

Emergency Management and Recovery

Narration Script

Huon Valley Council | Candidate and Councillor Knowledge Series

Slide	Title
1	Title — Emergency Management and Recovery
2	Before You Begin
3	The Framework
4	The Municipal Committee
5	Who Appoints Whom
6	The Plan
7	What Council Must Do
8	When Something Happens
9	Recovery
10	In the Huon Valley
11	What Councillors Do
12	Five Things to Remember
	Total

Slide 1 — Title — Emergency Management and Recovery

Welcome to Emergency Management and Recovery, part of the Huon Valley Council Candidate and Councillor Knowledge Series.

The Huon Valley faces bushfire, flood, storm and a range of other hazards. When one of them arrives, Council has a defined role and it is a supporting role, not a commanding one.

This module covers the framework, who does what, and the single most important thing a councillor needs to know when an emergency happens.

Slide 2 — Before You Begin

Council supports the response. It does not run it. Getting that right protects both the community and the councillor.

One Act covers both halves of this. The Emergency Management Act 2006 governs emergency management and recovery, through the same committee and largely the same people, which is why they are treated together here.

Council is a support agency. Response to an emergency is led by a Response Management Authority Tasmania Police, the Tasmania Fire Service, the State Emergency Service or another agency, depending on the hazard. Council's role is to support that agency with the resources it holds.

The Committee has no operational authority. Council's own Plan says it directly: the Municipal Emergency Management Committee has an important role in leadership and stakeholder communications during and after an emergency, but has no authority in the command, control or coordination of a response, and is not expected to be operationally involved.

And councillors have no operational role at all. The councillor role here is representation, communication and support more before the event and after it than during it. We will come back to that at the end, because it is the part most likely to be tested.

Slide 3 — The Framework

The framework has three tiers, and Council sits at the bottom of a structure that runs all the way up to the Minister.

At State level there is a Ministerial Committee for Emergency Management, the State Emergency Management Committee, and a State Emergency Management Controller with a Deputy.

At regional level, Tasmania is divided into regions, each with a Regional Emergency Management Committee and a Regional Controller. The Huon Valley sits in the Southern Region, whose Committee has overarching responsibility across it and is chaired by the Regional Controller.

At municipal level, section 20 establishes a Municipal Emergency Management Committee for each municipal area, reporting directly to the Regional Committee. All southern Councils are represented on the Regional Committee by their Municipal Coordinator.

And there is planning at every level: the Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements, Regional Plans, Municipal Plans, and Special Emergency Management Plans for particular risks.

Slide 4 — The Municipal Committee

The Municipal Emergency Management Committee is a statutory body, established by the Act rather than by Council. That distinguishes it from every other committee in this series.

Section 20 establishes one in respect of each municipal area. It exists as a matter of law, and Council does not create it, abolish it, or decide whether to have one.

Its purpose, in the words of section 22, is to institute and coordinate, and support the institution and coordination of, emergency management in the municipal area — including preparing and reviewing the Municipal Emergency Management Plan and any Special Emergency Management Plans.

Its other functions follow. To determine and review emergency management policy. To review the management of emergencies that have occurred. To report to the Regional Controller. And at the direction of the Chairperson or a Coordinator, to assist them or Council in performing their own functions.

It has power to establish subcommittees, and Council's Committee meets at least twice a year, more often if an emergency occurs.

But it does not command. Its role during an emergency is strategic advice, leadership and stakeholder communication — not operational direction. That belongs to the Response Management Authority.

Slide 5 — Who Appoints Whom

Three roles, three different appointers, and this is the part councillors most often get wrong.

The Municipal Chairperson is appointed by Council. At Huon Valley Council that is the Mayor or an appointed Councillor. Where the Chair resigns, is removed or dies, Council appoints a replacement as soon as possible.

The Municipal Coordinator and Deputy are appointed by the Minister, from a person nominated by Council. Council nominates; the Minister appoints, on the State Controller's recommendation. The Minister can also require Council to nominate within a specified time.

The Municipal Recovery Coordinator is appointed by the general manager, known here as the Chief Executive Officer. If no Recovery Coordinator is appointed, the Municipal Coordinator performs those functions.

The rest of the Committee is not Council's to decide. Membership is the Chairperson, the Municipal Coordinator, the Municipal Recovery Coordinator, each person holding a position determined by the Chairperson, and such other persons as the Chairperson or a Coordinator considers appropriate. The Chairperson also appoints a member as executive officer.

One condition is worth knowing. Council may only nominate a person as Coordinator if, once appointed, they would have the authority and ability to make decisions during an emergency without first seeking Council's approval. The Act is deliberately keeping Council out of the decision loop when speed matters.

Slide 6 — The Plan

The Municipal Emergency Management Plan is prepared by the Committee, not by Council, and that surprises people.

Each Municipal Committee prepares a plan for emergency management in its area, and must review it at least once every two years.

It is approved from above. The Committee submits it to the Regional Controller, who submits it to the State Controller, who may approve it or require amendment and resubmission.

What it contains is set by the Act: the arrangements and responsibilities for the governance and coordination of emergency management within the area.

Council's Plan covers the full cycle — prevention and mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. It includes a risk assessment for the Valley, a hazard-by-hazard table of which agency leads and what Council's support function is, warnings and flood thresholds, evacuation, impact assessment and cost capture.

And it is operational. It names who does what during an event, from the Incident Controller down through intelligence, operations, logistics and administration — by position, so the arrangements survive a change of employee.

Slide 7 — What Council Must Do

The Act imposes obligations on Council directly, not only on the Committee, and they are worth knowing because they cost money.

If an emergency affects the municipal area, Council is to use its resources, and the resources made available to it, for the purposes of managing the emergency.

