

Summary

Sydney CBD Safety Sub Plan

Citywide Facilities Emergency Management Framework

1 Purpose

The [Sydney CBD Safety Sub Plan](#) (June 2023) a subplan of the NSW State Emergency Management Plan (EMPLAN), establishes how government agencies, emergency services, and building owners and managers will coordinate to protect life and property during major emergencies in the Sydney Central Business District (CBD).

For Better Buildings Partnership (BBP) members, the plan provides essential guidance to:

- Understand how emergency management is structured in the Sydney CBD,
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of building owners, managers, and tenants, and
- Ensure preparedness and coordinated implementation during an emergency.

The Plan recognises the commercial property sector's critical role in maintaining the CBD's safety, continuity, and resilience. BBP members, representing much of Sydney's built environment, are considered essential partners in ensuring the city's emergency preparedness, communication consistency, and rapid recovery after an event.

2 Overview of the Plan

The Sub Plan provides the framework for a multi-agency and community-wide response to emergencies such as natural disasters, terrorism, major infrastructure failures, or other large-scale incidents. It complements and aligns with other key documents, including:

- The NSW State EMPLAN and State Recovery Plan
- The City of Sydney EMPLAN and Recovery Plan
- NSW Evacuation Management Guidelines and the Sydney CBD 10 Sector Incident Response Plan

Emergencies are managed at the lowest effective level; local, regional, or state depending on scale and impact. The NSW Police Force leads coordination, supported by the Local Emergency Operations Controller (LEOCON), Regional Emergency Operations Controller (REOCON), and State Emergency Operations Controller (SEOCON).

This hierarchical command structure ensures that response and recovery actions are well-coordinated across all agencies. BBP members should be aware of how directions cascade from Combat Agencies → Police → LEOCON → building managers, to enable rapid, aligned decision-making during an incident.

3 Emergency options

Only NSW Police can declare a Danger Area and give directions about the movement of people during a CBD emergency. Building managers must follow these instructions immediately and support safe movement to CBD Assembly Areas.

The Sub Plan identifies four emergency options that may be directed by NSW Police for workers, visitors and building occupants. These strategies may be applied individually or in combination depending on the nature and scale of the emergency:

1. **Evacuate to a Nominated Location** – moving people from a danger area to a designated CBD Assembly Area.
2. **Shelter-in-Place / Find Shelter** – remaining indoors when this provides greater safety than evacuating.
3. **Stay at Work / Delay Your Journey** – continuing normal activities when there is no immediate threat, but transport networks are disrupted.
4. **Business as Usual** – returning to normal operations once authorities determine the area is safe.

These strategies are implemented using the Sydney CBD 10-Sector Framework, where each sector has a Primary and Secondary CBD Assembly Area (e.g., Hyde Park, The Domain, Barangaroo Reserve, Belmore Park, Tumbalong Park).

BBP members must ensure their building emergency plans reflect the building's designated sector and associated Primary and Secondary Assembly Areas and should coordinate with neighbouring properties where appropriate to support the safe movement of occupants.

4 Response phases

The Sub Plan outlines two key phases of emergency response that may occur during a CBD incident:

- **Phase 1 – Immediate Response**
The initial response period where emergency services assess the situation, implement rapid protective actions, and issue initial instructions to buildings and occupants (e.g., internal evacuation, shelter-in-place, or sector-based directions).
- **Phase 2 – Emergency options**
A prolonged phase where occupants may be directed to CBD Assembly Areas, remain there for an extended period, and await coordinated movement assisted by NSW Police, Transport for NSW, and Welfare Services. This phase may involve welfare support, staged movements out of the CBD, or the establishment of evacuation centres.

5 Emergency Response Framework for BBP Stakeholders

1. **Incident Occurs:** The relevant Combat Agency (e.g., Fire & Rescue NSW, NSW Police, or NSW Health) takes control of the response.
 - BBP members should ensure their internal emergency teams are aware of which agency is likely to lead different types of incidents (e.g., Police for security threats, Fire and Rescue for structural or hazardous incidents).
2. **Command and Coordination:** Police may declare a Danger Area and determine whether to evacuate, shelter, or hold position.
 - Building management teams should ensure they are subscribed to the SydneyALERT system and familiar with the Sydney CBD Emergency Warning System (CBD EWS), which provides citywide loudspeaker and visual notifications.
3. **Building-Level Response:**
 - Chief Wardens and building management implement their Emergency Response Plan.
 - Occupants move to internal assembly points or CBD assembly areas as directed.
 - BBP members should use their internal communication channels (PA systems, SMS alerts, internal apps, or radios) to share accurate, up-to-date guidance with tenants and contractors.
4. **Movement and Welfare:**
 - The NSW Police coordinate the movement of evacuees.
 - Transport for NSW and Welfare Services provide onward transport and temporary assistance if needed.
 - BBP members can assist by providing situational information to authorities about building occupancy levels, accessibility needs, or tenant vulnerabilities to improve coordination.
5. **Communication:**
 - Public information is managed centrally by the Public Information Functional Area Coordinator (PIFAC) to ensure consistent citywide messaging.
 - BBP members should align their public statements and tenant updates with official information from emergency services and the City of Sydney to avoid confusion.
 - Mobile networks may become congested or fail during major incidents. BBP members should plan for communication redundancy and avoid relying solely on mobile calls or SMS during emergencies.
6. **Recovery and Return:**

- Return to buildings will only occur once authorised by NSW Police or the SEOCON. Re-entry must align with City of Sydney recovery arrangements.
- Once the danger has passed, the return and recovery process is managed under the NSW State Recovery Plan and City of Sydney Local Recovery Plan.
- BBP members should participate in post-incident debriefs, assist with rapid re-occupancy assessments, and share lessons learned to strengthen overall city resilience.

