



Scenario 3: Background

Across the world, rising global temperatures are having a catastrophic effect, driving changing weather patterns and causing more frequent and severe extreme weather events including heatwaves, bushfires, droughts, severe storms, floods and cyclones.

Extreme weather events often result in significant human, economic and environmental loss.

Amid these challenges, healthcare professionals and community members play a crucial role in emergency responses and broader health system adaptation to climate change.

Instructions

- This simulation will be conducted as a 'table-top' group-based simulation activity.
- Participants should form into six groups. Each group will have a pack of cards that profiles a different extreme weather event.
- **Read the first two cards in your pack only. The remaining cards are to be left upside down** until the facilitator calls 'start', at which time your group is to read and discuss how you would respond to the situation described on the **next card only**.
- At specific points in time, the facilitator will call 'next card' and your group will turn over the next card and discuss how you would respond to the unfolding situation described.
- When responding to the situations described in the scenarios, it is important to think broadly and consider more than the immediate healthcare concerns presented. Your focus should be on coordination of the emergency response, as well as prioritisation and communication.
- **While you may not feel that you have the experience to manage the situations presented, you may in fact be the most experienced person in a disaster situation and others will turn to you for advice – this simulation is about being resourceful and creative ... so do the best you can with the information at hand.**
- At the end of the simulation activity, the facilitator will lead a debrief and discussion with the whole group.

Scenario 3: The bushfire

Part 1

You are visiting your family who live in a coastal town with a population of approximately 2000 people, except during peak holiday seasons when the population can more than triple. It is Boxing Day and bush fires have been burning to the north and south for days. The flames are up to 40-metres high and the fires are expected to worsen when the southerly winds hit in a few hours.

At 1pm you hear on the radio that the hospital is dangerously short staffed because many people are either protecting their properties or unable to get to work because the highway is blocked. You decide to go to the hospital and offer to help.

The air is becoming thick with smoke and it is getting dark. At 3pm the electricity fails and the hospital needs to rely on a generator. The only functioning monitor is in the resuscitation room in the emergency department and only a few of the lights in the hospital are working.

What are your immediate priorities?

Scenario 3: The bushfire

Part 2

It is 5pm. Although the hospital beds are fully occupied, people continue to come for help.

A mother has brought her two sons to the hospital with severe asthma exacerbated by all the smoke; their caravan park has been evacuated and she doesn't know where else to go.

Some of the fire and rescue team arrive with burns and smoke inhalation. A man has fallen off his roof while trying to defend his home from the fires and has severe lacerations and a compound fracture of his right tibia and fibula.

The hospital is running dangerously short of essential medications and supplies.

How should these pressing issues be managed?

Scenario 3: The bushfire

Part 3

It is 10pm. Electricity has been restored, but community members and holiday makers are still seeking sanctuary from the fires and smoke at the hospital. You estimate that over a hundred people have arrived.

As well as those who are injured, many are tired, distressed, and frightened, some are getting increasingly agitated and most haven't eaten since early in the day.

How will you respond to and prioritise these competing priorities?

Scenario 3: The bushfire

Reflection

What might be the immediate and longer term social/emotional/mental health impacts of this extreme weather event?

You are aware that changing weather patterns will result in more frequent and severe extreme weather events such as bushfires. What advice would you give to community members and healthcare settings to help them better prepare for such events?