



Fire Safety Measures

Provider Alert

December 2024



Key Points

- ◆ People with disability are at higher risk of dying in home fires and other emergencies than the general population*.
- ◆ Fire safety and emergency planning is a critical component of safeguarding people from fire, enabling NDIS participants to live safely and with independence.
- ◆ Fire safety and emergency planning is a shared responsibility between individuals, NDIS support providers, the Australian Government, and fire services.
- ◆ NDIS support workers have an obligation under the NDIS Code of Conduct to act on any reasonable or obvious fire risks they observe and raise the issue with their provider. If they are the provider, they can take the steps outlined below.
- ◆ Being 'fire safe' means actively preventing fires at home, having working smoke alarms suitable to a person's needs, and having a home fire escape plan and an emergency plan. An emergency plan is a plan for what a person and their support network will do during an emergency such as a bushfire or storm and will vary depending on the potential hazards in the area that a person lives.

Fire safety risks for people with disability

People with disability are at disproportionate risk of being affected by fires and other emergencies in their homes. On average, approximately 64 people across Australia die in preventable fires in their homes each year. Disability is identified as a risk factor in approximately 62% of preventable residential fire fatalities, often alongside age or health conditions*. Residential fires also lead to a range of other negative outcomes for those affected, from significant injuries, to trauma, to loss of possessions and property.

For some people, experiencing a residential fire can be a life changing experience with significant physical, mental and emotional trauma that can be difficult or impossible to recover from. It is likely that there are substantial benefits to the health and wellbeing of people with disabilities, as well as cost savings by way of reducing home fires and other emergencies, though these benefits may be difficult to quantify in a meaningful way.

Australian Government policies and programs that support people with disability to live independently must consider the critical necessity for fire safety measures that reduce the likelihood of people with disability having a fire in their home or being unable to respond safely and appropriately if a fire does occur.

* 'Preventable Residential Fire Fatalities in Australia July 2003 to 2017' (Coates et al, 2019)

Fire safety should be considered a shared responsibility between individuals, NDIS providers, the Australian Government, and fire services. This reflects the philosophy and recommendations of the [National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework](#) which outlines a coordinated approach to reducing disaster risk and highlights the need for shared responsibility across the whole of society.

How NDIS providers can help reduce fire safety risk

The introduction of the NDIS has fundamentally changed the disability support sector. However, building codes and standards have not always kept pace with that change, which can put people at risk. NDIS providers of in-home supports or services may be well placed to support the fire safety and emergency planning of NDIS participants given their proximity to, and intimate understanding of participant needs.

Appropriate emergency risk reduction support for participants that NDIS providers can coordinate may include risk assessments and treatments to prevent fire in the home, development of home escape and emergency plans alongside participants, and sourcing of fire safety devices that meet a participant's needs, such as specialised smoke alarms. It is important for providers to also consider issues such as staff training, staff health and safety, and access to suitable prevention/mitigation solutions.

Provider Obligations

If a provider becomes aware of a fire safety risk to a participant that it is not within their ability to influence (as it is not providing supports or services that include managing fire safety), the provider should raise the risk with an appropriate person. For example, this could be with the participant, the participant's support coordinator, carer, any independent advocate, or another person representing the participant and/or a family member of the participant.

The aim of these discussions would be to ensure the

appropriate fire safety measures are put in place such as an on-premises alarm connected to the participant's personal device.

In addition, certain NDIS providers (e.g. specialist disability accommodation providers) have specific obligations to prevent fire safety risks to NDIS participants (see below).

NDIS Code of Conduct

All NDIS providers must comply with the National Disability Insurance Scheme (Code of Conduct) Rules 2018 (Code) and support workers must also understand and apply the Code in the course of their daily work.

The Code requires, among other things, workers and providers who deliver NDIS supports to:

- ◆ *promptly take steps to raise and act on concerns about matters that may impact the quality and safety of supports and services provided to people with disability*

More information can be found via this link:

<https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/about/ndis-code-conduct>.

The NDIS Practice Standards

The [NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators](#) (NDIS Practice Standards) specify the quality standards to be met by registered NDIS providers who provide supports and services to NDIS participants.

Registered NDIS providers must demonstrate compliance with the NDIS Practice Standards including the following standards:

Risk Management

(Schedule 1 – Core Module, Part 2 – Provider governance and operational management, of the NDIS Practice Standards).

As part of this standard, registered NDIS providers must have a risk management system that includes, amongst other risks, emergency, and disaster management.

