



HEALTH CHECK GUIDE

Sydney Coastal Councils Group (SCCG)

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT HEALTH CHECK FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

**A Guide for NSW local councils participating in the
Emergency Management Health Check initiative.**

Disclaimer

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
HEALTH CHECK PROJECT OVERVIEW	4
Background	4
BENEFITS OF THE HEALTH CHECK FOR LOCAL COUNCILS	5
Driving Collaboration	5
Identification of gaps and opportunities	5
Continuous improvement in emergency management	5
Integrating and embedding the Health Check in existing processes	6
Future application and ownership of the Health Check Tool	6
ABOUT THE HEALTH CHECK	7
Evolution of the Framework	7
Current Framework	7
Response Scale	9
Readiness Evaluation and Reporting	10
Access to the Health Check and Resources to support participation	10
Improvement Planning	11
Health Check Completion Period and Frequency	11
WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN YOUR HEALTH CHECK	12
Sponsor	12
Facilitator	12
Contributors	12
Reviewers	12
4 STEPS TO SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING YOUR HEALTH CHECK	13
STEP 1 – PREPARATION	15
STEP 2 - ENGAGEMENT	17
STEP 3 – COMPLETION	20
STEP 4 – ACTION	22
RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT	24
Part A - Managing Risks	24
Part B - Planning For Emergencies And Disasters	25
Part C- Building Capability To Respond Effectively	29
Part D - Providing Assurance Of Capability And Capacity	30

INTRODUCTION

This Health Check Guide has been developed to assist local councils in participating in the NSW Emergency Health Check for Local Government.

This is a state-wide project initiated by the Sydney Coastal Councils Group (SCCG), funded by the State Emergency Management Program (SEMP) and endorsed by the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC).

Building upon a previous Pilot Project, this phase focused on reviewing and revising the existing Health Check Tool to make it fit for purpose and highly valuable and accessible to the local government audience. The Emergency Management Health Check Tool is realigned to a new framework, presents the questions in a more user-friendly way and has been converted to an online survey and reporting platform.

Supporting the Health Check Tool is a suite of resources or 'Toolkit' that are now available via a dedicated website called www.emhealthcheck.com.au.

The project has engaged a diverse range of stakeholders with a role to play in preparing for and responding to local area emergencies and disasters across NSW. This has taken place through one-on-one meetings, committee meetings and stakeholder workshops in metropolitan and regional NSW. Over 100 local government area stakeholders have participated in the project and provided input, insight and feedback into the development of the Emergency Management Health Check and the supporting resources.

Throughout the project there has been widespread acknowledgement of the need for the Emergency Management Health Check within NSW and a number of key drivers have been identified. These can be summarised as:

- Increasing frequency and intensity of natural disasters;
- Need to match capability to location-based risks and hazards;
- Local government have a pivotal role in emergency management preparedness;
- Community and emergency services expectations and confidence need to be met;
- Validating requirements within IP&R and Local Emergency Management Planning;
- Driving collaboration within local government areas and across regions.

As well stakeholders have clearly articulated the benefits they believe the Health Check will bring to local government participants in the initiative:

- Allows for continuous improvement within emergency management at the local level;
- Elevation of the 'conversation' to the executive level within local councils;
- Alignment and integration with current internal auditing requirements;
- Creates a baseline from which to measure progress;
- Validation of existing local emergency management planning processes and capability;
- Provides a business case for funding and resources;
- Drives internal and external stakeholder engagement and collaboration.

The Health Check has been designed to be completed annually by councils via a collaborative stakeholder engagement process. The Health Check was launched in early 2017 and will be evaluated for future improvement or scalability by September 2017.

This Guide will provide background on the project as well as information on how to:

- 1) Prepare for participating in the Health Check;
- 2) Engage key stakeholders in the process;
- 3) Complete the Online Health Check Tool;
- 4) Create action plans for improvement from the results.

HEALTH CHECK PROJECT OVERVIEW

Background

The NSW Office of Emergency Management (OEM) awarded grant funding under the State Emergency Management Projects (SEMP) Program, 2012-13 to the Sydney Coastal Councils Group (SCCG) to complete a Phase 1 Project entitled “**Emergency Management Planning – Piloting a Health Check for Local Government.**”

The project’s aim was to improve the emergency management capability of local government for harm minimisation in response to natural hazards.

A fundamental assumption of emergency management is that response starts at the most immediate level, and scales up as required. In NSW primary responsibility for planning for emergency management at the local level lies with the Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC). While local government acts as a partner in emergency management, legislation does not define clearly the tasks required of local government.

The primary output of Phase 1 of this Project was to develop a Health Check Tool to enable local councils to review their role in emergency management in terms of prevention, preparation, response and recovery, and identify opportunities for improved outcomes. The contents and format of the Health Check Tool were based on the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience (COAG, 2011) and its seven key priorities.

A detailed report and fact sheet on Phase 1 can be found at:
www.sydneycoastalcouncils.com.au/Emergency_Management_Planning_Project

The SCCG engaged thirty (30) councils across NSW to test and trial the Health Check Tool. The Pilot Health Check Tool was developed in a spreadsheet format with an additional user guide and useful documentation. Feedback provided by Local Government participating during the pilot indicated that the Health Check Tool was not user-friendly, created a disconnect between the Local Emergency Management Committees (LEMC) and councils, and there was limited understanding of the value the tool would deliver.

In order to address the challenges of the Phase 1 Health Check Tool and provide maximum opportunity for a successful implementation and uptake by all local councils within NSW, Phase 2 of the project ‘**Development and implementation of an Emergency Management Health Check Tool for local government**’ received approval for grant funding through the SEMP program in 2016.

As part of this process, we engaged consulting firm Janellis to develop a functional online emergency management health check tool and resource package, and facilitate a series of regional Stakeholder Workshops for councils and relevant State Agencies across NSW. Workshops were held in Sydney, Western Sydney, Newcastle, Ballina, Dubbo and Ulladulla.

