the Department's business continuity policies, plans and processes consider the potential disruptive impact of a disaster or emergency incident to critical business functions and processes.
- Ensure essential services or critical functions provided by the Department to HHSs that support or may impact on disaster and emergency incident response have appropriate plans in place to maintain supply.

People

The Department will ensure effective disaster and emergency incident management is supported by networks, training, skills, and experience of individuals who undertake it by:

- Ensuring staff have the relevant skills and experience to enable effective communication and information sharing with partnering entities, and the Department shall conduct training and exercises to foster this capability.
- Ensure persons appointed to any disaster and emergency incident committees are aware of, accept and fulfil their roles, positions, and responsibilities as department representatives.
- Ensure representatives appointed to state level disaster management groups are aware of their responsibilities to fulfil the legislated functions of the group on behalf of the health system.
- Ensuring roles required to conduct critical business functions and disaster and emergency incident management activities:
 - are outlined in the development of risk management, business continuity and training plans
 - acknowledge dependencies on the roles and responsibilities of partnering entities.
- Developing and maintaining capability to undertake disaster and emergency incident operations through:
 - identifying staff to participate in advisory and operational roles with the appropriate accreditation, skills, knowledge, and experience
 - undertaking training of staff in line with the minimum requirements in the Queensland Health Disaster and Emergency Incident Training Framework
 - assessing training needs annually and maintaining a training plan
 - exercising plans, functions and capabilities based on identified need, at least annually, including at least one mass casualty scenario involving more than one HHS⁶.

Enablers

The Department will ensure the physical equipment, assets, systems, data and technologies used by the organisation to undertake disaster and emergency incident management are appropriate to its needs and requirements by:

- Ensuring a functional State Health Emergency Coordination Centre (SHECC) can be activated,

⁵ See roles and responsibilities of Queensland Health in the Queensland State Disaster Management Plan (SDMP)

⁶ See Queensland Health Disaster and Emergency Incident Training Framework; and DM Act s. 55 & 59 regarding reviewing and renewing district and local disaster management plans.

- resourced, and maintained, consistent with the Queensland Health Incident Management System Guideline (QHIMS Guideline).
- Establishing and maintaining cooperative partnerships to support information and resource management during disaster operations between the SHECC⁷ and:
 - executive and operational disaster and emergency incident governance
 - HHSs and Health Emergency Operations Centres
 - areas of the Department that provide essential services or critical functions to support disaster and emergency incident response within HHSs
 - state-level disaster management groups and the State Disaster Coordination Centre (SDCC).
 - health-related departments, committees, groups, and coordination centres of the Australian Government.
 - Establishing and maintaining communication and information systems for use in coordinating disasters and emergency incidents that are consistent and compatible with:
 - systems and processes in use by the SDCC
 - systems and processes in use by HHSs
 - systems and processes identified in the QHIMS Guideline.
 - Develop and maintain the capability to undertake disaster and emergency incident operations through:
 - supporting release of appropriately skilled staff to participate in advisory and operational roles within the SHECC
 - supporting the training of staff in line with the minimum requirements in the Queensland Health Disaster and Emergency Incident Training Framework
 - exercising plans, functions and capabilities based on identified need, at least annually.
 - Establish and maintain processes to:
 - identify potential resource gaps (human, financial and material) before, during and after disaster and emergency incident operations
 - allocate and coordinate the use of resources during disasters and emergency incidents on request from the State Health Coordinator, and act on requests for assistance, resources, or services from HHSs.

Continuous improvement

The Department will ensure disaster and emergency incident management activities are effectively monitored, evaluated and measured through established and effective lessons management, exercise and activation debrief processes by:

- Regularly reviewing the content and effectiveness of Queensland Health disaster and emergency incident plans and arrangements through:
 - identifying and documenting trigger points for reviews
 - reviewing the content of plans and sub-plans annually, with updates as required
 - reviewing the effectiveness of the Queensland Health Disaster and Emergency Incident Plan (or part of the plan or its sub-plans) annually through exercises, evaluation, activation and debrief
 - ensuring processes are in place to assess the effectiveness of plans and arrangements

⁷ If the SHECC is not activated, between the Health Disaster Management Unit and these entities
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following activations in line with the Queensland Health Operational Briefing and Debriefing Guideline

- documenting and sharing lessons identified in reviews, assessments or debriefs, including potential improvement strategies or activities
- incorporating improvements based on lessons identified into existing governance processes, monitoring, and recording decisions and actions taken to promote 'lessons learned'.
- Regularly reviewing and assessing cooperation between areas of the Department responsible for disaster or emergency incident response functions, and between the Department and HHSs, including whether the systems and procedures employed are compatible and consistent⁸.
- Participating on behalf of the health system in multi-agency reviews of the content and effectiveness of state level disaster management plans and arrangements.
- Ensuring relevant employees and stakeholders are aware of the Department's preparedness arrangements through information and awareness activities⁹.
- Ensuring a functional SHECC can be activated, resourced, and maintained, consistent with QHIMS.

4. Human rights

Human rights are not engaged by this policy.

5. Legislation

- *Disaster Management Act 2003 [Qld]*
- *Disaster Management Regulation 2014 [Qld]*
- *Hospital and Health Boards Act 2011 [Qld]*
- *Public Health Act 2005 [Qld]*
- *Public Safety Preservation Act 1986 [Qld]*
- *Human Rights Act 2019 [Qld]*

6. Supporting documents

- Disasters and Emergency Incidents Policy (QH-POL-315)
- Emergency Management Assurance Framework (EMAF)
- QH-HSD-003 'Disasters and Emergency Incidents'
- QH-HSD-046 'Management of a public health event of state significance'
- Queensland Counter-Terrorism Strategy 2020
- Queensland Health Incident Management System (QHIMS) Guideline (2023)
- Queensland Health Disaster and Emergency Incident Plan (2023) and sub-plans
- Queensland Health Disaster and Emergency Incident Training Framework (2022)

⁸ Aligns with IGEM functions DM Act s. 16C(c).

