

## Concepts and principles of health and disaster management

### Speed read

- Disasters can stretch the ability of the health system to provide services to the community as usual.
- The health sector is the lead for events such as pandemic, heatwave and thunderstorm asthma depending on local arrangements
- A key goal during disasters is to limit disruption to services that support community health and wellbeing.

### Key points

**The major focus of disaster health management is primacy of life and the protection and recovery of community wellbeing.**

**Health and disaster management requires an all-hazards approach.** While some hazards require specific measures, an all hazards approach to disaster health arrangements provides the foundation to manage any disaster including catastrophic and novel disasters.

**Health and disaster management needs to be integrated.** A whole of community approach is essential to achieving good health outcomes. A significant proportion of hospitals are in the private sector, meaning that most community-based health care is not under the direct control of state governments.

**Managing health requires a multi-disciplinary, all-agency approach.** An approach that recognises governments, healthcare services, healthcare workers, non-government organisations and communities should all be coordinated in their contribution to disaster management and building disaster resilience.

**Coordination and cooperation between the three levels of government and across agencies and departments at each level is needed to manage health risks and achieve sustained community wellbeing in disasters.** This applies across all activities and is particularly important during the disaster response phase where time and resources are limited and when agency and sector plans should be integrated.

**Health and disaster management requires risk management.** Most health risks can be managed by routine operations and practices such as screening high risk people, general immunisation programs, and health professionals attending crowded places and mass gatherings. Other risks may require organisations to work together in a non-routine way.

**Health and disaster management is complex.** The health system is a complex, global web of infrastructure, technologies and supply chains. Community reliance on, and expectations about, the provision of products and services can be high and tolerance of system failures low.

**In the health sector the most commonly used incident management system is Major Incident Medical Management and Support (MIMMS).**

## Take action

- Find your state or territory health plans in the Health and Disaster Management Handbook: [knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/health-and-disaster-management-handbook](https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/resources/health-and-disaster-management-handbook)

## More information

- [Health and Disaster Management Handbook](#) (AIDR 2019)
- [Pandemic Collection on the Australian Disaster Resilience Knowledge Hub](#)
- [Australian Government Department of Health](#)
- [Australasian Major Incident Medical Management Support system](#)
- [Standards Australia, AS4083-2010 Planning for emergencies – Health care facilities](#)