Australian Government
National Emergency
Management Agency

Australian Institute for
Disaster Resilience

Principles of emergency management

Speed read

- There are 11 nationally agreed principles of emergency management.
- The principles are intended to provide guidance, flexibility and a broad understanding of the approaches to emergency management.
- The principles improve and provide consistency in policy and decision making and to support resilience to emergencies and disasters in Australia.

Key points

Principle	Explanation
Primacy of life	The protection and preservation of human life (including both communities and emergency service personnel) and relief of suffering will be paramount over all other objectives and considerations.
Comprehensive	The development of emergency management arrangements will embrace the phases of prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery (PPRR) across all hazards. These phases of emergency management are not necessarily sequential.
Collaborative	Relationships between emergency management stakeholders and communities are based on integrity, trust and mutual respect, building a team atmosphere and consensus. Planning and systems of work reflect common goals and all stakeholders work with a unified effort.
Coordinated	The bringing together of organisations and other resources to support emergency management, risk reduction, preparedness, response, relief and recovery. It involves the systematic acquisition and application of resources (organisational, human and equipment) in an emergency situation. Activities of all stakeholders are synchronised and integrated. Information is shared to achieve a common purpose, and impacts and needs are continuously assessed and responded to accordingly.
Flexible	Emergency situations are constantly changing. Emergency management decisions may require initiative, creativity and innovation to adapt to new and rapidly emerging challenges. Emergency plans need to be agile to change and adapt to these new circumstances.
Risk based	Emergency managers use systemic risk management principles and processes in prioritising, allocating and monitoring resources to manage the risks from hazards. Systemic risk-based planning will anticipate the effect of efforts, the changing hazard landscape and the changing consequences of the emergency
Shared responsibility	Everyone understands their own responsibility in an emergency, and the responsibility of others. Communities and individuals understand the risk. This encourages all stakeholders to prevent, prepare for, and plan for how they will safely reduce their risk, respond to and recover from an emergency.
Resilience	The ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions through risk management (UNDRR 2017).
Communication	Information is crucial to decision making and to the preservation of life. Emergency managers need to support common information systems and are responsible for providing and sharing clear, targeted and tailored information to those who need it, and to those at risk, to enable better decision making by all stakeholders.
Integrated	Emergency management efforts must be integrated across sectors, not progressed in silos, ensuring the engagement of the whole of governments, all relevant organisations and agencies, the business sector and the community.
Continual improvement	All sectors continuously learn and innovate to improve practices and share lessons, data and knowledge so that future emergency management is better and the overall cost of impact of emergencies and disasters is reduced. Continuous monitoring, review and evaluation should examine the processes, timelines and outcomes of plans. Review informs communities and displays transparency and accountability. Review also enables facilitation of the adaptive change process with communities.

📞 +61 3 9419 2388
✉ enquiries@aidr.org.au
📍 www.aidr.org.au
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Take action

- Keep a copy of the principles of emergency management easily accessible.
- Familiarise yourself with the Australian Emergency Management Arrangements, the arrangements in your immediate jurisdiction, and your role in preparing for emergencies.
- Get to know who is responsible for mitigation, prevention, and preparedness in your area.

More information

- *Australian Emergency Management Arrangements* (AIDR 2023)
- National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework (2018)
- Second National Action Plan to implement the National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework (2023)
- Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2023