



# Natural disasters – leave and support provisions

January 2015

## Introduction

The purpose of this fact sheet is to provide information on leave and support arrangements available to Defence personnel affected by natural disaster and or personnel who engage in voluntary emergency management activity.

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## How might Defence people be impacted by natural disasters?

Personnel may be personally impacted by natural disasters in a number of ways including:

- temporary closure of workplaces and schools
  - inability to attend work due to road closures
  - managing home and contents before, during and after the disaster
  - personal loss including damages to property
  - personal illness or injury
  - evacuation
  - participation in emergency service or Reserve activities
  - recall from leave and/or direction to assist with Defence operations associated with natural disaster relief.
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## Bureau of Meteorology emergency warnings

Bureau of Meteorology and State and Territory emergency warnings are used to identify emergency ratings for bushfires, tropical cyclones, severe weather, tsunamis and major floods.

In the event of a declared **catastrophic bushfire emergency**, State and Territory emergency management agencies will recommend evacuation of identified localities as the best option for survival - these may include workplaces, employee properties or access to these. Fire danger ratings issued by the [Bureau of Meteorology](#) range from Low-Moderate to Catastrophic or 'code red'. Fire danger ratings issued by designated fire agencies in each State and Territory may vary and should be referred to for affected localities in the event of a catastrophic emergency.

**Major flooding** involves significant inundation which results in road and property closures. Flood warnings are issued by the [Bureau of Meteorology](#). Flooding is rated on a scale from minor to major. In the event of major flooding, extensive land areas are inundated, properties and towns are likely to be isolated and major traffic routes likely to be closed. Evacuation of people from flood affected areas may be required.

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## Access to leave

Access to leave provisions may be granted to Defence personnel in the event of a natural disaster affecting their workplace or home taking into account the specific circumstances of the warning issued.



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January 2015

**Leave provisions - APS**

Below is a summary of leave which may be available to APS employees:

Details	Period of leave	Rate of pay / count as service	Evidence	Decision-maker	PSS
<p><b>Miscellaneous leave – Affected by disaster</b> To assist an employee to cope with a disaster where the employee's home or its contents are destroyed or significantly damaged or where a pending disaster is likely to result in the employee's home or its contents being destroyed or significantly damaged.</p>	Up to three days per occasion may be granted.	Full pay / counts as service	None specified – delegate discretion	Supervisor	No
<p><b>Miscellaneous leave – Affected by disaster (additional)</b> To assist an employee to cope with a disaster where the employee's home or its contents are destroyed or significantly damaged or where a pending disaster is likely to result in the employee's home or its contents being destroyed or significantly damaged.</p>	Approval of leave, including rate of pay, beyond three days per occasion is discretionary.	For absences in excess of three days per occurrence, the rate of pay may be full pay, half-pay or without pay. Paid leave counts as service. Delegate discretion for unpaid leave.	None specified – delegate discretion	Executive Level 2 / Colonel (E) and above	No
<p><b>Miscellaneous leave - Special purposes</b> To enable an employee to be absent due to special circumstances where the employee is required to give immediate attention to a situation that is either an emergency and/or likely to result in unreasonable hardship or financial loss to the employee if left unattended.</p>	Leave may be granted where it does not exceed: a. one day/shift on any occasion; or b. more than two days/shifts each calendar year, on a non-cumulative basis.	Full pay / counts as service	None specified – delegate discretion	Supervisor	No
<p><b>Personal leave for caring purposes in an unexpected emergency</b> Requirement to provide care of immediate family or household member due to an unexpected emergency. For example: where school or child care centre closures occur as a consequence of their location in a locality subject to an emergency warning.</p>	Maximum of 2 days absence per occurrence. Limit of Personal leave credit	Full or half pay / counts as service	Medical certificate or other evidence supporting the requirement for employee to provide care. Statutory declaration	Supervisor	Yes
<p><b>Miscellaneous leave - Exceptional circumstances</b> To enable an employee to be absent due to extraordinary or exceptional circumstances recognised by Defence.</p>	Discretion of decision-maker	Leave may be granted at the rate of full pay, half-pay or without pay. Paid leave counts as service. Delegate discretion for unpaid leave.	None specified – delegate discretion	Senior Executive band 2 / Major-General (E) and above	No
<p><b>Miscellaneous leave – Emergency service or community activity</b> To enable an employee to engage in an activity as a member of a recognised emergency management organisation. Includes voluntary emergency management activities that involve dealing with a civil emergency and/or natural disaster. Eligibility is extended to employees who are registered volunteers of an emergency management organisation or employees who respond to a civil emergency and/or natural disaster and perform activities at the direction of a recognised emergency management organisation.</p>	Up to 4 days of leave is to be granted per occasion.	Full pay / counts as service	Verification with emergency service	Supervisor	No



