



Australian Government

Australian Radiation Protection  
and Nuclear Safety Agency



# Interim Plan

# AUSRNEPLAN

## AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT RADIATION AND NUCLEAR EVENT PLAN

## Authority

The *Interim* Australian Government Radiological and Nuclear Event Plan (*Interim* AUSRNEPLAN) derives its authority from the Australian Government Crisis Management Framework (AGCMF). The AGCMF outlines the arrangements enabling the Australian Government's 'all hazards' crisis management approach.

The *Interim* AUSRNEPLAN is prepared and maintained by the **Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA)** in close consultation with the **National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA)** and other relevant Australian Government agencies. It outlines the processes the Australian Government may use to coordinate during and communicate in preparation for a significant radiological or nuclear emergency event.

The Minister responsible for the arrangements under *Interim* AUSRNEPLAN is the **Minister responsible for Health and Aged Care**, with support from relevant Ministers outlined in roles and responsibilities.

## Document Information

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Document Contact	N/A

## Purpose

A radiological or nuclear incident that requires a whole-of-government response. It may be caused by ionising radiation in emergency exposure situations. An emergency exposure situation arises as a result of an accident, a malicious act, or any other unexpected event, and requires prompt action in order to avoid or reduce adverse consequences.

Radiological or nuclear emergency situations may be caused by many types of initiating events and can involve different radioactive materials and scenarios. 'Events' can occur, for example, at nuclear reactor sites, on nuclear powered warships, medical facilities using radioactive materials, industrial sites that use or make radioactive sources or during the transport of radioactive materials.

Radiological or nuclear emergency events could also include malicious acts involving or directed at nuclear or radiological material – for example, through the dispersal of radioactive material in a public place. Events could also arise without warning in unexpected locations, for example, radioactive material out of regulatory control. Radiological consequences can also result from the detonation of a nuclear weapon.

Given the number of radioactive sources in use in Australia and around the world, nuclear or radiological emergency events are infrequent occurrences. Significant events such as airborne releases of radioactivity or a local incident that develops over time may disrupt services and supply chains and/or result in the onset of adverse health consequences. Catastrophic events, while rare, have the potential to release large amounts of radioactive material into the environment resulting in far-reaching disruption to critical services, overwhelming of health response services and severe health consequences. Long term impacts include contamination of food and water supplies, long-lasting effects on mental and social well-being, as well as effects on local economy and infrastructure. Recovery can last for decades.

The *Interim* AUSRNEPLAN details key roles and responsibilities for a range of agencies in supporting the preparedness, response, and early recovery to a significant radiological or nuclear event. It promotes effective crisis management, accountability, and transparency by designating Australian Government Coordinating Agency crisis management functions, key decision makers, information and data flow arrangements and crisis management mechanisms and capabilities, in the event of radiological and non-radiological consequences from a significant radiological or nuclear emergency.

The *Interim* AUSRNEPLAN will operate as a temporary guide with minimum response requirements while an enduring national plan is developed, as recommended by the AGCMF Review, in consultation with relevant stakeholders. The activation of the *Interim* AUSRNEPLAN does not prohibit the activation of other national response plans, including the Australian Government Disaster Response Plan (COMDISPLAN).

## Scope

This *Interim* AUSRNEPLAN applies to significant radiological or nuclear emergency events that include:

- Large airborne releases of radioactivity over Australia from domestic or international nuclear facilities
- Local releases of radioactivity to land, air, and water environments from nuclear reactors on vessels
- Local incident that develops over time
- Release of radioactivity to the environment from re-entry of space debris containing radioactive material
- Incident abroad with consequences for Australian citizens or Australian interests

The *Interim* AUSRNEPLAN does not apply to:

- Crisis response plans and arrangements maintained by Australian states and territories.
- Other Australian Government agency bilateral or multi-lateral response agreements already in place.

