

The Eastern Health community like many people in Australia and overseas have been gripped by the current bushfire crisis. I would like to take the opportunity to remind you all of the leave options available to you and how to access each.

I have personally asked all managers to ensure that everything possible is being done to support and reassure affected staff by reducing red tape for those who are directly affected, need to defend property or support the community.

Below is an outline of the leave options available to you. Whilst we encourage you to try and provide as much notice as possible if you are unable to attend for work, we understand that there may be times where this is difficult or even impossible but ask you to communicate any leave requirements to your line manager as soon as you can.

If you have any questions I encourage you to speak with your manager or the HR Connect team on 03 9955 7555 between 8.30am to 4.30pm Or Email on hrconnect@easternhealth.org.au anytime.

Leave options

Leave to Engage in Emergency Relief Activities

If you are a member of a voluntary emergency relief organisation including, but not limited to, the Country Fire Authority, Red Cross, State Emergency Service and St John Ambulance you will be released from normal duty without loss of pay where your attendance is required at local, national or international emergency situations, provided that such leave can be facilitated without unreasonably affecting the operations of Eastern Health. Eastern Health will make all attempts to accommodate the attendance of employees in these circumstances.

Please ensure you notify your manager as soon as you are able to.

Special Leave

If you elect to defend or pack-up your immediate family property under an SES or CFA “Emergency Warning” message, or under a Victoria Police “Evacuation Order” you may apply for special paid leave up to a maximum of ten (10) days (pro rata for part timers). Please notify your manager of your need to take leave as soon as practicable.

Personal Leave

If your health and wellbeing is adversely affected by the bushfires and you are unable to work or you need to provide care or support to a member of your immediate household or family or if you need leave to deal with an unexpected emergency related to the bushfires, you are entitled to take personal leave. Please contact your manager as soon as practicable to notify them of your absence and if possible, how long you think you will need to be absent.

Our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider is available 24/7 on 1300 687 327. Please do not hesitate to contact EAP if their support could be of assistance to you.

There are also a number of other services available if needed which include the following:

- Victorian Doctors' Health Program on 9280 8712
- AMA Peer support 1300 853 338
- Nurse and Midwife Support telephone line on 1800 667 877
- Nursing and Midwifery Health Program Victoria on 9415 7551
- You are also encouraged to utilise our sacred spaces or contact our spiritual care services.

Other Paid leave

Where a "Watch and Act" message from CFA is issued and you elect not to attend work to deal with personal circumstances or where you wish to take leave for other reasons related to the bushfires, you may apply to take appropriate accrued leave (such as annual or long service leave). Managers will make all attempts to support (and where required) approve your leave. Where you have exhausted all your paid leave entitlements, unpaid leave may be taken. Please try to discuss your leave requirements with your manager as early as practical.

Unpaid Leave

Employees wishing to take unpaid leave related to the current bushfire crisis are encouraged to speak with their manager. Unpaid leave will not be unreasonably refused.

Notice requirements

As you know, all employees are required to notify their manager of any absence as soon as reasonably practicable and Eastern Health understands and appreciates you may not be able to provide much, if any advance warning of some the leave needs outlined above. To ensure that Eastern Health knows you are safe and so we can ensure there is no disruption to your pay, please ensure you speak with your manager as soon as you can.

Regards,

David Plunkett

Chief Executive
Eastern Health