



Preparing for Emergencies in the Highlands and Islands

**A Guide to Civil Contingencies and
Resilience**



This document has been developed collaboratively by the member organisations of the **Highlands and Islands Local Resilience Partnership (HILRP)**, including Category 1 and Category 2 responders as defined by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

The guidance contained within this document reflects current legislation, national guidance, recognised good practice, and the collective expertise of partner agencies responsible for preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergencies. It is intended to provide members of the public with practical and consistent information specific to the communities in the Highlands and Islands to support personal and community resilience during emergency situations.

This document supplements the guidance that is available at [Ready Scotland](#) and should be used in conjunction with other official sources of information regarding personal and community resilience.



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The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA) defines an emergency as an event or situation that threatens serious harm to human welfare, the environment, or the security of the UK, including war or terrorism. You may also hear emergencies described as *major incidents* or *disruptive challenges*.

Resilience is the ability to adapt to a crisis and return to relative normality. In emergency planning, it describes how organisations work together to prepare for emergencies, respond effectively when they happen, reduce their impacts, and support communities to recover.

Resilience is achieved through partners working together to plan for, respond to, and recover from potential risks. This approach is known as **Integrated Emergency Management (IEM)**. IEM brings together five interconnected steps, supported by continual learning from every emergency:

1. **Assessment** – identifying key risks and the skills and resources available to respond
2. **Prevention** – reducing risks and minimising their potential impacts
3. **Preparation** – planning, training and exercising together to ensure readiness
4. **Response** – coordinating actions and communications to meet the most urgent needs
5. **Recovery** – supporting affected communities to return to normality and learning lessons for the future

Different emergencies—such as flooding, terrorist attacks or industrial incidents—can create similar needs, including shelter and community support. Because of this, much emergency planning focuses on managing the consequences of an emergency rather than its cause.



Emergency management in Scotland involves many organisations working together, not just the emergency services. Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, these organisations are grouped into three responder categories.

CATEGORY ONE RESPONDERS

Category 1 responders are the public sector organisations that have primary responsibility for responding to emergencies. They include:

- Local Authorities
- Police Scotland
- British Transport Police
- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
- Scottish Ambulance Service
- NHS Health Boards
- Integration Joint Boards (IJBs)
- Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)
- Maritime and Coastguard Agency

CATEGORY TWO RESPONDERS

Category 2 responders are co-operating bodies. They support

emergency planning and response and are subject to additional legislation. These include:

- Utilities and infrastructure operators (electricity, gas, water, communications, rail, airports and harbours)
- Public Health Scotland and Public Services Delivery Scotland
- Health and Safety Executive
- The Met Office

OTHER IMPORTANT RESPONDERS

Other organisations may also play a significant role in resilience and emergency response, including:

- Voluntary and community organisations
- The military
- Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS)
- Transport Scotland
- Commercial organisations
- The Scottish Government



Category 1 and 2 responders work together through Resilience Partnerships, which provide the framework for coordinated planning, preparedness, response and recovery in emergencies. There are three levels of Resilience Partnerships in Scotland:

- **National** – 1 Scottish Resilience Partnership
- **Regional** – 3 Regional Resilience Partnerships (North, East and West)
- **Local** – 12 Local Resilience Partnerships

NATIONAL

The Scottish Resilience Partnership brings together senior statutory responders and key partners to set resilience priorities, provide assurance to Ministers, and support national preparedness for major emergencies.

REGIONAL

Based in the North, East and West of Scotland are three Regional

Resilience Partnerships (RRPs) who have an oversight of emergency plans for their specific region.

