

Community-led Resilience Teams.

A guide for establishing and developing Community-led
Resilience Teams in local communities





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The Australian Red Cross Community-led Resilience Team project won the NSW Resilient Australia Community Award in 2020.

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The Australian Red Cross Disaster Resilience Program

Working alongside communities to strengthen resilience and prepare for disasters.

- Disasters are becoming more frequent and complex, with communities often impacted by overlapping events, such as drought, flood, bushfires and pandemic. Australian Red Cross has been involved in responding to disasters across every State and Territory for more than 100 years. In that time, we've seen the importance of community; it's neighbours, passersby and loved ones who are often there to provide support and help first, and in the long-term.
- The Australian Red Cross Disaster Resilience Program provides targeted support to individuals, households and communities before a disaster to ensure they are informed, resilient and have capacity to anticipate, respond to and recover from disasters. The program also works at a sector level to increase understanding of humanitarian and psychosocial needs of people affected by disasters.
- Our approach is evidence-based and informed by our network of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies around the globe, as well as our local experience working with communities impacted by disasters.
- Depending on the needs of each community, the program works at three different levels:
- Individual, household and targeted groups.
- Australian Red Cross focuses on practical, psychological, and social actions people can take to prepare themselves for the impacts of disasters. These actions include acquiring knowledge about their threat environment; building their skills and capacity to take care

of themselves and others, both psychologically and practically; and increasing their social connections within their communities.

- Red Cross has a suite of resources and activities for individuals and households, such as RediPlan and Pillowcase workshops, community events, preparedness resources and our annual preparedness campaign.

Community

Australian Red Cross focuses on enhancing existing community capacity and capability, through a community-led process to connect and work together to develop locally appropriate activities to strengthen resilience. Red Cross provides support, facilitates RediCommunities workshops and links community members with specialist services, guidance and other communities undertaking similar work.

We recognise that every community is unique, so our approach is flexible and responsive to community needs and priorities as they emerge. Red Cross has a suite of workshops, training and activities that may be requested as part of our community level work, such as Psychological First Aid, Communicating in Recovery and Community-led Resilience Teams.

Sector

Australian Red Cross facilitates capacity-building training with community groups, and staff of local government, organisations and businesses.

Australian Red Cross contributes to influencing, advocating, advising, and educating the emergency services, government, and community sector at local, state and national levels, about the impacts of disasters and community disaster resilience.

Introduction

05

Emergency events are becoming commonplace in Australia and, due to our changing climate, events are becoming more widespread and more extreme.

The impacts of disasters are complex and can disrupt people's hopes, aspirations and lives for years. With a changing climate, increasing disadvantage and shifting settlement patterns (including greater urbanisation and more tree/sea change living), more people and property will be exposed to the hazards of disasters. Regional areas have endured the brunt of disaster events in recent years with limited resources and personnel to manage emergencies and support recovery. It is timely for communities to draw upon their significant capacities to work together to prepare and support each other before, during and after emergency events.

Recent global trends within emergency management have seen a shift towards a sharing of responsibility between various levels of government, emergency agencies, community services and communities themselves. With disasters being more widespread and intense, and official resources limited, emergency agencies have neither the capacity nor the volunteer base to support all affected communities during an event, particularly in remote locations. Communities are increasingly taking on a level of responsibility for their own emergency preparedness, response and recovery from disasters. This has a range of social and environmental benefits.

Local communities know their history, risks, people, resources, capacities and geographical location better than anyone from outside the community. With advice and support from emergency management agencies such as Red Cross, State Emergency Services (SES), and Rural Fire Services (RFS), as well as Local Emergency Management Officers at local councils, communities can improve their preparedness and resilience for disaster events. Community-led Resilience Teams (CRTs) provide a way for community members to support each other and improve their capacity for disaster resilience.

This guide is designed to assist community members and Red Cross volunteers working with communities to establish and develop their own CRTs.

The guide provides advice for engaging community members, emergency and recovery agencies, and other community stakeholders. It explains the simple steps required to establish and develop a CRT and provides practical examples of how the model has worked in Northern NSW. Australian Red Cross is working in partnership with RFS and SES, as well as local councils, to encourage a flexible community-led approach to disaster resilience.

Module 1

What is a Community-led Resilience Team?

CRTs grew out of disaster recovery work in the Tweed area in Northern NSW after widespread flooding from Tropical Cyclone Debbie in 2017. Local Red Cross Emergency Services volunteers undertook outreach in impacted areas and heard community needs. Volunteers networked with community leaders and held community meetings alongside SES, RFS and local council staff to establish CRTs within several villages in the Tweed Shire. While the model initially focused on floods, it quickly expanded to an “all hazards” model which has been successful in recent fires, floods, and pandemic.

A CRT is led by residents for residents, like a communication tree within your community with a focus on providing emergency preparedness information. A CRT network links to emergency services agencies and can support joint preparedness, raise awareness of local disaster risks, and combine resources to improve the resilience of individuals, families and the community as a whole. CRTs operate on a voluntary opt-in arrangement in a context best suited to each community. They provide a way to make best use of everyone’s knowledge, resources and relationships.

CRTs are formed by residents of a community

– whether a village, a group of streets, a neighbourhood or a network of local landholders. Communities may also be based around specific groups of people (rather than geography); for example, a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse network in a particular area, or a group of people who communicate in Auslan. Overall coordination generally consists of a Team Leader, a Deputy Team Leader, Street/Suburb/Area Coordinators, and resident members.

This is the basic concept, but it is up to communities to choose a model that suits them best. The CRT can use phone, social media, community groups or neighbour networks on the ground as a ‘communication tree’ to distribute relevant emergency information to members and safely gather essential local information for emergency and recovery agencies. Communities’ existing strengths, resources and shared risks (by virtue of the landscape they live in) during emergencies will help determine which model will suit them best. The model can be fine-tuned over time as experiences change and residents come and go.

The CRT Network



Module 2

07

The benefits of a local Community-led Resilience Team

There are many benefits to setting up a CRT:

- A CRT can bring a community together before, during and after a disaster event.
 - Community members can work together to prepare for future disasters – whether fire, flood, storm or pandemic – before an emergency happens, with support and advice from emergency services agencies and local council.
 - CRT members will know how to access reliable and accurate information about emergencies and recovery, and how to contact relevant agencies before, during and after an emergency event.
 - The CRT may have a direct link to relevant emergency services in their location. The emergency services can provide the CRT with updated emergency information for distribution, and local knowledge can be shared with emergency services.
 - Raising awareness of disaster events and risks will improve local resilience and response to emergencies and enhance recovery outcomes within the community.
 - CRTs may be able to support vulnerable people within the community and notify emergency services of special needs before or during an event.
 - During a disaster, the community will be able to react in a coordinated manner, effectively and more confidently following a shared plan and course of action.
 - The CRT may have a list of local people with specific qualifications or skills to assist in emergency situations (for example those accredited with earth-moving or tree-felling capabilities).
 - The CRT may also create a stocktake of where various resources are located within the community, such as machinery, water pumps and generators.
- Community meetings can be organised with emergency and recovery services to share and clarify emergency preparedness and disaster recovery information.
 - The CRT can represent their community following an emergency event to ensure local community concerns and needs are considered by relevant disaster recovery agencies.

