



## Weathering storms

Rebekah Baynard-Smith (CBBM Facilitator)

**Like many parts of Gippsland, Moe South is vulnerable to storms and has had several storm events in the last 12 months.**

At our recent Neighbour Day BBQ a request was made for more information on how to weather storms, such as how to deal with prolonged power outages and what to do after significant storm damage. Overleaf, a local resident shares her experience of not just surviving the power outages last year, but thriving through them.

The Victorian State Emergency Service provides some great pointers and considerations on what to do following a storm event.

**After a storm, ensure that you and your family, friends and property are safe, and seek help if you need it.**

- Check your home and property for damage.
- Stay safe by avoiding dangerous hazards, such as floodwater, mud, debris, damaged roads and fallen or damaged trees.
- Drive slowly, obey all road signs and never drive through floodwater.
- Call 132 500 for emergency assistance from VICSES in the event of storms or flooding.
- Call Triple Zero (000) in life threatening emergencies.
- When cleaning up after a storm, consider your health and safety.
  - Do not enter damaged or flooded buildings until authorities advise it is safe to do so.
  - Wear strong boots, gloves and protective clothing while cleaning up.
  - Wash your hands and clothes regularly.
- Remember that electricity, gas and water supplies may be disrupted. If your property has been damaged, have all utilities checked and tested by a licenced technician before you use them.
- If there are fallen powerlines, keep away. Always assume fallen powerlines are live. Standing near fallen powerlines can be fatal. Stay well clear – more than 8-10 metres away. Contact your local power company:

[esv.vic.gov.au/safety-education/emergencies/electrical-emergency/](http://esv.vic.gov.au/safety-education/emergencies/electrical-emergency/)

- Call your insurance company to organise any insurance matters, and remember to take photos of damage.



You can report fallen trees and other hazards to Council and other authorities via the Snap Send Solve app which allows you send photographic evidence of the issue, as well as precise GPS locations to help make it easier for issues to be prioritised and dealt with. Remember that a tree may have become hazardous after a storm even if it hasn't fallen, so take care when taking photos or driving in the vicinity.

# Snap Send Solve

### Where should I go?

If your home is unsafe to stay in, consider who you may be able to stay with temporarily, such as with family and friends. There is no guarantee that Council will open an Emergency Relief Centre in your local area so it's best to plan ahead by organising temporary accommodation through your networks.

### How can I check in with people I'm worried about?

If there are people you are concerned about, give them a call or, if safe to do so, swing by their place and check in on them physically. Even if people are ok, they usually appreciate being remembered and cared for.

An easy way to stay in touch with your neighbours and loved ones is by setting up a WhatsApp group chat (the modern day phone tree). WhatsApp is a free app for any smartphone which only requires a phone number to set up. It's best to get these established in the calm periods well ahead of any emergency, not waiting until something happens to put together. You can also use the Red Cross 'Get Prepared' app to make a note of key people you need to check in on and offer support to.



For more information or for support using apps to assist you to prepare for and respond to emergencies, contact Rebekah at [rebekah.baynard-smith@latrobe.vic.gov.au](mailto:rebekah.baynard-smith@latrobe.vic.gov.au) or 0427 368 657 for a 'Get Techy Get Ready' workshop.



## How to thrive in a power outage

*Jenny Jackeulen, Moe South resident*

### **Getting caught in an unscheduled power blackout is not something anyone wants.**

The last big blackout we were caught in came one evening during the heavy June 2021 storm. In the midst of this storm, a large tree fell across power lines bringing them down with it as it crashed down onto our road. As a result, the entry and exit to our property was blocked. We couldn't get out and no one could safely get in.

Because this weather event was so large, many people were affected and emergency services were stretched. Other residents affected were classified as higher priority, and rightly so.

Luke and I had to start thinking about how we were going to deal with the prospect of being isolated and without power for possibly days (four days in the end). We initially used the torch app on our mobile phones to help us get around. We quickly located our solar pencil torches which we keep on windowsills, so they are charged ready for use. We set up a campfire the first night where we could cook and get warm and then started planning what we needed and needed to do.

We are lucky to have both town and tank water, so we were able to connect immediately to the town supply. We were also lucky to still have a Coonara heater in our lounge, and though we could not use the fan, we could still get heat out of it to keep us warm.

We also have a couple of small gas camp cookers which we moved indoors onto the kitchen cook top for cooking and boiling water for drinking and washing. Our small generator was connected to the fridge/freezer. We set about placing candles around the house in safe areas. Most of the candles were already in appropriate jars/containers. We used our solar wind-up radio to keep up to date with the news as well as for entertainment. We charged our phones in the car so we could contact family and friends and to keep in touch with the Vic Emergency App.

Keeping card games, board games and musical instruments around is also useful when you just can't simply pick up that remote control. Just having conversations and just listening to the quiet and looking out into the very dark sky and surrounds was very interesting too. At the end of the day, it wasn't such a bad experience. You find yourself getting creative and engaged!



*Trees wreaking havoc on Moe South streets*