



# Local Flood Guide Myrtleford



# FloodSafe

Flood information for the Ovens River, Barwidgee Creek, Buffalo Creek and Happy Valley Creek at Myrtleford



2010 flood, Myrtleford. Image Courtesy of the Border Mail

MYRTLEFORD



FLOOD STORM EMERGENCY **132 500**

For more information visit [ses.vic.gov.au](http://ses.vic.gov.au)

# The Myrtleford local area

Myrtleford is located on and adjacent to the Ovens River floodplain within the Alpine Shire. The Ovens River catchment collects both rain and snow melt from the North East and Alpine weather districts, from Mt Buffalo, Mt Hotham and Mt Jack to Mt Stanley. Parts of Myrtleford are prone to flooding from the Ovens River, Happy Valley Creek, Buffalo Creek and/or Barwidgee Creek. Flooding from the Buckland and Buffalo Rivers can also add to flooding in and around Myrtleford.

Damaging floods have impacted Myrtleford in recent history including 1974, 1993, 1998 and 2010. In significant flood events floodwater spills from the Ovens River to the northern part of the floodplain around Selzers Lane at Ovens. This contributes to flooding in Happy Valley Creek and on the northern floodplain at Myrtleford. Parts of Myrtleford are also at risk of flash flooding following heavy rainfall in the area over a short time, especially in the Nil Gully areas and bushfire affected areas.

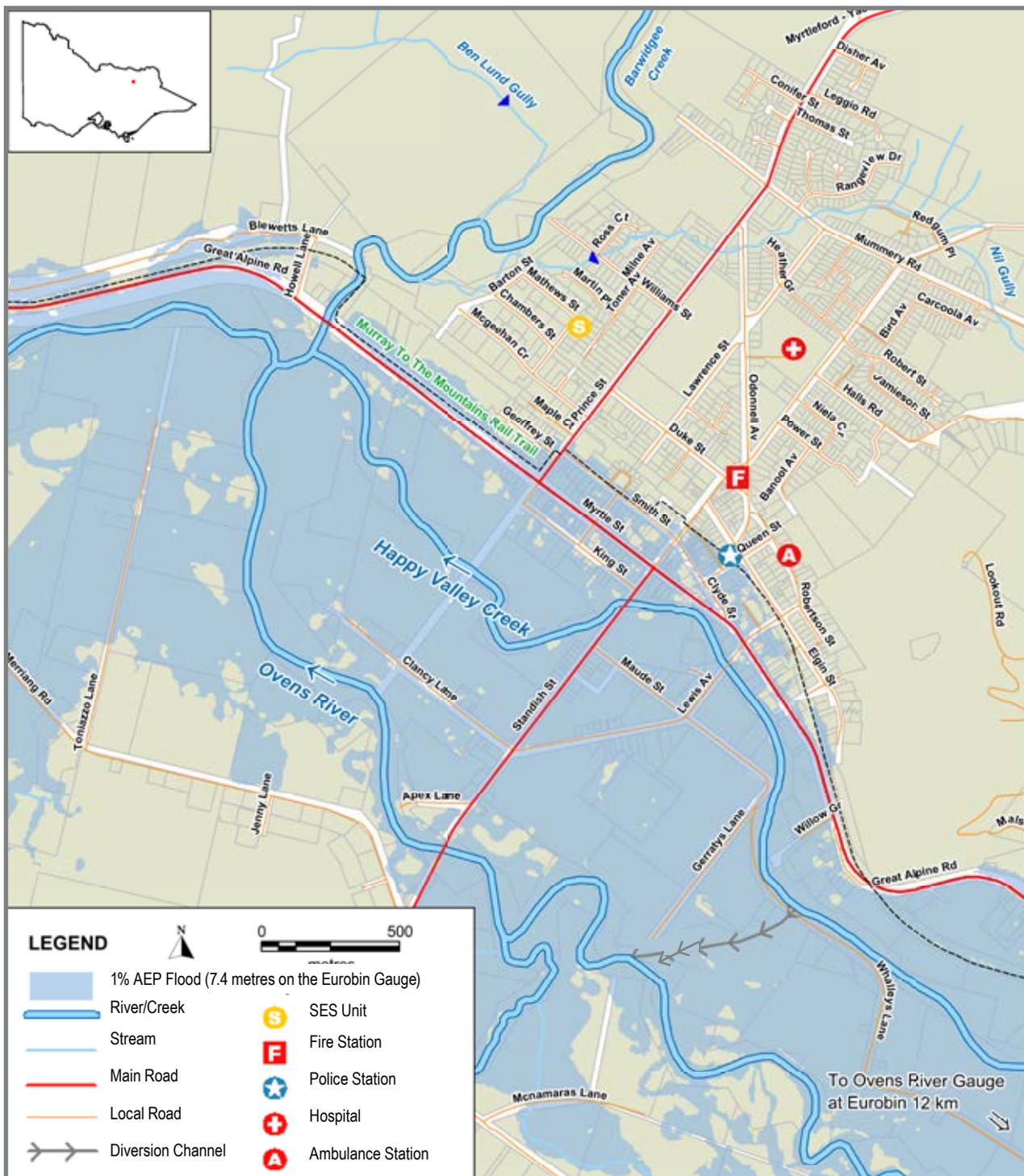
This map shows the likely spread of a 1% AEP (Annual Exceedance Probability) riverine flood in Myrtleford. This means there is a 1% chance of a flood this size occurring in any year, not that it can only happen once every 100 years. This size flood is Council's flood planning zone which represents 7.4 metres on the Ovens River Gauge at Eurobin.