The Emergency Management Health Check allows councils, Local Emergency Management Committees, regions and government representatives to identify areas for improvement in council’s resilience and readiness capability; build a case for funding to address emergency management needs; ensure integration between local emergency planning, risk management and Integrated Planning & Reporting Framework; and provide a platform to identify best practice emergency management and share lessons across NSW.

The new Health Check Tool and online resource site were launched in January 2017.

A stakeholder briefing sheet on Phase 2 can be found at:
<http://emhealthcheck.com.au/wp-content/uploads/Briefing-Sheet-Implementing-an-Emergency-Management-for-local-government.pdf>

BENEFITS OF THE HEALTH CHECK FOR LOCAL COUNCILS

Driving Collaboration

The Emergency Management Health Check Project has been an excellent example of 'resilience in action'. Resilience first requires the acknowledgement of potential vulnerabilities followed by key people and groups coming together to collaborate, validate and elevate the conversation to the appropriate level for assessment of capability and actions for improvement to take place.

Beyond the development and implementation of the Tool, this initiative has seen a range of stakeholders come together in ways they never have before. The workshops that have been held across NSW have allowed stakeholders within council to start a conversation on their emergency management preparedness, with a number of participants already preparing briefings for their executives on the Health Check initiative.

Cross-council collaboration has begun within a number of regions, with Local Emergency Management Officers (LEMOs) recognising the need to work together in more strategic ways.

And we've seen cross-regional sharing of knowledge and tools as pockets of best practice have been identified and shared within the workshop forums.

Completion of the Health Check itself also requires collaboration both within and external to council. Multiple stakeholders within council need to be consulted and engaged in the completion of the questions – with our recommended approach being a series of facilitated workshops to provide a platform for group discussion and agreement. In most cases, completion of the Health Check will also involve consultation with the respective Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC).

Results from the reports can also be shared by councils within regions for further enhancing collaboration and cooperation with regards to leveraging learnings, sharing information and resources - potentially using the Region Emergency Management Committee (REMC) as the vehicle for this collaboration.

Identification of gaps and opportunities

The Health Check Tool will provide local government with a consistent methodology for creating an annual snapshot of their emergency readiness and ability to deliver on council's responsibilities and community expectations.

By being able to identify both the areas of competency and the areas for improvement, councils can create a baseline from which to develop and prioritise their capability development programs.

Continuous improvement in emergency management

Both the process of completing the Health Check with stakeholders and the resulting reports provides a platform for creating a series of improvement programs that are endorsed at the executive level within councils.

Undertaking the first Health Check will create the baseline to establish current emergency management capability. This will allow for key areas for concern to be identified and prioritised from action using the guides and resources provided in the Toolkit. The reports and action plans then create the case for resources and funding – either internal or external – to develop and deliver improvement plans within the following 12 months.

The success of the improvement programs can be measured by completion of the Health Check over subsequent years, thereby demonstrating council's continuous improvement in emergency readiness and resilience.

Integrating and embedding the Health Check in existing processes

Throughout the project it has been highlighted that the greatest opportunity for the successful integration of the Health Check into existing council frameworks is to align the completion and reporting of results with council's newly mandated internal audit process. This ensures involvement and visibility of the process and the outcomes with the council executive management team. And guarantees it becomes part of the ongoing governance and assurance process within council.

By following the stakeholder engagement process and using the guides, resources and templates provided as part of the Toolkit, advocates of the Health Check within council will have the greatest chance of successfully implementing and embedding this initiative across their organisation.

Future application and ownership of the Health Check Tool

SCCG is the current custodian of the Health Check as the recipient of the State Emergency Management Program (SEMP) grant funding. The intent of the Health Check in this first stage is to assist councils in self-assessing their emergency readiness. The data collected by the Health Check is for the information and use by councils only and will not be aggregated or shared by SCCG to any other party. Councils may opt to share their reports with other Councils or relevant stakeholders if they wish to do so.

Longer-term application or development of the Health Check will be evaluated based on user feedback and outcomes prior to September 2017. This may include review by the NSW Office of Emergency Management (OEM) of the responses for evaluation of the program only and for seeking feedback from users who have undertaken the Health Check.

It should be noted there was recognition of the value of the Health Check to provide insights into regional and state level reporting and in most cases it was indicated that the Office of Emergency Management would be best fit for future ownership of the initiative. However, local government would have to have a clear understanding of how the information would be used, who would have visibility of it, how it may be used to benchmark regions and what impact it would have on grant-funding or the provision of emergency services support to regions and local areas.

ABOUT THE HEALTH CHECK

The Emergency Management Health Check is a tool to help local councils track and evaluate their emergency preparedness and to identify areas for improvement in capacity and capability to prevent or respond to major emergencies and disasters.

The tool will assist councils in developing a business case for funding and resources in the areas they need it the most.

As this is an annual process, councils will also be able to measure their progress over time and see the impact of implementing action plans on their annual readiness metrics.

The Health Check can create a platform for discussion with neighbouring councils within each region to identify opportunities to leverage learnings, share resources or integrate plans to further improve readiness and resilience.

Evolution of the Framework

The Health Check Framework is a distillation of:

- The original 2014 Health Check goals and outcomes that were aligned to the 4 elements of the PPRR and the 7 priorities of National Strategy for Disaster Resilience;
- The recommendations and revisions from the first Pilot phase;
- The recommended revisions that were gathered over the course of the second phase with direct input from:
 - local government stakeholders participating in one-on-one meetings and group workshops
 - the Project Advisory Committee and
 - NSW government representatives (eg. Office of Emergency Management, Emergency Management Unit, Regional Emergency Management);
- Our consultant's expertise in resilience, emergency management and developing health checks and benchmarking frameworks.