LOCAL

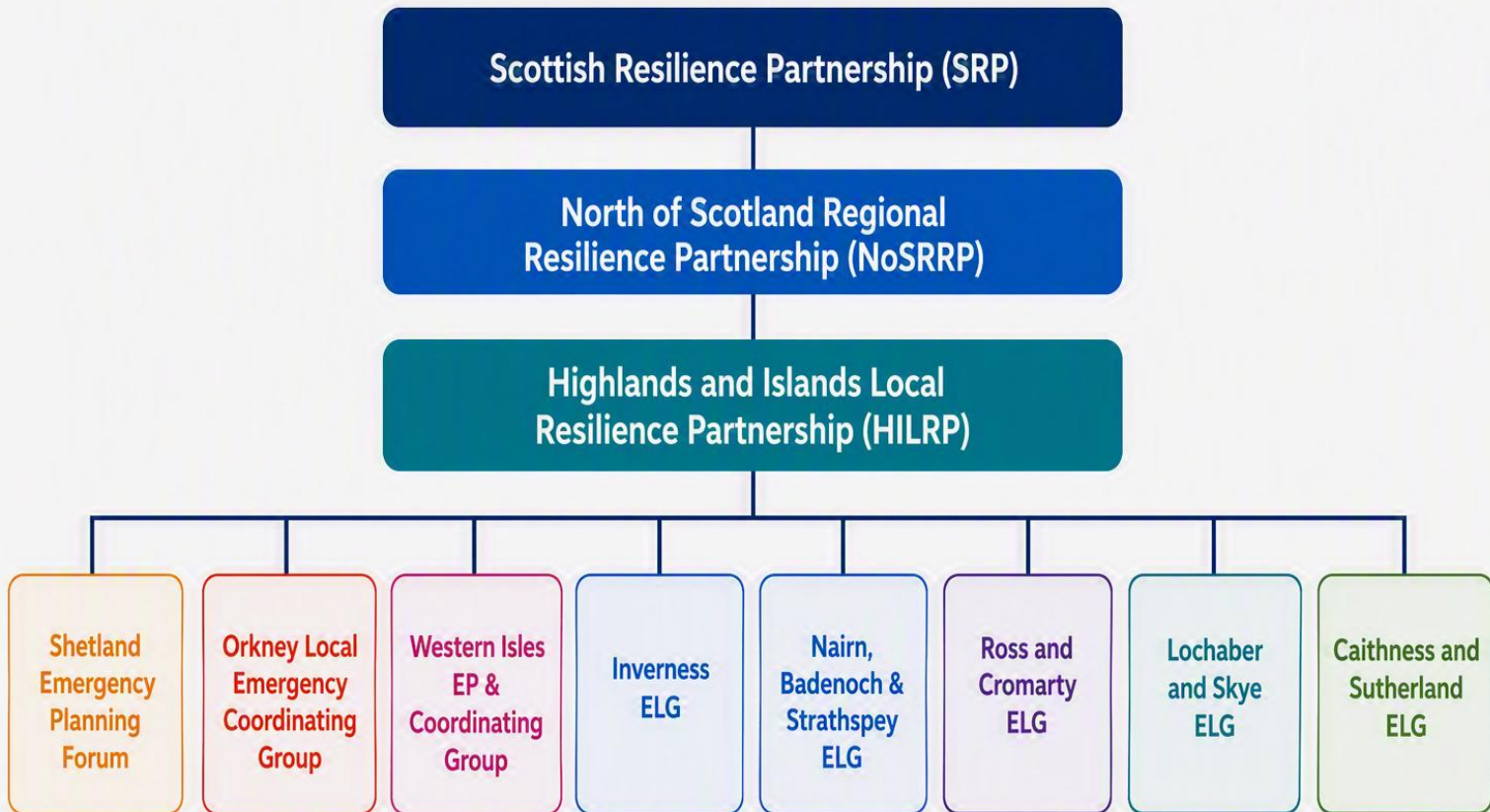
The 12 Local Resilience Partnerships (LRPs) include the 'blue light' agencies as well as local authorities, NHS, coastguard agencies, key voluntary sector organisations and other partners as required. Together they support local resilience planning, response and recovery arrangements.

AREA-BASED

Because the Highlands and Islands LRP covers a large and diverse area, resilience is further supported by area-based groups operating beneath the LRP: five mainland Emergency Liaison Groups (ELGs) and three island Emergency Coordination Groups (ECGs).