⁹ See DM Act s. 23 & 30 regarding functions of district and local disaster management groups.

- Queensland Health Operational Briefing and Debriefing Guideline (2020)
- Queensland State Disaster Management Plan (SDMP Interim version 2023).

7. Definitions

Term	Definition	Source
Capability	How an entity uses training and exercising to help embed culture change and improve performance	Queensland Emergency Management Assurance Framework (Accountabilities)
Critical business function	A business function or part thereof identified as essential for organisational survival and achievement of objectives	AS5050:2010 Business continuity – Managing disruption-related risk (Section 1.3 Definitions)
Committees	<p>Executive level Disaster Management Committee (DMC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A ‘trusted network’ of HHS Incident Controllers and functional leaders providing high level, strategic, disaster management oversight to the executive and reports to the relevant delegate and leadership group <p>Operational level Disaster Management Advisory Network (DMAN)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides expert operational and clinical advice to the DMC and contributes to successful implementation of SDMAs 	<p><i>Disaster Management Act 2003</i> (Section 48)</p> <p>Queensland EMAF (Good practice attributes)</p> <p>Standard for Disaster Management in Queensland (Accountabilities)</p>
Continuous improvement	How entities monitor, evaluate, measure, and improve their disaster management activities	Standard for Disaster Management in Queensland (Accountabilities)
Disaster (Note: full definition of a disaster must take into account this definition and the definition of an ‘event’ under the DM Act.)	<p>Serious disruption to a community where an event requires a significant coordinated response by the state and other entities to help the community recover from the disruption.</p> <p>Serious disruption means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • loss of human life, or illness or injury to humans • widespread or severe property loss or damage • widespread or severe damage to the environment 	<i>Disaster Management Act 2003</i> (Section 13)

Term	Definition	Source
Disaster (and emergency incident) management	Arrangements about managing the potential adverse effects of a disaster event, including mitigation, prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery	<i>Disaster Management Act 2003</i> (Section 14)
Disaster (and emergency incident) operation)	Activities undertaken before, during, or after a disaster event happens to help reduce the level of serious disruption to the community	<i>Disaster Management Act 2003</i> (Section 15)
(Disaster) Event Note: An event may be natural or caused by human acts or omissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cyclone, earthquake, tsunami, volcanic eruption • Flood, storm/storm tide, tornado • Explosion, fire, chemical, fuel/oil spill, or gas leak • An infestation, plague, or epidemic • Failure of, or disruption to an essential service • Failure of, or disruption to critical infrastructure • An attack against the state • Another event similar to an event mentioned 	<i>Disaster Management Act 2003</i> (Section 16)
Doctrine	How an entity's documented ideas, strategies and guiding principles, guide disaster management in alignment with legislation and reflects good practice (includes guidelines, policies, plans and procedures)	Standard for Disaster Management in Queensland (Accountabilities)
Enablers	How an entity develops and uses the necessary resources to assist in undertaking disaster management activities (includes both the physical equipment and assets, and the systems, data, and technologies)	Standard for Disaster Management in Queensland (Accountabilities)

Term	Definition	Source
<p>Effective (relating to disaster and emergency incident management, operations, and plans).</p> <p>Note: Effectiveness can only be determined during application of a plan or arrangement through exercise or activation</p>	<p>An effective disaster management system for Queensland should consistently display five good practice attributes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scalable – able to be applied to any size or type of event across all levels of Queensland’s disaster management arrangements • Comprehensive – considers all phases of disaster management, all hazards and risk, and targeted all agencies approach • Interoperable – promotes linkages and partnerships between systems, programs, and people, to enable sharing of information and coordinated activities across the sector • Value for money – ensures the value of services and systems is considered in terms of cost, fit for purpose, quality, and the advancing of broader economic, environmental, and social objectives • Adaptive – arrangements can adapt to a changing climate and environment, remaining flexible to the needs of the community 	<p>Queensland EMAF (Good practice attributes)</p>
Emergency Incident	<p>Any emergency incident that is not considered a disaster under <i>the Disaster Management Act 2003</i>, but that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is confined to activation of a single Health Emergency Operations Centre in a single HHS • results in moderate or medium impact on normal operations • is able to be resolved through the use of local or first response resources • may involve the State Health Emergency Coordination Centre moving to ‘alert’ or ‘lean forward’ level of activation, dependent on situation reporting 	<p>Queensland Health Disaster and Emergency Incident Plan</p>
Governance	<p>How entities administer their disaster management responsibilities and ensure decision making is appropriate, clear, and consistent</p>	<p>Standard for Disaster Management in Queensland (Accountabilities)</p>
Performance	<p>Productivity and effectiveness measured by a combination of quality, quantity, cost, time, and human relationships</p>	<p>Queensland EMAF (Accountabilities)</p>

8. Approval and implementation

Policy Custodian	Policy Contact Details	Approval Date	Approver
A/Executive Director, Disaster Management Branch	DMB@health.qld.gov.au	February 2024	Chief Health Officer

Version control

Version	Date	Comments
V2	29 February 2024	Since 2018 revision: transferred to new template, including new human rights section. New "People" section in Requirements however the requirements listed were existing from other sections. Have removed distinction between areas of the Department of Health.