

Protecting your business, crops and livestock from natural disasters

As demonstrated by Tropical Cyclone Larry in March 2006, cyclones, storms and floods can have a devastating impact on primary producers. But some simple planning can help limit the damage and make recovery easier and quicker.

Before the cyclone: planning

Personal and property protection

- Prepare a detailed lock-down procedure for your home, sheds and farm buildings. Include instructions on how and where to turn off power, gas and water supplies, and how to secure roofs and other loose items that could be blown around and cause damage.
- Assign disaster responsibilities to employees and family members (e.g. securing objects, or moving livestock or machinery).
- Prepare a list of emergency telephone numbers (e.g. Police, Fire, Ambulance (000); local council; industry organisations; utility companies; the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (13 25 23); and relatives and neighbours).
- Prepare a map showing possible evacuation routes.
- Assemble a disaster kit. Suggestions for an emergency survival kit are given on the following page.
- Clear trees and shrubs from around your home and other buildings on your property. Clear areas near overhead power cables.
- Effluent systems can overflow during cyclones. To minimise the risk to health and the environment, keep your home and farm effluent systems in good working order.
- Tell family and friends what your plans are if a cyclone hits.

Business protection

- Assess cyclone risks to your property, livestock and crop production, and the potential impact on business income.
- Check that you are adequately insured for cyclone damage—beware of being under-insured.
- Take photographs of assets to document their pre-cyclone condition; this will help with insurance claims.

- Store your business records, deeds, other important papers and contact numbers in a safe, dry place.
- Back up your computer files (such as billing, payroll records and customer lists) regularly. Store copies in a secure, off-site location.
- Discuss with employees at what stage of an emergency you will send them home.

Livestock and pets

- Check with your local council or other agencies about emergency animal shelters and yards.
- Ensure your livestock and pets have some form of identification that will facilitate their return (e.g. name tag, microchip or brand).
- Plan for pets' needs (e.g. food, water, medication, carry container).
- Ensure that livestock equipment, shelters and paddocks are properly maintained, and have adequate stocks of hay / fodder, in preparation for sudden emergencies. (**NB:** round bales shed water so can be stored in the open for short periods of time)
- Fit gates on internal fences to avoid moving stock along public roads.
- Remove harmful plants from the areas designated for livestock evacuation to avoid stock eating toxic plants if the feed runs out.

For more information on managing animals in disasters, contact the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation, your local council, the RSPCA or your veterinarian.

Crops

- Maintain drains, contour banks and farm waterways to limit flooding and crop damage.
- Clear headlands and paddock access points of all potential debris.
- Ensure windbreaks, crop layout and support structures are designed and well maintained to provide maximum protection.

Emergency survival kit	
Personal needs	
- Battery-operated radio (with spare batteries) - Torch (with spare batteries), candles and waterproof matches - Strong shoes, leather gloves, hat, goggles, overalls and extra clothing - First aid kit and manual, and combination pocket knife - Medications, toiletry and sanitary supplies, and a change of clothes - Special needs for infants, the aged and people with disabilities	- Water in containers (even a bathtub)—allow about three litres per person per day - One week's supply of canned food - Paper plates, cups, plastic utensils, can opener and plastic storage containers - Pet food, water and other animal needs - Portable stove with fuel and cooking pot - Tent or tarpaulin, and blankets (woollen and thermal) - Money, including change / phone card, for phone calls - Strong plastic bags (for clothing, valuables, documents and photographs)
Business needs	
Backup generators for power supply to milking sheds, automated feeding machines and aquaculture aerators; check which electricity phase you are on—three-phase will accommodate a larger generator if it has more than one job to do	- Fuel for transport - Equipment such as a chainsaw, shovel and pick

Source: Emergency Management Australia and the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation

During the cyclone

When a cyclone warning is issued

- Listen to the radio for updates.
- Secure your home and outdoor objects.
- Move animals, people and equipment away from overhead power cables.
- Fill vehicle fuel tanks and park in a secure, covered area.
- Decide when to send employees home.
- Make the decision to move or turn out livestock from low lying areas prone to flooding to higher ground if possible. Remember, livestock management priorities during a disaster should focus on immediate safety for humans first and then animals and crops.
- If moving animals to a safer place, do so early to avoid unnecessary risk to you and your animals.
- Move stock away from boundaries to internal paddocks where possible, to limit the chance of them escaping through damaged fences onto public roads.
- Place animals under solid cover if possible (e.g. sturdy barn, shed or covered pen).
- Turn off all electricity, gas and water supplies, and unplug all appliances.
- Close all interior doors and secure external doors.
- Evacuate if:
 - you are directed to do so by local authorities
 - you live in a high risk area for flooding or strong winds
 - you feel you are in danger.
- If you are unable to evacuate, go to a safe place, such as a small interior room, a closet or even under a sturdy table or object that can provide additional protection.

When the cyclone strikes

- Follow the safety procedures recommended by local authorities.
- Stay indoors and away from windows and glass doors.
- Keep curtains and blinds closed.
- Don't go outside until the cyclone has passed. Beware of the calm 'eye'. If the wind suddenly drops, don't assume the cyclone has passed—violent winds will soon resume from the opposite direction.
- Listen for updates on your radio and wait for the official 'all clear'.

After the cyclone: recovery

- Don't go outside unless officially advised it is safe. If you have evacuated your property, check with local authorities about the best time to return.
- Don't use the telephone landline unless it is an emergency.
- If you have a mobile telephone, organise to be in mobile phone coverage range at least once a day so you can make calls and receive any urgent messages. Keep in contact with family and friends.
- Listen to the radio for information about recovery assistance.
- If it is safe to do so, assess the damage to home, property, crops and livestock. Take extra caution in paddocks / fields where powerlines may be down.
- If required, contact the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation on 13 25 23 for specialist primary production recovery advice, including QRAA assistance.
- Contact your insurance agent and industry organisation representative to access any recovery assistance that is being provided to your industry.
- Over the long term, monitor your health and wellbeing, and those of your family and employees. Contact a counsellor or your family doctor if you need help coping with the emotional effects of the disaster.

Pests and diseases

Cyclones and flooding increase the risk of pest and disease outbreaks, and early intervention is critical to limiting the damage. You can help by remaining vigilant:

- As you begin clearing debris, be alert for any signs of diseases or pests e.g. sick animals and rotting vegetation. Address immediate animal welfare needs.
- As part of your damage assessment, note the condition of plants and animals. Monitor any change to these conditions over the coming days.
- Even if you are unsure, report ANY concerns to the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation on 13 25 23.

Further information

Primary industries and animal welfare

Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation

Tel: 13 25 23
www.deedi.qld.gov.au

General cyclone preparedness advice

Bureau of Meteorology

Tel: 1300 659 212 (automated message, cyclone advice watch/warning)
www.bom.gov.au

State Disaster Management Group

www.disaster.qld.gov.au

Drawing up a family disaster plan

Queensland Health factsheets
www.health.qld.gov.au

© The State of Queensland, Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation, 2010.

Enquiries about reproduction, including downloading or printing the web version, should be directed to SAFTRSCopyright@deedi.qld.gov.au or telephone 13 25 23 (Queensland residents) or +61 7 3404 6999.