

Disaster Resilient SA

April newsletter

Updates: New Red Cross projects for 2019-21

Red Cross SA branch has been fortunate to receive NDRP funding for two new projects to run from 2019-2021.

“Leave it to Z” will focus on supporting young people to influence and participate in decision making in emergency preparedness and recovery and drive change in how emergency services and state government work with young people. Young people are often disproportionately affected by natural disasters and other emergencies but also have an inherent strength, resilience and ability to support their community.

“Community-Led Emergency Resilience” will focus on a community-led approach to increase resilience and preparedness for emergencies through collaborating with community groups, emergency services agencies, community services and government agencies to develop locally-appropriate and locally owned small scale initiatives and strategies to inform and prepare their community for emergencies.

Recruitment for two positions is progressing with start dates expected in May. For further information please get in touch.

Resource in focus: The ACOSS Resilient Community Organisations toolkit

Did you know that 25% of Community Organisations think they would close their doors for good after an extreme weather event?

The ACOSS Resilient Community Organisations toolkit was developed by and for the community sector to help organisations measure and improve their resilience to disasters and emergencies. The toolkit includes a benchmarking system to allow organisations to assess their current preparedness levels and identify areas to improve and a ‘Six steps to disaster resilience’ section- filled with information and resources for organisations to take action.

Once organisations have made changes based on their benchmark results, they can revisit the benchmarking system to check their progress and identify other areas to improve their resilience to emergencies.

For further information and to complete the benchmark, visit the website: <https://resilience.acoss.org.au/>



Good News story: Lock Emergency Ready Committee

In the past years, the Lock Community has had 'ad-hoc' engagement with the CFS to increase bushfire awareness and preparedness. But after the "Is the Eyre Peninsular Disaster Ready?" workshop, conversations between key organisations within the town determined the need for a more formal approach which has led to the creation of the Lock Emergency Ready Committee (LERC).

This committee is based off of similar committees in Cummins, Port Neill and Coffin Bay and consists of representatives from CFS, Lock Health Centre, Lock Area School, a service club and the District Council of Elliston. The first action of this committee involved extending the town's Bushfire Safer Place to include the Lock Football Oval and Sports Club. After advice from the local CFS Prevention Officer, the Council and the Lock Football Club worked together to reduce the vegetation surrounding the oval to meet the standard for Bushfire Safer Places. These changes have been accepted by the local Bushfire Management Committee for the Eyre Peninsular and is currently before the State Bushfire Management Committee for endorsement.

The Lock Emergency Ready Committee have included information about the new Bushfire Safer Places in a community newsletter to inform all residents that in the event of a bushfire, the Football Club is now an option to seek refuge. Future actions will include having this information on signs around town to ensure tourists and other visitors are also aware of where they can go in an emergency.

Practice Scenario: Influenza outbreak

Week 1: With the beginning of the cooler months, several staff members and clients have been noticed to be at work with 'the sniffles' that are apparently doing the rounds at the local primary school and childcare centre. 1 or 2 workers are at work sneezing and coughing but claim that they shouldn't go home because there are deadlines approaching and 'it sounds worse than I feel'. You encourage your staff to get their flu vaccine, practice good hygiene and take time off if they are feeling unwell. Certain staff members actively shun the flu vaccine, stating that they don't work because 'one time they had the flu shot and got the flu anyway' while others state that they're only for old people and they're healthy enough to fight it off.

Towards the end of the week, some staff members are calling in sick with 'flu-like symptoms' which causes you to need to adjust others work duties and rosters to ensure services continue.

Week 2: After the weekend it appears that nearly half of the staff are in the midst of varying levels of illness. Multiple staff members have called in sick, leaving those that are left to carry the load. Some staff have come back into the office but are not fully recovered yet,



leading to their reduced productivity and increasing the potential for germs to circulate to the healthy staff members.

The local Aged Care facility has implemented a quarantine, not allowing visitors as several residents have been struck down with the flu, with some needing to be hospitalised.

Week 3: Over the past few weeks, the majority of staff members have now taken time off work either because they themselves are sick or they are looking after others who are sick. This has put a great deal of strain on your organisation to continue to function at full capacity. Numbers of hospitalisations due to the flu have increased in the local area and the school has closed for the remainder of the week due to the numbers of unwell teachers and students causing disarray for many families.

Week 4: The young daughter of one of your staff members who is immunocompromised has been admitted to hospital with pneumonia after they caught the flu. It is uncertain when they will be back at work. Staff members are slowly returning to the office but many are still fatigued and many projects are behind schedule.

For your workplace, consider the following:

- What advice and duties will you be giving your staff?
- What (if any) messages will you be communicating to your clients/ customers/ community members and when?
- How will you manage with reduced staffing capacity? What services will be essential to maintain? Are there any that will be delayed or cancelled?

In the case of a flu epidemic, remember that:

- The flu can result in hospitalisations and death at any age, with the elderly, pregnant women, young children and those living with chronic health conditions at particular risk.
- The incubation period for the flu ranges from 1-4 days (average of 2 days) and the infectious period can last up to 7 days. So even if you start to feel better you may still be contagious.
- Symptoms of the flu can last 2-3 weeks (particularly fatigue).
- Timing of your flu vaccine is important as it can start to wear off after 3-4 months. Flu season in the past few years has peaked in August so getting immunised too early can leave people exposed later in the season. Seek advice from your GP.
- In 2018, an extra 3.4 million flu vaccinations were made available to vulnerable groups. Reducing the death toll from 1137 deaths in 2017 to just 73 in 2018. It also reduced the number of reported cases of flu from nearly 250,000 in 2017 to 53,000 in 2018.

Do you have any questions regarding your emergency planning or your organisations role in an emergency? Contact Jess Law, Community Resilience Project Officer to have a chat. jlaw@redcross.org.au or 08 8100 4664