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Lead Minister

Under the AGCMF, the **Minister for Health and Aged Care** is the nominated Lead Minister responsible for radiological or nuclear emergency, unless the Prime Minister chooses to appoint another Minister. Upon receipt of notification of a significant radiological or nuclear emergency, the Lead Minister is responsible for:

- Provides advice to the Prime Minister and the National Security Committee of Cabinet (NSC) (or other Committees of Cabinet) on whole of Australian Government crisis priorities and consequence management objectives.
  - Oversees a coordinated Australian Government response to crisis and coordinates ministerial activities by collaborating with other Australian, state and territory counterparts.
  - Exercises executive responsibilities and decision-making in consultation with Australian Government ministers with relevant interests.
  - Ensures that there are systems and procedures available so that they are readily contactable.
- Ensures that their office maintains business continuity plans in the event that the office is affected directly by a crisis.
- Acts as the key Australian Government spokesperson in alignment with a whole of Australian Government crisis communications strategy.

### Australian Government Coordinating Agency

The **Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA)** is the **Australian Government Coordinating Agency** responsible for whole-of-government coordination arrangements to facilitate preparedness, response, and early recovery processes in the event of disruption to services and supply chains and the onset of potential or adverse health consequences from a significant radiological or nuclear emergency event. ARPANSA is responsible for crisis coordination as well as consequence management activities within its own sector. As such, ARPANSA is also the Sector Lead Agency.

The coordination, response, and early recovery responsibilities for ARPANSA are encapsulated in the arrangements set out in the phases of the *Interim* AUSRNEPLAN. The *Interim* AUSRNEPLAN has four (4) phases: STANDBY, ALERT, ACTIVE and STAND DOWN.

As the nature of a crisis changes over time, the Australian Government must be able to shift and adapt coordination in accordance with the severity and complexity of significant radiological or nuclear emergency events. For severe and/or complex radiological or nuclear emergency events, upon consultation and agreeance, the Lead Coordinating Senior Official may transition the Australian Government Coordinating Agency responsibilities to NEMA to ensure ARPANSA's continued delivery of Sector Lead Agency responsibilities. NEMA is responsible for the whole-of-Australian-Government coordination arrangements to facilitate preparedness, response, and early recovery processes in the event of Tier 4 crises as per the AGCMF.

### Sector Lead Agency

**ARPANSA** is the Sector Lead Agency responsible for monitoring crisis events and conducting specific responses and consequence management activities within the radiation or nuclear sector, including where NEMA has assumed the Australian Government Coordinating Agency role.

ARPANSA maintains a Radiation Emergency Coordination Centre in Melbourne, which provides 24-hour access to expert radiation protection advice in the event of a radiological or nuclear emergency event. ARPANSA is responsible for deployment of liaison officers to relevant crisis or operation centres as required for situation awareness and engages with counterparts in states and territories as required.

ARPANSA maintains business continuity plans to ensure the Agency can continue to perform its role under the *Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Act 1998*, when required to deliver its responsibilities as an Australian Government Coordinating Agency or a Sector Lead Agency. ARPANSA is responsible for maintaining records of decisions and actions relevant to a crisis.

ARPANSA maintains and administers Australia's rights and obligations under two International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Conventions: the Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident and the Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency. As a World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre for Radiation Protection, ARPANSA is responsible for the Radiation Emergency Medical Preparedness and Assistance Network (REMPAN) for Australia.

As the Australian Government Coordinating Agency, ARPANSA is responsible for the *Interim AUSRNEPLAN*.

