Natural disaster financial assistance for local councils

# Counter disaster operations

## Overview

Under the Natural Disaster Financial Assistance (NDFA) scheme, financial support is provided to assist local councils with costs associated with certain counter disaster operations, including repairs to assets damaged by counter disaster operations.

Financial assistance is provided in accordance with the Commonwealth-State Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA).

## Definition of a counter disaster operation

Counter disaster operations can be defined as those **extraordinary** activities undertaken to provide direct assistance to, and in the protection of, individuals or the general public, immediately before, during, and in the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster. As a general rule, counter disaster operations activities are typically undertaken within the immediate proximity of residential properties.

Where activities are carried out to protect communities the underlying principle is that these activities are undertaken to reduce the cost of direct assistance to individuals (technically, thereby reducing personal hardship and distress under Category A of the NDRRA). Counter disaster operations are normally undertaken within the first 24/48 hours and up to two weeks after a natural disaster.

## Examples of eligible counter disaster operation

### Across all eligible natural disaster events

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| For the protection of the general public |
| * Establishment of temporary access routes required for disaster relief operations to allow individuals and families to return to their home. |
| * Removal of trees or damaged limbs or dead animals (domestic or wildlife) from roadside verges. |
| **Of direct assistance to individuals or households** |
| * Activities to render a damaged house safe and habitable, **which are only eligible if the applicant is the owner of the home and it is their principal place of residence.** For example: tarping damaged roofs, tree bracing or structural integrity assessments required prior to residents returning home i.e. electrical safety. |
| * Clearing of disaster related debris in immediate vicinity of residential properties including damaged and/or destroyed items, **which are only eligible if the applicant is the owner of the home and it is their principal place of residence.** The only exception to this is if a residential property, such as a holiday home, is damaged and there is hazardous waste (such as asbestos) on that property, which is preventing other residents from returning to their principal place of residence. This can include costs incurred in providing this assistance through non-monetary in-kind practices, such as waiving revenue or through the provision of services (i.e. external contractor). |
| * Removal of trees or damaged limbs or dead animals (including livestock) if it occurs within the residential component of a rural property, or within the area immediately surrounding the main access to the house (i.e. the driveways), or where it could potentially present a health and safety threat to residents living in the house (i.e. by contaminating drinking water). For rural properties, the residential component is the area clearly identifiable as residential and not used for farming purposes i.e. residential premise and immediate surroundings. These activities **are only eligible if the applicant is the owner of the home and it is their principal place of residence.** |
| * Establishment of temporary dump sites for disposing of disaster related debris (includes establishment, operation and decommissioning costs). |
| * Restoration of assets damaged during eligible counter disaster operations such as deliberate damage to fences when emergency access is required to combat the eligible natural disaster event. |

### Bushfire events

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| Of direct assistance to individuals or households | For the protection of the general public |
| * Cleaning and refilling residential portable water and septic tanks arising from debris to ensure that residential properties are safe and habitable. | * Establishment of bushfire control lines to ensure public health and safety in public areas due to threatening bushfires including the hiring of additional dozers. |
| * Establishment of bushfire control lines to protect residential properties from threatening bushfires including the hiring of additional dozers. |  |

### Flood events

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| Of direct assistance to individuals or households | For the protection of the general public |
| * Clearing of blocked drains and pipes. | * Sandbagging including the hiring of machines to fill sandbags necessary to ensure public health and safety in public areas arising from inundation. |
| * Pumping out of residential septic tanks. | * Temporary levees to prevent inundation around townships. |
| * Resupply of water used for firefighting as long as the water was used for an eligible counter disaster activity. | * Temporary flood crossings required for either disaster relief operations to ensure public health and safety. |
| * Sandbagging (including the hiring of machines to fill sandbags) and the construction of temporary levees necessary to prevent inundation of residential properties. |  |
| * Temporary flood crossings required for either disaster relief operations or to allow residents to return to their homes. |  |

### Eligible costs

Examples of eligible costs associated with the undertaking of counter disaster operations include the following:

* Consumable items necessary for eligible counter disaster operations such as tarpaulins, chain-saw chains, ropes, batteries, plastic sheeting, outboard motor parts used during an event.
* Transportation of labour, equipment and materials necessary for eligible disaster relief operations.
* Overtime costs, travel expenses and allowances incurred while undertaking counter disaster activities.
* Vehicle or equipment repairs and additional servicing required as a direct consequence of eligible counter disaster operations.
* Running costs associated with the operation of local government owned plant and equipment undertaking eligible counter disaster operations, such as fuel and oils.
* Hire of additional plant and equipment.

### Ineligible counter disaster operations

Examples of ineligible counter disaster operations include the following:

* Normal day labour salaries and wages outside of the NDRRA.
* Purchase of capital equipment for earthmoving, chain saws and water pumps (except where hire is not possible).
* Establishment costs associated with a volunteer organisation repairing fencing on a residential property.
* Undertaking urban search and rescue operations and rapid impact assessments.
* Temporary fencing to contain livestock wandering free as a direct result of a natural disaster.
* IT costs associated with operation of natural disaster systems.
* Establishment and operation of incident control centres.

## Advice regarding eligibility

The examples provided above are guidelines only. For any queries relating to the eligibility of relief and recovery expenditure, please contact NDFA Team on (03) 9651 2327 or email ndfa@dtf.vic.gov.au.