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January 2015

**Leave provisions – APS (cont)**

<p>Cont'd</p> <p>Miscellaneous leave – Emergency service or community activity          Leave granted is to consist of:          a. time when employee engages in the activity; and          b. reasonable travelling time to and from the activity; and          c. reasonable rest time immediately</p> <p>Miscellaneous Leave – Emergency service or community activity (additional)          As described above.</p>	<p>Approval of leave, including rate of pay, beyond four days per occasion is discretionary.</p>	<p>For absences in excess of four days per occurrence, the rate of pay may be full pay, half-pay or without pay. Paid leave counts as service. Delegate discretion for unpaid leave.</p>	<p>Verification with emergency service.</p>	<p>Executive Level 2/ Colonel (E) and above</p>	<p>No</p>
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**Leave provisions – APS (cont)**

Employees who volunteer for an emergency management activity in response to a declared natural disaster and wish to access *Miscellaneous leave – emergency service or community activity* are required to provide documentation to support their participation and also verify the nature of the organisation they are volunteering with. In most instances they will be working for a recognised emergency service or organisation which has a role under an emergency management plan prepared by a Commonwealth State or Territory government for coping with emergencies and/or disasters. It includes fire fighting, civil defence and rescue bodies which secure the safety of people, animals and/or property in a natural disaster or emergency.

Where there is no declared emergency or evacuation recommendation an employee would generally be expected to cover their absence from the workplace by use of flex, time off in lieu, annual leave, long service leave (noting minimum use of seven calendar days) or miscellaneous leave for private purposes without pay.

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January 2015

## Leave provisions - ADF

Where possible, Australian Defence Force (ADF) members affected by a natural disaster are to make contact with their administrative unit in the first instance.

This table gives the types of leave that would apply in the listed situations.

Situation	Leave type
1. A member leaves work to care for a child as a result of a school/childcare facility being closed in a fire situation	Carers Leave Short absence from duty (where no other leave is available)
2. A member: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• returns to or stays at home to protect their property and/or family</li> <li>• evacuate their property</li> </ul>	Recreation Leave Short absence from duty (where no other leave is available)
3. A member is sent home or directed to absent themselves from work due to the workplace being in danger ( <i>short term</i> )	On duty: ordinary pay (no leave required)
4. A member is directed to absent themselves from work due to the workplace having being damaged ( <i>longer term</i> )	On duty: ordinary pay (no leave required) <b>NB:</b> an alternative work arrangement would be the first solution in this event.
5. Members who participate in activities as part of an ADF contingent (fire fighting, evacuation, medical treatment)	These members are considered to be on duty and no form of leave needs to be taken.
6. In the event a member's house is damaged/destroyed.	The member is to make arrangements with their CO for the appropriate leave to be taken. Additional support and advice is available through DCO by email to <a href="mailto:defencefamilyhelpline@defence.gov.au">defencefamilyhelpline@defence.gov.au</a> or by calling 1800 624 608.

ADF members who participate in volunteer services as part of the Country Fire Service (CFS) or Emergency Services (ESS) will need to make local arrangements for the appropriate leave with their CO.

## Flexible work arrangements

Flexible work arrangements may assist in a variety of circumstances including where workplaces are unavailable due to being directly affected by a natural disaster and/or are inaccessible due to road closures or it would be too dangerous for an employee or member to travel to work. They may also be beneficial following the period of immediate emergency when affected personnel are returning to work and managing their personal circumstances following their absence due to the disaster.

Flexible work arrangements such as working part-time hours, working from home and working from an alternative location could all be considered when making decisions regarding personnel who are absent from the workplace as a result of a natural disaster.



## Natural disasters – leave and support provisions

January 2015

### **Employee Assistance Program – APS employees**

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a confidential and professional counselling service for APS employees to deal with problems that may impact on their working life. The EAP is available when an APS employee is affected by a natural disaster.

EAP contact information:

**Phone:** 1300 361008 (available 24 hrs/day from anywhere in Australia for the cost of a local call)

**Website:** Additional information and resource articles are available from the EAP landing page on People Connect.

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### **Support and procedural information – ADF members and families**

Support and procedural information for members and their families is available through the National Welfare Coordination Centre (NWCC) and the Defence Community Organisation (DCO).

The National Welfare Coordination Centre: 1 800 801 026

Defence Community Organisation: [www.defence.gov.au/dco](http://www.defence.gov.au/dco)

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### **Disaster assistance**

Defence personnel wishing to provide assistance or who require assistance as a result of a natural disaster are encouraged to visit the [Emergency and Disaster assistance](#) link under Disaster assistance web pages on the [www.australia.gov.au](http://www.australia.gov.au) website.