

Emergencies and coronavirus (COVID-19)

Travel exemption scheme for bushfire preparation

From Wednesday 6 October 2021, Victorians who need to travel to carry out summer fire preparation activities can apply to their local council for an exemption to current travel restrictions. If the exemption is approved, property owners or their nominated representatives may be able to travel to complete preparation activities from Monday 11 October 2021, subject to the conditions of their exemption permit. We ask for your patience as we expect councils will receive a significant number of applications and it may take time to process each request.

Permit holders will be able to travel for a specified period of up to 72 hours to carry out preparation works.

Property owners can apply for a permit through the local council where their secondary property is located.

Eligibility is based on a range of factors including the location of the property, the area's Bushfire Management Overlay, the works to be undertaken, and the period of requested travel.

Summer fire preparation

- Throughout the fire danger period, Victorians who own properties in bushfire prone areas are encouraged - and in some instances required - to undertake fire preparation. Activities include cutting grass, clearing gutters, removing growth from around dwellings and generally removing bushfire fuel from the property, to reduce the risks of bushfire.
- This year, due to COVID-19 restrictions across Victoria, emergency preparation activities will be different for residents in metropolitan Melbourne or restricted areas who own properties in regional Victoria. While it is important for owners to prepare their properties for the summer season, it is also vital that they don't risk further spread of COVID-19 to regional communities.
- From 6 October 2021, property owners can apply to the local council for permission to travel for fire or emergency preparation activities on a property which they own but would not otherwise be authorised to travel to under COVID-19 restrictions.
- The time property owners can take to complete bushfire preparation works will be limited to up to 72 hours. This includes travel time. The permit provided by local council will specify all conditions of travel.
- Ensure you have a fire preparedness plan in place before the summer fire season and complete your emergency preparation activities as soon as feasible.

Residents of metropolitan Melbourne and restricted areas

- Residents of metropolitan Melbourne and restricted area residents are strongly encouraged to use local contractors to undertake work where possible.
- If you live in metropolitan Melbourne or a restricted area and own property in regional Victoria, you can only travel to that property if the council has issued you with a permit or a Fire Prevention Notice requiring you to undertake fire preparation work at your property.
- If you live in metropolitan Melbourne or a restricted area you cannot travel to or within regional Victoria to help family members or friends prepare their property, unless you provide care or support to the person because they have needs including age, infirmity, disability, illness, chronic health condition or matters relating to health.
- People travelling from metropolitan Melbourne or restricted areas to regional Victoria to undertake emergency preparation must comply with the restrictions that apply in metropolitan Melbourne or their restricted area even when they are in regional Victoria.

Residents of regional Victoria in unrestricted areas

- If you live in regional Victoria and are not in a restricted area, you can travel to a second property, holiday home or business to prepare it for an emergency without restrictions, if it is also in regional Victoria and also not in a restricted area.
- If you live in regional Victoria, and are not in a restricted area, you can travel to help your family members or friends prepare their property if it is also in regional Victoria and not in a restricted area. You should keep 1.5 metres distance from them, wear a face mask and comply with local restrictions.
- Regional Victorian residents travelling from one regional location to another must be aware of and comply with local restrictions.

Preparing for emergencies

Can I travel to prepare my property for fires?

If you live in regional Victoria and are not in a restricted area, you can travel to a second property, holiday home or business in regional Victoria if it is not in a Restricted Area, to prepare it for an emergency. You must comply with local restrictions.

If you live in metropolitan Melbourne or a Restricted Area and own property in regional Victoria, you can only travel to that property if the council has issued you with a permit or a Fire Prevention Notice requiring you to undertake fire preparedness work at your property.

If you live in metropolitan Melbourne or a Restricted Area, you should consider travel to your second property for emergency preparation as a last resort. You are strongly encouraged to use local contractors and businesses to prepare your second property.

If you are unable to use contractors, you can only travel to your regional property to prepare it for an emergency if the council has issued a permit, or a Fire Prevention Notice legally requiring you to undertake fire preparedness activities.

All restrictions travel with you, whether you live in metropolitan Melbourne or a regional area with restrictions. You must also comply with any additional restrictions your local council places on your permit.

Can I apply for a permit to travel to prepare my property for floods, storms, or other emergencies?

No. The permit scheme is limited to preparations for the summer Fire Danger Period.

If preparation works for any type of emergency are urgent and essential, property owners or occupiers may travel to carry out that activity. When you leave home, you must wear a face mask unless you have a lawful exception for not doing so, and observe all other COVIDSafe requirements including gathering limits, physical distancing and good hygiene.

