



Scenario 2: 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 2: The heatwave

Part 1

You live in a remote Australian town with a population of approximately 3000 people. The temperatures over the last week have been averaging 44°C, rarely dropping below 35°C, even at night. The unrelenting heat is impacting the community, exacerbating heat-related chronic diseases and significantly increasing healthcare demands.

You work in the town's 25-bed hospital and have just begun an afternoon shift. Due to the heatwave, the air-conditioning has failed and this is impacting the provision of care. Both the intranet and internet are down.

What are your immediate priorities?

Scenario 2: The heatwave

Part 2

It is 4pm: Due to the heatwave, a number of people have been brought to the emergency department with heatstroke and dehydration. One woman has presented as her home dialysis unit has failed, another because of injuries resulting from domestic violence.

Tensions are high in the emergency department with escalating tempers and increasing episodes of aggression.

A local Aboriginal Elder has had a cardiac arrest. Despite the soaring temperatures inside the hospital, the staff must perform the resuscitation wearing plastic gowns to maintain infection prevention measures.

How are you going to respond to these pressing concerns?

Scenario 2: The heatwave

Part 3

It is 7pm. One of the maintenance staff has reported that the cooling system for hospital mortuary has broken down. There are two deceased patients; one is the Aboriginal Elder who did not survive his heatstroke and cardiac arrest. His family is very distressed that he could be taken away from his Country.

The woman with acute kidney disease is deteriorating. She would normally be transferred to the closest tertiary hospital but all flights have been cancelled.

How will you respond to these challenges?

Scenario 2: The heatwave

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 heatwaves. What advice would you give to community members and health care facilities to help them better prepare for such events?