## Your local emergency broadcasters are:

- ABC Myrtleford 91.7 FM
- ABC Bright 89.7 FM
- ABC Wangaratta 106.5 FM
- Alpine Community Radio Ovens Valley 92.9 FM
- SKY NEWS Television

## Alpine Shire Contact details:

Phone: (03) 5755 0555  
 Email: [info@alpinshire.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@alpinshire.vic.gov.au)  
 Web: [alpinshire.vic.gov.au](http://alpinshire.vic.gov.au)



**Disclaimer:** This map publication is presented by Victoria State Emergency Service for the purpose of disseminating emergency management information. The contents of the information has not been independently verified by Victoria State Emergency Service. No liability is accepted for any damage, loss or injury caused by errors or omissions in this information or for any action taken by any person in reliance upon it. Flood information is provided by North East Catchment Management Authority.

### Are you at risk of flood?

In Myrtleford, flooding is usually riverine flooding, caused when the Ovens River overflows, and excess water is carried through town by a floodwater 'breakout' into Happy Valley Creek. Flooding usually affects the town for 2-4 days but this can vary depending on the distribution and duration of the rainfall event and which direction the floodwater is coming from.

The 1993 flood which measured 7.1 metres at the Ovens River (Eurobin) Gauge is the largest flood on record. Since 1993, flood mitigation works have been undertaken including the construction of a diversion channel. This channel is designed to divert floodwater and reduce impact during an Ovens River breakaway. Floodwater is diverted from Happy Valley Creek (at the Whalleys Lane culverts) back into the Ovens River near the end of Gerraty's Lane. The channel helped reduce the impact of the 2010 flood on the town, but did not completely save it from flooding.

With the changeable nature of flooding in Myrtleford, it is important to watch conditions around you. Check rainfall, snow melt and river conditions and stay updated by tuning into local radio.

### Ovens River levels at the Eurobin gauge

This gauge is used to help predict and provide warnings for flooding in Myrtleford. Floodwater can take about six hours to travel from Eurobin to Myrtleford. The Ovens River gauge at Eurobin flood class levels have recently been changed by the Bureau of Meteorology, shown in the table below.

While no two floods are the same, the following table can give you an indication of what could happen at certain heights, including when your access may be cut off and when your property may be affected.