These groups ensure decisions are informed by local knowledge and community needs.

Highlands and Islands Resilience Structure





Emergencies can affect people, families and communities in different ways. Emergency arrangements in Scotland place strong emphasis on caring for people affected, during the response and throughout recovery.

Caring for people means providing practical, emotional and psychosocial support to those impacted.

People who may need support include those directly affected, people displaced from their homes, families and friends seeking information, local communities providing care, and responders involved in the response.

Vulnerability is not fixed and can be temporary or situational. People who are usually independent may need support in an emergency.

Care for people is delivered through a multi-agency approach, involving local authorities, health and social care, emergency services, voluntary organisations and community partners. Working within the Local Resilience Partnership (LRP),

partners coordinate care arrangements alongside the wider emergency response and recovery.

Support may include safe shelter, practical help with food, clothing and medication, emotional and psychosocial support, help to reunite families, and clear, accessible information.

In an emergency, services prioritise the most vulnerable. By being as self-reliant as possible, you help reduce demand on responders. Taking care of yourself enables support to reach those who need it most and helps the wider community.

Communities play a vital role, particularly in rural and island areas. Neighbours, carers and community organisations often provide early support and help identify those who may need assistance.

Caring for people is central to resilience. By working together and planning ahead, responders and communities can reduce harm and support recovery after an emergency.

Planning your own Emergency Arrangements



Emergency services, councils and other agencies plan for major incidents, and households, workplaces and families can benefit from having a simple emergency plan too.

Think about the risks in your area, such as flooding, severe weather, transport accidents, industrial sites or house fires.

If you live near a regulated industrial or nuclear site, you may already have an information leaflet explaining what to do during an emergency. In such cases, your Council makes plans with the Emergency Services and the site operators to keep you safe.

Talk with your household about how you would respond in different situations, including evacuation.

Agree where you would meet if separated, both near your home and outside your local area, and choose an out-of-area friend or relative everyone can contact to confirm they are safe.

Plan escape routes from your home and practise them regularly, particularly for fires. Keep emergency phone numbers, insurance details and important documents somewhere safe and easy to access.

Consider any additional needs within your household, including medication, mobility equipment, sensory needs, babies, pets or assistance animals. It is also helpful to know if neighbours or nearby family members may need support during an emergency.

Make sure your insurance policies are up to date and cover the risks most relevant to your area.

In an emergency, call 999 and clearly state which service you need: Police, Fire and Rescue, Ambulance or Coastguard. Stay calm and provide clear information about your location and the incident.

Preparing your own “Emergency Supply Kit”



In an emergency, help may not reach you immediately. Prepare an Emergency Supply Kit so your household can manage for at least 72 hours. Keep it clearly labelled, easy to carry, and somewhere everyone can access.

Essentials for everyone

You should include:

- Drinking water (around **2–3 litres per person per day**)
- Ready-to-eat food that does not need cooking
- A torch and spare batteries or a wind-up torch
- A battery-powered or wind-up radio
- A mobile phone charger or power bank
- Basic first aid kit
- Hand sanitiser, wipes, toilet paper and personal hygiene items
- Warm clothing, waterproof layers, sturdy footwear
- Blankets or emergency foil blankets
- Important contact numbers written down

Medications and health needs

- A list of any regular medications, doses and allergies
- At least **3 days’ supply** of essential medicines where possible
- Medical equipment you rely on (with batteries or back-ups if required)

Important documents

Keep copies of important documents such as identification, insurance details and emergency contacts in a waterproof folder.

Additional Needs

Think about any additional needs within your household, including babies, pets, disabilities, sensory needs or special dietary requirements.

Check your kit every six months and replace expired items where needed.



Many people rely on support from carers, family members or paid services. Emergencies can disrupt normal care arrangements, so planning is important.

If you rely on care or support

- Keep an Emergency Care Plan, including:
- What support you need each day
- Medication information
- Key contacts (family, carers, services)
- Keep this plan somewhere easy to find and share it with people you trust
- Ensure emergency services or responders can easily understand your needs

If you are a carer

- Plan how you would continue caring if travel is disrupted or services are delayed
- Identify a back-up person who could help if you are unable to reach the person you care for
- Make sure you have access to medications, equipment and contact details.