Current Framework

The Health Check Framework identifies 20 capability areas with a set of questions within each one. These will be used to generate reports that will assist Councils in assessing their emergency readiness.

Capabilities 1-15 inform the metrics in the Health Check Reports and will guide and influence the development of action plans to improve emergency management capability and capacity where required. These have been grouped into **four (4) broad competencies**:

- A. Managing risks
- B. Planning for emergencies and disasters
- C. Building capability to respond effectively
- D. Providing assurance of capability and capacity.

Capabilities 16-20 are additional information gathering "SnapShot" questions to assist councils in assessing the need for resources, funding, support or training with regards to Emergency Management.

An outline of the Health Check Framework can be found on the next page.

PART A - MANAGING RISKS

This section will cover:

1. Risk Management
2. Collaborating with Stakeholders to reduce Risks
3. Considering Risks and Hazards in Land Use Planning

PART B - PLANNING FOR EMERGENCIES AND DISASTERS

This section will cover:

4. Emergency Management Planning and Policy
5. Emergency Management Roles and Responsibilities
6. The Role of the Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC)
7. The Role of the Local Emergency Management Officer (LEMO)
8. Identifying and Preparing Vulnerable Communities and Individuals
9. Informing and Engaging the Community
10. Considering Emergency Risks within Asset Management Programs
11. Business Continuity Planning for Council and the Broader Community
12. Maintaining Emergency Operations Centres (EOCs)
13. Resourcing for Recovery

PART C - BUILDING CAPABILITY TO RESPOND EFFECTIVELY

This section will cover:

14. Emergency Management Training and Exercising to build Response Capability

PART D - PROVIDING ASSURANCE OF CAPABILITY AND CAPACITY

This section will cover:

15. Reviewing and Reporting to provide Assurance of Capability and Capacity

ADDITIONAL SNAPSHOT QUESTIONS FOR YOUR COUNCIL

This section will cover:

16. Recent Events within Council
17. Recent Emergency Events within your local area
18. Emergency Management Resourcing Requirements
19. Opportunities for Grants and Funding to improve Readiness
20. Towards Council and Community Resilience

Response Scale

The majority of the **questions within the capability areas 1-15** use a 5-point scale (5 being the highest level of competency and 1 being the lowest level) allowing the responses to be consistent and able to provide readiness indicators in the Health Check Reports.

For example:

- 5 - Strongly Agree
- 4 - Agree
- 3 - Neither agree nor disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 1 - Strongly Disagree

A more specific example would be:

- 5 - Quarterly
- 4 - Bi-annually
- 3 - Annually
- 2 - Less than Annually
- 1 - Never

To assist users in responding, the indicators below are included in this Guide and in the *Offline Health Check Questionnaire* that will be used to gather initial responses by key stakeholders before inputting into the *Online Health Check Tool*.

Response	Capability	Description
5	Highly Effective	Demonstrates best practice in capability and the capacity to sustain and continuously improve.
4	Effective	Processes and procedures meet expectations and should continue to be regularly reviewed to maintain assurance of effective capability at all times.
3	Adequate	Isolated gaps in processes and procedures mean a consistent, effective and coordinated approach cannot be assured.
2	Limited	Major gaps in capability exist which may lead to financial or operational loss, safety or compliance breach or community, environmental or reputation impact.
1	Poor	Capability is absent or not effective posing extreme risks. Potential for significant adverse financial, operational, safety, community, environmental or reputational impacts.

The majority of these questions also provide an indication of **‘What best practice looks like’**, assisting participants in understanding what the top end of the scale should look like.

All questions in both the online and offline versions of the tool will have a free text box for **‘Comments on your Response’** – allowing for justification or further explanation of each response.

For the **Snapshot questions 16-20**, a variety of response styles have been used that best reflect the information being captured. These responses DO NOT inform the metrics in the final Health Check reports – they are for information only to assist in decision-making on emergency management capability and capacity.

Readiness Evaluation and Reporting

Responses to the Online Health Check will be scored individually and aggregated to provide a series of Readiness Metrics in the Reports. These are:

1. Overall Summary of Readiness – based on all scored responses
2. Summary of Readiness within each of the 4 broad competencies
3. Summary of Readiness within each of the 15 capability areas

The aggregated results are based on the mean (average) of all responses within that capability or competency.

These are presented in two different reports:

1. A Health Check Summary Report

This is a visual report that displays the readiness summaries in a colour coded, graphical format.

2. A Detailed Individual Response Report

This is a more basic text and numerical report that provides both the readiness summary and the responses to each of the questions in the Health Check.

The reports are delivered to a nominated email address on completion of the Online Health Check.

Examples of these reports can be found on the resource site www.emhealthcheck.com.au

Access to the Health Check and Resources

Accompanying the Health Check Tool is a Toolkit (resource package) to assist councils in:

- understanding the background, drivers and benefits of the Health Check;
- the engagement of key council and other stakeholders in the Health Check initiative;
- the facilitation of completion of the Online Health Check using the guides, templates and resources;
- developing and implementing action plans to improve local government emergency preparedness.

The Toolkit consists of:

1. Project Background
 - Phase 1
 - Phase 2
2. Benefits for Councils
 - Feedback from Workshops
 - Testimonials from participants
3. Guides and Templates
 - The Health Check Guide
 - Quick Check List
 - Glossary of Terms
 - Stakeholder Briefing Template
 - Offline Health Check Questionnaire
 - Improvement Plan Template
 - Executive Report Template

4. Resource Links and References
 - Risk Management
 - Planning
 - Stakeholder Roles and Responsibilities
 - Stakeholder Engagement and Communication
 - Community Engagement
 - Community Awareness and Education
 - Training
 - Recovery
 - Awards
 - Podcasts
5. Case Studies
6. Access to the Online Health Check Tool via secure login.

These resources have all been made available to councils via the dedicated resources website www.emhealthcheck.com.au which is currently hosted by the Sydney Coastal Councils Group.