7.40 m	1% flood. Height shown on map page 2.
7.10 m	<b>October 1993 flood peak.</b> In 1993, 90 homes and 32 businesses in Myrtleford flooded above floor level and 202 properties were cut off by floodwater on their property. (Estimated gauge level - event preceded Eurobin gauge operation).
6.90 m	<b>September 1998 flood peak.</b> During this flood, 112 buildings flooded above floor level. Extensive flooding to houses and properties between Happy Valley Creek and the Ovens River along Whalleys Lane, Maude and Standish Streets and Lewis Avenue. Extensive road closures. Prince Street (Myrtleford to Yackandandah Road) was the only road open into and out of town. (Estimated gauge level - event preceded Eurobin gauge operation).
6.83 m	<b>September 2010 flood peak.</b> During this flood, 18 low-lying houses were evacuated, water flooded the car park behind Target and affected shops backing onto Happy Valley Creek.
6.00 m	<b>MAJOR FLOOD LEVEL (previously 5.50 metres)</b>
5.73 m	<b>December 2010 flood peak.</b> 19 people were evacuated from the Myrtleford and Arderns Caravan Parks.
5.50 m	<b>MODERATE FLOOD LEVEL (previously 5.00 metres)</b>
5.00 m	Arderns Caravan Park and low-lying parts of town start to flood. In 1998, Nimmo Bridge (Ovens River at Standish Street) was under water. Myrtleford's flood diversion channel only reduces flooding up to a flood of this height. It has no benefit once floods are higher than five metres.
4.90 m	Happy Valley Creek overflows near Whalleys Lane.
4.79 m	<b>March 2012 flood peak.</b>
4.50 m	<b>MINOR FLOOD LEVEL (remains the same)</b>
	At Minor Flood Level, the Ovens River overflows at Selzers Lane (Ovens) and many other places between the Hop Gardens and Myrtleford. Flooding in Myrtleford is inevitable once the Ovens River overflows upstream of town. Standish Street floodway active.

### Did you know?

Myrtleford has a history of big floods including in 1870, 1885, 1974, 1993, 1998 and 2010. The 1993 flood is the largest on record and is known as the "Big flood of 1993". During this flood, 90 homes and 32 businesses and public buildings were flooded above floor level and flooding caused extensive damage to crops, livestock, pumps, machinery and fencing.

Floods in Myrtleford can be influenced by a number of different factors, including:

- The 2010 flood was influenced by snow melt in the upper Ovens River catchment and significant flooding in Happy Valley Creek. In 1974 the Happy Valley Creek catchment experienced major rainfall while 1993 and 1998 floods resulted from heavy local rainfall over much of the Upper Ovens catchment (over 300 mm in 72 hours in 1998).
- Bushfires in Myrtleford's rain catchment can impact the way that floods behave as the vegetation and soils can be affected for several years and less rain is needed to cause runoff and flooding.

Road closures are common in Myrtleford during big floods. The Great Alpine Road can be flooded both sides of Myrtleford, isolating the town. The Great Alpine Road at Wabonga Lane (near the deer farm) and the road to the sewage farm are often the first areas to be cut off by flooding. In 2010 the only access into Bright was via emergency vehicles travelling along the Rail Trail.

Floods like these, or worse, could happen again. If you live close to a river, creek, or low-lying area, you may be at risk of flood impact.

Specific information regarding flood planning overlays for your property can be found at [www.alpineshire.vic.gov.au](http://www.alpineshire.vic.gov.au). Follow the links to the Online Mapping Services.

# About Flood Warnings

## What warnings mean

**Warnings** are issued by the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) to tell people about possible flooding.

A **Flood Watch** means there is a developing weather pattern that might cause floods in one or two days.

A **Flood Warning** means flooding is about to happen or is already happening. There are general, minor, moderate and major flood warnings.

### A Minor Flood Warning means floodwater can:

- Reach the top of the river banks.
- Come up through drains in nearby streets.
- Cover low-lying areas including riverside camping areas.
- Affect some low-lying caravan parks.
- Cover minor roads, tracks and low level bridges.
- Spread across land or go into buildings on some properties and farms.

### A Moderate Flood Warning means floodwater can:

- Spill over river banks and spread across low-lying areas.
- Start to threaten buildings, roads, rail, power and other developments.
- Require evacuation in some areas.
- Cover main roads.

