

INDUSTRY RESOURCE TOOLKIT SERIES: COMMUNICATING DURING A RESPONSE

This content has been developed in collaboration with Plant Health Australia to increase awareness of national response arrangements under the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed (EPPRD).

Communication is key during an emergency response

In this article, you will learn about communication during a response, including:

- who decides what information is shared in a response
- what is confidential information
- how to stay informed during a response.

Key points

- Talking points are developed to provide consistent information to stakeholders during an emergency response.
- For responses under [the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed](#) (EPPRD), a Confidentiality Deed Poll is signed, which means some information must remain confidential. Generally, if it's not in the talking points, it will not be shared publicly.
- During emergencies, get information from credible sources, check for the latest information, and avoid unverified sources.
- Help your industry and peers by not spreading misinformation.
- Stay updated and informed by visiting the [Plant Health Australia website](#) and [the Australian Lychee Growers website](#), call the Australian Lychee Growers Association (ALGA) on 0417 639 927 or email algaeo@australianlychee.com.au. ALGA will communicate all necessary & relevant Biosecurity information to growers via email, social media and industry newsletters.

Communication plays a valuable role during a response

When people are stressed and information is limited, it is human nature to speculate or assume and sometimes fill in the gaps with misinformation. This is especially true during times of uncertainty and disruption like during a biosecurity emergency response.

Those impacted by response activities will naturally want to know as much as possible about the decisions that will affect their businesses and livelihoods.

Effective communication is critical during a biosecurity emergency response. Accurate and timely information helps stakeholders understand the current situation and what they can and can't do. Everyone involved in a response has a critical role to play, including you.

Who decides what information is shared in a response

During a response, it's important for all stakeholders to communicate consistently and accurately. This is supported by the development of talking points that form the basis of the information used in media releases, websites, social media, and industry and community engagement activities.

Information used in the talking points is gathered from several areas, including the Lead Agency (state or territory government where the response is taking place), Consultative Committee on Emergency Plant Pest (CCEPP), the National Management Group (NMG), and nominated industry liaison representatives. As the key decision-makers, they are aware of the current situation and changes in response actions.

These areas work together in a coordinated way to ensure the flow of information within a response, as well as what can be shared publicly and when.

National talking points

- National talking points provide details about the pest, an update on the current situation, and what actions affected parties and the general public need to know.
- They provide high-level national messaging and are only distributed to stakeholders who are signatories to the EPPRD and directly involved in the response.

- National talking points are developed by the [National Biosecurity Communication and Engagement Network \(NBCEN\)](#), which is a membership of state and territory governments, affected peak industry bodies, and Plant Health Australia.
- This coordinated approach ensures confidential information is managed and stakeholders are providing consistent messages, becoming a reliable point of truth during a response.

Lead agency

- The lead agency's role is to implement the response plan and, as such, has a detailed understanding of the response's day-to-day activities.
- The Incident Management Team (IMT) oversees the implementation of response activities and has a dedicated Public Information function that plays a critical role in gathering and distributing information to stakeholders and feeding information into the national talking points.
- In addition to national talking points, the lead agency will also support affected industry parties develop tailored talking points that are specific to their industry and meet the information needs of affected growers.
- The Public Information function will work closely with an Industry Liaison Officer (ILO) to provide input into industry-specific talking points and ensure the information provided doesn't breach confidentiality.
- The lead agency invites affected industries to nominate an ILO to work closely with the IMT.

Affected industries

- National peak bodies that are signatories to the EPPRD are involved in all levels of a response to an EPP that affects their industry.
- If the Lychee Industry is impacted, the Australian Lychee Growers Association (ALGA) will have representation in the CCEPP, NMG, NBCEN and will nominate ILOs to support the lead agency and the IMT.
- ALGA would be involved in decision-making that supports response activities and ensures timely and accurate information is passed on to our industry.
- ALGA would work closely with our nominated ILO, other affected industries and the Lead Agency to support consistent messaging.

NMG and CCEPP

- Information provided and discussed by NMG and CCEPP is considered confidential unless all affected stakeholders agree that it can be included in talking points or as legally required.
- Find out more about our role on the NMG and CCEPP during a response. Refer to Article 3 'Responding to an Emergency Plant Pest under the EPPRD'.