Improvement Planning

The goal of the Health Check is to give guidance to councils on the priority areas for improving emergency management capability and capacity.

A set of actions for improvement, along with an Improvement Plan Template have been provided to assist in creating a program of improvement within your council over the next 3-12 months.

Please see STEP 4 – ACTION for more guidance on how to use the Health Check to create your improvement program.

Health Check Completion Period and Frequency

The Health Check has been designed as an annual self-assessment with the first one being made available in early 2017.

The completion period for the Health Check each year will be from 1 February to 1 July, allowing time for the review of results and development of improvement plans by each council.

Each council can only submit the online version of the Health Check once each year. However, review of the Offline Questionnaire can occur at any time and may be used to prompt considerations of readiness in the lead up to extreme weather events or seasonal hazards.

WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN YOUR HEALTH CHECK

The intention of the Health Check is to build awareness, understanding and engagement across the many roles of councils to promote an integrated approach to emergency management with shared responsibility within the organisation and with the community.

The Health Check seeks to identify areas where the most gains in knowledge and application are possible. The process of completing the Health Check, if undertaken as proposed, will assist in:

- improving coordination across all functions of Local Government to improve emergency management capability and capacity;
- promoting a culture of continuous learning and the benefits of monitoring and evaluation;
- coordinating activities with, and through, the Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMCs) and Regional Emergency Management Committees (REMCs);
- using resources more efficiently through improved planning and resource sharing;
- supporting more hazard aware and resilient communities.

The Health Check is not, therefore, for a particular individual or role; rather it is an opportunity for General Managers, Senior Staff, LEMOs and the LEMCs to work together to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of emergency management for their local communities.

The Health Check is an assessment to alert individuals and organisations as to their potential roles in emergency management, and to allow them to identify, and assess whether they are ready to perform, those roles. Whilst the Health Check does not propose additional roles or requirements, an evaluation may reveal that further, or changed allocation of, resourcing is necessary.

Sponsor

We highly recommend identifying a senior member of staff (preferably the General Manager) to provide sponsorship and stewardship of the initiative across your council. The Sponsor will support the facilitator or project manager in ensuring the required stakeholders and relevant staff are informed, engaged or involved in the project. They will endorse key messages and communication and assist with any roadblocks or challenges to implementation.

Facilitator

The facilitator may be the subject matter expert who initiates the Health Check project or the nominated person to coordinate the stakeholder engagement and Health Check completion process. This may be the LEMO, a risk or audit manager, an emergency management coordinator or an experienced project manager. The role of this person is to get the relevant stakeholders on board and conduct briefings, meetings and/or workshops to review and complete the Health Check. They will also coordinate the development of draft improvement plans and executive reports for review and decision-making.

Contributors

These are the relevant stakeholders (either internal or external) who have a role to play in emergency management within the local government area who may be required to contribute input insight and responses to the Health Check.

Reviewers

These are stakeholders selected to review the Executive Reports and Improvement Plans.

4 STEPS TO SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETING YOUR HEALTH CHECK

Using the Health Check to improve your Emergency Management Readiness

The following section of this Guide will assist you in participating in the Health Check by following our recommended steps to success.

All references to guides and templates in this section can be found on the Health Check resource website www.emhealthcheck.com.au

Use this Quick Check List to track your progress:

1) Preparation

- Review background and reference material on the project
- Review this Health Check Guide for information on how to participate in this initiative
- Review the Stakeholder Briefing Template
- Review the recommended Stakeholder Engagement Process for completion of the Tool
- Request your Council ID Authenticator via info@emhealthcheck.com.au

2) Engagement

- Develop your Stakeholder Briefing document for stakeholders
- Develop your Stakeholder Engagement Plan
- Facilitate meetings or workshops with key stakeholders to review the Health Check
- Collate feedback and agree responses via the Offline Health Check Questionnaire

3) Completion

- Complete the Online Health Check Tool using your Council ID Authenticator
- Submit responses and indicate recipient email address to receive reports
- Receive reports via secure link in email

4) Action

- Review the Readiness Metrics Scale to interpret the results in your reports
- Review the suggested actions for improvement contained in the report and in this Guide
- Use the Improvement Plan Template to create your action plans based on the outcomes
- Develop an Executive Report to present to the General Manager and Senior Staff.
- Use the Project Template to present proposed improvement projects for approval.

STEP 1 - PREPARATION

STEP 1 – PREPARATION

➤ Review the background and reference material on the project

To understand the drivers and inspiration behind this initiative we recommend reviewing all the background material available on the project via this guide and on the resource website: www.emhealthcheck.com.au

➤ Review this Health Check Guide for information on how to respond

Read this entire guide to assist you in understanding the Health Check Framework, the response scales, how to complete the Tool, how reports are generated and what you can do to improve your readiness using the results.

➤ Review the Stakeholder Briefing Template

The Stakeholder Briefing Template will assist you in creating a document you can present to stakeholders about the Health Check initiative to begin the engagement process.

➤ Review the recommended Stakeholder Engagement Process

The Stakeholder Engagement Process has been provided to assist you identify the key stakeholders for this initiative and to engage them at appropriate stages in the completion, review and action planning process.

➤ Request your Council ID Authenticator

Access to the Online Emergency Management Health Check Tool is via the resource website www.emhealthcheck.com.au.

To login to the online tool you will require a unique Council ID Authenticator – *only one will be issued per council*. To request your Council's ID please contact info@emhealthcheck.com.au.

STEP 2 - ENGAGEMENT

STEP 2 - ENGAGEMENT

As with any initiative, project or program, the key to success is a strong and effective stakeholder engagement and communications strategy. To assist councils in getting the Health Check off the ground, socialised and successfully implemented we have developed some simple guidelines for stakeholder engagement.

