



Communications in emergencies and natural disasters

Introduction

Telecommunications services, such as phone and internet, help us to communicate and receive information during emergencies or natural disasters and are crucial in coordinating response and recovery efforts.

While telecommunications companies actively plan for emergency situations, during a natural disaster, telecommunications services cannot be guaranteed. Power outages are highly likely in a natural disaster and can lead to telecommunications services becoming unavailable.

All Australians can do more to prepare for the loss of telecommunications services in a natural disaster so they do not become isolated and without important information that helps keep them up to date.

What can I do to prepare?

The devastating 2019-20 bushfires affected telecommunications infrastructure, impacting phone and internet services for many people living and travelling in bushfire affected communities. Telecommunications services may be unavailable for a number of reasons during a disaster, however most outages are due to power failure, either from direct damage caused by natural disasters or as a preventative measure.

To help stay safe and connected during an emergency, there are some easy steps you can follow to prepare for unexpected outages:

- If communication networks go down and you're concerned for your safety, don't wait to be told to evacuate – prepare and leave early.
- Follow advice from emergency personnel on the ground and Emergency Alert phone messages if received.
- Plan ahead and don't rely on a single type of communications technology. Consider how you will communicate if your mobile, landline and internet service are not available.
- Include a portable radio with a spare set of batteries in your emergency kit so you can stay up-to-date with emergency information.
- Keep your mobile charged and have a backup power source, like a battery pack.
- While you have power, monitor your local ABC and commercial radio and television stations, as well as local emergency service websites and social feeds for up-to-date warnings and information.
- Write down contact numbers and email addresses for family and friends so you have these available if you are in a natural disaster and cannot recharge your phone.

Telecommunications network operators work closely with emergency service organisations to restore and maintain services as quickly as possible. They also deploy portable network equipment to provide temporary coverage as soon as is safely possible, but this can take some time if conditions are unsafe so it's best to be prepared.

Find out more:

- Visit [Emergency Alert](#) for more help on what to do in an emergency