



BE READY CENTRAL WEST

PREPARING FOR NATURAL DISASTERS





BEING READY FOR DISASTERS

The Central West of Queensland is a remote region which covers 240 599 km². We are prone to a number of disaster events including flooding, severe storms, bush fires and heatwaves. Our communities are resilient and we are known for having wide open skies, breathtaking scenery, beautiful landscapes and a warm, dry climate. The grazing of cattle, sheep and, more recently goats, are the key industries throughout the region. Tourism is also a major industry during the cooler months with people visiting from all areas of Australia and from overseas. The Landsborough and Capricorn Highways traverse the area and the Diamantina, Thomson and Barcoo Rivers and Coopers Creek run through the Central West on their way to Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre. The head waters of Alpha Creek and the Belyando River commence south of Alpha and flow north into the Burdekin basin.

The Longreach Disaster District is located in Central Western Queensland and is comprised of five Councils. These are the Barcaldine Regional Council, Barcoo Shire Council, Blackall-Tambo Regional Council, Longreach Regional Council and Winton Shire Council. Each one of these Councils takes steps to prepare their local communities, organisations and businesses for possible disaster events. Prepared communities take better care of themselves before, during and after disaster events, which eases the burden and workload on response and recovery agencies. The five Councils have partnered to prepare a booklet to advise their communities of the natural disaster events which can impact upon them. The information provided will inform residents of the Central West and tourists visiting the area on how best they can prepare for and respond to these natural disaster events.

FOUR STEPS TO BE READY: PLAN.PACK.LISTEN.ACT

PLAN

Preparedness includes the taking of preparatory measures to ensure that, if an event occurs, individuals, communities, business and industry, government and non-government organisations are able to cope with the effects of the event.

- » Check your insurance policies are current (car, home and contents);
- » Identify the strongest room in your house to take shelter during a storm;
- » Know where and how to turn off your mains supply of power, water and gas; and
- » Have water storage containers and gas cooking equipment.

PACK AN EMERGENCY KIT

- » Torch;
- » Toiletries;
- » Sturdy gloves;
- » Portable radio;
- » Spare batteries;
- » Face masks
- » Essential medication;
- » Baby formula and nappies;
- » Three days' worth of non-perishable food; and
- » Important documents saved to a USB or in a sealed bag.
- » Can opener;
- » First aid kit;
- » Fresh water;
- » Waterproof bags;
- » Cash;

LISTEN

- » Listen to regular updates on ABC radio (AM 540), 4LG (AM 1098) and West FM;
- » Check the BOM website **bom.gov.au** for updates in relation to current and future weather information;
- » Check Council websites for up to date information on road closures and evacuation centres;

barcaldinerc.qld.gov.au | barcoo.qld.gov.au
btrc.qld.gov.au | longreach.qld.gov.au
winton.qld.gov.au

- » Listen for the Standard Emergency Warning Signal (SEWS). The SEWS is a wailing siren sound that has been adopted by all States and Territories to alert the community to the broadcast of an urgent safety message relating to an emergency/disaster.

ACT

- » Act quickly on the advice provided by Emergency Personnel and the Local Disaster Management Group;
- » Ensure all members of your household are informed of the current situation;
- » Check on neighbours and friends who may need assistance;
- » Activate your emergency plan including evacuation arrangements if needed; and
- » Locate your emergency kit.

FLOODING

Heavy rain in the catchments of the Diamantina, Thomson and Barcoo River systems can lead to flooding of townships and rural properties downstream. Water movements from these rain events can take from several days to several weeks to reach affected towns downstream from these headwaters. This water is generally slow moving, therefore allowing sufficient time to prepare and activate emergency plans and evacuation arrangements if required. As this water flows downstream, it tends to spread outside of the river banks and can cause flooding to properties as it makes its way south.

Heavy rainfall in the upper catchment of the Burdekin basin south of Alpha can lead to flooding in the local creek and river systems. Residents in this upper catchment need to adequately prepare as this floodwater can quickly make its way north.

These rain events often restrict road access to towns and properties throughout the region. Unsealed roads become impassable for extended periods of time and most rural roads are comprised of black soil which becomes very boggy. Black soil roads can hold moisture for long periods of time and should not be driven on until they are completely dried out.



WHAT WILL HAPPEN?

- » If flood-producing rain is expected in the near future, the Bureau of Meteorology will issue a Flood Watch;
- » A flood warning is issued when flooding is occurring or expected to occur in a particular area. A severe weather warning is issued when flash flooding is expected;
- » Warnings will be broadcast on radio, TV, social media and Council websites or directly within communities by street announcements and door knocking. The emergency alert system or SEWS (Standard Emergency Warning Signal) may also be used;
- » Drains, creeks and rivers that have had little or no water in previous months may fill rapidly with fast-flowing water, which can then spread to houses and streets; and
- » You may not be able to get in or out of your house or street.