During an emergency

- If normal care arrangements break down, local authorities and health services will work to identify people at risk and provide urgent support
- If you are in immediate danger or a caring situation becomes unsafe, call **999**

No one is expected to cope alone in an emergency — help is available.



Taking shelter is often a critical element to protecting yourself and your family, especially if there is an airborne risk from a chemical spill or similar situation.

If the emergency services believe it is best for the public to remain in their homes, you will be advised to

“GO IN – STAY IN – TUNE IN”

If this is the advice passed, then you should stay at home and await further instructions from the emergency services by tuning into local radio and checking official social media.

GO IN to a room as far away from a hazard as possible, preferably upstairs, and with an exit.

STAY IN and don't leave your house until you are told that it is safe to do so. If your pet is outside, do not go looking for them. Wait for them to return to the door and let them into a room that is separate from you and others with you.

TUNE IN to local radio, official social media sites and any UK government issued emergency alerts.

- Avoid eating uncovered food that may have been exposed to any contaminated air in the emergency. Sealed packaged food should be safe.
- Only use your phone if essential to keep lines free for emergency services.
- Children attending school will be looked after by education authorities and Police.
- Should you be out walking when the sheltering advice comes, go into a shop or other public building and wait for further instructions.
- Do NOT go and get your children, they will be quite safe inside the school or nursery, and you may cause yourself harm by venturing outside. Should evacuation become necessary, your children will be taken to a rest centre where you can pick them up.



Evacuations can occur for multiple reasons, from gas leaks to floods. Not all evacuations are long term. In the event of an evacuation, it will benefit both you and the emergency services if you are prepared.

Having a plan for where you would go in the event of an evacuation, including how to get there in challenging conditions such as flooding.

- Remember to allow for traffic congestion, as you will not be the only people being evacuated.
- If the emergency services advise you to shelter at home, do not self-evacuate. Stay inside and follow the **“Go in, Stay in, Tune in”** message and wait for further advice from the emergency services. If they advise you to evacuate then do so. Do NOT enter restricted areas or road closures.
- Have a “checkpoint person” outside your home who you and your family know to go to if you get separated during an emergency. This could be a friend or family member who lives outside the affected area.
- Find out where children will be sent if schools are evacuated.
- Have a supply kit ready with items from the “emergency supply kit” checklist that you would need in a rest centre – prescription medication, specific baby items, toiletries, and phone lists.
- Know how to shut off your home’s gas, water, and electric at main switches and valves.
- If your home is likely to hard freeze then take action to prevent damage to water pipes by turning off water mains, draining taps, turn off inside valves for external taps, leave the loft hatch open, and close and lock windows.



In the increasingly digital reliant world, there is a risk that day to day activities could be disrupted by a cyber-attack.

- Cyber-attacks can cause disruption to local systems that communities rely on, such as transport links or grocery stores. To remain resilient in such incidents, ensure that you have appropriate supplies to last through an incident by following the advice in the “Preparing your own Emergency Supply Kit” section.
- If fuel supplies are affected, then vehicle transport may become difficult. Only make essential journeys and plan how much fuel you will need to get to a working fuel station if your local station is not operational.
- Keep up to date with the event through reliable sources such as Police Scotland or Council media outputs. Incidents such as these are likely to cause significant public interest which can feed miss and diss-information. Only act upon information that has come from a reliable source.



Some areas of the Highlands and Islands are at risk of flooding.

Councils and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) provide guidance and warnings to help you prepare. Homeowners are responsible for protecting their property.

Before a flood

Know your risk and sign up for flood warnings. Prepare simple property protection such as sandbags or flood boards, and keep a flood kit in an accessible high place with essentials like a torch, radio, warm and waterproof clothing, food, medication and important documents. Move valuable items upstairs where possible, plan for pets, and relocate vehicles to higher ground if needed.