Emergency and Disaster Management

(Schedule 1 – Core Module, Part 2 – Provider governance and operational management, of the NDIS Practice Standards).

This standard outlines the planning expected of registered NDIS providers to ensure the risks to the health, safety and wellbeing of participants that may arise in an emergency or disaster are considered and mitigated and ensures the continuity of supports critical to the health, safety, and wellbeing of participants in an emergency or disaster.

To achieve this outcome, registered providers must at a minimum demonstrate the following:

- ◆ Measures are in place to enable continuity of supports that are critical to the safety, health and wellbeing of each participant before, during and after an emergency or disaster.
 - ◆ The measures include planning for each of the following:
 - a. preparing for, and responding to, the emergency or disaster;
 - b. making changes to participant supports;
 - c. adapting, and rapidly responding, to changes to participant supports and to other interruptions;
 - d. communicating changes to participant supports to workers and to participants and their support networks.
 - ◆ The governing body develops emergency and disaster management plans (the plans), consults with participants and their support networks about the plans and puts the plans in place.
 - » The plans explain and guide how the governing body will respond to, and oversee the response to, an emergency or disaster.
 - » Mechanisms are in place for the governing body to actively test the plans, and adjust them, in the context of a particular kind of emergency or disaster.
 - » The plans have periodic review points to enable the governing body to respond to the changing nature of an emergency or disaster.
- » The governing body regularly reviews the plans and consults with participants and their support networks about the reviews of the plans.
 - » The governing body communicates the plans to workers, participants and their support networks.
 - » Each worker is trained in the implementation of the plans.

Service Agreements with Participants

(Schedule 7 – Module 5: Specialist Disability Accommodation, of the NDIS Practice Standards)

NDIS providers who are registered to provide specialist disability accommodation to NDIS participants are required to have a service agreement with their participants.

The service agreement needs to include information about dwelling safety features, including fire alarms and building evacuation procedures, and how this information will be communicated to other providers who deliver supported independent living to each participant in the dwelling.

Further resources

NDIS Commission resources

- ◆ [NDIS practice standards | NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission \(ndiscommission.gov.au\)](https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/ndis-practice-standards)
- ◆ [Provider Alert – Emergency Management | NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission \(ndiscommission.gov.au\)](https://www.ndiscommission.gov.au/provider-alert-emergency-management)

State and Territory Fire and Emergency Services

- ◆ [NSW Fire and Rescue](https://www.nswfireandrescue.nsw.gov.au/)
- ◆ [ACT Fire and Rescue](https://www.actfireandrescue.nsw.gov.au/)
- ◆ [Queensland Fire Department \(QFD\)](https://www.qldfireandrescue.com.au/)

- ◆ [Fire Rescue Victoria](#)
- ◆ [Country Fire Authority VIC \(CFA\)](#)
- ◆ [Metropolitan Fire Service \(SA\)](#)
- ◆ [WA Department of Fire and Emergency Services \(DFES\)](#)
- ◆ [NT Fire and Rescue Service](#)
- ◆ [Tasmania Fire Service](#)

Fire Safety Checklists and Templates

Victoria

- ◆ [FRV/CFA e-learning module: Prevent Detect Escape](#)
- ◆ [FRV/CFA Home fire escape planning template](#)
- ◆ [FRV/CFA Home fire safety checklist](#)
- ◆ [FRV smoke alarm information](#)

New South Wales

- ◆ [NSW Fire and Rescue: Home Fire Safety Checklist](#)
- ◆ [NSW Fire and Rescue: Smoke Alarms](#)
- ◆ [NSW Fire and Rescue: Fire Escape Plans](#)

Australian Capital Territory

- ◆ [ACT Emergency Services: Home Fire Safety](#)
- ◆ [ACT Emergency Services: Fire Safety Systems](#)
- ◆ [ACT Emergency Services: Smoke alarms](#)

Queensland

- ◆ [QFD Safe Home Checklist](#)
- ◆ [QFD smoke alarm information](#)

Western Australia

- ◆ [DFES: Preventing a fire in the home](#)
- ◆ [DFES: Smoke Alarms for people with disability](#)

Northern Territory

- ◆ [NT Fire and Rescue: Fire Safety](#)
- ◆ [NT Fire and Rescue: Smoke Alarms](#)

Tasmania

- ◆ [TAS Fire Service: Fire Safe at Home Risk Assessment](#)
- ◆ [TAS Fire Safety: Smoke Alarms fact sheet](#)

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