



Staying connected in emergencies

Description

Staying connected in emergencies

Internet and voice services aid in staying connected in emergencies or natural disasters before, during and after. Power outages are common in emergencies, so it is important to have a range of options available to make sure that you stay connected.





• Creating an emergency plan

It's crucial to have an emergency plan ready before a crisis strikes. This includes knowing what actions to take, what to pack, preparing equipment, and managing people and animals.

This [fact sheet](#) helps you complete steps in preparing for an emergency situation.

Most state-based fire services offer bushfire plans that can serve as templates for emergency planning. [Creating an emergency management plan](#) (find a free template [here](#)) ensures you and your business are ready in case of emergency.



It also helps to know what's happening behind the scenes during and after an emergency. This [fact sheet](#) will help you understand actions emergency services and other organisations are taking to get you back in service.

• Emergency Planning

- - 1
Stay mobile

Keep a charged mobile phone and portable mobile battery pack ready to use in a power outage, or if your connection is disrupted in an emergency event. Consider turning off mobile data on unnecessary apps to save battery. Download emergency apps, maps, and critical resources for offline use.

- 2
Stay updated

Local radio is a good source of information during an emergency, so include a battery powered radio in your emergency communications kit. Also follow emergency services, including your state Fire and Rescue and Police Services, as well as utility companies such as Telstra, and on social media for updates.

- 3
Back up information

To make sure you can access important information and essential documents from anywhere, including insurance policies and financial documents, consider creating a digital back up on a USB or in the cloud.

- 4
Be prepared

Test residential evacuation and business continuity plans, including considering investing in alternative communication and power options (such as a generator or battery supply) to keep your business or community group operating – these need to be tried and tested regularly as part of your Business Continuity Plans.

• Prevent storm damage to equipment



In an electrical storm, turn off and unplug mains-powered devices to protect them from lightning strikes and power surges. Use surge protectors or uninterruptible power supplies (UPS) for important equipment to handle power surges by grounding excess voltage.

These devices are available at hardware and electronics stores. Wait until the storm passes before reconnecting mains-powered devices.





• General tips to stay connected & safe during emergencies

- - 1
Evacuate early

If communication networks go down and you're concerned for your safety, don't wait to be told to evacuate – prepare and leave early.
 - 2
Follow emergency advice

Follow advice from emergency personnel on the ground and [Emergency Alert](#) phone messages if received.
 - 3
Use diverse communication

Plan ahead and don't rely on a single type of communications technology to keep connected. Consider how you will communicate if your mobile, landline and/or internet services are not available.
 - 4
Buy a portable radio

Include a portable radio (solar powered, crank-charged, or with a spare set of batteries) in your emergency kit so you can stay up-to-date with emergency information.
 - 5
Monitor local radio/TV

While you have power, monitor your local ABC and commercial radio and television stations, as well as local emergency service websites and social feeds if possible, for up-to-date warnings and information.
 - 6
Keep devices charged

Keep your mobile charged and have a backup power source, like a battery pack. Even without a mobile plan or SIM card it is possible to contact 000 with a charged mobile phone, in mobile reception areas.
 - 7



Write down contacts

Write down contact numbers and email addresses for family and friends so you have these available even if your phone or other electronic devices aren't available or working.

- For more information, check out these tips from the Australian Government [Communications in emergencies page](#).



Frequently Asked Questions

- 1What are some alternative connection options?

We strongly recommend having as many backup voice and internet options as possible for use in possible emergency situations. One connection may work while another is offline in the same situation, and no one technology or connection is guaranteed reliable in every situation.

Service Type	Description
Telstra Air	Free internet via hotspots for Telstra service users. Contact Telstra to confirm access.
Mobile Internet Dongles	Battery-powered, portable devices providing internet access via mobile network. Regularly connect to a mobile service to stay activated.
Landline Phone	Keep a handset that plugs directly into the phone wall plug for use during power outages.
Printed Information	Print out important contact numbers and evacuation plans in advance.
Regional Tech Hub Contact Sheet	Download and print provider contact details for easy access.
Wi-Fi Calling	Activate Wi-Fi Calling on your mobile phone for voice calls and texts over Wi-Fi.