During a flood

Stay informed using official sources such as your Council or Police Scotland. Avoid floodwater, as it may be contaminated and fast-moving. Follow road closures and safety advice, keep children and pets away, and switch off gas, electricity and

water if it is safe to do so.

If advised to evacuate, follow emergency services instructions. If you become trapped, move to a higher level, stay visible and call for help. Those without access to an upper floor, such as in caravans or bungalows, should alert authorities if at risk.

After a flood

Do not return home until it is safe. Electrical systems must be checked before use, and any food or water that has been contaminated should be discarded. Wear protective gloves during clean-up and follow good hygiene practices. Contact your insurer before disposing of damaged items and be cautious of unsolicited repair work—always verify traders before agreeing to work.

Flooding can create ongoing risks such as contamination and structural damage, so follow advice from local authorities and seek support where needed.



Winter weather can bring snow, ice, freezing temperatures and disruption to travel and power supplies. Major snowstorms, extreme wind and freezing conditions can develop quickly, particularly in remote areas.

Before travelling, check weather and road conditions and consider whether your journey is necessary. Allow extra time, drive with care and never assume roads are free from ice, even if gritted.

Make sure your vehicle is winter-ready with suitable tyres, antifreeze, screen wash, working lights and enough fuel or battery charge. Clear all snow and ice from windows, mirrors and the roof before setting off.

Keep a winter emergency kit in your vehicle including warm clothing, blankets, food and water, a torch, phone charger or power bank, first aid kit, shovel and scraper.

If stranded in snow, stay with your vehicle unless safe shelter is very close. Run the engine occasionally for heat, keep the exhaust clear and open a window slightly for ventilation. Use hazard lights or a distress signal to help rescuers locate you.

At home, prepare to manage without outside help for at least three days. Keep extra food, drinking water, medication, heating fuel and winter supplies such as rock salt and shovels. Dress in warm layers and avoid over-exertion when clearing snow.

If you rely on electricity for medical or support needs, consider joining the Priority Services Register through the SSEN website or by calling 105.



Severe storms can bring strong winds, heavy rain, flooding and power outages. Fallen trees, flying debris and damaged power lines can create serious hazards.

Before a storm, secure loose outdoor items, charge phones and power banks, and keep torches, batteries, food, water and blankets ready.

If possible, check online for updates including SSEN PowerTrack app for power outages and listen to the local radio or television for weather reports and emergency information.

During a storm, stay indoors where possible and avoid unnecessary travel. Keep away from windows during high winds and avoid floodwater or closed roads.

Dress for the season with several layers of loose fitting, lightweight warm clothing rather than one layer of heavy clothing. The outer layer should be water repellent. Always wear a hat, most body heat is lost through the top of your head.

Power cuts may occur during severe weather. Use torches instead of candles where possible and keep fridge and freezer doors closed to preserve food.

If you see fallen power lines or damaged electrical equipment, stay well away and report it immediately by calling 105.

After a storm, take care around fallen trees, debris, flooding and damaged buildings.

Check on neighbours and vulnerable people only if it is safe to do so.



Extreme heat can be as dangerous as extreme cold, as it pushes the human body beyond its limits.

Most heat-related illnesses occur when people are overexposed to high temperatures or exert themselves beyond what their age or physical condition allows. Those most at risk include the elderly, young children, and individuals who are unwell or overweight.

To reduce the effects of extreme heat, it is recommended to remain indoors as much as possible. Electric fans do not lower air temperature but simply circulate warm air.

Maintaining a balanced diet with light, regular meals is important, and salt tablets should only be used if medically advised.

Drinking plenty of water is essential, even if you do not feel thirsty, although people with certain medical conditions such as heart, kidney or liver disease should seek medical advice before increasing fluid intake.

Alcohol should be limited as it contributes to dehydration.

Vulnerable individuals, including family members, friends and neighbours, should be checked on regularly. Children and pets must never be left in enclosed vehicles.

