Natural Disaster Financial Assistance for local councils

Counter disaster operations

## Overview

Under Victoria’s 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 other forms of assistance i.e. costs associated with temporary accommodation.

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 operations following all types of natural disaster events

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| For the protection of the general public | |
| * Establishment and operation of temporarily locally positioned operational **base camps** used by front line emergency services personnel to undertake bushfire suppression activities. | |
| * **Bushfire suppression** activities to protect the general public, including aerial support in the immediate proximity of a community where fire impact is imminent. | |
| * **Consumables** such as saw chains, ropes, batteries, plastic sheeting, outboard motor parts, tarpaulins and personal protective equipment and uniforms used during an event (as long as there was no stock on hand prior to the event). | |
| * **Hire of additional plant and equipment** to undertake eligible activities listed above. | |
| * **Removal of trees** or damaged limbs or dead animals (domestic or wildlife) from roadside verges. | |
| * **Restoration of a facility** has been damaged while undertaking eligible counter disaster operations activities, or where an asset has been damaged when used as an evacuation point. | |
| * Establishment of **temporary access routes** required for disaster relief operations to allow individuals and families to return to their home. | |
| * **Transportation** of labour, equipment and materials necessary for eligible disaster relief operations. | |
| * **Vehicle or equipment repairs,** and additional servicing required as a direct consequence of eligible counter disaster operations, such as fuel and oils. |

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| **Direct assistance to individuals or households** |
| * Rapid **damage assessments** on residential properties. |
| * Activities to render a **damaged house safe and habitable**. For example, covering broken windows, tarping damaged roofs, tree bracing, or structural integrity assessments required prior to residents returning home (i.e. electrical safety, re-grading of a private driveway to ensure access to the immediate vicinity of the main residential house.   These activities are only eligible to assist a disaster affected household where they are the actual owner of the home and it is their principal place of residence. In order to claim reimbursement of expenditure, local councils need to demonstrate that any work undertaken on the main residential house are necessary to make the home safe, habitable and secure (note that the household needs to have utilised any available insurance arrangements). |
| * **Demolition of a damaged house arising from a natural disaster.** For example, demolition and removal of disaster damaged related building materials and debris of the residential property.   This measure is only eligible to assist a disaster affected household where they are the actual owner of the home and it is their principal place of residence. In order to claim reimbursement of expenditure, local councils need to demonstrate that the costs relate to the demolition activities and that the household is intending to rebuild their house in the same location (note that the household needs to have utilised any available insurance arrangements). |
| * **Removal of disaster related debris** in immediate vicinity of residential properties including damaged and/or destroyed items. 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. Debris located beyond the immediate vicinity of a residential property is ineligible. For rural properties, the residential component is the area clearly identifiable as residential and not used for farming purposes (i.e. residential premises and immediate surroundings).   The following activities are associated with the removal of debris:   * + clean-up activities inside and immediately outside a home including the removal of damaged furniture, whitegoods, building material debris (such as tiles, bricks and broken glass) and spoiled perishable food;   + removal of septic waste;   + removal of fallen trees and green waste as well as the removal of trees which have become dangerous as a direct result of the natural disaster;   + removal of flood related debris (such as mud);   + removal of hazardous material (such as asbestos) which has been exposed as a direct result of the eligible disaster. Hazardous material located beyond the residential block which is causing potential health and safety risks for the household, is also eligible to be removed; and   + clearing blocked drains, guttering and downpipes. |
| Local councils can seek reimbursement for costs associated with the engagement of contractors or the hiring of skips, transportation and disposal costs for the debris including any temporary dump sites to accommodate debris removal, the hire of additional specialised cleaning machinery, the replacement of consumable items (i.e. chainsaw chains and fuel) and extraordinary Council staffing costs (i.e. overtime and allowances waived – for example, if a local council allows households to dispose of their disaster related debris free of cost as a council owned dump site.  This measure is only eligible to assist a disaster affected household where they are the actual owner of the home and it is their principal place of residence.   * **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).   This measure is only eligible to assist a disaster affected household where they are the actual owner of the home and it is their principal place of residence. |
| * **Restoration of assets damaged** during eligible counter disaster operations (i.e. fences that have been damaged when emergency access is required to combat the eligible natural disaster event). |
| * **Search and rescue** operations |
| * Establishment of **temporary dump sites** for disposing of disaster related debris (includes establishment, operation and decommissioning costs). |

## Examples of ineligible counter disaster operations following all types of natural disaster events

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| For the protection of the general public |
| * **Advertising** where not associated with an eligible NDRRA activity i.e. community events. |
| * **Caravan Parks -** Restoration of damage located in Caravan Parks (owned by a private operator or local council). |
| * **Capital purchases for computers, phones and software.** |
| * **Debris –** including dead stock, located beyond the immediate vicinity of a residential property is ineligible. 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). |
| * **Driveways –** re-grading of private driveways where there is no link to a natural disaster. |
| * **Fencing -** Establishment costs associated with a volunteer organisation repairing fencing on a residential property. |
| * **Fencing –** restoration of fencing bordering on private property and areas managed by either Councils or Catchment Management Authorities which are owned by the private property landholder. |
| * **Fencing -** Temporary fencing to contain livestock wandering free as a result of a natural disaster. |
| * **Internal plant hire**. |
| * **Parks and Gardens** – clean-up of debris. |
| * **Planning and building permit waivers** to assist residential property owners to rebuild. |
| * **Restoration** of community assets not damaged whilst used as a relief or recovery centre or MECC. |
| * **Staffing Costs -** Normal day labour salaries and wages outside of the NDRRA. |
| * **Staffing costs -** Compassionate leave. |
| * **Staffing costs** - Staff counselling. |
| * **Tree stumps -** removal of a tree stump where it is unclear if a tree was falling on a road or road reserve or in the immediate vicinity of a residential property. |

## Examples of eligible counter disaster operations following bushfire events

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| Direct assistance to individuals or households | For the protection of the general public |
| * Cleaning and refilling **residential potable 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** and other bushfire response activities to protect residential properties from threatening bushfires including the hiring of additional dozers. |  |
| * **Resupply of water** used for firefighting as long as the water was used for an eligible counter disaster activity. |  |

## Example of eligible counter disaster operations following flood events

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| Direct assistance to individuals or households | For the protection of the general public |
| * Clearing of blocked **drains and pipes**. | * Clearing of blocked **drains, culverts and bridges** |
| * Cleaning and refilling **residential septic tanks** arising from debris to ensure that residential properties are safe and habitable. | * **Sandbagging** including the hiring of machines to fill sandbags necessary to ensure public health and safety in public areas related to inundation. |
| * **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 to ensure public health and safety. |
| * **Temporary flood crossings** required for either disaster relief operations or to allow residents to return to their homes. | * **Temporary levees** to prevent inundation around townships. |

## 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](mailto:ndfa@dtf.vic.gov.au).