## Enabling Agencies

An Enabling Agency is an Australian Government agency that has an important operational role in an Australian Government response. Other Australian Government agencies may have equities or responsibilities as an enabling agency under the *Interim AUSRNEPLAN*. For the purposes of the *Interim AUSRNEPLAN*, the key agencies involved in enabling the coordination, preparedness, response, and early recovery processes are:

- **Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C)** – PM&C advises and supports the Prime Minister during crisis. This includes providing advice on key decision points, including whether to recommend a National Emergency Declaration be made or a Committee of Cabinet or National Cabinet be convened. Through PM&C, ARPANSA will support this advice. Where required, PM&C may also support or initiate decisions to escalate to NEMA-led coordination and co-chair peak senior official's crisis coordination committees.
- **The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)** – DFAT is responsible for Australia's foreign policy and representing Australian Government interests internationally to facilitate coordinated requests, offers and responses for international assistance related to radiological or nuclear incidents for domestic interests, however, will be the Australian lead coordination agency in the event of an international crisis.
  - **The Australian Safeguards and Non-Proliferation Office (ASNO)** works to enhance Australia's domestic and international security through effective regulation and treaty implementation, supporting partners across the Indo-Pacific region, strengthening the global non-proliferation regimes and activities. ASNO is responsible for fulfilling Australia's obligations to the IAEA under Australia's Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and its Additional Protocol, including ensuring that any nuclear material and nuclear facilities involved in or impacted by any event are correctly reported to the IAEA and that appropriate arrangements are made to continue to meet Australia's obligations to facilitate inspection by the IAEA. Under the *Nuclear Non-Proliferation (Safeguards) Act 1987*,
- **Department of Home Affairs** – Home Affairs is responsible for gaining agreement from the States and Territories for the activation the *National Emergency Declaration (NED) Act 2020*.
- **NEMA** - Responsible for the Australian Contingency Plan for Space Re-Entry Debris (AUSSPREDPLAN).
- **Department of Defence and the Australian Defence Force (ADF)** – Responsible for supporting domestic operations under existing arrangements, including Defence Assistance to the Civil Community, if requested.
  - **Australian Submarine Agency (ASA)** – Responsible for supporting whole-of-government through technical advice and deployment related to radiation and nuclear preparedness,

response, and early recovery activities. Responsible for plans related to Australia's conventionally armed nuclear-powered submarine capability.

- **Head of Navy Engineering** – Responsible for Defence Operations Manual (OPSMAN1) for visiting nuclear powered warship entry.
- Conducting Proliferation Security Initiative operations and selected Counter Terrorism operations under the National Counter Terrorism Handbook.
- **The Department of Health and Aged Care** – Responsible for the coordination of national health sector responses to address adverse consequences for the health of Australians, health systems, or Australian Government health services or assets. Responsible for the Domestic Health Response Plan for Chemical, Biological, Radiological or Nuclear Incidents of National Significance (CBRN Plan).
- **The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW)** – Responsible for the provision of meteorological and oceanographic data to ARPANSA to assist in modelling of a radiational or nuclear event.
- **Department of Industry, Science and Resources (DISR)** – Responsible for improving business ability to respond to crises.
  - **Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO)** – Responsible for supporting whole-of-government through technical advice and deployment related to radiation and nuclear preparedness, response, and early recovery activities. Responsible for plans related to Australia's nuclear research program.
  - **Australian Radioactive Waste Agency (ARWA)** – Responsible for supporting whole-of-government coordination related to radioactive waste management preparedness, response, and early recovery activities.
- **Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) of Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, and the Arts (DITRDCA)** - Responsible for the National Plan for Maritime Environmental Emergencies.

## Lead Coordinating Senior Official

The **Lead Coordinating Senior Official** for coordination, response and early recovery is the **Chief Radiation Health Scientist / CEO of ARPANSA**. **Chief Radiation Health Scientist / CEO of ARPANSA** is responsible for:

- Ensures that their agency (an Australian Government Coordinating Agency designated under the Framework) is prepared and positioned to coordinate Australian Government actions in response to crisis or crises caused by their designated identified hazard(s).
- Advises and supports the Lead Minister in executing the Lead Minister's responsibilities.
- Where the Lead Minister is the Prime Minister, advises and supports the Prime Minister through PM&C.
- Assesses the level of crisis coordination required, and establishes, reviews, and adapts the appropriate tier of coordination over the course of the crisis.
  - Maintains near real time situational awareness and monitors impacts and consequences of the crisis across all sectors.
  - Facilitates shared situational awareness across the Australian Government and nationally.
  - Facilitates agreement to whole of Australian Government coordination priorities and objectives.
  - Ensures coordination of cross-government advice to relevant ministers.