Clothing should be loose-fitting and cover as much skin as practical, and a wide-brimmed hat should be worn to protect the face and head.

Exposure to direct sunlight should be limited, and sunscreen with a suitable protection factor should be used.

For guidance on treating heat exhaustion and other heat-related conditions, reference should be made to first aid resources.



Health emergencies, such as flu outbreaks or pandemics, can spread quickly and affect large numbers of people at the same time.

They are usually caused by viruses that spread through:

- Coughing and sneezing
- Close contact with others
- Touching contaminated surfaces

Common symptoms

Symptoms can come on quickly and may include:

- Fever or chills
- Headache
- Dry cough
- Muscle aches and fatigue

Most people recover at home, but some groups are at higher risk of complications, including older people, young children and people with long-term health conditions or weakened immunity.

What to do if you are unwell

- Stay at home and rest
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Keep warm
- Avoid contact with others, especially vulnerable people

Getting the right help

Pharmacy First

Your local pharmacy can provide advice and treatment for common illnesses. No appointment is needed.

NHS Inform

Provides trusted advice on symptoms, treatment, and when to seek help.

NHS 24 (111)

Call 111 if you need urgent advice when your GP or pharmacy is closed.

Emergency (999)

Call 999 if symptoms are severe or life-threatening.

Incidents Involving Hazardous Materials



Hazardous materials are part of everyday life, from industrial chemicals to household products. While incidents are rare, chemical releases, smoke or poor air quality can affect health, particularly for people with heart or lung conditions, pregnant people, babies and children, and older adults.

Check on neighbours, friends or family who may be more vulnerable and help them stay informed.

Before an incident, monitor air quality updates through the *UK Air Information Resource* and sign up for local alerts if you live near industrial or hazardous sites.

If an incident occurs, follow advice from emergency services and local updates. Move away from the affected area, avoid using phones near suspected gas leaks, and if indoors close windows and doors. If driving, close windows and find an alternative safe route.

Remember the “Remove, Remove, Remove” advice:

- remove yourself from the area to get fresh air
- remove contaminated outer clothing if safe to do so
- remove substances from skin using absorbent material or water if irritation occurs.

Try to avoid pulling clothing over your head if possible. Do not smoke, eat or drink. Do not pull off clothing stuck to skin.

After an incident, continue following official guidance. If exposed to toxic or radioactive substances, stay where you are and wait for emergency services. Do not go directly to hospital unless instructed, and follow any decontamination advice provided.



Preventing Fires - Electrical Safety

- Don't overload sockets or extension leads
- Avoid joining extension leads together
- Don't leave appliances on standby unnecessarily
- Never run appliances while asleep or out
- Only use safe, approved chargers

Kitchen & Cooking

- Never cook under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Keep cooking appliances clean
- Avoid chip pans where possible
- Never overfill pans with oil

Smoking

- Never smoke in bed or when tired
- Fully extinguish cigarettes
- Take extra care when drinking alcohol
- Keep matches and lighters away from children

Lithium Batteries

- Use correct chargers and batteries
- Never charge devices unattended or overnight
- Keep devices off soft furnishings
- Replace damaged batteries and always dispose of batteries at an approved disposal point.

Smoke & Heat Alarms

- Install smoke alarms in key rooms
- Install heat alarm in kitchen
- Fit carbon monoxide alarms
- Test alarms weekly

Escape Plan

- Identify escape routes
- Keep exits clear
- Agree meeting place
- Close doors at night

Emergency

- **GET OUT – STAY OUT – CALL OUT**
- **Never re-enter the building**



Be Prepared

- Have a family escape plan and meeting point
- Know what to do and include care for pets
- Know your access routes and exits
- Speak with neighbours about plans
- Teach children about fire safety

If You See a Fire

- CALL 999 IMMEDIATELY
- Give clear location and access details
- If safe, guide fire crews to the fire

Prevent Wildfires

- Never discard lit cigarettes
- Avoid fires in dry, hot or windy weather
- Follow the Scottish Outdoor Access Code
- Do not burn vegetation out with permitted season
- Report unsafe behavior