“Our CRT has brought our community together, people who were once disconnected have now connected with the community.”

CRT Member, NSW



Credit: Australian Red Cross/Sharen Scott



CASE STUDY

Chillingham

Chillingham is a small village in the Tweed Valley of Northern NSW, approximately 14km north-west of Murwillumbah. In recent years, it has been affected by both flooding and bushfire.

In 2019, Red Cross volunteers started to engage with residents of Chillingham to gauge interest in a Community-led Resilience Team (CRT). Volunteers talked to local residents in the village, handed out flyers and had conversations with local businesses, schools, emergency services and the local Community Association. They obtained large village maps from council which allowed for practical landscape discussions with local community members. They organised meetings bringing together community members and RFS to discuss bushfire risks; and SES to discuss flood. Some of these meetings were challenging as there was still a level of fear and anger about previous disaster experiences. By the time the 'whole of community' meeting came around, the local village hall was overflowing, with the doors thrown open so people outside could hear.

A CRT was formed and Red Cross volunteers continued to support local leaders with information and resources as they began to form their local networks and 'communication trees', and came together to prepare.

In 2019, as bushfires approached, the CRT was activated to give people advance notice of how to get their households ready: how to pack their cars; prepare for family and pets' evacuations; how to leave their properties prepared for fire crews; and where to go when evacuated. The community had an advanced plan to evacuate vulnerable and medically at-risk residents first. This meant that both community members and emergency



Credit: Australian Red Cross / Sharen Scott

services responding could communicate more easily and effectively during the event, with everyone feeling relatively more in control.

Red Cross has had great feedback from individual community members, emergency services and local council partners, as well as CRT leaders in Chillingham. Community members have reported feeling more confident, better connected to information and local emergency services contacts, and have pointed to numerous additional local benefits. For example, the Chillingham CRT has continued to strengthen its relationship with local emergency services, raising funds to purchase personal protective equipment (PPE) and a defibrillator which will be available at the local General Store.

"I feel better able to make a decision when an Emergency happens."

CRT Member, NSW

Module 3

09

Where to Begin – Seven Easy Steps



Credit: Australian Red Cross/Rodney Dekker.

1. KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY

Community-led disaster readiness works best when it involves as many different community members as possible. There are probably local groups, progress associations, business networks and school communities that can be easily identified who might like to be involved. Many of these organisations already support and bring the community together in different ways. However, it is important to also consider people who might not be so socially connected; and also to find ways to identify, include and support new residents over time.

The diverse communities who have taken up the CRT model in Northern NSW include long term residents of many generations, tree-changers, sea-changers, members of diverse spiritual communities, residents of Multiple Occupancies, older people and residents with disabilities or who are medically at-risk. The model has been tested and has worked in a number of different emergency scenarios in a variety of different communities. It works because, at its core, it is community-led.

There are many different ways to get to know your community; and each community will have its own way of putting the pieces together to build its CRT.

TIPS: Getting to Know Your Community

- Research your community and start to build a community profile (see Appendix 4) or a Town/Village Study (Appendix 9) – for example, the ABS Census Quickstats is a great place to look at local statistics and gather information on population, age and disability profiles, employment status, and languages spoken in the community.¹
- Start to map out the areas you think a CRT could cover – considering natural boundaries, roads and localities, and what you know of previous disaster experiences (e.g. roads that were cut off or areas where telecommunications went down) – and think about the groups and individuals living in those areas who might like to be involved. Your plans will likely change over time as more input is gathered, but start to map the ground.

¹ <https://www.abs.gov.au/websitedbs/D3310114.nsf/Home/2016%20QuickStats>

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- Consider whether it is a good time to start a community conversation, being sensitive to people’s current experiences if an emergency has recently occurred, and whether there might still be some anger or blame to work through. There are impartial groups like Red Cross and others with disaster recovery experience who might be able to help ease these initial conversations.
 - Identify existing community engagement networks and community leaders:
 - Residents associations, ratepayers associations, progress associations, hall committees
 - Community groups, neighbourhood centres, arts, community and sporting organisations
 - Rotary Clubs, Lions Clubs, Men’s Sheds and Country Women’s Association (CWA)
 - Aboriginal community organisations and Land Councils
 - School and early learning communities
 - Faith-based and spiritual communities
 - Primary health providers, including GPs and Community Nurses
 - Multiple Occupancies
 - Local businesses and business chambers, real estate agents, rural buyers and stock and station agents, café/pub owners, post office, supermarket, chemists
 - Landcare groups, farmers markets and cooperatives, makers and growers networks
 - Local library services
 - Caravan parks and tourist accommodation
 - Homelessness support organisations
 - Community social media pages and groups
 - Local festivals or events
 - Other informal leaders and long term residents
 - Do some research on recent disaster events locally to understand what happened on the ground. Identify areas most at risk of flood, fire or vulnerable to other disasters. Start to build a picture of which areas were cut-off or had limited access. If you don’t know, don’t worry – emergency services agencies and local councils can help with this once they come on board.
 - Think about seasonal changes and what happens in your community over the course of the year – for example, whether the community has caravan parks, if it welcomes a lot of tourists at particular times of year, if there are seasonal fruit pickers, or students or schoolies. Your plan might need to consider groups who aren’t necessarily “full time” residents.
 - Consider using the Town / Village Study template or the Community Profile Template in the “Resources” section at the back of this handbook. For more ideas, check out the Red Cross Community Assessment and Engagement Tool, RediCommunities Guide and Toolkit, or Climate-Ready Communities Guide.²

“CRTs have shown how we can all help each other.”

CRT Member, NSW

2. KNOW YOUR NETWORKS

Once an initial picture has been formed of who's who and high level risks and opportunities have been identified, it's time to start conversations to build interest in local disaster preparedness. The best way to do this is to use existing networks. There will be many formal and informal networks in your community – start with the ones you know, and more will become visible as discussions progress. With each conversation, more people will want to get involved.