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

- » Check the Bureau of Meteorology and local emergency service websites and listen for flood information;
- » Contact your local Council;
- » Secure loose items around the property including rubbish bins, garden tools, sports equipment and outdoor furniture;
- » Unplug electrical equipment to avoid damage caused by power surges;
- » Move household items to a higher place;
- » Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed;
- » Switch off power at the switchboard, gas and the main water valve;
- » Sandbag areas at risk from flooding, including drains inside the house to help prevent sewage overflows;
- » Boil tap water in case of contamination; and
- » Never drive, walk, swim or play in floodwaters. There could be hidden hazards below the water that you cannot see, regardless of how well you know the area.

AFTER THE FLOOD HAS PASSED?

- » Do not return to a flood zone until there is official communication that it is safe to do so;
- » Check whether electricity, gas or water supplies have been affected;
- » Treat every electrical item with extreme caution. Avoid power lines or other electric lines and cables;
- » Wear rubber boots or rubber-soled shoes and rubber or leather gloves;
- » Watch for damaged flooring, walls and ceilings as well as unexpected visitors such as snakes;
- » Follow Council or QHealth instructions for treating water that is contaminated; and
- » Contact emergency services if you need help.

SEVERE STORMS

Heavy rain, lightning strikes, damaging winds and hail can be experienced during severe storms. These storms can last several hours and they can travel long distances. The storm season normally occurs from November to April.

Damaging winds and hail associated with severe storms can cause considerable damage to infrastructure including buildings, power lines, vehicles and trees. Large loose objects that are not fixed to permanent structures can be picked up by strong winds and can also damage infrastructure.

It is important to listen to and heed warnings issued by authorities including the local Council, the Bureau of Meteorology and emergency services.



DAMAGE AND IMPACT

Storms have the potential to cause substantial damage to homes and vehicles caused by heavy winds and large hail. They can damage significant structures such as power lines, trees and other large objects that can be collected by large winds.

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

- » Check the Bureau of Meteorology and local emergency service websites and listen for storm and flood information;
- » Contact your local Council;
- » Secure loose items around the property including rubbish bins, garden tools, sports equipment and outdoor furniture;
- » Unplug electrical equipment to avoid damage caused by power surges; and
- » Move household items to a higher place.

AFTER THE STORM HAS PASSED?

- » Listen to your radio and remain indoors until advised it is safe to go outside;
- » Use recommended safe routes to return to your home;
- » Do not go sightseeing;
- » Check on your neighbours if necessary;
- » Do not use electrical appliances that have been wet until they are checked for safety;
- » Boil or purify your water until supplies are declared safe;
- » Stay away from damaged power lines, fallen trees and floodwater; and
- » Contact your local Council if you need help, or if your home is uninhabitable due to storm damage.

BUSHFIRES

Bushfires occur when both managed and unmanaged areas of vegetation ignite and burn through reserves, national parks, private property and urban corridors and are most likely to occur when the weather is very hot and dry. The higher the temperature and the lower the humidity, the more likely it is that a fire may start or continue to burn. They can start from human activity either accidentally or deliberately, or can start by natural causes such as lightning strikes.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN?

- » If fire danger levels are rising in your area, information will be broadcast on radio and websites including the BOM, Rural Fire Service Queensland and Council Facebook pages; and
- » When there is a bushfire in your area, it is up to you to take notice, seek information, make decisions and act.

THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS WILL OCCUR:

Advice: When an Advice warning is issued for your area, it indicates a fire or other emergency has started, however there is no immediate threat. At this level of warning, you will be asked to stay informed.

Watch & Act: When a Watch & Act warning is issued for your area, there is a heightened level of threat. You need to be aware of your situation and take action to be prepared and protect yourself and your family. At this level of warning, you will be asked either to leave now or be prepared to leave.

Emergency Warning: Don't assume you'll receive a warning as a fire approaches and don't assume a fire crew will be available to assist every home. It is up to you to monitor conditions, know what the Fire Danger Rating is each day and to tune in to local media including radio, social media and websites.

WHAT SHOULD I DO?

STRUCTURE

- » Clear leaves, twigs, bark and other debris from the roof and gutters;
- » Purchase and test the effectiveness of gutter plugs;
- » Enclose open areas under decks and floors;
- » Install fine steel wire mesh screens on all windows, doors, vents and weep holes;
- » Point LPG cylinder relief valves away from the house;
- » Conduct maintenance checks on pumps, generators and water systems; and
- » Seal all gaps in external roof and wall cladding.

ACCESS

- » Display a prominent house or lot number in case it is required in an emergency; and
- » Ensure there is adequate access to your property for fire trucks – four metres wide by four metres high, with a turn-around area.

VEGETATION

- » Reduce vegetation loads along the access path;
- » Mow your grass regularly;
- » Remove excess ground fuels and combustible material (long dry grass, dead leaves and branches); and
- » Trim low-lying branches two metres from the ground surrounding your home.