➤ Identify the key stakeholders for the Health Check initiative

Multiple local government stakeholders will need to be involved in participating in the Health Check. As an example you may wish to consider council representatives with a role to play in emergency management such as:

- General Managers
- Local Emergency Management Officers (LEMO) and alternates
- Risk Managers
- Infrastructure
- Strategic Planning
- Community Engagement
- Environment and sustainability
- Governance
- Business Continuity Planning
- Corporate services

You may also wish to involve or consult with members of the LEMC and other external stakeholders, consultants or experts who have been involved in your emergency capability development.

We recommend recording your key stakeholders in a register that will include:

- Name
- Role
- Stakeholder category
- Contact details
- Record of communications made – type, date, by who

➤ Develop your Stakeholder Briefing document

The Stakeholder Briefing Template has been provided to assist in creating the first line of communication to the potential Sponsor or other key stakeholders about the Health Check initiative. Completion of an initial 'draft' document is recommended which can then be socialised with the relevant council staff members for review and consideration.

The Stakeholder Briefing Template can be found at:

http://emhealthcheck.com.au/wp-content/uploads/SCCG_Health-Check_Stakeholder-Briefing-Template_V1.0.pdf

Supporting material to assist you in briefing key stakeholders on the Health Check are:

- Phase 2 Stakeholder Briefing Sheet:
<http://emhealthcheck.com.au/wp-content/uploads/Briefing-Sheet-Implementing-an-Emergency-Management-for-local-government.pdf>
- Project Update for Workshop Participants:
http://emhealthcheck.com.au/wp-content/uploads/SCCG_Health-Check-Workshop-Participant-Update_December-2016.pdf
- Health Check Video Showcase:
https://youtu.be/hpT9I_vxHds

All these resources are also accessible via www.emhealthcheck.com.au

➤ **Develop your Stakeholder Engagement and Communication Plan**

We also recommend developing a simple Stakeholder Communication Plan in order to map out your strategy for engaging with the relevant internal or external parties.

The Communications Plan would include an indication of:

- The various stakeholder groups you have identified above;
- Key messages to each that will communicate what's in it for them, why it's important and what action is required of them;
- Methods of communication to each group eg. email, presentation, briefing document, meeting, workshop etc;
- Timing of communication eg. when does it need to happen by;
- Who will deliver the message eg. sponsor, facilitator or others.

➤ **Facilitate Meetings and Workshops**

In order to complete the Health Check you will require input from your various stakeholder groups. You may choose to gather their input in a number of ways:

- By sending them questions to review and complete that are relevant to them
- By meeting one-on-one to assist you in completing the relevant questions or sections
- By facilitating a workshop or series of workshops to enable group discussion on the questions and responses.

We would recommend ideally a blend of the above according to what will be appropriate for your council, your risk profile, size, complexity or internal culture.

Prior to undertaking any of these interactions you should develop a clear plan that includes consideration of the following for each meeting or workshop:

- a) Aim
- b) Objectives
- c) Key Messages
- d) Success Criteria
- e) Agenda or Flow
- f) Participants
- g) Duration
- h) Location
- i) Logistics

The aim of the meeting or workshops is to generate the discussion on emergency management, uncover potential discrepancies in thinking, seek alignment and ultimately provide the platform for completion of the Offline Health Check Questionnaire.

A copy of the Offline Health Check Questionnaire can be found at:

http://emhealthcheck.com.au/wp-content/uploads/SCCG_Offline-Health-Check-Questionnaire_V1.0.docx

➤ **Complete the Offline Health Check Questionnaire**

The Offline Health Check Questionnaire is a Word Document that allows users to review all the questions, response scales and best practice indicators prior to inputting into the Online Health Check Tool. Responses can be checked using check boxes and commentary on your response can be added in the 'comments' field.

A final review of the Offline Health Check Questionnaire can be made by the relevant stakeholders prior to proceeding with completion and submission of the Online Health Check.

STEP 3 - COMPLETION

STEP 3 – COMPLETION

➤ Login via the Health Check resource website

Once you have completed the Offline Health Check Questionnaire and had approval to proceed from key stakeholders you will be ready to enter and submit the Online Health Check.

To access the Online Health Check Tool please visit www.emhealthcheck.com.au. There are several ways to access the Login:

- Via the top right navigation bar
- Via the sub menu bar under the header image
- Via the link at the bottom of the homepage

You will need your Council ID Authenticator to login. If you have not yet requested it, please do so via info@emhealthcheck.com.au

➤ Enter your Council ID Authenticator

A landing page will present you with a text box for entering your Council ID Authenticator. Please enter this now to begin the Health Check.

➤ Review Introduction and enter names of contributors to your Health Check

At the beginning of the Online Health Check is a page for entering the names and roles of the stakeholder involved in responding to the Health Check questions. Please enter these now.

➤ Start the Online Health Check

Now you can begin to complete the Online Health Check using the left hand dropdown navigation or by scrolling page by page using the <BACK> and <SUBMIT> buttons.

Use the 'best practice indicators' and the 5-point response scale contained in this Guide and the Offline Health Check Questionnaire to assist with your responses.

Use the 'comments on your response' free text box if you wish to provide additional information, justification or further clarity on how or why you have chosen that response for each question.

➤ Complete and Submit the Health Check

Once you are comfortable you have fully completed the Health Check and are 100% happy with your responses, please go to the end of the Questionnaire, enter the email address you wish to send the Health Check Reports to and then click SUBMIT. If you do not complete the Health Check your responses will be saved and you can resume at another time.

➤ Receive report via email

The reports will be sent to the email address you elected above. If you do not receive them within 30 minutes of submission, please check your junk or spam folders. If you have still not received them please contact info@emhealthcheck.com.au for assistance.

STEP 4 - ACTION

STEP 4 – ACTION

➤ Review reports delivered by email

You will receive 2 reports via email to the nominated address:

1. A Health Check Summary Report
2. An Individual Detailed Report

The reports will be delivered via web links and can be downloaded in PDF.