TIPS: Getting to Know Local Networks

- There are emergency services networks in your area that will be keen to support you with expert advice, information and resources.
 - Red Cross has a network of Emergency Services staff and volunteers across the regions and in every state and territory who support communities with "all hazards" emergency preparedness and recovery. Local volunteers can support you with information and resources and help you connect with local emergency services organisations.
 - SES and RFS (and their equivalents in different states and territories) also have Emergency Services staff and volunteers in regional areas across Australia. They would be happy to support you with community-led preparedness and expert advice on what happened in your area in previous disasters, as well as to assist you to assess future risks. Just contact your local units or control centres, or ask your local council for help if you're not sure who to contact.
 - Your Local Emergency Management Committee, which includes local and state government agencies, emergency services and disaster welfare support agencies like Red Cross and St John's, may also be interested in your community's plans. The Committee plans for and responds to local emergency events. The point of contact is the Local Emergency Management Officer at your local council.

- Many local councils that have been impacted by recent disaster events are now also establishing Community Resilience Networks. These are wide networks of community services agencies that bring together council, emergency services agencies and community organisations. You can find out more about these groups from your local council.
- There are also community networks that may be able to help spread the message, such as schools or local health networks. Consider things like:
 - Letterbox drops
 - Pinning up flyers on community noticeboards at general stores, post offices and libraries (ask permission first)
 - Online networks – social media community boards; buy, swap and sell groups; and other similar groups.

"[The CRT] has really brought our Community together."

CRT Member, NSW

"We can use our CRT in so many ways, especially to keep the vulnerable safe."

CRT Member, NSW



3. START TO FIND YOUR PEOPLE

Start to put your research into action – make up a flyer that you can hand out to start local conversations.

TIPS: Starting conversations

- Connect with some of the community leaders and groups you have identified as part of your research – find out when they meet, and see if you can go along to a meeting to talk about the idea of a CRT. The more people spreading the word, the easier it will be.
- Hand out your flyers and talk to people about whether they'd like to be part of a local disaster preparedness team – start a contact list of interested people and identify people who might like to help you organise a team.
- Attend local markets or community events and talk to people about getting ready for disasters and their experiences of recent emergency events. Local Red Cross, SES or RFS volunteers (or their equivalents in other states and territories) would be happy to join you by setting up a stall with preparedness advice, local contacts and information.
- Stop by local businesses and talk to owners about getting ready for disasters and their experiences of recent events.
- Put up a notice on your local community online noticeboards and other social media groups – start a conversation and see who might be interested in helping you get a local disaster-ready team together.
- Connect with local newspapers and radio stations to spread the word. Put together a short media release with some clear statements on what you are trying to achieve and why, who is involved, and how people can get in contact for more information.³
- Don't forget: there could be some anger, frustration and anxiety still evident in your community, especially if you have recently been impacted by a disaster event. Be sensitive to people's emotions and aim to work towards a sense of hope and common purpose in planning for the future. If you need any help, Red Cross volunteers are trained in Psychological First Aid and will be happy to advise and support you in facilitating these conversations.

4. ORGANISE YOUR FIRST WORKING GROUP MEETING

By now you have had a lot of local conversations, and hopefully have found a few people who are interested in and supportive of your idea, and who can help you get a CRT up and running. The next step is to bring these people together so you can start to plan your wider community approach.

TIPS: Getting a Working Group Together

- Using your contact list, find a time and a place that suits people who were interested in a follow up discussion about a local disaster preparedness group or CRT. It doesn't have to be everybody, but a core group who are engaged enough to help you with the next steps.
- Discuss what a CRT would mean for your community – what sorts of risks and hazards you need to consider and which emergency services might be able to help. Contact Red Cross, RFS, SES or other emergency services organisations to see if they might support you at a wider community meeting. Red Cross has a one-hour presentation that you could use as part of this initial community group meeting to learn about CRTs in other areas and think about how the model might work for your community.
- Consider local issues (e.g. history, geography, population base, telecommunications, limited services, isolation, road or river access), your community's strengths, how you might work around any disconnects or divisions, and what happened during the last emergency event.
- Drawing on your maps and research, consider a structure that might be suitable for your community (e.g. street coordinators or small area coordinators). Do you have people willing to put their hands up for these roles?
- Consider how best to engage with other members of the community. This might be via community meetings, flyers and letterbox drops, newsletters or social media.
- Plan your next steps towards a whole of community meeting – where and when will it be held, and who you still need to connect with in the community. Try to ensure that everyone gets the chance to listen and have a say.
- Form a small working committee to share tasks moving forward. Schedule follow up meetings if needed, and invite along representatives from Red Cross, SES, RFS, Police and/or local council to help you plan. They will have lots of helpful advice and resources to share and will be keen to help you.

5. ORGANISE YOUR FIRST COMMUNITY MEETING

A community meeting can be a great way to get things started – not only is it a chance to get people together to talk about preparing for future emergency events, but it also provides an opportunity to get the community together so you can get to know each other.

Community members can hear from emergency services agencies and partners such as Red Cross, SES and RFS about how to set up a household emergency kit; how to make plans for pets and stock; what the local risks and triggers are for your local area; how to get your house and land ready for flood, storm and fire; where to find reliable information during an emergency; and how to plan for possible evacuations well in advance. The more people and families know about how to prepare, the calmer and more in control everyone will be during an emergency – and the whole community will be better able to recover after an emergency.

TIPS: Your First Community Meeting

- Decide on a suitable time, date and venue for your community meeting. Think about the needs of people who work, who have small children or caring responsibilities, or who might have transport issues affecting their ability to attend. Consider whether to hold the meeting outdoors and relevant accessibility requirements.
- Connect with local Red Cross, SES and RFS (or their local equivalents) to request support at a community meeting, with emergency services as guest speakers and with information stalls and “get ready” resources. Ask for their help to promote the event.
- Let council know the meeting is happening – invite them along and also ask for their help to promote it.
- Prepare an agenda:
 - introduce the concept of a CRT
 - provide opportunities for emergency services agencies to speak (10–15 minutes each)
 - make space for community members to ask questions and identify priorities
 - invite people to join a CRT (if you find people willing to be area coordinators even better)
 - ask people to register their contact details, and address any privacy/information security concerns. Make sure to keep this information safely protected (more on this in Module 4)
- Print flyers/invitations and deliver them to local residents and businesses.
- Advertise the community meeting on social media pages and groups, in village and school newsletters, at markets and local businesses and shops.
- Think about catering – sometimes food is a great incentive for people to come along to meetings, and to have a chance for a relaxed chat. Maybe local council would consider sponsoring, or a local business or service club might be able to support.
- Prepare a sign-on sheet at the entrance of the venue, and remind people to register their details. Setting up a registration desk to welcome people is a great way to start building relationships.
- Make arrangements for a safe, accessible and comfortable meeting – consider whether there are enough chairs and other accessibility requirements, if you will need microphones or a PA system so that everyone can hear, if there is hand sanitiser available for all or if people should bring their own. Remember to follow all relevant health and safety guidelines.
- Include an opportunity for social interaction – have some “get ready” stalls set up by Red Cross, SES and RFS volunteers where people can chat and get information.

