

Case Study – Exercise Heatwave Emergency 25

Exercise need

On 22 May 2025, the Campbelltown Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC) held exercise Heatwave Emergency 25 at the Campbelltown Staff Training Centre, and included LEMC and Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) members. This event provided an opportunity for the participants to workshop and discuss their anticipated responses to a heatwave across their Local Government Areas (LGA)s.

The scenario challenged participants to address the complex issues involved in responding to heatwaves within the Campbelltown LGA. Key considerations included infrastructural limitations in establishing and transporting community members to cooling and hydration hubs, planning for continuity of power-dependent services, and ensuring coordinated public messaging. Participants also explored strategies for volunteer welfare, resource constraints and sharing, as well as tailored communication approaches to meet the diverse needs of the region.

Exercise aim

The exercise aimed to strengthen community safety, preparedness, response and recovery efforts by:

- **Evaluating local arrangements and adequacy of resourcing** for responding to a heatwave within the LGA
- **Assessing the coordination, effectiveness, readiness, and suitability** of the LEMC response and early recovery plans
- **Identifying gaps in knowledge, awareness and skills** amongst LEMC and Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) members

Exercise objectives

- **Ensure** that LEMC and EOC procedures are established for effective heatwave response and assess their scope and effectiveness
- **Confirm** that all relevant stakeholders are familiar with heatwave response procedures
- **Identify** training, skills, capability, resource or logistical gaps within the LEMC for heatwave response readiness
- **Verify** the alignment of LEMC and EOC procedures with the updated NSW State Heatwave Sub Plan

Exercise outcomes

Overall, the exercise met its objectives and participants reported that the exercise increased their knowledge and understanding of heatwave emergencies and was a relevant and good use of their time. The use of the EOC was

reported to help reinforce realistic expectations and familiarisation with the tabletop format helping participants to highlight practical gaps.

The exercise demonstrated that while foundational plans are in place, improvements are needed in communications, coordination and capability development.

The exercise identified a deficit in heatwave-specific planning, triggers and responses within the Campbelltown LGA.

Areas for further planning and resourcing highlighted include

- **Integration of spontaneous volunteers and volunteer workforce welfare checks**
- Limited **identification and mobilisation** of a trained volunteer workforce
- **Establishment of mobile cooling or hydration stations** and transport to and from, particularly for vulnerable residents and in high-use outdoor spaces
- **Planning for power dependent service** continuity such as aged care, health communications and local business
- **Coordinated public messaging campaigns** with emphasis on clarity and accessibility.

The exercise also identified strong interagency collaboration and openness to joint planning with high levels of engagement and willingness to explore localised solutions

Exercise evaluation

Observations/Insights	Sustain/ Improve
Communication Protocols: NSW Ambulance's new role as the combat agency prompted discussion about how and when information should flow to the LEOCON, LEMC and local stakeholders.	Improve
Public Messaging: Confusion persists in the community around blackouts, energy-saving advice, and heatwave preparedness. Messaging needs to be clear, multilingual, and inclusive.	Improve
Cooling Centres: The activation process needs clearer triggers. Questions were raised about whether they are truly accessible, known, and used by the community.	Improve
Open Spaces: No clear monitoring processes for parks and walking trails during extreme heat. Safety warnings, closures, or monitoring protocols are needed.	Improve
Power & Utility Impacts: Risks related to prolonged blackouts, mobile network failure, and reliance on electricity (e.g., medical devices) were discussed.	Improve

Observations/Insights	Sustain/ Improve
Load shedding during peak events would exacerbate these issues.	
Vulnerable Communities: Communications must be inclusive of CALD groups, those without digital access, and individuals living alone or in insecure housing.	Improve
Volunteer Management: The spontaneous volunteer workforce was not clearly accounted for in planning.	Improve

Recommendations

The following recommendations arose from this exercise:

1. Clarify Roles, Responsibilities, and Coordination

- Clarify and strengthen understanding of agency roles during a heatwave response, particularly NSW Ambulance as the combat agency.
- Update and distribute the Consequence Management Guide (CMG) to reflect lead agency roles in heatwave scenarios.
- NSW Ambulance to work with LEOCONs to formalise communication protocols during heatwave responses.
- Clarify escalation processes and decision-making structures for heatwave declarations and responses.

2. Improve Interagency Collaboration and Communication

- Identify and address communication barriers between agencies, particularly coordination with LEOCON, NSW, and SEMC.
- Enhance mechanisms for sharing information between SEMC, LEMC, and combat agencies.

3. Exercise, Train and Build Capability

- Conduct more frequent multi-agency exercises, including natural and human-made scenarios relevant to the Campbelltown area.
- Include heatwave-specific scenarios in future exercises to test plans and coordination.
- Embed the Heatwave Plan in agency training and exercises to ensure operational familiarity and consistency.
- All agencies to participate in joint training on managing heat stress, power outages, and community welfare checks.
- LEMC to conduct a follow-up exercise or workshop focused on cascading failures (e.g., power, communications, water) during heatwaves.
- Provide targeted learning on:
 - NSW Ambulance's coordination approach across PPRR

- How other agencies support NSW Ambulance in a declared heatwave
- Transport for NSW's capabilities and remote-area challenges

4. Public Messaging and Community Engagement

- Council and agencies to collaboratively develop and deliver a multilingual heatwave awareness and preparedness campaign targeting vulnerable groups.
- NSW Health to lead development of clear public messaging on heat-related illness signs and home cooling techniques.
- Council to map and assess risks related to open space access/use during heatwaves, including signage, closures, and outreach.

5. Community Resilience and Support Measures

- LEMC to define clear activation triggers for community cooling centres using weather forecasts and vulnerability indicators.
- Council to investigate feasibility and funding for mobile cooling and hydration stations in high-traffic or high-risk areas.
- Emergency Services and Council to develop a spontaneous volunteer engagement plan, including screening, tasking, and safety protocols.