Battery Conservation	Place mobile phones in aeroplane mode until in range of a network to conserve battery.
Internet Call Services	Download apps like Skype, Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp for internet-based calls.
Satellite Phone	Expensive but reliable backup service for emergency use.
Mobile Satellite Dongles	Devices like Thuraya SatSleev or Zoleo for mobile and satellite services.
Handheld UHF/CB Unit	Purchase a handheld unit with contact channels for local organisations and neighbours.
Evacuation Center Wi-Fi	Check for Wi-Fi availability at local evacuation centre ; provided by nbn® Disaster Satellite Services , or the nbn® mobile Road Muster trucks .

Telstra Air

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Mobile Internet Dongles

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Printed Information

Print out important contact numbers and evacuation plans in advance.

[Regional Tech Hub Contact Sheet](#)

Download and print provider contact details for easy access.

Wi-Fi Calling

Activate Wi-Fi Calling on your mobile phone for voice calls and texts over Wi-Fi.

Battery Conservation

Place mobile phones in aeroplane mode until in range of a network to conserve battery.

Internet Call Services

Download apps like Skype, Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp for internet-based calls.

Satellite Phone

Expensive but reliable backup service for emergency use.

Mobile Satellite Dongles

Devices like [Thuraya SatSleev](#) or [Zoleo](#) for mobile and satellite services.

Handheld UHF/CB Unit

Purchase a handheld unit with contact channels for local organisations and neighbours.

Evacuation Center Wi-Fi

Check for Wi-Fi availability at local evacuation centre; provided by nbn® [Disaster Satellite Services](#), or the nbn® [mobile Road Muster trucks](#).



- 2How do you make emergency calls during a power outage?

During a power outage, nbn's phone and internet services won't function without backup power. This also impacts connected medical and security alarms.

Prepare an emergency connection pack with a charged mobile phone, portable battery pack, and battery-powered radio for emergency calling.

- 3What emergency contacts should I keep readily available?

000

- Australia's primary emergency call service number is Triple Zero (000). It can be dialled from any fixed or mobile phone, pay phones, certain Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services, and satellite phone services.
- If you call from a mobile phone, your call to 000 will be carried on any available mobile network.
- Note that if there is no mobile coverage on any network, you will not be able to reach the Emergency Call Service via a mobile telephone.
- If there is Internet access via Wi-Fi, you may be able to use Wi-Fi Calling. You can also call 000 using the [Emergency+ app on your smartphone](#). You must have access to a mobile network or Wi-Fi Calling in order to make this call.

112

- Available from most mobile phones. Call as if you were calling 000.
- If there is no mobile coverage on any network, you will not be able to reach the Emergency Call Service via a mobile telephone.
- If there is Internet access via Wi-Fi, however, you may be able to use Wi-Fi Calling.

106

- People who are deaf or have a hearing or speech impairment can use a TTY (Type to Read) to call 106. 106 is a text-based Emergency Call Service provided as a part of the National Relay Service (NRS).
- All calls to the emergency numbers, whether from fixed, mobile, pay phones or VoIP services are free-of-charge.
- When you call 106, the operator will connect you with the emergency service organisation (police, fire or ambulance) you request.
- You cannot access 106 by SMS.
- You can also ask the NRS for a captioned relay, internet relay, SMS relay, video relay or voice relay call to be transferred to Triple Zero if you need emergency help from police, fire or an ambulance service.

National Relay Service (NRS)

- Calls to emergency services are prioritised in the NRS call answer system except NRS Video Relay calls.



- You can contact emergency services through NRS Chat, SMS Relay, NRS Captions, Voice Relay, Video Relay and TTY.
- For more information on NRS emergency calls, visit the [Department of Communications and the Arts's AccessHub](#).

Emergency alert telephone warning system

- Emergency Alert is the national telephone warning system used by emergency services to send voice messages to landlines and text messages to mobile phones within a defined area about likely or actual emergencies.
- Emergency Alert is just one way of warning communities and will not be used in all circumstances.
- [Emergency Alert](#) relies on telecommunications networks to send messages, and message delivery cannot be guaranteed.

Emergency+ app (Relaunched in October 2020).