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- Have some tea and coffee available so that people can stay and meet their neighbours.
- Prepare and hand out an information sheet for everyone attending so that they can share with friends or neighbours who might not have attended. Make sure you include contact details for the working group and local emergency services.
- Remember: in communities recently impacted by disasters or emergencies, a whole of community meeting could be a place where frustrations and anger emerge. Make sure you have a plan for how you will manage things calmly and respectfully if this occurs, and check in with any community members who seem to be particularly upset – particularly if they still seem angry before jumping in the car to head home. Offer another chance to chat or a cup of tea.
- And don't worry if the numbers seem small – participation will grow as the word spreads and the benefits start to be discussed in the community.

Possible questions from the community attendees:

- ***Privacy/personal information:*** All personal information provided to the Community-led Resilience Team will be managed only by the Team Leaders (e.g. kept in a locked case). No information should be shared in multiple databases without people's consent or shared with any emergency services agency unless required in an emergency. Street/Area Coordinators will only have information relevant to their street/area.
- ***Will we get more information from emergency services?*** The Community-led Resilience Team can put together information packs for residents and organise meetings with local emergency services to answer any questions. Local brigades or units may have community mailing lists or SMS groups that CRTs can be linked to for updates during an emergency. They may also like your help as "floodspotters" or local observers on the ground, particularly if you live at key areas of local catchments. The CRT may also link with council's community networks and your Local Emergency Management Committee. All of these opportunities can be explored as you make your local connections.
- ***What about new people coming to the community?*** The CRT can develop an appropriate Welcome Pack for new residents.
- ***Are we covered by insurance?*** Discuss this as a community, with local council and emergency services. There may be options for your group to investigate public liability insurance for a small annual fee, or you could apply for grants or other external funding. There may also be opportunities for members to volunteer with emergency services (such as SES) and be covered by their insurance for particular tasks. Remember: CRTs are mainly focused on preparedness and, during an emergency, normal processes apply. This means residents should call 000 in an emergency, or contact SES or RFS (or their state and territory equivalents) for appropriately trained help in an emergency. Local community members who have qualifications, licences or accreditations that may be useful during an emergency may be identified during your community skills review.

COMMUNITY PREPAREDNESS
BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES
Community-led Resilience Teams (CRT)

INVITATION
Pumpenbil Community Meeting

A holistic approach to Emergency Preparedness & Recovery

Are you Prepared for an Emergency?

Red Cross and your local Community-led Resilience Team (CRT) would like to invite you to a Community Meeting to discuss how you can work together to help each other in an emergency when you are isolated until Emergency Services can get there.



Let's discuss:

- What is important to your village?
- Do you know your local risks?
- Learnings from past experiences
- What plans you have in place for local emergencies?



WHERE: Tyalgum Community Hall
DATE: Wednesday 26th Sept 2020
TIME: 6.00pm (NSW)



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6. ESTABLISH A CRT COORDINATING COMMITTEE

After your community meeting, hopefully you will have identified a few more community members who are keen to join your coordinating committee – either as street or area coordinators, or as Team Leaders or Deputy Team Leaders. Now is the time to plan your local approaches, divide your locality up into manageable sections and to decide how you will coordinate across your village, suburb or township from this point forward.

TIPS: Establishing the CRT Coordinating Committee

- Discuss the Community Meeting:
 - who will maintain the register of interested people and keep their details safe (some communities use waterproof lockable safe cases or other safe storage arrangements)
 - what were the community's priorities in terms of getting ready for emergencies and how will you collaborate with emergency services agencies to address them
 - who was and who wasn't at the meeting – are there any groups of residents you still need to connect with?
 - who will send a thank you note to everyone who attended (if you do this via email, remember to use the "bcc" field in the email
- to protect people's information and ensure email addresses are not visible or shared)
 - who will make a post on social media to let people who couldn't attend know what happened and how to get involved
- Discuss how your CRT Coordinating Committee will work together in the future:
 - how will you share responsibility for the area – are there natural boundaries or groupings you can use (e.g. street or landscape boundaries)? Think about how access or terrain may be affected during an emergency.
 - have you identified a Team Leader, Deputy Team Leader/s and local neighbourhood coordinators?
 - do you have enough street coordinators or are there still gaps in terms of locations / people you need to contact and engage with? How will you connect with these areas?
 - who will keep the community regularly updated and how (e.g. will you create a local newsletter or social media group)?
 - who will keep local emergency services updated and engaged?
 - when is your next meeting and your next "Get Ready" event?

Role of Red Cross and Emergency Services in CRTs

The strength of the CRT model is that it is truly community led. This means that, while staff and volunteers from Red Cross, SES, RFS, council and other agencies are always available for support, contacts and technical advice, the local CRT Committee should be formed and led by local residents themselves.

If Red Cross volunteers have been closely involved with the establishment of the Committee, now is the time for them to step back and consider offering the following ongoing support instead:

- help with links to information, advice and relevant experts in council and emergency services agencies as requested by CRT Team Leaders
- quarterly email / phone call to check in with CRT Team Leaders and identify any areas for assistance
- connecting the CRT with grant opportunities where funding is identified as a priority need
- supporting the CRT with “Get Ready” stalls, firewise and streetwise events, or flood-ready and other emergency training
- some groups may be interested in doing additional training and becoming local emergency services volunteers with SES, RFS or Red Cross (while this is very beneficial, it is definitely not required)
- supporting the community with preparedness and recovery longer term – for example, Red Cross volunteers may offer outreach, Psychological First Aid (PFA), Café PFA or “Cuppa and a Chat” when there is smoke in the air or when heavy rain has fallen in areas affected by recent fire or flood emergencies.



TIPS FROM RED CROSS VOLUNTEERS WORKING WITH CRTs

- Take it one step at a time and try to find volunteers to help with the ground work, so you can cover a lot more ground more quickly and with less stress. Try to focus on volunteers who may live in the area you are connecting with.
- Social media is such a great way to connect with community members without having to do too much – just make sure when you are posting information and links you only use trusted sources, such as RFS, SES, Red Cross, Bureau of Meteorology (BOM), Department of Health, or your local council Disaster Dashboards etc. Join local community pages and share information to build momentum.
- Don't put too much pressure on yourself to try and do it all too quickly!