Industry Liaison Officers

- Industry Liaison Officers (ILO) are a key conduit of information between the Lead Agency and the national peak industry body.
- The role of the ILO is to provide industry knowledge to the IMT and update their national peak industry body.
- The information flow between an ILO and the national peak industry body is valuable to inform decision-making of the CCEPP and NMG representatives.
- ILOs work closely with the public information function within the IMT to support on-the-ground communication and engagement activities, and ensure the wording used and details provided in messaging, are relevant to their industry.

What is confidential information?

In an emergency situation, certain information must remain confidential to protect the privacy of those impacted, maintain relationships with our trading partners, ensure a coordinated approach to response activities and uphold public trust.

To ensure confidentiality during a response those who are privy to confidential information must sign a confidentiality deed poll. This includes all representatives on the CCEPP and NMG, ILO's, and lead agency staff working in the IMT. It also includes key staff within stakeholder organisations such as board members, communication staff, and specialist advisers who provide critical advice to support decision making.

Some information, such as the names and addresses of those impacted, can never be released, and other information is released in a controlled way to ensure it aligns with response activities and direction from the lead agency. This allows for systems and processes to be in place so that stakeholders are notified of their roles and responsibilities at the right time.

For example, a lead agency is responding to an incursion that has progressed to the point where they will be allowing the movement of an affected commodity. Before the lead agency can make this publicly known, they need to ensure the systems are in place to manage the required processes growers will need to follow. This delay may only take a few days, but if growers hear of the changes and try to move their commodity before it has been publicly known, they risk not following the correct processes and jeopardising the response.

How to stay informed during a response

During the early stages of a response, the situation can change rapidly as new information becomes available. Activity that was permitted one day may be restricted the next as the size of the response becomes known. Equally, as the response progresses, restrictions may be lifted, allowing a return to business as usual.

If the Lychee Industry is an affected party during a response, ALGA will ensure we provide accurate timely information throughout the response.

Official websites are also a reliable source of truth. The lead agency will have response-specific information on its website that will be updated regularly and include details on what permits growers may need or processes to follow.

The [Outbreak website](#) also provides information on all current responses in Australia across plant, animal and environmental responses.

To support delivering a unified message and avoid duplication of efforts ALGA will often link to official sources like those above. This is so our industry has confidence that the response is being conducted jointly and as an affected industry we have a say in how that is done.

Regardless of the level of impact, a response has on you or your industry it's important to remain up to date and accurately informed. Always rely on information from credible sources and check you are referring to the most recent version (refer to the date or time information was provided). Avoiding unverified sources will help your industry and peers by not spreading misinformation.

You can stay up to date by visiting the [Plant Health Australia website](#) and [the Australian Lychee Growers website](#), call the Australian Lychee Growers Association (ALGA) on 0417 639 927 or email algaeo@australianlychee.com.au. ALGA will communicate all necessary Biosecurity information to growers via email, social media and industry newsletters.

What you can do now

- Continue to stay up to date with the Lychee Industry Association by visiting the website and responding to emails. ALGA will communicate all necessary Biosecurity information to growers via email, social media and industry newsletters.
- You may be interested in becoming an Industry Liaison Officer by participating in PHA training.
- Prepare for a plant pest or disease response by using sound biosecurity practices. Learn more about biosecurity essentials by visiting the [Farm Biosecurity website](#).

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Resources

Read: Want to learn more?

- [National Biosecurity Communication and Engagement Network](#)
- [Outbreak website](#)
- [Biosecurity Incident Management System](#) (BIMS)
- [PLANTPLAN: National talking points](#)
- PLANTPLAN: [Industry Liaison function](#)
- Confidentiality under the [EPPRD](#) (Clause 29)

Watch: View videos online to find out more

- [The role of the public information function](#) in an Incident Management Team

Learn: Free training available on BOLT

Free training is available on [Biosecurity Online Training platform \(BOLT\)](#). Register to get started.

- [Plant Biosecurity in Australia](#)
- [Industry Liaison Officer e-learning](#)

For additional information refer to Article 5 'Owner Reimbursement Costs'.