If you need to undertake urgent and essential emergency preparation, all restrictions travel with you. This means that if you live in metropolitan Melbourne and your property is in regional Victoria then the restrictions applying to metropolitan Melbourne travel with you. This also applies if you are subject to local restrictions in regional Victoria and travelling to a different part of regional Victoria.

I have been issued with a Fire Prevention Notice. Can I travel to my property?

Yes.

You should visit your property to undertake the necessary work to respond to the Fire Prevention Notice. You should only leave your property to remove waste or collect pre-purchased materials. Removing waste includes depositing debris at a landfill site, or a waste transfer station or recycling centre.

When you leave home, you must wear a face mask unless you have a lawful exception for not doing so, and observe all other COVIDSafe requirements including gathering limits, physical distancing and good hygiene.

Do I need any evidence to show police I am travelling to my property to prepare it for emergencies?

Yes. If you are travelling outside a Restricted Area, you will need to show the Fire Prevention Notice or permit (hardcopy or electronic) you received from the local council where your property is located, as evidence of your reason for travel.

Can I buy or borrow equipment to clean up my property?

If you live in an Unrestricted Area, you can buy or borrow equipment. Keep a distance of 1.5 metres from others, wear a face mask and practise good hygiene, including washing your hands regularly.

If you live in a Restricted Area, you should buy or rent equipment online and have it delivered, or use contactless 'click and collect'. Wash or sanitise your hands before and after picking up your items. Do not travel any further than you need to.

If you live in metropolitan Melbourne or a regional area with restrictions, those restrictions travel with you to your second property.

My parents live in regional Victoria. Can I travel to help them prepare their property for emergencies?

If you live in metropolitan Melbourne or another Restricted Area, you cannot travel to regional Victoria to help family or friends prepare their property, unless you provide care or support to them because they have particular needs including age, infirmity, disability, illness, chronic health condition or matters relating to health.

When you are doing essential emergency preparation work, you should be mindful of the risks of transmitting COVID-19 to elderly people. Older people are especially vulnerable to COVID-19. Keep a distance of at least 1.5 metres between yourself and your parents and wear a face mask. You should not hug or kiss them.

If you live in regional Victoria and not in a Restricted Area, you can travel to help family or friends prepare their property if it is also in regional Victoria, and not in a Restricted Area. Keep 1.5 metres distance, wear a face mask while you assist them, and comply with social gathering limits.

If you live in regional Victoria you cannot travel to help family members or friends prepare their property if it is in metropolitan Melbourne or a Restricted Area, unless you provide care or support to them because they have particular needs including age, infirmity, disability, illness, chronic health condition or matters relating to health.

Can I travel to a tip, landfill site, recycling centre, or Waste Transfer Station to deposit debris or waste as part of preparing my property?

Yes, if you live in a Restricted Area or your property is a Restricted Area then landfills and waste transfer sites are permitted to open to residential customers for disposing of bushfire preparation materials.

Check your local council website to find out if local waste management sites are open for the purposes of preparing properties for an emergency.

To find your local council visit the [Know Your Council website](#).

Can I take friends to help me prepare my property for emergencies?

No. if you live in a Restricted Area you may only nominate members of your immediate family or household to assist you. When you apply to the local council, you may nominate members of your household (provided you are permitted to gather with them under the restrictions) to help you prepare your property for emergencies. If your travel is approved by the local council, the letter of support issued will provide details of the household or immediate family members you have nominated to assist you in preparing your property for emergencies. Anyone travelling with you must be from your household and you must have provided their names and details to the local council when you applied for travel.

Can I take my children with me to our regional property?

If you live in a Restricted Area, children may travel with you while you prepare your property for emergencies if necessary. The letter of support issued by your local council will specify the names and ages of the children you have nominated to accompany you.

Can I stay at my regional property once I have finished preparing it for emergencies?

No. If you reside in a Restricted Area, your permit from local council will specify a timeframe in which the works must be completed (generally 72 hours) and you must return to your primary place of residence within this timeframe.

If you do not complete the required works within the specified timeframe, you are required to return to your primary place of residence and reapply for a second permit.

I have more than one property within regional Victoria, can I travel from one property to another?

If you live in a Restricted Area, you can apply for a permit to travel to each of your properties to conduct emergency preparations or repairs. If you have properties in different local government areas, you will need to apply to both of these local councils.

There is no house on my property, can I still apply? Where do I stay?

Yes. You can apply for a permit even if the property does not have a house. Current restrictions allow for residents of Restricted Areas to book accommodation Victoria if absolutely necessary. Wherever possible you should not stay in accommodation, and if necessary, stay for as short a duration as possible.