7. MANAGING THE CRT LONGER TERM

As with any volunteer-based group, it's important for community members involved in the CRT to keep things interesting and not too burdensome, so that people continue to be happy being involved. Think about how often you'd like to meet, and give different people responsibility for different aspects of the CRT, so that everyone gets to spend some time on what interests them, and everyone gets some time out. Keep an eye out for new members all the time, to give existing members a break.

TIPS: For the longer term – Managing your CRT

- Set some achievable annual priorities based on feedback from your community and local emergency services – make a calendar and a plan to deliver your community's priorities (you might only run one event a year, but you may also deliver information online or via letterbox drops a few times in between).
- Share your annual priorities with Red Cross, SES, RFS and your local council so local volunteers and staff can help you achieve them.
- Set up a process to ensure that people's private information (names, contact details) is safe and is not widely shared. Ask for people's consent to share the information with emergency service agencies or to opt out (e.g. via text or email groups used by emergency services to provide information). A simple form that could be used to get consent to share information is included in at Appendix 1.
- Share your own contact information if you are comfortable to do so. Consider setting up a standalone email account just for CRT business, separate from your regular email account. Be sure to check it regularly.
- Develop a contact list for relevant emergency services in your area and find out from them what local information would help them during an emergency. Share Team Leader and Street / Area Coordinator details with local emergency services (if you have consent to do so).
- Decide how often the CRT Coordinating Committee will meet and how you will keep the community updated (e.g. will you set up a community Facebook group, create a newsletter, or similar).
- Put together "Get Ready" packs for local residents – Red Cross, SES and RFS as well as local council will all have resources they can share: fridge magnets, handouts, booklets, apps, and other resources to help people prepare for, respond to, and recover from an emergency event.
- Develop a "Welcome Pack" for new residents as they join the community – your local real estate agency or council may be willing to help you distribute these. Include contact details for the CRT and ask them to get in touch.
- Organise regular meetings for CRT members and invite various emergency services agencies to provide expert advice on preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergency events.
- Make a plan for what you will do if phones / internet go down – how will you connect and communicate? Some localities have sought grant funding for satellite phones and two-way radios, or set up locally understood systems with flags, lights or sirens during emergency events.
- Are there people more at risk in your community who would benefit from the CRT network and resources? Can you work with emergency services and link in with people's care providers to make a plan for them?



Credit: Australian Red Cross/Amelia Wong

- Do you need to make a plan for moving cars, stock and packing up shops linked to local triggers? Get advice from SES on river heights, local flooding, and how to use BOM weather warnings, and make sure everyone in the community understands these triggers before an emergency event. Put your community plan into action as conditions change.
- Apply for grants to fund awareness-raising initiatives, such as a website, resident packs, welcome packs, or street awareness barbecues. Consider funding for equipment such as emergency kits, PPE or defibrillators, or upgrades to local community halls. Stay in touch with your council about community needs.
- Continue to promote the CRT to the community via newsletters, talks, market stalls and flyers.
- Put together a list of people in the community with relevant emergency skills, certificates or other accreditations (e.g. nurses, doctors, SES members, RFS members, First Aiders).
- Put together a list of people in the community with resources and licences to use them (machinery, specific tools, water trucks, boats).
- Develop a community profile to help plan for future events. You can obtain statistical data from the ABS website (population, dwellings), and you can also include local information such as where roads get flooded, the closest hospitals and local communication methods. Talk to council and emergency services to see whether they already have such a list or to find out how they can help you develop one.



CASE STUDY

Byrill Creek

Byrill Creek is a small village of 124 residents and 61 dwellings in the Tweed area of Northern NSW.

The Byrill Creek CRT was formed in November 2020. Residents connect to their local CRT through an online community page and chat group to stay up to date with what's happening in their local area.

In mid-December 2020, the Tweed catchment received very heavy torrential rain over three days, with falls of up to 250ml in just one night. This created flash flooding near Byrill Creek.

Very quickly, the local CRT started to update local residents and emergency services with accurate information on how high and how quickly the waters were rising at different points of the catchment, and which causeways were already underwater. The information continued to be kept up to date all throughout the day, by numerous local residents who lived at different points adjacent to the creek.

The chat group informed residents in real time about what was going on, such as changes to creek levels, so residents were able to activate their emergency plans, knowing what was likely to happen over the next 24 hours.

Residents were also able to identify and reference their community trigger points, and community members who were away from home working in neighbouring towns and villages knew exactly when they needed to leave work so they could get home and avoid being stranded on the other side of the swollen creek. CRT members also used the communication tree to ask other residents if they needed any supplies from the shops as they drove by on their way home.

The information being posted by trusted local sources was also of great use to emergency



Credit: Australian Red Cross/Luke Plummer

services and other people downstream, who could also start to plan for flooding and possible isolation. There was time for people to connect with other members of the CRT and the community to check if anyone needed help. People who were away on holiday were also able to ask people in the village to check on their homes and make sure they were okay.

TIPS FROM COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHO HAVE STARTED CRT IN NORTHERN NSW:

- Don't try and cover your whole area all at once. Take small steps and do what is manageable for you – things will build over time.
- Remember to ask for support if you are feeling unsure – from other community members or from local emergency services who are happy to help.
- Don't be offended if some people don't want to join. Once things get going, word will spread.

Module 4

Resources and emergency information

Red Cross has lots of resources to support communities with emergencies from preparation to recovery, particularly the Red Cross RediPLAN. Red Cross also delivers workshops, including “Psychological First Aid”, “Recovery Basics and Self-Care”, and “Communicating in Recovery”, which explain the effects of disasters on individuals, families and communities. We have programs for individuals and households, as well as for neighbours and communities keen to get started together. We even have a great preparedness program for children – the “Pillowcase Program” – which prepares children for emergencies and provides them with a “grab and go” bag they can take home.

You can also find lots of helpful tools and resources on our website redcross.org.au/prepare.

Emergency services agencies such as SES and RFS (and their state and territory equivalents) also have a wide range of resources available on disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. They are always keen to work with community members to help you get prepared. Your community might choose to: become ‘floodspotters’; set up an SES Community Action Team to do more specialised flood and storm training; invite RFS out to your neighbourhood for a firewise community event; or support older and more vulnerable community members to prepare their properties for bushfires via the RFS AIDER program. There is a lot of information and local contact details on their websites or via your local units and brigades.