The Summary Report can be requested in Word or PowerPoint format by contacting info@emhealthcheck.com.au

The Individual Detailed Report (or parts of it) can be cut and pasted into a word document to assist you in creating your own commentary or prioritised action plans.

➤ Interpret your results

Use the Readiness Metrics scale to assist you in understanding your results and what you can do to take action to improve your readiness and resilience.

Result	Readiness	Descriptor	What you can do
5	Highly Effective	Demonstrates best practice in capability and the capacity to sustain and continuously improve.	Congratulations! You have demonstrated your leadership in emergency management and should consider sharing your initiatives and experiences with other councils and regions to assist in helping local government areas improve readiness and build resilience.
4	Effective	Processes and procedures meet expectations and should continue to be regularly reviewed to maintain effective capability levels at all times.	You are clearly aware of the capability requirements for your council and should continue to identify and plan strategic emergency management initiatives that will further build and sustain your preparedness and capacity over the longer term.
3	Adequate	Isolated gaps in processes and procedures should be addressed to ensure a consistent, effective and coordinated approach.	While there is capability in place, more action is required to close the gaps and deliver improvements in the short to long term. More can be done to provide assurance of capability and capacity in emergency management.
2	Limited	Major gaps in capability may lead to financial or operational loss, safety or compliance breach or community, environmental or reputation impact.	Actions to improve capability and capacity are required and resources should be dedicated to improvements in these areas in the immediate to short term. A formal review of existing processes and plans in the short term would be recommended.
1	Poor	Capability is absent or not effective posing extreme risks. Potential for significant adverse financial, operational, safety, community, environmental or reputational impacts.	Immediate action, support and resources will be required to address the absence or ineffectiveness of existing capability. An immediate formal review of existing processes and plans would be recommended.

➤ Assessing and prioritising the areas for action

You may find your council has generated consistent results throughout the Health Check Reports – whether that be consistently low, consistently moderate or consistently high.

Or you may find there are wide variances in the results with a selection of the 15 areas competencies demonstrating strong capability while also exhibiting major gaps in other areas.

Regardless of which way your council has fared in the reports **we recommend focusing on 5 key priority areas for action initially**, based on your council's risk appetite, risk profile, available resources, funds and the ability to garner executive level support to the improvement program.

For example, you may choose to focus on:

1. How can we better integrate monitoring and managing our extreme emergency risks within our existing risk management framework or practices?
2. How can we use our existing internal auditing process to review and report on our emergency management capability and capacity?
3. How can we better share / leverage knowledge, communications and resources with other councils within our region to accelerate our readiness and resilience?
4. How can we better develop and support the council representatives with a role to play in emergency management in particular the Local Emergency Management Officer and their alternates?
5. How can we provide greater assurance of our capability through an annual schedule of joint training and exercising with the relevant emergency management stakeholders and critical suppliers?

These priorities can be further broken down into immediate (0-3 months), short term (3-6 months) and longer term (6-12 months) specific actions for improvement.

➤ Creating your Improvement Plan

To assist you in documenting your priorities and actions we have provided a simple Improvement Plan Template that you can replicate and customise for your council's improvement program.

The template example can be found at:

http://emhealthcheck.com.au/wp-content/uploads/SCCG_Health-Check_Improvement-Plan-Template_V1.0.pdf

➤ Develop your Executive Report

You may also wish to summarise the results of the Health Check and your priority recommendations for improvement for executive level review. To assist we have developed a simple example that again you can replicate and customise for your council's needs.

The template example can be found at:

http://emhealthcheck.com.au/wp-content/uploads/SCCG_Health-Check_Executive-Report-Template_V1.0.pdf

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The following are suggested actions for improving your readiness capability or capacity within the 15 key competency areas. These are by no means exhaustive but have been provided as a guide for prompting discussion, ideas and thinking within your council for how to take your emergency management preparedness to the next level.

PART A - MANAGING RISKS

1. Risk Management

- Councils should continually monitor and review their risk management strategies and practices ensuring consistent alignment with ISO 31000 and NERAG and application of best practice principles. Also ensuring that effective consultation is undertaken with the relevant Emergency Management stakeholders and the Community throughout the risk assessment and mitigation process.
- Local Emergency Management Committee(LEMC) to table as an agenda item or conduct workshops for the review and completion or update of local emergency risk assessments and emergency management plans.
- Ensure Emergency Risk Assessments are considered in all Risk Management, Emergency Management, Asset Management, Strategic, Land Use and Business Continuity planning across your council.
- Utilise subject matter experts to inform decisions within the planning framework including impacts of transport, climate, demography changes.
- Council to consider review of existing land use developments in high risk areas and ensure they incorporate provision for emergency management arrangements.
- Ensure as part of your internal audit and risk management process that local government area emergency hazards and risks that have the potential to significantly impact council responsibilities and/or operations are included within the Risk Register.
- Utilise environmental subject matter experts within and external of council within hazard emergency management planning.

2. Collaborating with Stakeholders to reduce Risks

- Provide support to agencies in the engagement of community stakeholders for identifying, evaluating, prioritising and managing hazards and risks in the local government area. For example, the provision of meeting venue, posting on information on council website, providing communication channels to residents and businesses.
- Leverage REMC meetings as a vehicle for collaboration and knowledge sharing across neighbouring LEMCs and councils. For example, each meeting provides an agenda item to share learnings/experiences including discussion of best practice in hazard and risk mitigation.
- Introduce incentive programs such as 'fire safe' gardens, 'storm safe' preparedness. Investigate options for grant funding to support such programs.

3. Considering Risks and Hazards in Land Use Planning

- Ensure all future land use planning processes incorporate consultation with emergency management subject matter experts.
- Review or undertake natural hazard assessments to ensure currency.