### A Major Flood Warning means floodwater can:

- Cause widespread flooding.
- Threaten more houses and businesses.
- Cause properties and whole areas to be isolated by water.
- Disrupt major roads and transport routes.
- Require many evacuations.

Victoria State Emergency Service (SES) will give information about how the floodwater might affect people and properties.

### Severe Thunderstorm Warnings

Thunderstorms are classified as severe, due to their potential to cause significant localised damage through: wind gusts, large hail, tornadoes or flash flooding. Severe Thunderstorm Warnings are issued to the community by BoM.

### Severe Weather Warnings

These warnings are issued to the community by BoM when severe weather is expected that is not directly related to severe thunderstorms or bushfires. Examples of severe weather include damaging winds and flash flooding.

**Flash Flooding** happens quickly, especially in the Nil Gully area. There may be little or no warning. The arrival time or depth of a flash flood cannot always be predicted.

**Remember, you may not receive any official warning.**

**Emergency assistance may not be immediately available. Be aware of what is happening around you to stay safe.**

**Never wait for a warning to act.**

## Emergency Alert

SES may provide alerts to the Myrtleford community through the Emergency Alert telephone warning system. All emergency service providers can use Emergency Alert to warn communities about dangerous situations by voice message to landline telephones or text message to mobile phones.

If you receive a warning, make sure that all family members, people at work and your neighbours are aware of the situation.

**If you receive an Emergency Alert you should pay attention and act. It could mean life or death.**

If you need help to understand a warning, ask a friend, neighbour or family member.

## Warnings for Myrtleford

For the Ovens River, flood warnings are issued by the Bureau of Meteorology to provide predictions of the flood size (minor, moderate or major), time and possible peak of the Ovens River.

It is important to know how the predicted flood levels are likely to impact you as you may be affected before the peak (*see page 3: Ovens River Flood Levels at the Eurobin Gauge.*) You can use this table to figure out when you need to start following your flood emergency plan.

## Flood levees

A levee is an embankment usually alongside a river or creek designed to protect property from floodwater.

Levees can reduce the frequency of flooding but no levee is guaranteed to be flood-proof. A levee is designed to control a certain amount of floodwater. If larger floods occur, water will flow over the levee into low-lying areas. Floodwater may also damage the levee, flowing through an opening or break.

## Community Sirens

A Community Warning Siren operates in Myrtleford. If a siren is activated (for a flood or any other emergency), the siren will indicate one of two emergency situations:

- A siren sounding for 90 seconds indicates that the CFA Brigade is responding to a fire.
- A long five minute sounding of the siren indicates an emergency situation is threatening the town, conditions are dangerous and people must seek further information immediately. Check websites, information lines and local radio.

You can seek further information through emergency broadcasters – ABC local radio, commercial radio and designated community radio stations and SKY NEWS Television.

### Now – before a flood

- Check if your home or business is subject to flooding. For more information, contact Alpine Shire Council.
- Develop an emergency plan.
- Check if you could be cut off by floodwater.
- Know the safest way to go if you decide to leave your property and plan an alternative route.
- Check your insurance policies to ensure your equipment, property and business are covered for flood damage.
- Keep a list of emergency numbers near the telephone.
- Put together an emergency kit.
- Stay alert for weather warnings and heavy rainfall.

### When a flood is likely

- Take action. Follow your emergency plan.
- Listen to your radio for information and advice.
- Check your neighbours are safe and know about the flood.
- Stack possessions on benches and tables with electrical goods in the highest places.
- Anchor objects that are likely to float and cause damage.
- Move rubbish bins, chemicals and poisons to the highest place.
- Put important papers, valuables, photos and other special personal items into your emergency kit.
- Business owners should raise stock, business records and equipment onto benches and tables.
- Rural property owners should move livestock, pumps and machinery to higher ground.
- If you are likely to be isolated, have enough food, drinking water, medicine, fuel and other needs to last at least three days.
- Do not forget pet food and stock feed.