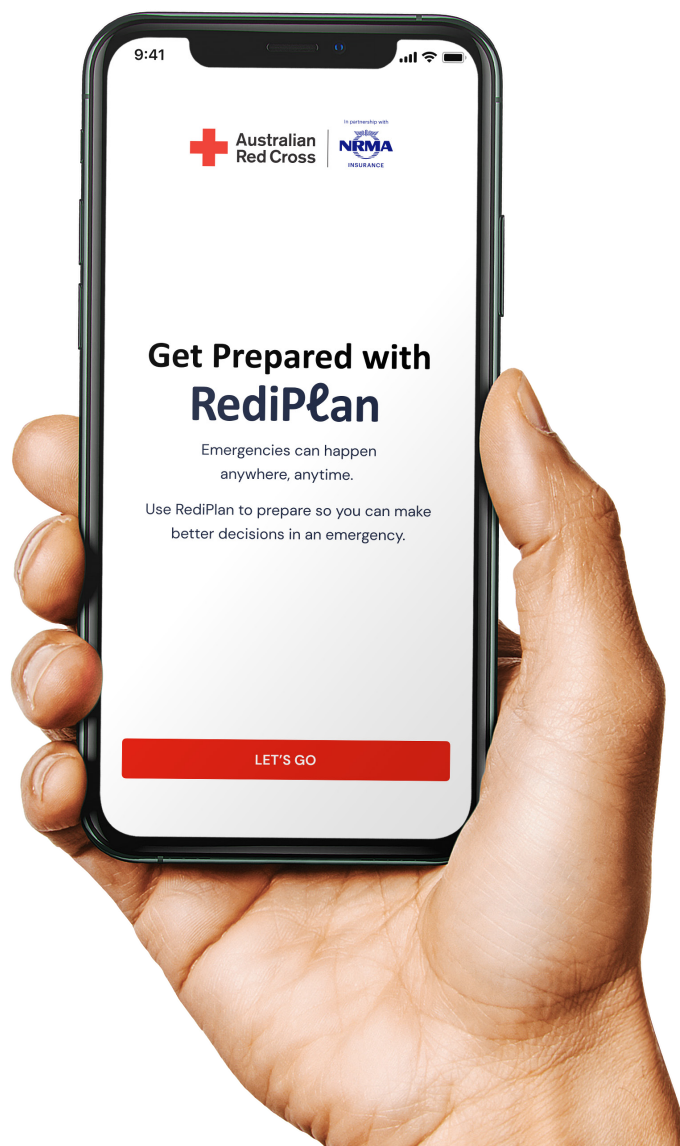
Local councils may also have emergency information relevant to the local area on their websites and will have a Local Emergency Management Officer on staff, who can provide advice and links to local services. Many councils are now also developing online “Disaster Dashboards” which provide accurate, real time information from emergency services agencies in one spot during an emergency event.

Mobile Apps and Websites

There are many mobile apps and websites available to help you prepare for emergencies.

Red Cross Get Prepared

The Red Cross Get Prepared App helps people prepare for any emergency. It helps you connect with your key support people and provides easy checklists so you can accomplish simple tasks that can make you and your loved ones safer, and protect the things that matter most to you. It also includes a personalised emergency plan that you can share with others or print out.



There are many more useful apps and websites that help with emergency preparedness and during an event. The most important thing is that the information provided is accurate, timely and from a trusted and reputable source. Here are a few more that might be of interest to communities starting a CRT:

Emergency Apps

NAME	APPS		WEBSITE
Bureau of Meteorology (BOM)	(BOM) Weather (BOM) Weather	Android app iPhone app	bom.gov.au/australia/meteye
NSW Rural Fire Service	Fires near me Fires near me	Android app iPhone app	rfs.nsw.gov.au
SES FloodSafe	Floods near me Floods near me	Android app iPhone app	ses.nsw.gov.au
RMS Live Traffic	Live Traffic Live Traffic	Android app iPhone app	livetraffic.com
Emergency+	Emergency+ Emergency+	Android app iPhone app	emergencyplus.com.au
Red Cross	Get Prepared Get Prepared	Android app iPhone app	redcross.org.au/get-prepared-app.aspx

We hope you enjoy the journey towards building your CRT, and thank you for the time and energy you are willing to invest in your community. Remember, you can always contact Red Cross, SES or RFS (or their state and territory equivalents) to get things started or if you need any help throughout the process.

Appendices

Selection of Templates and Resources used by established CRTs

It is not intended that all communities will use all of the resources set out below – choose what is right for your community, or invent your own.

- 1. Community-led Resilience Team Registration Form**
- 2. Skills in the Community**
- 3. Resources in the Community**
- 4. Community Profile**
- 5. Street Coordinator Information**
- 6. Bin Safety**
- 7. Gas Bottle Safety**
- 8. Emergency Kit**
- 9. Town / Village Study**
- 10. New Residents Kit (Welcome Kit)**
- 11. What is a Community-led Resilience Team – Community Handout**

Appendix 1. Community-led Resilience Team Registration Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone or mobile: _____

Email: _____

Emergency Contact (name and phone number): _____

Details for others in household: **A**=Adult; **C**=Child; **D**=Person with Disability; **E**=Elderly

NAME	A,C,D or E	Phone Number (if different)
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Pet/s (how many and what kind): _____

In the event of an emergency, will you need assistance with anyone in your household or your pets?

Yes No

If yes, please specify: _____

How many vehicles are in the household and which type: _____

Are you able to assist neighbours if needed? Yes No

If yes, how can you assist? _____

Your Community-led Resilience Team for Emergencies

Your area is: _____

Your Street Coordinator is: _____

Street Coordinator Mobile: _____

For the latest emergency information, please tune into the following radio station or social media pages:

Appendix 4. Community Profile

Community Name: _____

Population _____

Average age _____

Number of dwellings _____

Areas/Suburbs within CRT _____

Local Emergency Services

SES Name: _____

Unit Commander: _____

Contact: _____

RFS Name: _____

Captain: _____

Contact: _____

Other local emergency and recovery
services and contact details _____

Community service organisations _____

(Residents Assoc/Rotary/
Community Centre _____

Businesses _____

Education Centres and Schools _____

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Local demographics
(groups within the community)

Social, sporting and
community networks

Local communication channels/
methods (social media,
newsletter, notice board)

Local geography
(rivers, mountains, roads)

Local risk factors and
disaster history

Peak periods for visitors/
tourists/seasonal employment

Appendix 5. Street Coordinator Information

Thank you for assisting your community in times of emergency. You will play an important role in disseminating information throughout your neighbourhood and providing local knowledge for emergency services. Communication methods may include emails, phone calls and word of mouth. You will be part of a network linked to the CRT Leader.



Street Coordinator responsibilities include:

- Meeting your neighbours
- Sharing the CRT concept
- Attending CRT meetings when possible
- Contacting neighbours in your street group to share relevant information
- Updating neighbours with new information or changes to the CRT
- Relaying residents' needs to the CRT Leader for sharing with appropriate agencies
- Sharing specific local knowledge with the CRT during preparation, response and recovery phases
- Identifying alternative communication methods for your street group should electricity become unavailable during an emergency
- Informing the CRT Leader if you will be absent from your area for a length of time

Proudly supported by Red Cross Emergency Services – Together we can make a difference.