- Ensure all 149 certificates incorporate all known existing 149(2) and future hazards (149(5)).
- Avoid intensifying land use in hazard areas through appropriate strategic and land-use planning.
- Consider options to reduce land use intensity in hazard areas where feasible.
- Ensure future land use developments be required to incorporate assessed and documented emergency management arrangements.
- Council to provide links to current mapping and tools that identify specific emergency hazards within their local government area. For example:
 - saferhomes.nrma.com.au
 - http://www.pittwater.nsw.gov.au/property/natural_hazards
 - <http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/know-your-risk/Bush-fire-hazards-and-your-property>
 - <http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/building-in-a-bush-fire-area/planning-for-bush-fire-protection/bush-fire-prone-land/check-bfpl>

PART B - PLANNING FOR EMERGENCIES AND DISASTERS

4. Emergency Management Planning and Policy

- Ensure Local Government emergency management planning aligns with the principles of PPRR (Prevention, Planning, Response and Recovery).
- Review of the EMPlan in part or in full is a standing item on the LEMC meeting agenda or is conducting regular workshops to review and refine plan elements (e.g. Consequence Management Guides [CMGs])
- Identify members of the Executive team to champion, drive and provide oversight of Emergency Management Planning across council.
- Consideration for involving Elected Council in the oversight of emergency management capability via scheduled briefings on emerging risks, planning updates, outcomes of exercises and After Action Reviews.
- Consider establishing Memorandums Of Understanding (MOUs) / Mutual Aid Agreements (MAA) with neighbouring councils for the identification of emergency management resources (people and/or equipment) that may be shared in broad-scale local emergencies.

5. Emergency Management Roles and Responsibilities

- Emergency management roles and responsibilities to be included in staff induction programs, supported by an annual awareness program or session. Include emergency management updates in internal communications, newsletters etc.
- Ensure council staff with a role to play in Emergency Management have responsibilities and required competencies included in Role Cards or Position Descriptions.
- Ensure all council staff allocated Emergency Management roles have participated in relevant induction and training programs provided by NSW Office of Emergency Management or Emergency Service Organisations.

- Please refer to the resources section at www.emhealthcheck.com.au or www.emergency.nsw.gov.au for more information.
- Council to ensure it maintains a current register of all Emergency Management stakeholder contacts including but not limited to:
 - Within your council
 - Emergency Services
 - Regional command
 - Local Government within your region
 - Members of Parliament
 - Critical service providers (eg utilities)
 - Contractors
- Consider developing a ready reference tool (for example wallet or security card sized contact list) with emergency contacts that is carried at all times by council staff involved in emergency management.

6. The Role of the Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC)

- Consider the appointment of a Senior Manager at a minimum to Chair the LEMC. Ideally it would be the General Manager.
- Ensure emergency management responsibilities are included as a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for senior management within council. Where the LEMC Chair is not the General Manager, they will regularly meet with the General Manager and/or senior staff to provide briefings on LEMC reviews, actions and planning.
- Establish an agenda item for the next LEMC meeting to review and/or define the roles and responsibilities of the LEMC Chairperson. Once agreed, create a schedule for annual review of the document.
- The LEMC membership to meet at least 3 times per year (as mandated) and to consider convening at additional times as required - for example in the lead up to severe forecasted weather events or in light of other emerging threats that may impact the local government area.
- The LEMC Chair to ensure that meeting minutes are tabled for review at the next executive team meeting
- LEMC to coordinate the provision of assistance into the development of CMGs by all members of the LEMC.
- At a minimum ensure the Chair of the LEMC attends all REMC meetings. Consider additional council representation at these meetings by other senior staff with a role to play in building resilience – for example Risk Managers, Business Continuity Managers, Community Engagement Managers, Environment Managers etc.
- Through attendance at the REMC meetings, Local Government ensure the provision of recovery planning and resource requirements.

7. The Role of the Local Emergency Management Officer (LEMO)

- Council to create a formal document for the LEMO function with agreed performance indicators, competencies required, roles and accountabilities, training requirements and review schedule.
- Council to consult the REMO is the first instance and then the Office of Emergency Management for guidance on creating an induction program and relevant tools for the LEMO function.

- Council to identify suitable alternates to be trained and mentored to fulfill the function of the of LEMO during absences, vacancies or long duration emergency.
- Council to consider a longer term resource strategy for the function of the LEMO to ensure knowledge transfer and continuity of the role in the event of resignation, retirement or other unforeseen departure of the LEMO.
- General Manager and Senior Staff to ensure an Annual Review is conducted with both the LEMO and alternate LEMOs in order to:
 - identify training requirements for the next 12 months
 - provide a platform for discussion and feedback on the training conducted or the experience of actual events in the previous 12 months.
- General Manager and/or Senior Staff to conduct a review of the LEMO function to ensure appropriate funding, resources, training and allocation of time is commensurate with the requirements of their role and the risk profile of the local government area.

8. Identifying and Preparing Vulnerable Communities and Individuals

- Council to use Census data to develop profiles of its communities. Council to identify the key vulnerabilities of community groups and prioritise areas of need based on hazard mapping and other sources of information.
- Council to support agencies in their communications to households in high risk areas of the need to complete personal or home emergency plans. With particular reference to guidelines and templates that are available for the key risks in their area. Eg information from RFS and SES on Bushfire, flood, storm household and personal emergency planning.

9. Informing and Engaging the Community

- In collaboration with Agencies, council can consider a range of methods for engaging and communicating with the community either directly or via supporting the relevant agencies and community groups to communicate on risk, hazards and the need for self-reliance.
- Some strategies, activities and methods may include:
 - Websites with hazard information and links to agencies*
 - Early warning advisory services*
 - Constituent mail or email communications*
 - School/child care/aged care/hospital awareness programs*
 - Community events*
 - Collaboration with community groups*
 - Identification of Community Champions to reinforce EM messages*
 - Communication and collaboration with local businesses*
 - Provision of templates and guidelines for personal response plans*
 - Community Service Announcements in the media*
 - Volunteer Strategy*
 - Social media networks*
- Both LEMC and REMC to ensure that Hazard Risk Assessments consider vulnerable entities such animal welfare providers, health and medical authorities.