6 Responsibilities of BBP Members

BBP members, as owners, managers, and operators of major commercial buildings have a critical role in ensuring building occupants' safety and supporting the coordinated citywide response.

Responsibilities include:

6.1 Preparedness activities required under the Sydney CBD Safety Sub Plan

BBP members must:

- Maintain compliant emergency plans and procedures in line with AS 3745:2010, including evacuation, shelter-in-place, communication, and emergency response actions.
- Train wardens and building staff to activate and manage emergency procedures effectively.
- Ensure all occupants understand evacuation and shelter-in-place arrangements, including the building's CBD sector and its Primary and Secondary CBD Assembly Areas.
- Designate, manage and clearly signpost building assembly areas, ensuring guidance is accessible and multilingual.
- Maintain arrangements for vulnerable occupants, including Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) and accessibility considerations.
- Ensure emergency information and instructions are accessible to all occupants, including visitors, contractors, tourists, event attendees and short-term occupants unfamiliar with the building.
- Ensure building systems (alarms, PA systems, access control, CCTV) support emergency communication and allow first responder access.
- Nominate a primary emergency liaison contact for communication with NSW Police and other emergency services during incidents.
- Deliver and participate in emergency and security awareness campaigns and training to promote readiness across the building portfolio.
- Encourage tenants to maintain business continuity plans that align with CBD-wide emergency arrangements.
- Support consistent public communication by aligning internal messaging with official emergency information.
- Encourage occupants to consider maintaining personal "Go Bags" with identification, medication, first aid, radios, torches and essential supplies.

6.2 Responsibilities of workers

Workers can be prepared for a CBD emergency in the following ways:

- Familiarisation with building evacuation plan and building's assembly area.
- Become familiar with alternate transport modes, outside usual means of commute.
- Put together a 'Go Bag' .

For Residents

- Important personal information (identification, insurance details, etc.)
- Bottled water
- A torch
- AM/FM radio with extra batteries
- Spare keys
- First aid
- Personal supplies, including medications
- Leads, cages, and food for pets

For Child Care Centres

- Nappies
- Formula
- Bottles
- Petty cash
- Parent contact details
- Wrist bands or stickers with centre name and emergency contact details
- Be familiar with the concepts in this Plan and how you may be asked to respond, for example: Know your building assembly area and nearest CBD assembly area should immediate evacuation be required.
- Understand the concepts of shelter in place or find shelter; continue normal day to day activities; and evacuation.
- Understand how to best share official advice with others.
- Limit use of mobile phones. When mobile networks are used for message delivery, due consideration needs to be given to the guarantee of receipt in timely fashion because those networks are susceptible to significant congestion during emergencies and mass crowd events, which can lead to service degradation.
- Designate an out of precinct contact person.

6.2 Recommended best practice (not mandated by the Sub Plan)

BBP members are encouraged to:

- Review Emergency Management Plans annually.
- Participate in precinct-level or CBD-wide exercises when invited.
- Coordinate with neighbouring buildings to support consistent movement and crowd safety.
- Strengthen utility, communication, and IT resilience (e.g., backup power, redundant comms).
- Encourage tenants to maintain business continuity plans aligned with CBD arrangements.
- Consider membership of Precinct Safety and Security Working Groups where established.
- Provide places of refuge to the community when sheltering/seeking shelter during emergency events.

7 Key Takeaways for BBP Members

- Be familiar with the Sydney CBD Safety Sub Plan and the building's role within it.

- Ensure emergency management framework aligns with the plan's principles.
- Conduct regular exercises and training for staff and tenants.
- Establish clear communication channels with tenants, emergency services, and city authorities.
- Contribute to a coordinated citywide response by promoting preparedness, sharing information, and supporting public safety messaging.
- Conduct site-level post-incident debriefs to share lessons learned and update processes and procedures accordingly.
- Assist in rapid building safety assessments and facilitate re-occupancy planning to support recovery.
- Share and promote BBP best practices in resilience and emergency preparedness across the Sydney CBD network.

8 Quick Reference – BBP Actions by Phase

Phase	Key BBP Actions
Before (Preparedness)	Maintain plans, conduct drills, review risks, and coordinate with nearby buildings.
During (Response)	Follow official directions, activate building emergency plans, and communicate clearly with occupants.
After (Recovery)	Participate in debriefs, assess building safety, coordinate tenant return, and document lessons learned.

9 Reference Documents

For further detail, BBP members can refer to:

Annexure	Title	Relevance to BBP Members
Annex A	Context and Demographics	Outlines CBD population, land use, key features and supports building-level planning.
Annex B	Roles and Responsibilities	Defines roles of agencies and stakeholders, including building owners and managers.
Annex C	10 Sector Response Plan	Identifies sector boundaries and helps locate your building's emergency sector.
Annex D	10 Sector Demographics	Details workforce and residential data per sector. Useful for scale planning.
Annex E	Decision-Making Diagram	Explains who authorises protective strategies and when.
Annex F	Assembly Areas	Lists all primary and secondary CBD assembly areas by sector.
Annex G	Assembly Area Checklist	Provides guidance for managing evacuees and ensuring safety.