



## FACT SHEET

# Surviving a Cyclone

**November to April is cyclone season. Experiencing a cyclone can be terrifying and its impact on people and property disastrous. Preparation is the key to minimising the risks.**

Tropical cyclones develop over the waters around Australia during the warmer months, mostly November to April; however, cyclones have formed and caused destruction at other times of the year. The destructive force of a cyclone can have devastating consequences from serious injury and loss of life, through to major structural damage to property and infrastructure.

Beyond the obvious and very serious risks to life and property, a cyclone can disrupt business processes, prevent the delivery of important services and lead to serious financial losses. During a cyclone a Church organisation working in health or welfare might find itself physically cut off from clients in critical need, a school might lose essential services like power and water and be unable to operate for an indefinite period of time, or a parish might find itself unable to serve a community in desperate need of support and guidance.

Though little can be done to prevent natural disasters like cyclones from occurring, it is possible to minimise the risks. Having emergency plans in place make it easier for your organisation to ensure the safety of people, minimise losses, maintain business continuity and get back to delivering services and achieving its mission sooner. It also clearly demonstrates a duty of care to workers, including employees, volunteers, contractors and students.

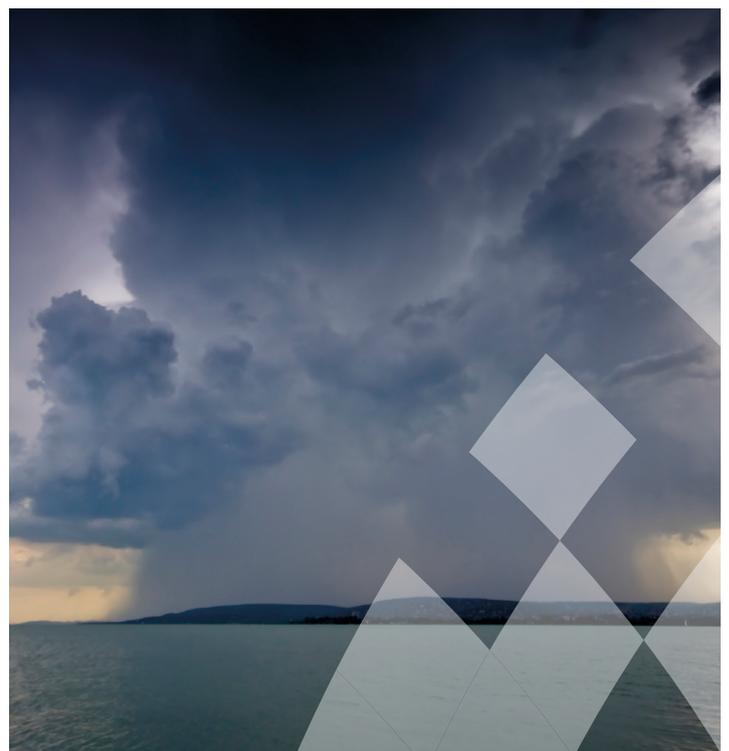
### Understand the risks

Wind and water are the most dangerous forces during a cyclone. Wind gusts can reach up to 280kmph and are capable of turning any debris into a deadly missile. Wind of this magnitude can bring down power lines, large buildings, bridges and trees creating potentially life-threatening situations.

The strong onshore winds and heavy rains typical in a cyclone often lead to flooding which increases the risk of drowning and damage to property. Rising floodwaters or damage to roads and bridges can cut entire communities off. This can last for several days or even months especially if materials and skilled services are in short supply or the area is remote. Heavy rain can also result in storm surge, a large, quick moving body of water that piles up against the shore, which can be extremely dangerous and unpredictable.

Damage to or loss of infrastructure as a result of a cyclone can leave communities without essential services like water and power or communications services like phone and internet. This can extend for days or even months depending on the location and the circumstances.

In Australia tropical cyclones are categorised using the Tropical Cyclone Category System. The intensity of a cyclone is determined by the maximum mean wind speed over open flat land or water. Cyclones are categorised on a scale of one to five, five being the most severe\*.



The best way to identify your organisation's unique set of risks is to conduct a risk assessment. Your local council and State Emergency Service (SES) will be useful resources.

## Develop emergency plans

Once you have identified your risks, you can begin to explore and implement an emergency plan. It is best to involve as many stakeholders as possible in the creation and management of your plans.

Your cyclone plans should cover four key areas:

1. How you will prepare for cyclone. This would include developing business continuity and evacuation plans, establishing systems for monitoring cyclone risks and ensuring you have adequate insurance in place.
2. Procedures for when a cyclone is imminent.
3. Procedures for during a cyclone.
4. Procedures for after a cyclone.

You'll also need to decide on the trigger or triggers that will bring each phase of your plan into action. A trigger could be a warning from the your state or territory government, a warning from the Bureau of Meteorology or a specific change in the weather. It is important to consider how long it will take to activate your plan and compare this to the amount of time you are likely to have. Cyclones can be unpredictable so time may be very limited.

Cyclones can strike at any time of the day or night, so consider what you will do if a cyclone warning is received when your organisation is closed, for example over the weekend, or for schools, during the holidays

## Communication and training

Appropriate training should be provided for employees, students, volunteers and contractors so that everyone understands the plans and their role and responsibilities. This could take the form of a group session, online training program or a one-on-one briefing depending on people's age, experience and location. This training should also be part of the induction process for employees, volunteers and contractors at the commencement of work.

The Bureau of Meteorology releases a series of publications and warnings. These include

<b>Tropical Cyclone Seasonal Outlook</b>	Provides a rough forecast for the number of tropical cyclones expected in the coming season.
<b>Tropical Cyclone Outlook</b>	Provides a probability forecast for potential tropical cyclone development during the coming three days.
<b>Cyclone Watch</b>	Issued when the onset of gales is expected within 48 hours. Provides a brief estimate of the cyclone's location, intensity, severity category and movement.
<b>Cyclone Warning</b>	Issued when the onset of gales is expected within 24 hours, or are already occurring. Identifies the communities being threatened, advises the name of the cyclone, location, intensity and movement.

\* Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology  
[www.bom.gov.au](http://www.bom.gov.au)

## Monitoring and review

Cyclone plans should be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis to ensure all details are up-to-date and any resources including emergency kits and equipment are in place. Reviews should also be completed after a cyclone, if there are any changes to buildings or property, if business activities or services change and after any training exercises. The review process is an opportunity to identify what parts of the plan work well and what needs to be refined.

To discuss your insurance options speak to your Client Relationship Executive on **1800 011 028**

For assistance with risk management, please contact the Risk Management Helpdesk on:

**1300 660 827**  
[helpdesk@risksupport.org.au](mailto:helpdesk@risksupport.org.au)

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