- **Important** – if there is no mobile coverage on any network, you will not be able to reach the Emergency Call Service via a mobile telephone.
- You must have access to a mobile network or Wi-Fi calling in order to make this call.
- Emergency+ is a free application developed by Australia's emergency services and industry partners. The application works across Australia, using GPS functionality built into smartphones to help a Triple Zero (000) caller provide critical location details required to mobilise emergency services.
- You use the app to identify your exact location, which you can then provide to emergency services when calling 000.
- Location accuracy is critical information for [Triple Zero \(000\)](#) call takers. The quicker an accurate location is established; the sooner emergency services can be dispatched and render assistance.
- With the vast majority of Triple Zero (000) calls originating from mobile telephones today, the Emergency+ application is a vital Government initiative to improve public safety and emergency service response times.

Links to emergency apps and resources:

Location

National

- <https://www.emergencyalert.gov.au/>
- <https://www.abc.net.au/listen/listenapp>
- <https://www.redcross.org.au/firstaid/firstaidapp>
- <https://airrater.org/>
- <https://www.abc.net.au/emergency/how-you-can-help>
- <https://auslanemergency.com.au/index.php>
- <https://www.getready.qld.gov.au/during-disaster>
- <https://www.nsw.gov.au/emergency/preparedness>

Queensland

New South Wales



Victoria

■ <https://support.emergency.vic.gov.au/hc/en>

Tasmania

■ <https://alert.tas.gov.au/about-app>

South Australia

■ <https://www.alert.sa.gov.au/>

■ <https://www.sa.gov.au/topics/emergencies->

■ <https://apps.apple.com/au/app/be-informed>

Western Australia

■ <https://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/hazard-informa>

Northern Territory

■ <https://apps.apple.com/au/app/nt-public-saf>

■ <https://nt-public-safety.en.softonic.com/and>

- 4How do you make emergency calls using Internet voice services?

Emergency triple zero calls are supported over [VoIP and Wi-Fi Calling](#) if there is no mobile network coverage available to make the call.

Your phone will try to search for a mobile network first, as this provides more of your location details to your chosen emergency service, but you should have no problems calling 000 using the Wi-Fi calling service.

There are some limitations when making emergency triple zero calls using an Internet service, including:

- Most VoIP handsets require power to operate.
- For Wi-Fi calling, you need to have a compatible device/plan from your provider.
- Location services will not be automatically provided to emergency services. Emergency services will ask for your location when they answer your 000 call.
- You will not be able to receive National Emergency Warning System (NEWS) SMS warnings if your mobile is connected over Wi-Fi calling.

If you do have Internet access, consider using the Australian Government Emergency+ App instead. It uses GPS functionality to help Triple Zero callers provide critical location details to emergency services.

- 5How do you use battery backups/UPS (Uninterruptible Power Supply)?

An Uninterruptible Power Supply is a mains-power charged battery that provides anywhere from 30 minutes to 4+ hours of power to the devices plugged into it, if the main power to your premises is lost.

In the event of an outage, the UPS instantly switches to its internal battery, meaning that the services plugged into it are not interrupted at all. Computers don't shut down, medical devices aren't interrupted, Internet services don't need restarting.



You can get UPSs for general purposes, or ones designed to support a very particular sort of device. The more specific the UPS is, the longer its internal battery will last.

An everyday UPS cannot support the needs of an entire house; you're better off looking at a petrol or diesel generator for that, in particular if you live in an area prone to power outages.

A UPS can, however, support vital communications services such as:

- [Telstra Smart Modems and some handsets](#)
- A [mobile repeater](#) (such as a Cel-fi) to continue mobile phone/internet access
- Necessary computers or routers
- In general, most nbn services

Other battery systems

You can get small, rechargeable battery packs about the size of a mobile phone designed to charge small mobile devices such as phones and tablets via a USB connection.

They are not too expensive, available from any shop that carries electronic equipment, and can charge a mobile phone to full power in a couple of hours.

Many camping and auto shops also carry solar-powered battery packs. These may also incorporate a radio and lights or torches. They have a rechargeable battery charged by a solar panel and will come in various sizes and power options. These can give you power as long as the solar panel sees the sun and a good hour or two of power from the internal battery when there's no sun.

Visit our page on [UPS](#) for more information.

Need more help to prepare for an emergency?