- Engages and collaborates with counterparts in Sector Lead Agencies and Enabling Agencies to ensure the requirements under this Framework are being met.
- Regularly convenes an overarching senior officials' coordination forum during a crisis in collaboration with senior official responsible for the relevant forum.
- In line with chairing arrangements, co-chairs the peak senior official's crisis coordination committee and brief NSC (or other Committee of Cabinet), as required.
- Maintains clear lines of communication with the Lead Minister's office.
- Coordinates development of a whole of Australian Government crisis communications strategy and ensures the dissemination of crisis communications products and public information (such as whole of government talking points and briefing materials).
- Coordinates strategic planning activities.
- Maintains oversight of any requests for or offers of assistance received by Australian Government agencies from state, territory, or foreign governments, coordinating with responsible agencies, including DFAT and NEMA.
  - Manages risks related to crisis coordination.
- Engages with counterparts in states, territories and/or international jurisdictions as required, coordinating with responsible agencies including DFAT and NEMA.
  - As crisis coordination concludes, ensures transfer of any ongoing responsibilities and processes to relevant senior officials, agencies (including state and territory leads) and recovery coordination mechanisms.
  - Conducts post-response evaluation and supports integration of relevant lessons identified into the continuous improvement of the Australian Government's crisis management arrangements, including plans and capabilities.
  - Maintains records of decisions and actions relevant to the crisis.

## Response

The phases of the Interim AUSRNEPLAN are:

- STANDBY Phase
- ALERT Phase
- ACTIVE Phase
- STAND DOWN Phase

The *Interim* AUSRNEPLAN may be activated when there is a nationally significant radiological or nuclear event.

The **Chief Radiation Health Scientist of ARPANSA** is responsible for phase changes under the *Interim* AUSRNEPLAN.

### STANDBY Phase

*Interim* AUSRNEPLAN is maintained in STANDBY as the default phase. During STANDBY phase, ARPANSA will maintain preparedness for the activation of *Interim* AUSRNEPLAN when required.

The STANDBY Phase is characterised by a 24/7 Duty Officer on call arrangement, to connect to the Chief Radiation Health Scientist, to consider escalation to the ALERT Phase.



### **ALERT Phase**

The ALERT Phase will be declared when a domestic or international radiological or nuclear event has occurred or a request for assistance has been of the Australian Government.

At the ALERT Phase, ARPANSA will commence gaining information to understand the scale and severity of the radiological or nuclear event and make decisions on what constitutes an appropriate response.

ARPANSA will report the situation to the Australian Government National Situation Room (NSR) through a Situation Report (SITREP) and inform the Department of Health, Health Security and Emergency Management Centre of the event, and the likelihood for escalation to the ACTIVE Phase.

During ALERT and ACTIVE Phases, whole-of-Government coordination will be led by the ARPANSA Crisis Management Team and through appropriate AGCMF coordination forums.

### **ACTIVE Phase**

The ACTIVE Phase will be declared when ARPANSA commences responding to the domestic or international nuclear radiological event. ARPANSA will coordinate the Australian Government response, including the provision of advice, or physical monitoring resources, in support of States and Territories, through the peak senior officials' crisis coordination committee or other relevant crisis committees, and through the NSR or DFAT and Health.

At the ACTIVE Phase, ARPANSA will regularly brief the NSR, or DFAT, and Health, as required, on the progress of the radiological or nuclear event. The ACTIVE Phase will be characterised by a proportionate allocation of resources from ARPANSA operating continuously (24/7) or within hours to support advice and reporting requirements commensurate with the scale and complexity of the event. Subject to the scale and complexity of the event, ARPANSA may seek support with coordination of Australian Government crisis communications. ARPANSA may also establish its ARPANSA Radiation Emergency Coordination Centre in Melbourne and the Crisis Management Team.

