

Frequently Asked Questions

Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA) emergency markers

Correct as at 27 November 2023

What are emergency markers?

Emergency markers look like street signs and help the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA) clearly identify the location of emergency callers.

The markers have a six-figure alpha-numeric reference (three letters and three numbers) that triple zero (000) callers can quote when stating their location.

How do emergency markers work?

The two most important pieces of information required when calling 000 are the location of the emergency (where is it?) and the nature of the emergency (what is it?).

When an emergency marker is quoted, an ESTA dispatcher can provide specific directional information to the responding emergency services.

Emergency markers are more than just signs. They are supported by GPS co-ordinates and directional instructions that ESTA operators can provide to police, fire, ambulance and the State Emergency Service. This includes advising them of obstructions such as locked gates, road closures and quickest access points.

The Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority manages 000 calls throughout Victoria for Victoria Police, CFA, MFB and the Metropolitan Ambulance Service.

What do the signs look like?

These Emergency Markers have a green background and white text, and can be your gateway to help in an emergency. By quoting the unique six-character alpha-numeric code displayed on the emergency marker, you can equip emergency call receivers with clear, unambiguous directional information.

Emergency markers may be vertical or horizontal, and can be freestanding signs, attached to existing infrastructure or integrated into other signage such as aquatic signage.

See an example of an emergency marker from another location opposite:



Why is Barwon Coast implementing this system?

Determining location information can be particularly difficult for 'open space' locations with no set addresses such as beaches and trails. Unlike the existing yellow beach marker codes (such as 18W), the unique alpha-numeric code included on the sign is linked to the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority's CAD system and specifies the location, GPS coordinates, road access route or navigational data, all of which assists the dispatch of emergency services.

ESTA emergency markers are not just a beach system; they are placed in open spaces, private lands and public areas such as reserves, rail trails, cycling tracks, waterways, and National Parks to reduce risk for the community – usually shared activity locations or facilities that have high visitation numbers or are visited by tourists and people who are unfamiliar with the locality.

The existing yellow beach location signs, such as 36W, are well-known locally but are not linked on the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA) CAD system, meaning that often the information cannot be used by Triple Zero call operators

When is this happening?

Barwon Coast will be installing the first of these new, green emergency markers at 60 locations between Collendina and Breamlea in December 2023.

This is the first stage of the project to replace the yellow beach location signs. The rest of the existing yellow beach location signs (e.g. 17W) will gradually be replaced by these new markers and unique alphanumeric codes, which is expected to take place over a two-year period.

Which code should I say if calling 000?

If there is a green emergency marker sign with an alphanumeric code near the site of an emergency, that is what should be provided to 000 operators, rather than the yellow beach location numbers.

This is because the alphanumeric code found on the green emergency marker sign enables Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA) – the body responsible for handling 000 calls in Victoria – to despatch emergency services to the **exact location** of the marker, unlike the yellow beach location signs which does not provide the same level of detail to emergency services.

If you cannot see a green emergency marker, try to determine the best way to clearly describe your location to the operator, such as nearby intersections or street names.

What will happen to the yellow beach markers?

There can only be one emergency marker in any location, so as the green emergency markers are rolled out, they will effectively replace the yellow beach location signs.

All existing yellow beach location signs (e.g. 17W) will gradually be replaced by these new markers and unique alphanumeric codes, which is expected to take place over a two-year period.

The two different types of signage will coexist on Barwon Coast reserves until all yellow beach location signs are replaced by emergency markers. It is critical to note that **where available, the ESTA emergency marker is the primary system that should be used.**

We understand and appreciate the history and community connection to the yellow beach location signs. However, public safety is of paramount importance, and the new emergency markers will save our emergency responders crucial time when responding to situations on the coast.