Appendix 6. Bin Safety in Fires and Flood

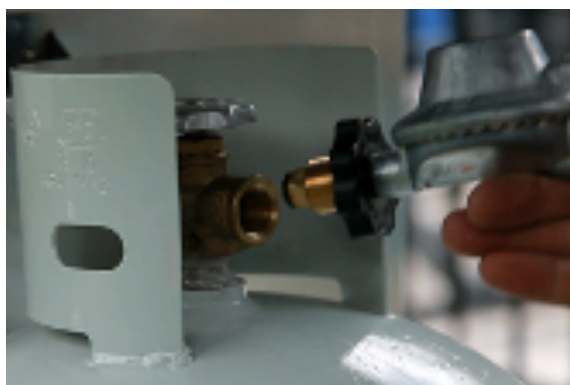
This list provides only general advice. If you require further or more specialised information, please call your local council's Waste Management department.



- Tie and anchor outdoor garbage bins to minimise the spread of disease and unsanitary conditions.
- Residents may be able to secure bins by tying them to posts, putting them inside garages or on their verandah or other raised locations. Please ensure that they are secure, as they may cause extensive damage when waters rise.
- If you are able to lift them to higher ground please do so. But remember, you may have limited time during an emergency, so having a plan and practicing it is your best alternative.
- Do not try and lift a heavy bin if you are physically not capable. Another member of the CRT may be able to help you with this.
- If you lose your bin, please contact your local council after the flood has passed and request a replacement. Please allow time for this to happen as there will be more urgent priorities in the aftermath of the emergency.
- Tie down timber, drums and other loose, buoyant items in the yard to prevent them from being carried away by flood water or battered against other items or structures.
- Relocate chemicals that react with water to give off heat or form explosive or toxic gases and poisons to the highest level in your home, and place them in waterproof containers. Make sure you include any substances that could contaminate flood waters.

Appendix 7. Gas Bottle Safety Checklist⁴

There may be specific hazard risks around properties that use gas bottles. Here is some general advice, intended as a guide only – always check with suppliers for the best advice for your personal circumstances. You can also check official websites or call your gas company for specific advice.



BBQ Gas Bottles

1. Make sure the BBQ gas bottle is turned off (clockwise) at the valve on top of the bottle.
2. Detach the gas bottle from the BBQ – remember it's reverse thread, so turn the knob clockwise to loosen and remove. Ensure the gas bottle remains upright at all times to allow the pressure relief valve to operate correctly to release pressure and minimise any chance of an explosion.
3. Place the gas bottle away from any flammable materials, in a well-ventilated area and clear of any ignition sources. If there is an ignition source nearby, any venting gas may ignite.
4. Once the bottle is removed from the BBQ, make sure the pressure relief valve is pointed away from anything combustible. The pressure relief valve points in the opposite direction from where you screw in your hose connection to the cylinder.
5. Make sure that there are no gas bottles stored indoors or underneath your property.

Large Gas Bottles

We don't recommend throwing gas bottles into a body of water. After the event, cylinders are often lost or forgotten and become a hidden hazard. Many people have been seriously injured or killed boating, water skiing, diving, or using machinery in water when they hit obstacles they wouldn't expect to be there. Cylinders can also float in positions that compromise the effectiveness of their inbuilt safety features.

While the fire event is underway, always follow the directions of the Fire Authorities in charge.

If you have 45kg or larger home gas bottles or cylinders⁵, this is what to do before the fire arrives or before evacuating:

1. Turn it off (in clockwise direction) at valve on top of the bottle.
2. Leave the bottle or cylinder where it has been installed.
3. Leave the bottle or cylinder in an upright position.
4. Ensure that it is secured to a solid structure and on a solid base to prevent it falling over, and that the pressure relief valve vent is facing away from the building. The best way to secure it is to chain it to the wall at the bottom of the cylinder. The vent is the protrusion that is opposite where the gas line screws into the valve. It usually has a dust cover.
5. Remove any combustible materials surrounding the gas bottles.



Appendix 8. Emergency Kit



redcross.org.au/prepare



GET PACKING

Get your essentials together

Packing your survive and recover kit can be satisfying and fun, especially for the kids. So get together with everyone in your household or your personal support network to make a list of what you'll need.

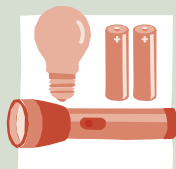
Chances are you'll already have many necessary items in the house. If you need to buy anything, remember you don't have to do it all at once. You can stagger it over weeks or months—a few items each time you shop.



Keep this handy checklist on the fridge until it's done!

Suggested survival items:

LIGHT



NOTE!

Don't leave batteries in the torch, and check them every six months. Consider wind-up torches that don't need batteries. Red Cross sells them online at redcross.org.au

WATER



NOTE!

Never drink tap water after an emergency until authorities have advised it is safe. Water can be stored for up to 12 months in airtight containers. Label when water was last changed.

CASH



NOTE!

Many people do not carry large sums of cash. ATMs and banks may not be operating in the early stages of any emergency. Having some cash will help meet basic and urgent needs.

FOOD



NOTE!

Remember the needs of everyone in your household, including babies, children and pets. Have at least three days' worth of food (meals, drinks and snacks) ready in case you need to leave home. If staying home, you will need food high in energy with a long shelf life that's easy to prepare.

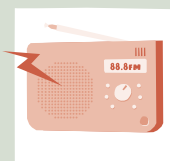




Take your medicine

Medical needs are an important consideration for everyone when packing a Survive and Recover Kit. Plan to have 14 days worth of any medications you might need.

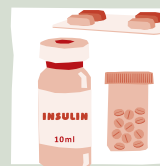
RADIO BATTERY-POWERED



NOTE!

Radio is often the best source of information in an 88.8FM emergency. Mark on the dial the frequencies of your ABC Local Radio and other local services. Select a radio that doesn't rely on electricity.

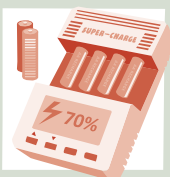
SPECIAL MEDICAL SUPPLIES OR EQUIPMENT



NOTE!

Consider what medications or supplies you might need and include these, alongside a list with their title, dosage and copies of your prescriptions.

CHARGERS



NOTE!

Have a charger or charged battery pack for your phone. Also consider, keeping an older landline phone that is not reliant on power—your telephone exchange may still operate even if the power is out.

TOILETRIES



NOTE!

Having toiletries can help keep you refreshed and give you a sense of routine—even when you are unable to wash or shower.

PROTECTIVE CLOTHING/ BLANKETS



NOTE!

