

Disaster response checklist



If you're a renter in Victoria and your property has been affected by a storm, flood, or bushfire, this checklist can help you understand your rights and guide you through the steps you can take next.

Call 000 if you are in danger right now.

○ If you need to leave in a rush, take important documents with you

When you leave your rental property, you may not be able to return for some time. Remember to take important documents with you, including your ID, insurance policies, financial records, and prescriptions.

○ Before you hand your keys back, understand your legal rights

If your rental property is significantly damaged, your landlord (officially called the rental provider) or estate agent may ask you to leave your home and hand back your keys.

Returning the keys will end your tenancy, which means you may lose the right to move back into the property. Finding another rental property nearby could then be difficult. Even if you decide not to stay, keep your keys and seek legal advice as soon as you can.

○ Report any damage to the landlord or agent

Call your landlord or agent as soon as possible to report any necessary repairs, especially if they are classified as urgent. Even if the problem seems likely to be resolved with just a phone call, follow up by confirming what repairs are needed in writing. This is required by law, and it will also give you proof of when you reported the problem if you need to take further action later.

For more information about reporting repairs, including if a repair is classified as urgent or non-urgent, see the [Repairs Toolkit](#) on our website.

○ Document the damage

Take photos or videos of any damage to your home and belongings. This is important because you may need proof if you make an insurance claim or if there is a dispute about the bond with your landlord.

Save backup copies of the photos or videos in case the originals are lost or damaged.



For more renting and disaster information, visit www.tenantsvic.org.au/disasters

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○ If you need to find emergency or temporary housing

Seek local information about where to find emergency accommodation, including asking other residents or emergency services for guidance. If an emergency relief centre has been established, information may be available there.

For crisis and emergency housing advice, contact the Housing Victoria Statewide After Hours Service:

- **Phone:** 1800 825 955 (free call) or (03) 9536 7777
- **Hours:** between 5 pm and 9 am, Monday to Friday and 24 hours on weekends and public holidays

Women and children escaping family violence should contact Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre:

- **Phone:** 1800 015 188 (free call)
- **Hours:** 24 hours
- www.safesteps.org.au

○ If you leave, consider stopping your rent and cancelling utilities

If the disaster has left your home unsafe or uninhabitable and you want to leave permanently, you'll need to terminate the lease, stop paying rent and cancel utilities. However, if you've left temporarily and intend to return once repairs are completed, keep paying your rent. Seek legal advice as soon as possible.

○ Make arrangements to collect belongings as soon as possible

If you left things behind and won't be returning, contact your landlord or agent to arrange collection as soon as possible. The longer you leave it, the more likely your belongings will be lost or disposed of, or that the landlord will charge you for storage costs.

○ Seek legal advice early

After disasters, get legal advice quickly. For free help with renting issues:

- **Call Tenants Victoria's Renter Support Line** on (03) 9416 2577 or visit our website at tenantsvic.org.au
- **Call Disaster Legal Help Victoria** on 1800 113 432 or use their Legal Help Chat at www.legalaid.vic.gov.au
- **Find your nearest community legal centre on the Federation of Community Legal Centres** website at www.fclc.org.au/find_a_community_legal_centre

This information is a guide and should not be used as a substitute for professional legal advice.



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