### **STAND DOWN Phase**

The STAND DOWN phase will be declared when all response actions or coordination of assistance have been actioned, or when the event has been deemed safe and the event has been turned into an existing exposure situation.

NSR and Department of Health and Aged Care NIC will be notified of deactivation activities and decisions.

The STAND DOWN phase will be characterised by ARPANSA completing post action assessments and reports through leading an end-to-end assessment of the response, cessation of support to forensic or evidentiary activities in support of law enforcement or criminal proceedings, returning to normal regulatory activities.

ARPANSA may move to the STANDBY phase, subject to no ongoing events.

### **Concurrent Phases and Tiers**

ARPANSA may manage several radiological or nuclear events concurrently and may be at differing phases subject to the specific incident. As an example, ARPANSA may be at the STANDBY phase for an emerging international radiological event, while concurrently at the ACTIVE phase for an ongoing domestic event.

Assignment of phases, and Tiers, will be subject to the scale, onset, and complexity, of the radiological or nuclear event.



## Coordination Arrangements

### Coordination arrangements

Whole-of-Government strategic coordination ensures that international assistance requests and offers are considered and actioned in line with the Australian Government's crisis management priorities.

During ALERT and ACTIVE Phases, whole-of-Australian Government coordination will be led by the ARPANSA Crisis Management Team and through appropriate AGCMF coordination forums. The Chief Radiation Health Scientist of ARPANSA is responsible for phase changes under the *Interim* AUSRNEPLAN.

A Radionuclide and Nuclear Event Strategic Coordination Committee (RNESCC) may be formed in the event of a significant radionuclide or nuclear event. The RNESCC is led by ARPANSA.

### Whole-of-Government Situational Awareness

Operational coordination will be undertaken by the ARPANSA Crisis Management Team in collaboration with the Australian Government Crisis Coordination Team (CCT). The CCT is an all-hazards capability which is stood up to support national response plans and arrangements under the AGCMF, drawing on a network of Australian, state and territory government liaison officers as required.

### Australian Government Crisis Communication and Public Information

The ARPANSA Media Communications team is responsible for coordinating Australian Government crisis communication products in collaboration with the CCT, including whole-of-government talking points and public information, in relation to the response undertaken in line with this *Interim* AUSRNEPLAN. It should be anticipated, that as an event escalates, support for the coordination of crisis communications will be required by ARPANSA.

## Relevant Legislation, Plans, and/or Arrangements

- Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Act 1998
- Australian Government Crisis Management Framework Version 3.3 September 2023
- Australian Government Disaster Response Plan 2020 – (COMDISPLAN)
- Australian Contingency Plan for Space Re-entry Debris (AUSSPREDPLAN)
- Defence Assistance to the Civil Community (DACC Policy and Manual)
- National Emergency Declaration Act 2023
- Domestic Health Response Plan for Chemical, Biological, Radiological or Nuclear Incidents of National Significance (CBRN Plan)
- Defence Operations Manual (OPSMAN1)
- International Crisis Management Framework
- National Plan for Maritime Environmental Emergencies
- National Health Emergency Response Arrangements (NHERA)

## Key contacts

Role	Name and Position or Team Name	Email
<b>Lead Coordinating Senior Official</b>	Dr Gillian Hirth AO, CEO of ARPANSA	
<b>Lead Coordination</b> (SES Proxy Lead Senior Official)	Dr Rick Tinker, Chief Radiation Health Scientist, ARPANSA	
<b>Administrative</b> (Coordination Team)	ARPANSA Crisis Management Team	<a href="mailto:Crisismanagement@arpansa.gov.au">Crisismanagement@arpansa.gov.au</a>
<b>Liaison Officer</b>	ARPANSA Liaison Officer	
<b>24/7 Duty Officer</b>	ARPANSA EPR Duty Officer	
<b>Media Officer</b>	ARPANSA Media Officer	