[Triple Zero website](#)

[ACMA: Emergency calls](#)

[Emergency alert](#)

[ACCAN: Staying connected during emergencies](#)

[nbn's: Preparation key to staying connected in an emergency](#)



• **For news, tips and resources on natural disasters, check these out:**

- ■ News



December 3, 2024

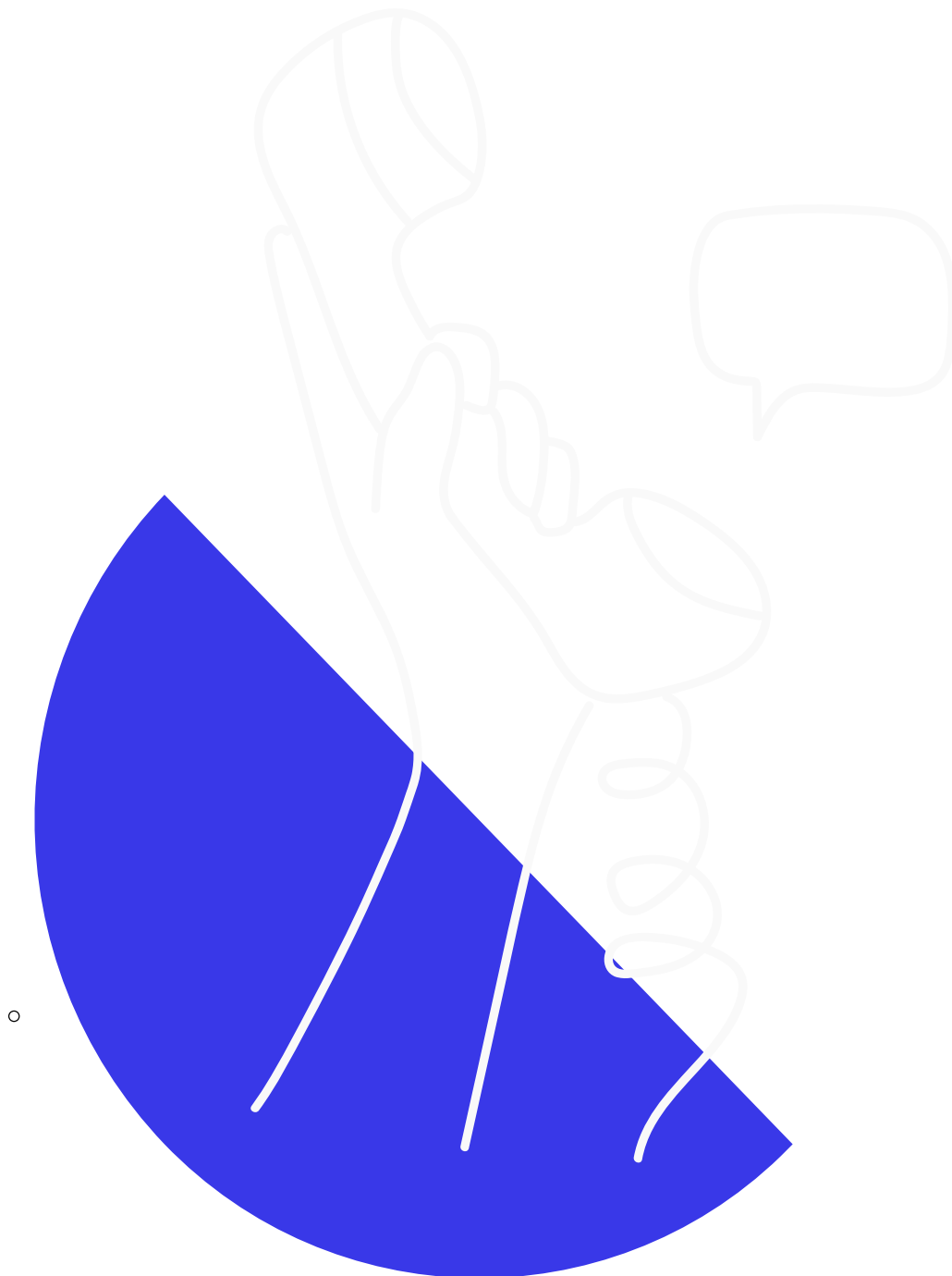
Telstra initiatives to prepare for disaster season

