



Community Emergency Risk Assessment

Informing Emergency Management Planning

What is it for?

Community Emergency

The Community Emergency Risk Assessment (CERA) provides Emergency Management Planning Committees (EMPC) with a framework for considering and improving the safety and resilience of their community from hazards and emergencies.

The CERA approach aims to understand the likely impacts of a range of emergency scenarios upon community assets, values and functions. As such, CERA provides an opportunity for multiple community impacts and consequences to be considered enabling collaborative risk treatment plans and emergency preparedness measures to be described.

Risk Assessment

The CERA tool provides a robust framework for a 'community of interest' to identify and prioritise those emergency risks that are likely to create most disruption to them. The assessment helps users to identify and describe hazards and assess impacts and consequences based upon the vulnerability or exposure of the community or its functions.

The outputs of the assessment process can be used to inform emergency management planning, introduce risk action plans and ensure that communities are aware of and better informed about hazards and the associated emergency risks that may affect them.

How does it work?

The CERA approach combines hazard information and intelligence from a number of sources in order to gain a clear understanding of the elements that define 'risk' within a specific area. These sources include:

- existing 'single hazard' risk assessments, (e.g., the Victorian Fire Risk Register (VFRR), Integrated Fire Management Planning (IFMP) and Flood studies);
- new or existing community profile information, (e.g., Part 2 of Municipal Emergency Management Plans);
- subject matter experts and local community representatives.

Integral to the success of the process are the in-depth discussions that occur between experts, decision-makers and community representatives. The CERA meeting format is designed to promote a collaborative discussion between agencies, experts and community representatives on the ways in which various hazards may affect important assets, values and functions for a defined 'community of interest'. This format enables participants to then identify underlying weaknesses, consequences and long term impacts that may not have been uncovered if discussed in isolation.

During these discussions, participants respond to a number of questions about the defined community, enabling them to describe the factors (i.e., Hazard, Exposure, Vulnerability) that contribute to a particular risk. Participants work to identify key risks by responding to these questions and collectively discussing the issues that arise.

By developing an understanding of the likely impacts and factors that underlie exposure and vulnerability, participants are better placed to describe within their Emergency Management Plan (EMP) how they will treat these risks or cope with impacts.





Community Emergency Risk Assessment

Informing Emergency Management Planning

What are the steps in the CERA Process?

The CERA process is designed to be undertaken over two facilitated sessions in the following manner. This timing is dependent upon the complexity of each municipality, the capacity of the EMPC, and access to and availability of subject matter experts and community representatives. Some risk assessments may therefore require more than two days to complete.

Session 1

- Convene a two to three hour workshop with your Emergency Management Planning Committee (EMPC) members.
- EMPC members identify the hazards they think pose the most significant threat to their community.
- EMPC members identify the Assets, Values and Functions they think are integral to the normal functioning of their community.
- Hazard experts and representatives of key community assets, values and functions are identified and then invited to take part in the risk assessment in Session 2.

Session 2

- A larger committee consisting of hazard experts and community representatives gathers for a second three to five hour workshop to understand and describe:
 - The nature and behaviour of hazards that may impact upon their community.
 - The exposure and vulnerability of key community assets, values and functions to each hazard.
- The committee then goes on to:
 - Identify strengths and weaknesses in existing planning and mitigation arrangements.
 - Identify opportunities for improvement to prevention, control and mitigation measures.
- To finalise the CERA process SES staff will be able to support the committee in loading the data from the group discussions into an excel-based risk assessment tool that will:
 - Calculate the levels of risk.
 - Create risk sheets (that can be exported) as well as heat maps for inclusion in Emergency Management Plans.

Further sessions can be arranged as needed.

How do you get started?

Contact your nearest SES Regional Office

SES staff will help you to organise your CERA meetings and work through the risk assessment process. They will provide you with materials to support your learning and risk assessment decision-making.

For further information please contact your nearest SES Regional Office or visit ses.vic.gov.au.