Protect Your Property

- Create a 10-metre safety zone around your home
- Remove dry vegetation, wood piles and debris
- Keep grass short
- Clear space around fuel tanks
- Keep access clear for emergency vehicles

Outdoor Fire Safety

- Check restrictions before lighting fires
- Avoid fires during high-risk conditions
- Use proper fire pits or containers
- Keep water or tools nearby
- Fully extinguish fires before leaving
- If you see anybody setting a fire or acting suspiciously contact the Police

Help Emergency Services

- Ensure house name/number is clearly visible
- Keep access routes clear



Pets are part of the family, and planning ahead can help keep both people and animals safe during an emergency.

Include pet food, water, medication and bowls in your Emergency Supply Kit. Keep pets microchipped where possible, ensure collars and tags have up-to-date contact details, and keep a recent photo in case you become separated.

If you need to leave home, take pets with you if safe to do so and use a secure lead, harness or carrier. Some rest centres may have limited facilities for animals, although local authorities and voluntary organisations will try to assist where possible.

If advised to shelter indoors, bring pets inside and keep them separate if they were outdoors during the incident. Never put yourself at risk by going outside during an emergency to search for animals.

Owners of horses, livestock or larger animals should plan in advance for shelter, food, water and safe relocation if required.

Follow advice from local authorities and animal welfare organisations, and never risk your own safety to rescue an animal.



An emergency can affect people emotionally as well as physically. Reactions vary and may appear immediately or weeks later.

Common reactions include:

- Anxiety, fear or low mood
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Irritability or emotional exhaustion
- Physical symptoms such as headaches or stomach problems

These reactions are normal responses to abnormal events.

Supporting yourself

- Talk to people you trust about how you feel
- Try to keep to familiar routines where possible
- Take breaks from news and social media if it becomes overwhelming
- Look after basic needs: rest, food, fluids and warmth

Supporting children and young people

- Offer reassurance and honest, age-appropriate explanations
- Encourage children to express feelings through talking, play or drawing
- Maintain routines such as meals and bedtime
- Watch for changes in behaviour that last or worsen

When to seek further help

If distress is severe, ongoing, or affecting day-to-day life:

- Contact your GP
- Reach out to local support services
- Voluntary organisations such as the British Red Cross can provide practical and emotional support during recovery

Recovery takes time — asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.



**In an emergency
always call 999 and
ask for the emergency
service that you
require.**

Non-emergency contacts

Police Scotland

Phone: 101

<https://www.scotland.police.uk/>

NHS Highland

Phone: 111

<https://www.nhshighland.scot.nhs.uk/>

Gas Emergencies

Phone: 0800 111 999

SSEN

Phone: 105

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

<https://www.firescotland.gov.uk/>

Scottish Ambulance Service

<https://www.scottishambulance.com/>

Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA)

Phone: 0800 807 060

[https://beta.sepa.scot/about-
sepa/contact-us/](https://beta.sepa.scot/about-sepa/contact-us/)

Scottish Water

Phone: 0800 0778 778

<https://www.scottishwater.co.uk/>

HM Coast Guard

Phone: 0203 817 2000

<https://hmcoastguard.uk/>

Met Office

Phone: 0370 900 0100

<https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/>

Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS)

Phone: 0300 020 3000

Highland Council

[https://www.highland.gov.uk/contact-
us](https://www.highland.gov.uk/contact-us)

Orkney Island Council

[https://www.orkney.gov.uk/contact-
us/](https://www.orkney.gov.uk/contact-us/)

Shetland Island Council

[https://www.shetland.gov.uk/contact-
us](https://www.shetland.gov.uk/contact-us)

British Red Cross

Phone: 0344 871 11 11

<https://www.redcross.org.uk/>

Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)

Phone: 0300 1234 999

<https://www.rspca.org.uk/>

SSPCA

Phone: 0300 099 9999

<https://www.scottishspca.org/>

Voluntary Action Orkney

Phone: 01856 872897

<https://www.vaorkney.org.uk/>