- News
September 11, 2024

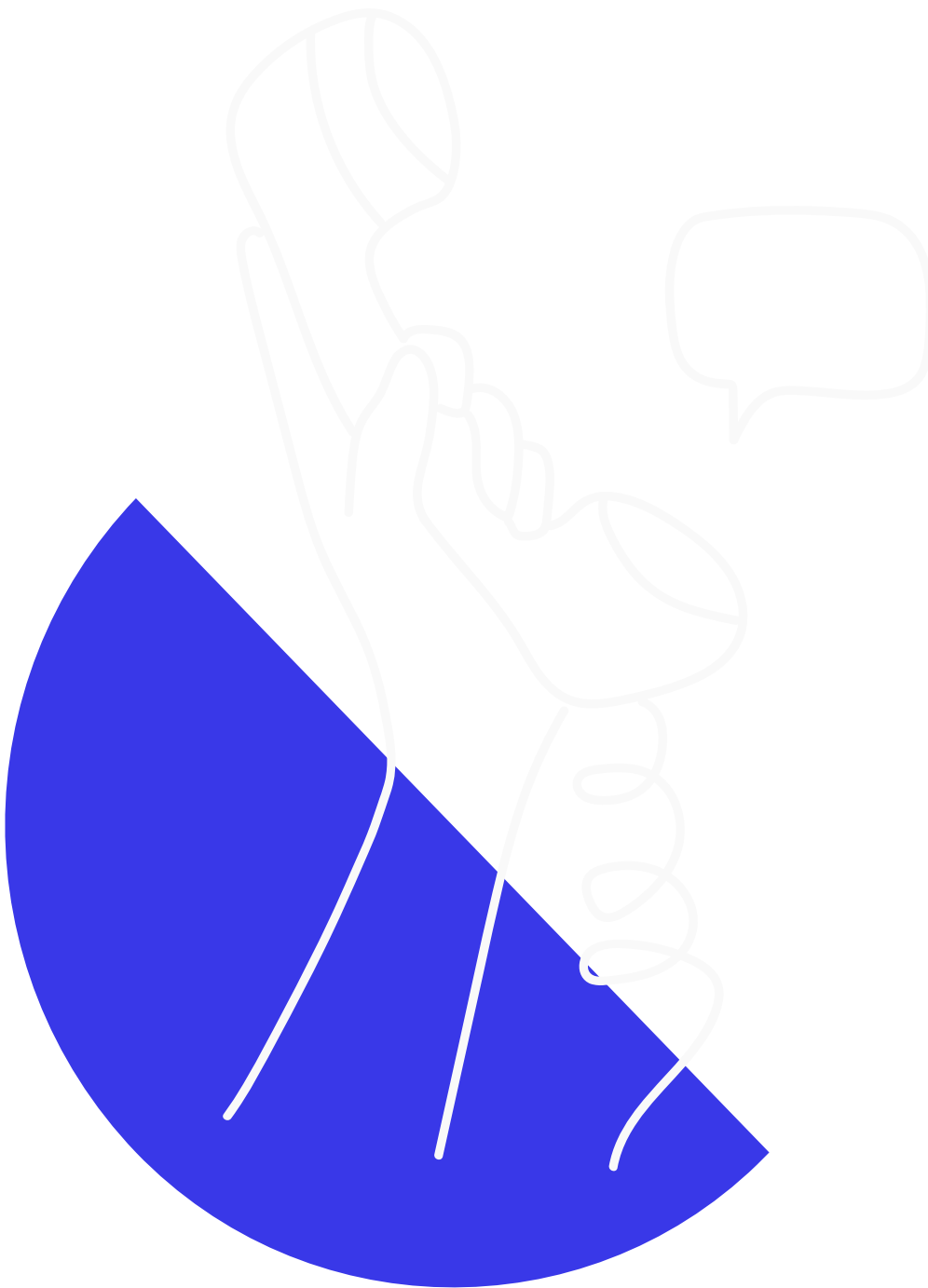
Connection options in an emergency

- Podcast
November 27, 2024

Regional Tech Hub Podcast: Tech Hub Talk



Need more help



Need more help to prepare for an emergency?

Chat to us on our hotline with one of our team members and let's get the conversation started. If we don't answer, we'll get back to you in no time at all.



[1300 081 029](tel:1300081029)

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2. Resources

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2. emergency preparedness
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