



POLICY DOCUMENT

DISASTER MEDICAL SERVICES

1. PURPOSE and SCOPE

- 1.1 This document is a policy of the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine and relates to preparation, readiness and responsiveness of emergency medicine systems in disaster settings.
- 1.2 The policy is applicable to public hospital emergency departments within Australasia

2. POLICY

- 2.1 Disasters are a serious disruption of the functioning of society, causing widespread human, material or environmental losses that exceed the ability of the affected society to cope using only its own resources.
- 2.2 Disaster medical services are health care systems designed to attempt to meet the health care needs of disaster victims, casualties and responders.
- 2.3 The planning and design of disaster medical services at any level must be based upon the best available evidence and experience from past major incidents.
- 2.4 Emergency departments represent the first stage of the hospital system's response to multiple casualty incidents.
- 2.5 Disaster medical services require appropriate funding to ensure disaster medical response teams are trained and equipped to safely perform required tasks.

3. PROCEDURE and ACTIONS

- 3.1 Emergency physicians should be involved in all medical aspects of disaster planning, management, and patient care.
 - 3.1.1 Emergency physician input into disaster planning is important to ensure that the planning process captures issues that potentially impact on clinical outcomes.
 - 3.1.2 Emergency physician's skill & experience in organizing medical services and prioritising medical treatment priorities place them in an ideal position to facilitate disaster medical responses and the smooth transition from the acute disaster medical responses to the public health issues of disaster recovery operations.
- 3.2 Emergency physicians should ensure that the ability of the emergency department to manage multiple casualty incidents are considered in any proposed changes to emergency department operating procedures.
- 3.3 Hospitals must have disaster plans that are regularly tested and which reflect the fact that effective disaster planning is a multidisciplinary, multi-agency exercise.