It does so in accordance with the Municipal Emergency Management Plan, whether or not a state of emergency or state of alert has been declared. So the Plan governs from the first moment, not from the point of a declaration.

So far as the Plan does not apply, Council acts on the directions of the Municipal Chairperson, the Coordinator or the Committee — and where a declaration has been made, on the directions of the Regional Controller.

Section 47 requires each council to establish and maintain, or otherwise provide for the availability of, all resources and facilities it considers necessary for managing an emergency in accordance with the Plan.

And Council supports the State Emergency Service, providing for municipal volunteer units, with the Director SES appointing each Unit Manager. The Minister may allocate money to councils for emergency management, but the baseline obligation is Council's.

Slide 8 — When Something Happens

When something happens, response is led by others. Council's Coordinator is the link, and escalation runs upward.

The Response Management Authority leads, and which agency that is depends on the hazard. Council's Plan sets out, hazard by hazard, which authority leads and what Council's support function is — property identification, road closures, local operations centres, plant and machinery, community information.

The Municipal Coordinator leads Council's support role, which may include establishing a Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre staffed by an Incident Management Team.

Escalation goes up, not sideways. The Coordinator considers whether any powers or declarations under the Act need to be used or made, and if so advises the Regional Controller. Council is not in that chain, and a councillor is not a shortcut into it.

Declarations are made above Council. A state of alert or state of emergency is declared at State level, and once declared, Council acts on the Regional Controller's directions where the Plan does not apply.

And resources can be shared. Where the Coordinator considers another municipal area's resources are necessary, they may request them — which is why Council's Committee includes the neighbouring Kingborough Council's Municipal Coordinator.

Slide 9 — Recovery

Recovery is the longer half of this, and it is where Council's role is largest. Response lasts days; recovery can last years.

It runs through the same committee. Council does not operate a separate recovery committee — recovery activities are incorporated into the business of the Municipal Emergency Management Committee, of which the Recovery Coordinator is a member.

The Municipal Recovery Coordinator manages and coordinates recovery on Council's behalf, appointed by the Chief Executive Officer.

The functions are in the Act. Prior to, during or after an emergency, to ensure arrangements are in place to implement recovery processes, including the establishment and coordination of evacuation centres and recovery centres, and that the decisions of the Committee, the Chairperson and the Regional Controller are carried out.

Council's Community Recovery Plan distinguishes short-term recovery — immediate relief and restoring essential services — from long-term recovery, the rebuilding of community, economy, infrastructure and environment.

And escalation exists here too. After significant emergencies an Affected Area Recovery Committee may be established, or a State Recovery Taskforce with a State Recovery Coordinator, and Council's Recovery Coordinator sits on an Affected Area Recovery Committee where one is formed.

Slide 10 — In the Huon Valley

The Valley's hazards are not hypothetical, and the Plan is written around them.

Bushfire. The Valley carries significant bushfire risk, with terrain, vegetation and dispersed settlement all contributing.

Flood and storm. The Plan sets flood and rainfall thresholds specific to the Huon Valley, and identifies the major transport routes and essential services exposed — which matters where a single road closure can isolate a community.

Concurrent and cascading events. The Plan explicitly considers events happening together, or one triggering another. A fire followed by rain on a burnt catchment is a different problem to either alone.

Climate change impacts are treated as part of the risk picture, alongside prevention, mitigation and adaptation, with land use planning sitting within the prevention arrangements.

And it connects to the rest of the series. Community Recovery is one of Council's eleven strategic risk categories, and climate resilience is a core principle of the Asset Management Strategy. Emergency management is not a separate compartment.

Slide 11 — What Councillors Do

The councillor role is largest before and after an emergency. During one it is smallest, and that is deliberate rather than dismissive.

Before an event, Council appoints and supports. It appoints the Municipal Chairperson and nominates the Coordinator and Deputy for the Minister to appoint. It funds and maintains the resources the Plan relies on. And it can ask, at any time, whether the Plan is current and whether those resources are actually there.

During an event, stay out of the operation. Councillors have no operational role, and the Committee itself has no authority in command, control or coordination. Directing employees or agencies during

an emergency is not assistance — it is interference in a chain of command that exists for safety reasons.

During an event, carry information carefully. Communicate what the response agencies are saying, through the channels Council has established. Do not improvise advice about roads, evacuation or safety, and do not become an alternative source of information. A councillor contradicting an official warning, even accidentally, can cost more than silence would.

After an event, this is the councillor's time. Recovery runs for months or years, it is largely Council's work, and it is where advocacy, representation and community connection matter more than anywhere else in the role.

And afterwards, review. One of the Committee's statutory functions is to review the management of emergencies that have occurred, and Council's Terms of Reference require a post-emergency operational debrief for all organisations involved. That is where lessons become changes to the Plan.

Slide 12 — Five Things to Remember

Five things to take away.

One. Council supports; others command. A Response Management Authority leads the response depending on the hazard, and the Municipal Committee has no authority in the command, control or coordination of it.

Two. The Committee is statutory. Section 20 establishes one for every municipal area. Council does not create it and cannot abolish it, which makes it unlike any other committee in this series.

Three. Three roles, three appointers. Council appoints the Municipal Chairperson. The Minister appoints the Municipal Coordinator and Deputy, from a person Council nominates. And the Chief Executive Officer appoints the Municipal Recovery Coordinator.

Four. The Plan governs from the first moment. Council uses its resources in accordance with the Municipal Emergency Management Plan whether or not a state of emergency or state of alert has been declared.

Five. Recovery is where councillors matter most. Response lasts days and belongs to the agencies. Recovery lasts months or years, is largely Council's work, and is where representation and advocacy count.