My property is occupied (renters or other people) can I still apply?

A property owner may attend their property to undertake critical emergency preparation activities if approved by council, even if it is occupied, where this also meets the requirements of

the rental agreement. While undertaking the work, the property owner must keep 1.5 metres distance from any occupant of the property and wear a face mask. In these circumstances property owners are encouraged to consider the use of contractors, local businesses or their tenants to undertake necessary preparation work.

Can I travel for supplies in regional Victoria (for example, tools)?

When traveling with this permit, you must comply with the restrictions of the local government area that you reside in., This means you will not be able to visit local businesses to purchase supplies. You should try and travel with the tools and equipment you will require.

If you absolutely must obtain equipment while visiting an Unrestricted Area, you should buy or rent equipment online and have it delivered or use 'click and collect'. Pick up should be contactless. Keep 1.5 metres away from others and arrange payment before pick up. Wash or sanitise your hands before and after picking up your items. Do not travel any further than you need to.

How many contractors can be onsite at any one time?

Details regarding maintenance and repair activities and the restrictions that apply are available at [Homes and Property](#).

Where can I find more information/How do I apply for a permit?

You need to contact the local council in which you have a property requiring preparation for an application form. You can find the details of your relevant local council at [know your council](#).

What if my property is not within a local government area because it is in an Alpine resort or unincorporated area?

If you are required to prepare a property in an Alpine Resort on Crown public lands, please contact the relevant Alpine Resort Management Board for an application form.

If your property is on Flinders Island, Elizabeth Island or Sandstone Island, please contact the DELWP Customer Service Centre.

During an emergency

What to do in an emergency

- You can leave your home during an emergency or if your safety is at risk.
- You can leave your home to travel to a safer location, such as a hotel or with friends or family, ahead of an emergency.

- If a fire, flood, storm, power outage or other emergency impacts your health or safety, or the health or safety of someone you live with, you can travel to other accommodation or a friend or family member's house.
- If you need power for life support or a ventilator, you can travel to accommodation or a friend or family member's house who has power.
- If you have been impacted by an emergency and need relief support, contact your local council and they will help you.
- If you live in a Restricted Area you can travel to your second property, holiday home or business to repair damage caused by an emergency once it is safe. You should carry evidence of property ownership with you, and evidence of damage (i.e., photos, insurance claim etc), if available.

Can I leave my home during an emergency?

Yes. You can leave your home in an emergency if your health and safety, or the health or safety of someone you live with is at risk. You can travel to a friend or family member's house. When leaving home during an emergency there are no limits on how far you can travel, and curfew doesn't apply.

You can leave your home to seek medical care.

When leaving your house, wear a face mask and keep 1.5 metres between you and other people.

Explain your situation if you are stopped by Victoria Police.

In a life-threatening emergency, call Triple Zero (000).

Emergency services have advised me to leave early. Can I travel to a safer location?

Yes, if you receive a warning to leave early, or you plan to leave early based on the forecast or fire danger rating, you can leave home to travel to a safer location. A safer location can be accommodation like a hotel or a friend or family member's house. When leaving home to travel to a safer location there are no limits on how far you can travel.

When leaving your house, wear a face mask and keep 1.5 metres between you and other people.

My power is out due to an emergency. Can I leave home to stay with friends or family?

If a power outage impacts your health or safety, or the health or safety of someone you live with, you can travel to accommodation like a hotel or a friend or family member's house. If you

require power for life support or a ventilator you can travel to a friend or family member's house who has power.

[Check your electricity distributor's website](#) to get an estimated time until power is restored.

The Victorian Department of Health (DH) and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) works with energy providers to check on customers who are dependent on power.

If you need to stay with friends or family, you must wear a face mask while in shared areas and when you leave the house. Wash your hands often and keep 1.5 metres between you and other people wherever possible.

My property is not safe and I'm isolating because I have COVID-19 or I am close contact. What should I do?

You can leave home if your safety is at risk. Contact Victoria's Department of Health (DH) and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) for advice using the number you have been provided with when you were first contacted. If you have already left your home or it is not safe to stay at home, contact DH or DFFH as soon as possible.

When leaving your house wear a face mask and keep 1.5 metres between you and other people.

After emergencies

My property has been damaged by an emergency. Can I travel to it?

Yes, you can travel to your second property, holiday home or business to repair damage caused by an emergency.

Carry evidence of property ownership and of damage (such as photos or insurance claim).