### Your emergency plan

Emergencies can happen at any time, with little warning. People who have planned and prepared for emergencies have reduced the impact and recovered faster.

Taking the time to think about emergencies and make your own plan helps you think clearly and have more control to make better decisions when an emergency occurs.

Your emergency plan should identify:

- The types of emergencies that might affect you.
- How those emergencies might affect you.
- What you will do before, during and after an emergency.
- Where to get more information.
- Where you will go if you evacuate and the best way to go in different circumstances.
- A list of phone numbers you will need, including emergency services, your insurance company, friends and family.



Visit [ses.vic.gov.au](http://ses.vic.gov.au) to obtain a copy of your Home Emergency Plan workbook

### Evacuation

During a flood, Police, SES and other emergency service providers may advise you to evacuate to keep you safe. It is important that you follow this advice.

There are two types of evacuation notices that may be issued via your emergency broadcaster during a flood:

- **Prepare to evacuate** – means you should act quickly and take immediate action to protect your life and property. Be ready to leave your property.
- **Evacuate immediately** – you must leave immediately as there is a risk to lives. You may only have minutes to evacuate in a flash flooding situation.

Do not return to your home until you are sure it is safe to do so. You do not need to wait to be told to evacuate.

# Emergency Kit

Every home and business should have a basic emergency kit:



Check your kit often. Make sure things work. Replace out of date items.

When a warning is issued, have ready for use or pack into your kit:



## I need to add:

Write your list here. Tick items as you pack them into your kit.

- Special needs \_\_\_\_\_
- Photos \_\_\_\_\_
- Family keepsakes \_\_\_\_\_
- Valuables \_\_\_\_\_
- Documents \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

# During and After a Flood

**Never**  
Drive, Ride or Walk  
Through Floodwater

## During a flood

When flooding has begun:

- **Never drive, ride, swim or walk through floodwater.**
- Remember that floodwater can be deeper than you think and can hide damaged roads and bridges.
- Never let your children play or swim in floodwater. It is dirty, dangerous and deadly.
- Tune in to your emergency broadcasters: ABC Local Radio, Commercial Radio, designated Community Radio Stations and SKY NEWS Television.
- In life-threatening emergencies, call Triple Zero (000).
- For SES emergency assistance during floods and storms call 132 500.
- Stay away from all waterways including drains and culverts.
- Stay away from fallen powerlines as electricity travels easily through water.
- Be aware that animals such as snakes, rats, spiders and other pests may be on the move during a flood. These animals can come into houses and other buildings or hide around sandbags.
- Keep in contact with neighbours.
- Be prepared to act quickly.

## After a flood

Flood dangers do not end when the water begins to fall. To make sure you stay safe:

- Keep listening to local emergency broadcasters.
- Do not return home until you are sure that it is safe.

Once you return to your home:

- Investigate the structural safety of your building.
- Drink bottled water or boil all drinking water until advised that the water supply is safe.
- Throw away any food or medicines that may have been in contact with floodwater or affected by power outages.
- When entering a building, use a torch to light your way. Never use matches or cigarette lighters as there may be gas inside.
- Keep the electricity and gas off until checked and tested by a professional.
- Take photographs of all damage for insurance.
- Clean your home straight away to prevent disease.

## How SES helps the community

Victoria State Emergency Service (SES) is a volunteer based emergency service. Although SES volunteers attempt to reach everyone prior to or during an emergency, at times this is not possible, especially during flash flooding which occurs so quickly. Therefore it is advisable for you to be prepared for emergencies so that you can share responsibility for your own wellbeing during those times. In a flood, SES assistance may include:

- Giving flood advice
- Protecting essential services
- Helping to protect infrastructure
- Rescuing people from floodwater
- Advising of an evacuation

To assist your preparation, it is recommended that you obtain a copy of the SES Home Emergency Plan by visiting [ses.vic.gov.au](http://ses.vic.gov.au).



# Emergency Checklist

## NOW: Flood preparation

- Check if your insurance policies cover flooding.
- Keep this list of emergency numbers near the telephone.
- Put together an emergency kit and prepare a home or business emergency plan, see [ses.vic.gov.au](http://ses.vic.gov.au).

