

How well would the small businesses in your region withstand a natural disaster event?

Rural Business Support's new **Business Readiness Project** aims to help 135 small rural and regional South Australian businesses be better prepared to withstand and survive natural disaster events.

While there has been increasing emphasis in recent years on reducing the personal, social and economic impacts of a natural disaster, there has been little focus on preparing businesses for events including fires, floods and even power outages during severe storms.

For example the need to prepare properties ahead of the fire danger season is well publicised, however there is little focus on helping business owners to understand the potential impacts of a natural disaster on their operations, employees and the bottom line.

The project was supported by the top recommendation from the

Independent Review of The Extreme Weather Event of 2016 before an education campaign to encourage businesses in South Australia to develop business continuity plans for disasters.

The project aims to reach 135 small rural and regional businesses to develop business readiness plans. The project is being delivered by Rural Business Support via 27 free workshops across regional SA between June 2018 and June 2019. The workshops are open to any small regional business with less than 20 employees.

Rural Business Support worked extensively with small rural businesses after the Sampson Flat and Pinery bushfires and 2016 Gawler River flood. Unfortunately these events resulted in business closures, reduced hours for employees and, for some businesses, an extensive and costly recovery.

A key feature of this project is a new risk planning tool which ultimately equips business owners with a Business Readiness Plan that can be saved, shared and regularly updated.

The tool steps users through questions to identify their critical business resources, infrastructure and plant/equipment and forecasts how the business would likely be impacted using several natural disaster scenarios. The tool then guides business owners to plan key actions that can be taken before, during and afterwards to reduce and/or avoid these risks altogether.

Participants will also receive a half hour telephone consultation following the workshops to answer any queries and assist with plan completion.

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