Ensure that your stay at your property is limited to doing the emergency repairs. Remain at your property unless you need to leave it to remove waste or collect pre-purchased materials.

Can I travel to check whether my property has been damaged by an emergency?

You can travel to check your property or business, but it is recommended that you first request your neighbours or friends to check on your property to advise you of any damage.

You can travel to repair damage caused by an emergency to your property or business. Carry with you evidence of property ownership and of damage (such as photos or an insurance claim).

My home has been impacted by an emergency. Can I get a tradesperson for repairs?

Yes, a tradesperson can visit for emergency repairs from a fire, flood, storm or other emergency.

The service provider must wear a face mask, unless an exception applies. Keep their time in your home to a minimum.

Where possible:

- remove yourself from the room where the service provider is working.
- maintain a physical distance of 1.5 metres between you and the service provider.
- minimise physical contact by paying with a direct bank transfer or contactless payment.

Am I allowed to leave home to buy tools or materials to fix damage to my house from an emergency? Can it be further than travel restrictions?

Yes, you can leave home to buy tools or materials to fix damage caused by an emergency.

If you live in regional Victoria, you can buy or borrow equipment. While shopping or borrowing equipment wear a face mask, keep at least 1.5 metres between yourself and others and practise good hygiene, including washing your hands regularly.

If you live in a Restricted Area, buy or rent equipment online and have it delivered or use 'click and collect'. Pick up should be contactless. Keep 1.5 metres from others and arrange payment before pick up. Wear a face mask and wash or sanitise your hands before and after picking up your item. You can travel to your closest hardware shop or provider, even if it is beyond current travel restrictions.

My home has been impacted by an emergency. Am I allowed to stay in other accommodation until it is fixed? Am I allowed to stay with family?

Hotels, caravan parks and other accommodation services remain open to accommodate people who cannot stay in their own homes - this includes homes damaged by fire, floods, storms or other emergencies.

You may stay with family members if staying in your own home is a risk to your safety but to reduce the risk of COVID-19 it is not recommended.

What is considered an 'emergency repair' for a tradesperson to visit?

Emergency repairs are urgent repairs that must be done to:

- keep members of the household or the community safe
- prevent members of the household or community from injury

- prevent property damage or damage to goods or to fix an essential service (for example fixing a roof or restoring an electricity connection)

If a tradesperson visits your home, where possible:

- remove yourself from the room where the service provider is working
- ensure physical distancing by keeping 1.5 metres between you and the service provider
- minimise physical contact by paying with a direct bank transfer or contactless payment

I'm an emergency service worker or volunteer. Can I travel beyond the current restrictions to respond to an emergency?

Yes. Emergency services, including bushfire prevention and management and emergency relief services are essential services, so you can leave your home and travel further than current travel restrictions allow to do this work.

If you are a volunteer at an organisation listed as an authorised service that is exempt from carrying a permit, you do not require a permit but should carry your organisation's identification with you.

You must wear a face mask when you leave home and follow your organisation's guidance around different face coverings, masks or PPE required for different emergency responses.

Can I travel to the tip to deposit debris as part of cleaning-up after an emergency or storm?

Check your local council website or call your local council to find out what arrangements are in place to support local residents in the clean-up effort. Your council can tell you if local tips are open for emergency clean-up following the emergency or storm.

To find your local council visit the [Know Your Council](#) website.

Can I travel to look for a missing pet?

If you have lost a pet, first call your council or local shelter to check if they have found your pet and follow their instructions to arrange for its return.

If you live in metropolitan Melbourne or other Restricted Areas and your pet is not at your council or shelter you may leave home to look for your pet, but minimise the time spent away from your home. You must wear a face mask outside your home and keep at least 1.5 metres between yourself and others at all times.

I am not an authorised worker but can no longer work at home due to storm damage or power outages. Can I travel to my office or worksite to work?

No. In metropolitan Melbourne, only authorised workers may attend work on-site. You can travel to work to collect essential equipment or supplies if they are necessary for working from home and have been damaged by a fire, flood, storm or other emergency.

If your home is unsafe and you need to relocate for health and safety reasons, you can go to friend or family member's home, or emergency accommodation.

I'm not an authorised worker but cannot work at home due to storm damage or a power outage. Can I travel to and work from a friend or family's house?

If you have moved to temporary accommodation you should work from that location.

You can travel to work from a friend or family member's house if your home has no power.

I'm preparing my emergency kit. Is there anything additional I should add because of COVID-19?

When preparing your emergency kit, you should pack medications and prescriptions, and medical devices such as your glasses or hearing aids. You should also include face masks and hand sanitiser.