

These scenarios are designed to stimulate conversations within organisations and networks of what may need to be considered in a variety of different emergency situations. Please feel welcome to use these scenarios in staff meetings or emergency planning workshops to increase awareness of organisational procedures and potentially identify gaps in planning.

For further information and advice please contact your local emergency planning committee through your council or local emergency services.

Practice Scenario: Dust storm

8:00am- It's been very dry in your local area for the past few months with minimal rain and higher than average temperatures. The temperature today is predicted to reach 34 degrees with a cold front expected in the afternoon with 35km-45km per hour winds and heavy rain expected.



2:00pm- The temperature has started to drop and the wind begins to pick up. You notice rubbish and lighter unsecured objects being caught in the gusts and blowing down the street.

2:45pm- The sky has become dark and visibility is reduced as a dust storm blows through your area. The wind is blowing at 35km per hour with gusts of up to 50km and the dust is abrasive on the skin of those caught outdoors. It is difficult to see, especially while driving.

3:00pm- SA Ambulance and the Emergency department at the hospital have had an increase in the number of calls for assistance from those with respiratory issues such as asthma, emphysema or cardiovascular disease. SES are responding to a number of calls of fallen tree branches and a car accident that has occurred due to poor visibility on the roads.

4:15pm- Heavy rain begins to fall. Due to the high winds many roof gutters and drains are clogged with leaves and other debris resulting in running water on roads and spilling out of gutters. The ground is so dry that it isn't absorbing the rain resulting in large puddles of collected water.

4:35pm- the rain has passed and the air is humid. You're faced with the mess left by the dust storm and the rain to clean up.

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?

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- Do you, people you work with or any of your clients have breathing difficulties that could be exacerbated by a dust storm? How would this be managed?
- Are staff members or volunteers required to drive as part of their duties? What advice or restrictions will be given to drivers during an extreme weather event such as a dust storm?
- What services will be critical to maintain? Are there any services that will be cancelled or reduced?
- If services will be cancelled or reduced, what impact will this have on clients/ members/ customers/ community?

In the case of a dust storm, remember that:

- Research shows that during a dust storm, visits to the emergency department for respiratory problems increase.
- Those with existing health concerns such as respiratory or heart-related problems may find their existing symptoms are aggravated during a dust storm.

Dust storms can reduce visibility. Extra caution should be used when driving. If the visibility is very low, park in a safe place to avoid collisions and wait for the dust to clear.

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