## When you hear a Flood Watch or weather warning

- Listen to Severe Weather Warnings for flash flood.
- Listen to radio and check the VicEmergency website for more information and advice.
- Go over your emergency plan. Pack clothing and other extra items into your emergency kit and take this with you if you evacuate.
- Leave early if you intend to evacuate.

## When flooding may happen soon (heavy rainfall)

- Make sure your family members and neighbours are aware of what is happening.
- Conditions change rapidly, roads and escape routes can be covered or blocked. Don't forget to take pets and your medicine with you.
- Put household valuables and electrical items as high as possible.
- Turn off water, gas and electricity at the mains.
- Secure objects likely to float and cause damage.
- If you are staying in a caravan or temporary dwelling, move to higher ground BEFORE flooding begins.

## During the flood

- For SES emergency assistance, call 132 500.
- Do not drive, ride, swim or walk through floodwater. This is the main cause of death during floods.
- Never allow children to play in floodwater. This is the main cause of death during floods for children and young people.
- Stay away from drains, culverts and waterways as water can flow quickly and have strong currents.
- Stay well clear of fallen trees, powerlines and damaged buildings.
- If you are trapped inside a building, stay inside and shelter in the highest place. Call Triple Zero (000) in a life-threatening emergency.

## After the flood: recovery

- If your property has been flooded, check with Alpine Shire Council for information and advice.
- Have all electrical and gas equipment professionally tested before use.

For more information visit:

- [ses.vic.gov.au](http://ses.vic.gov.au)
- [facebook.com/vicses](https://facebook.com/vicses)
- [twitter.com/vicseswarnings](https://twitter.com/vicseswarnings)

# Emergency Contacts

**Life-threatening emergency**  
Police Fire Ambulance

**000** Triple Zero  
TTY106

**Victoria State Emergency Service (SES)**  
For SES emergency assistance

**132 500**

**SES information line**

Operates during major floods or storms

**1300 842 737**  
**1300 VIC SES**

**VicEmergency**

Victorian emergency warnings

[emergency.vic.gov.au](http://emergency.vic.gov.au)

**Bureau of Meteorology (BoM)**

Weather information, forecasts, warnings

**1300 659 217**  
[bom.gov.au](http://bom.gov.au)

**National Relay Service (NRS)**

[relayservice.gov.au](http://relayservice.gov.au)

The deaf, hearing or speech impaired can call SES or Triple Zero (000) using NRS:

	DIAL	THEN ASK FOR
■ <b>Speak and Listen (SSR)</b> users phone	<b>1300 555 727</b>	<b>132 500</b>
■ <b>TTY / Voice</b> users phone	<b>13 36 77</b>	<b>132 500</b>

**Internet Relay** users log into

[iprelay.com.au/call/](http://iprelay.com.au/call/)  
then enter: **132 500 or 000**

**VicRoads**

Road closures and hazard reporting service

**13 11 70**  
[vicroads.vic.gov.au](http://vicroads.vic.gov.au)

## Alpine Shire Contact Details

Phone: **(03) 5755 0555**  
Email: [info@alpineshire.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@alpineshire.vic.gov.au)  
Web: [alpineshire.vic.gov.au](http://alpineshire.vic.gov.au)

**Weather Districts:**

North East and Alpine Region

**Catchments:**

North East and Ovens River

## Emergency Broadcasters

Emergency broadcasters include ABC Local Radio, designated commercial radio stations across Victoria and SKY NEWS Television.

- ABC Myrtleford 91.7 FM
- ABC Bright 89.7 FM
- ABC Wangaratta 106.5 FM
- Alpine Community Radio Ovens Valley 92.9 FM
- SKY NEWS Television

**Complete the following and keep this information handy close to the phone:**

Your electricity supplier: \_\_\_\_\_

Your gas supplier: \_\_\_\_\_

Doctor: \_\_\_\_\_

Vet: \_\_\_\_\_

## Insurance

Policy Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_