10. Considering Emergency Risks within Asset Management Programs

- Ensure an enterprise risk management approach is being applied across all business areas and that it informs emergency-related risks and impacts within Asset Management systems.

- Ensure Council has a process in place for identifying and assessing those assets within its control that are either most vulnerable to disruption or those that are most critical to its delivery of council services and obligations. These must then be prioritised for the development of comprehensive plans that are documented and tested to ensure council's ability to continue to meet its responsibilities and obligations with regards to these assets.
- Where mitigation infrastructure is already in place, ensure the requirements for maintaining the integrity of these structures is considered in council's Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) processes and documentation. This includes provision of resources and funding for maintenance programs in the Delivery Program and Operational Plan.
- Ensure mitigation infrastructure (such as flood levees) are identified as such in the asset management planning process, and related enhancements, maintenance and renewals are included in the Delivery Program and relevant Operational Plan.

11. Business Continuity Planning for Council and the Broader Community

- Ensure that in line with current local government requirements, Business Continuity Plans have been developed for the critical functions within your organisation.
- Better practice would see councils first undertake a Business Impact Analysis (BIA) to determine the key requirements (people, systems, data, processes, assets) needed to achieve Council's critical objectives. Relevant Business Continuity Plans would then be developed, tested and reviewed annually to ensure ongoing currency and effectiveness of the plans.
- Ensure council takes a holistic approach to building capability and that Business Continuity Planning considers the risks identified as part of risk management practices, that triggers and thresholds for activation are integrated with emergency management planning and that critical assets are prioritised for continuity and recovery arrangements.
- As part of the annual review of the Operational Plan, council to review and consider Emergency Management and Business Continuity impacts. Newly proclaimed councils to ensure that requirements for emergency management and business continuity are included in the development of their Community Strategic Plan.
- Council to incorporate providing evidence of Business Continuity capability in future tender applications for procurement of major suppliers for outsourced services to council. For example, IT core systems, waste and road repairs.

12. Maintaining Emergency Operations Centres (EOCs)

- Council to undertake a review of the operational functionality, resourcing and readiness of the nominated EOC.
- The LEMC Chair to determine a date within the LEMC annual meeting schedule to conduct an EOC readiness check to ensure all LEMC members are familiar and conversant with the operations of the centre

13. Resourcing for Recovery

- The LEMC to undertake a review of the Emergency Evacuation Centres to ensure these assets match the hazards and community requirements.
- Local Government, in partnership with existing volunteer organisations, to establish marketing campaigns and engagement forums which focus on their local communities and local needs.

- Local Government to ensure that contained within established volunteering strategies is the requirement for community members and businesses to understand and contribute to, local emergency management preparedness and planning.

PART C- BUILDING CAPABILITY TO RESPOND EFFECTIVELY

14. Emergency Management Training and Exercising to build Response Capability

- LEMC and council to consider collaboration on the development of a schedule of training and exercises to address a range of different emergency scenarios each year (relevant to the risk and hazard profile of the local to area) to identify interoperability and resource sharing opportunities.
- Consider building the requirements for emergency management training into the relevant position descriptions or Role Cards for staff with a role to play in emergency management.
- Options for training provided by the Office of Emergency Management include:

Online courses

- Emergency Management Overview
- Welfare Services Functional Area Overview

Class based courses

- Introduction to Emergency Management
 - Emergency Operations Centre Concepts
 - Emergency Operations Centre - Practical
 - Managing Emergencies
 - Design and Manage Exercises
 - Evacuation management
- Ensure all council staff with a role to play in the EOC are aware of and trained in the use of the EMOS.
 - The EMOS Quick Guide and information on OEM training is available via the resource links at www.emhealthcheck.com.au or visit emergency.nsw.gov.au.
 - Ensure at a minimum, there is an annual review of Business Continuity Plans across the critical functions within council. This may include a desktop walkthrough with relevant staff, a more detailed scenario-based exercise and/or the activation of BCPs as part of an integrated emergency management exercise.
 - Ensure at the completion of all reviews and exercises a formal report is produced that details observations, outcomes and recommendations for improvement in Business Continuity Planning. This report should be scheduled for review by the General Manager to determine priorities for action, resourcing and further monitoring of effectiveness.
 - General Manager or other Senior Staff to conduct a review of training and exercising requirements across emergency management and business continuity within your council to determine an appropriate level of funding is allocated on an annual basis to support this.

PART D - PROVIDING ASSURANCE OF CAPABILITY AND CAPACITY

15. Reviewing and Reporting to provide Assurance of Capability and Capacity

- Ensure the Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC) schedule an annual review of the:
 - Local Emergency Management Plan
 - LEMC membership
 - LEMC training requirements
 - LEMC resource requirements
- Ensure the General Manager is informed of the current status of capability and capacity through regular briefings throughout the year.
- Incorporate review of emergency management and business continuity capability into the existing internal audit procedures.
- Local government to ensure provision of senior representation to participate within, and contribute to, all formal multi agency After Action Reviews at the conclusion of declared emergency events.
- Council to provide resources and budget for the actioning and implementation of lessons learned derived from After Action Reviews to inform LEMC planning, training and exercising capability.
- Incorporate emergency management objectives into the Community Strategic Plan. Include emergency management actions in the Operational Plan. Establish KPI's for reporting on emergency management action outcomes through the Annual Report.
- Establish a method of recording and reporting on emergency and incident response/recovery costs. Set up cost centres to assist with recording and reporting on cost data.
- An LGA Costs Spreadsheet has been developed by Risk Frontiers in collaboration with Sydney Coastal Councils Group – for information on this tool please contact info@emhealthcheck.com.au

FOR ANY FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

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