

Principles of flood emergency planning

Speed read

- There are 14 nationally agreed principles for flood emergency planning.
- Flood emergency planning aims to improve the resilience of communities to flooding by supporting effective community response to floods.
- Flood emergency planning provides the opportunity to manage a flood while maximising public safety and minimising property, environmental, cultural, social and other intangible forms of damage.

Key points

Principle 1
Plans are risk based and informed by studies of flood behaviour, previous flood history and knowledge of community exposure and vulnerabilities. Plans should consider possible compounding and cascading impacts, in addition to the flood hazard. Plans should be based on current day risk but be regularly updated to reflect the changing nature of risk.
Principle 2
Plans are holistic and consider the full range of causes (e.g. heavy rainfall, dam failure, storm surge and tsunami), the full range of flood events including worst-case scenarios and provide for coordination across prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.
Principle 3
Plans are scalable, flexible and adaptable to all forms of flooding and the differing nature of floods.
Principle 4
Plans are based upon realistic assumptions concerning social behaviour during floods.
Principle 5
Plans are consistent with relevant legislation, regulations and governance arrangements. This includes consideration of cross-jurisdictional considerations and arrangements.
Principle 6
Plans are linked to required capability and capacity to achieve desired outcomes and priorities. Planning identifies the demands different flood scenarios may have on resourcing and informs capability development strategies.
Principle 7
Plans are concise, principles-based, simple to interpret and define priorities and desired outcomes.
Principle 8
Plans are contemporary; provide an authorising environment for decision makers and written from an operational perspective.

Principle 9

Planning is most effective when it is integrated rather than fragmented. This involves inter-agency planning and designing plans to ensure responses are integrated across agencies and with those of volunteers and community groups.

Principle 10

Planning is proactive and enables better decisions to enact forward leaning responses based on warning systems, flood intelligence and pre-considered arrangements and strategies.

Principle 11

Planning is a shared responsibility. Communities are involved throughout the planning process and have significant buy-in. Plans are written to enable a whole-of-community response as well as emergency services and broader government responses.

Principle 12

Planning is adequately resourced, is central to the culture of flood emergency management organisations and embedded into all aspects of organisational structures, policies, practices.

Principle 13

Plans are regularly exercised, and stakeholders are aware of their contents. Plans are part of the process that educates, trains and exercises an organisation so they are well understood and embed into the process of what to do into its culture and its core business.

Principle 14

Plans are living documents and planning is an ongoing process. They are maintained and regularly updated to ensure they remain relevant in the context of the community risk profile.

Take action

- Save or print these principles for easy reference.
- Watch the Flood Emergency Planning for Disaster Resilience [Handbook Showcase Webinar](#)
- Check out the companion document: [Application of the Total Warning System to Flood](#)

More information

- [Flood Emergency Planning for Disaster Resilience](#) (AIDR 2020)
- [Managing the Floodplain](#) (AIDR 2017)
- [Emergency Planning](#) (AIDR 2020)
- [Community Engagement for Disaster Resilience](#) (AIDR 2020)
- [Systemic Disaster Risk](#) (AIDR 2021)