PUBLIC AND INTERNAL COMMUNICATION

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1. AUTHORITY AND NEED

Releasing information is normally the responsibility of the control agency(s) in conjunction with the Municipal Emergency Response Co-ordinator (MERC) at municipal level. Any information released by Glen Eira City Council must be prepared by the Municipal Communications Officer (Manager Customer and Communications) and approved by the MEMO or MRM (General information regarding Councils participation in the emergency) or Chief Executive / Senior Management - (Policy / Financial / Political matters).

Information can be categorised under the following headings:

2. PRE IMPACT

To enable the public to take reasonable measures to prevent, or lessen the potential effects of emergencies and to cope during the impact phase of an emergency.

3. DURING IMPACT

To produce suitable news releases through the media concerning the effects of the emergency and what action the public can take.

4. POST IMPACT

To maintain the crucial information flow to those in need of assistance and direction.

5. RELIEF AND RECOVERY PROCESS

Glen Eira City Council will be responsible for the release of information about services being made available to residents and affected people within Glen Eira as a result of the emergency. This will be in consultation with the Department of Health and Human Services.

Any information released must be prepared by the Municipal Communications Officer and approved by the MRM (General information) or Chief Executive. Liaison must take place so duplication and confusion does not occur.

Should Glen Eira City Council open an Emergency Relief Centre, full details of the location, hours of operation, methods of access (e.g. if roads are blocked) and services available on site should be widely disseminated to the affected community.

6. DISSEMINATION

Immediate use of the media should be made to avoid phone congestion. The public should be advised to direct calls to appropriate agencies and centres with adequate facilities, staff and knowledge to answer questions or disseminate information. Maximum use should be made of web and social media based services.

Close liaison should also take place with media and communications staff from the emergency services responsible for the particular type of emergency to ensure a coordinated approach to the messages being disseminated to the community.

7. METHODS

All methods of disseminating information should be considered including;

- Radio and TV
- Council, emergency service and other relevant web sites
- Social media systems
- Email
- Council Customer Service Centre
- Text messaging services
- Newspapers (particularly in extended response and recovery phases)
- Ethnic groups, radio stations, newspapers
- Church/Religious Groups
- Community Organisations and newsletters
- Community Information Glen Eira
- Libraries
- Manual door knock of each residence
- Sirens
- Public address system mounted on vehicle
- Letterbox drops and mail outs

Agencies should, as far as possible, inform the community regarding warning systems and procedures likely to be used during an emergency. Warnings will be most effective, and reach the most people, when a combination of warning systems is used. This is critical as people often rely on one information medium.

8. DISABLED OR NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING PERSONS

Special consideration has been given to disabled and non-English speaking groups. In the case where information or communication is required with persons unable to speak English an interpreter service such as the Telephone Interpreter Service may be able to assist.

Refer to the Contact Directory.

All agency representatives dealing with this situation should carry a language indicator card, which can be used to establish the language in question. Copies of this card are available from the Australian Government Department of Immigration and Border Protection and the Glen Eira City Council offices.

9. INFORMATION RESOURCES

The following systems are an essential part of these arrangements and should be utilised if and when required:

- Electronic Media

- Police Media Liaison (who can access the State Emergency Management Joint Public Information Committee to assist with information dissemination)

- Literature/Brochure Information

- Print Media

If an emergency requires concurrent media response through radio, television and newspaper outlets, the Police Media Liaison Section may be contacted through the Municipal Emergency Response Co-ordinator.

10. CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE (CSC)

Glen Eira City Council operates, during business hours, the Customer Service Centre, a large telephone enquiry service, skilled in responding to public enquiries.

During an emergency, this service can be activated to handle incoming calls from the public, to either:

- Advise them of the status/details of the emergency; or

- To relay information from the public to response and recovery personnel.

 The service can be mounted at the Town Hall, or at Carnegie Library if required.

a. Steps to Activate

- **MERC** or **MEMO** to decide CSC should be activated. The **Municipal Communications Officer (Manager Customer and Communications)** may request the service of the **MEMO.**

- Scale of staffing of the CSC to be nominated by **Manager Customer Service** in consultation with the **MEMO** and **Municipal Communications Officer**.

- Request the CSC Co-ordinator, or deputy to activate the appropriate CSC with the appropriate numbers of staff.

- The Municipal Communications Officer to give the CSC Co-ordinator or deputy, a situation briefing that will enable staff to understand the emergency and an appropriate level of detail to keep the public reasonably informed.

- The CSC Co-ordinator will arrange for a recorded message to be prepared and used to field most calls in consultation with the Communications Officer.

- The CSC Co-ordinator will arrange for 'Question and Answer' screens to be prepared to enable accurate and clear communication from CSC staff.

b. Stand-Down

The CSC will be stood down at the request of the MEMO.

The CSC is accessible via the widely publicised primary contact telephone number for Council. Should callers experience a period of heavy call load or be placed on hold during their call, there is pre-recorded 'on hold messaging' about a variety of Council services. The content of this messaging can be updated to provide contemporary advice to callers about a particular emergency situation or to assist them in reducing on hold times during peak call periods. For example, the message can direct callers to ring the State Emergency Service in the period following a major storm event if their call relates to private property damage or inundation. The process of changing the on hold messaging is managed by the **Municipal Communications Officer (Manager Customer and Communications).**

11.   INTERNAL COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS

In some emergencies, there may be a need for Council staff who are not normally part of the on-call emergency response team (i.e. MEMO or MRM) to assist. In such a case, the MEMO or MRM can contact staff (individuals, some or all) using an internal IT based system to send out an SMS requesting assistance.

Keeping Council staff informed about an emergency will be critical to ensure both a focused response and an informed and consistent understanding of the situation. The Manager Customer and Communications will be responsible for ensuring this occurs. Internal platforms for communicating with staff include:
- Digital screens on ground floor and level one staff rooms
- Intranet message board and rotating banners
- CEO email update
- GECC Matters —monthly staff newsletter that is emailed to all senior management providing updates on policies, training, etc.
- GE People — quarterly staff newsletter
- Shortel instant messaging