Consider clothes made from natural fibres, keep seasons in mind, and try to pack sturdy shoes or boots and heavy-duty gloves. Remember sunscreen, insect repellent, and wide-brimmed hats.

FIRST AID KIT



NOTE!

As well as buying a Red Cross household or car first aid kit, it's also a good idea to do first aid training.

PET ESSENTIALS



NOTE!

Factor your pet into water needs, and make sure your dog or cat is registered and microchipped.

Most of the things you need will be at a supermarket, hardware store or even the \$2 shop. Remember you may already have useful items around the home, such as camping equipment.

redcross.org.au/prepare



Suggested recovery items:

SCANS OR PHOTOCOPIES OF IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS

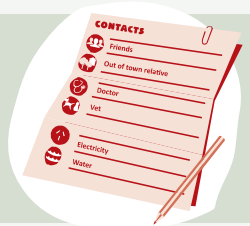


- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Passports | <input type="checkbox"/> Mortgage papers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wills | <input type="checkbox"/> Insurance papers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Driver's licences | <input type="checkbox"/> Prescriptions |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marriage and birth certificates | <input type="checkbox"/> Medical histories |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Land titles | <input type="checkbox"/> Child immunisation books |

NOTE!

Check functionality regularly, and use waterproof or fireproof containers if necessary. It's a good idea to have a back-up copy of documents securely stored in an alternative place to home, perhaps in a locked drawer at work, with a family member, or stored in the cloud.

YOUR REDIPLAN



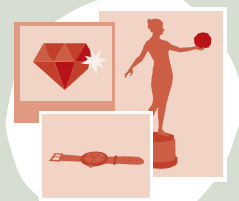
Store your scans or copies so that they can be grabbed quickly and easily if you have to leave.

The same care taken with your important documents can be applied to your personal videos and photos.

Take photos of any important household items, particularly those that are insured. Store the photos in a secure place, with copies in your kit, to assist with any insurance claims after the emergency.

Map where your valuable items are stored in your home in case you have to collect them quickly.

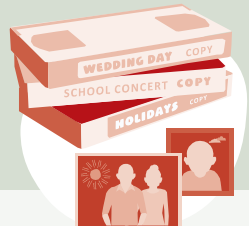
PHOTOGRAPHS OF VALUABLE HOUSEHOLD ITEMS



Make sure valuable items are stored well above ground level, or use waterproof containers.

Consider purchasing a fireproof safe for valuables. Keep some sturdy garbage bags for putting other items of sentimental value in, in case you have time to collect them in an emergency.

COPIES OF VIDEOS & PHOTOS





Entertainment

Comfort the kids

Children will need familiar things to help comfort them in a stressful and uncertain situation. Talk to your kids about what's important to them. This is likely to be different to what you think is important to them.

Store and review your kit

As you can see, you'll need more than a simple shoulder bag to hold your survive and recover kit.

You'll need a sturdy container, preferably waterproof.

Think about a box with wheels or handles and a watertight seal. Alternatively you can use a large sports bag or a suitcase with wheels. Arrange your container last so you'll know what size it needs to be.

Store your survive and recover kit where it's easy to access—close to an escape route in your house, or in a shed. Mark your kit clearly, and put some reflective tape on it so it can be seen easily in darkness. Make sure everyone in your household and personal safety network knows where it is.

Set an annual reminder in your phone and/or calendar to check your survive and recover kit.

Make a note of any perishables and rotate them through your bathroom and pantry. Your kit should be updated to reflect changes in your life, such as the addition of children or pets, changes to relationships, location changes, and so on.



redcross.org.au/prepare



Appendix 9. Town / Village Study

Name of Town/village:

Date completed

Population of Town/Village

Part of Shire/LGA

Local Demographics
(Groups within Community)

Local Geographic
(Physical features of the area)

ABS Quick Stats
Number of Dwellings

Closest RFS

Volunteer Numbers

Captain Contact details

Closest SES

Volunteer Numbers

Unit Commander details

Businesses in the Town/Village



Schools in the Town/Village

Community Organisations
in Town/Village

Emergency Services in
Town/Village

Community Leaders
& Contact Info

Villages to be included in CRT

Local Markets and when
they are on

Local Newsletters and who to
contact for advertising

Local Committees in
Town/village & Contacts

Obstacles

Appendix 10. Welcome Pack for new residents

A "Welcome Pack" for new residents could include:

- Welcome letter to the local community (including some local history)
- Community-led Resilience Team information, key contacts and how to join
- Recent community emergency/disaster history
- Red Cross RediPLAN (how to be prepared for emergencies)
- SES/RFS information such as How to Plan for a Flood/Fire
- Household Emergency Plan and Emergency Kit information
- What to do with pets/animals in an emergency
- Where to safely park vehicles in an emergency, including a map

Appendix 11. What is a Community-led Resilience Team – Community Handout



What is a Community-led Resilience Team?

Community-led Resilience Teams (CRTs) are an all-hazards approach to preparing communities before disasters; providing a community-driven response during disasters; and obtaining information on real grassroots needs afterwards. The model is truly community-led and works in all stages of the Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery model.

CRTs create prepared and resilient communities well-equipped and confident to look after themselves should they be impacted by disaster. CRTs connect neighbours by phone, social media and in other agreed ways well in advance of emergencies, so that they have the means to respond quickly. CRTs also allow emergency services to provide targeted training and information to a committed group of community members, which has benefits all around.

How are CRTs formed?

Red Cross liaises with local community leaders and groups (schools, businesses, churches, Multiple Occupancies, Hall Committees, Country Women's Association and others), and listens to residents' needs and concerns, talks to them about their experiences of past disasters and helps form a picture of what is necessary for the community in terms of preparedness. This also has a lot of social benefits, as people come together and get to know each other and their community better.

A local committee is formed and Red Cross links the committee to emergency services. Community meetings follow where next steps are agreed: how to get fire-ready; what to put in an evacuation kit, etc. Community strengths, skills and shared resources are identified, which highlights how resilient the community can be if everyone pulls together.

Where to from here?

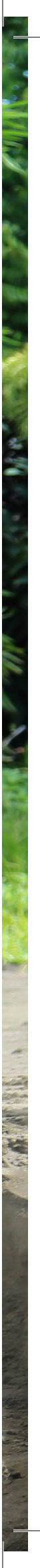
Red Cross Emergency Services volunteers can provide a 1 – 1.5hr presentation to outline the CRT model to interested communities. Please contact your local Red Cross Regional Officer for further details.

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A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing, spanning the width of the page.





Credit: Australian Red Cross/Dilini Perera



**Get in touch
with us.**

E. contactus@redcross.org.au
P. 1800 RED CROSS (733 276)
W. redcross.org.au