PERSONAL

- » Check that you have sufficient personal protective clothing and equipment;
- » Relocate flammable items away from your home, including woodpiles, paper, boxes, crates, hanging baskets and garden furniture;
- » Check the first aid kit is fully stocked;
- » Make sure you have appropriate insurance for your home and vehicles; and
- » Review and update your household emergency and evacuation plan.

HEATWAVE



The Bureau of Meteorology defines a heatwave as “three or more days of high maximum and minimum temperatures that are unusual for that location”. Heatwaves are calculated using the forecast maximum and minimum temperatures for the next three days, compared to both actual temperatures over the previous 30 days and to the “normal” temperatures expected for that location based on past records.

During heatwaves, there is an increase in emergency calls from people suffering heat-related illnesses. While the very young and the elderly are most at risk, anyone can be affected. Heat-related illness occurs when the body absorbs too much heat. This may happen slowly over a day or two of very hot weather. Act quickly to avoid serious – or even fatal effects of fully developed heat stroke.

EARLY SIGNS OF HEAT STRESS INCLUDE:

- » Rising body temperature;
- » Dry mouth and eyes;
- » Headache;
- » Shortness of breath;
- » Vomiting; and
- » Absence of tears when crying.

The risk of adverse clinical effects from the heat can be minimised by encouraging the population to:

- » Drink plenty of water and monitor themselves for signs of dehydration (e.g. dark urine);
- » Minimise physical activity;
- » Check on those at higher risk;
- » Check if their home air conditioner works before a heatwave;
- » Go to a public area which has air conditioning if they don't have access at home; and
- » Plan around the heat and avoid being outside between 11am and 3pm.

WHAT IS HEAT EXHAUSTION?

Heat exhaustion happens when someone becomes dehydrated due to fluid loss from a hot environment and/or excessive physical activity.

HEAT EXHAUSTION SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- » Headache;
- » Body temperature more than 40°C;
- » Muscle cramps;
- » Exhaustion and general weakness;
- » Nausea and/or vomiting;
- » Dizzy spells;
- » Pale, cool, clammy skin at first, becoming flushed and red later; and
- » A rapid, weak pulse.

TREATMENT FOR HEAT EXHAUSTION

- » Help the person to lie down at total rest in a cool or shady area to monitor;
- » Remove excessive clothing and loosen any tight clothing;
- » Cool by fanning and moisten skin if possible;
- » If fully alert and responsive, give them frequent small drinks of water;
- » If muscle cramps occur, gently stretch the affected muscles to ease pain;
- » If unresponsive, place in the recovery position;
- » If the person is unable to drink, vomiting, unresponsive, or does not improve, call 000 for an ambulance; and
- » Prepare to give CPR if necessary.

WHAT IS HEAT STROKE?

Heat stroke is a life-threatening emergency and can cause a person to collapse or fall unconscious. Heat stroke is more serious and means the body is no longer able to regulate its temperature by cooling the skin's surface by sweating. The internal body temperature rises, and organ damage can occur.

HEAT STROKE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- » Typically no longer sweating;
- » Red, hot and dry skin;
- » Body temperature more than 40°C;
- » A rapid, strong pulse;
- » Rapid, noisy breathing;
- » Irrational or aggressive behaviour; and
- » Deterioration of the conscious state.

TREATMENT FOR HEAT STROKE

- » Call 000 for an ambulance immediately;
- » Cool the person using wet towels or a wet sheet with a fan directed across the surface;
- » If ice packs are available, wrap them in towels and place them around the neck, groin and armpits;
- » If shivering occurs, reduce active cooling;
- » Monitor the person continually;
- » If unresponsive or not alert, place in the recovery position; and
- » Prepare to give CPR if necessary.

PANDEMIC

Pandemics are highly contagious viruses that are easily spread and can cause severe illness and even loss of life. The most common form of pandemic in Australia is influenza, otherwise known as the flu. Many people die annually from complications of the flu.

PERSON TO PERSON TRANSMISSION

Human infection occurs through the transfer of a pathogen from an infected person to a susceptible person.

Droplet transmission occurs when contagious droplets produced by the infected host are propelled into the environment through coughing or sneezing.

Airborne transmission refers to the production of droplet nuclei <5µm in diameter, which can stay suspended in the air and be disseminated by air currents. These particles can infect a susceptible host through inhalation. The classic example of a pathogen transmitted by airborne droplet nuclei is the measles virus.

Contact transmission refers to contact with bodily secretions through direct person-to-person contact and indirectly, through contact with contaminated objects such as hands, door handles and toys.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PANDEMIC AND OTHER DISASTERS

Some impacts of a pandemic are similar to those experienced in other disaster events; however some are specific to the pandemic environment and may result in circumstances not previously experienced in the community.

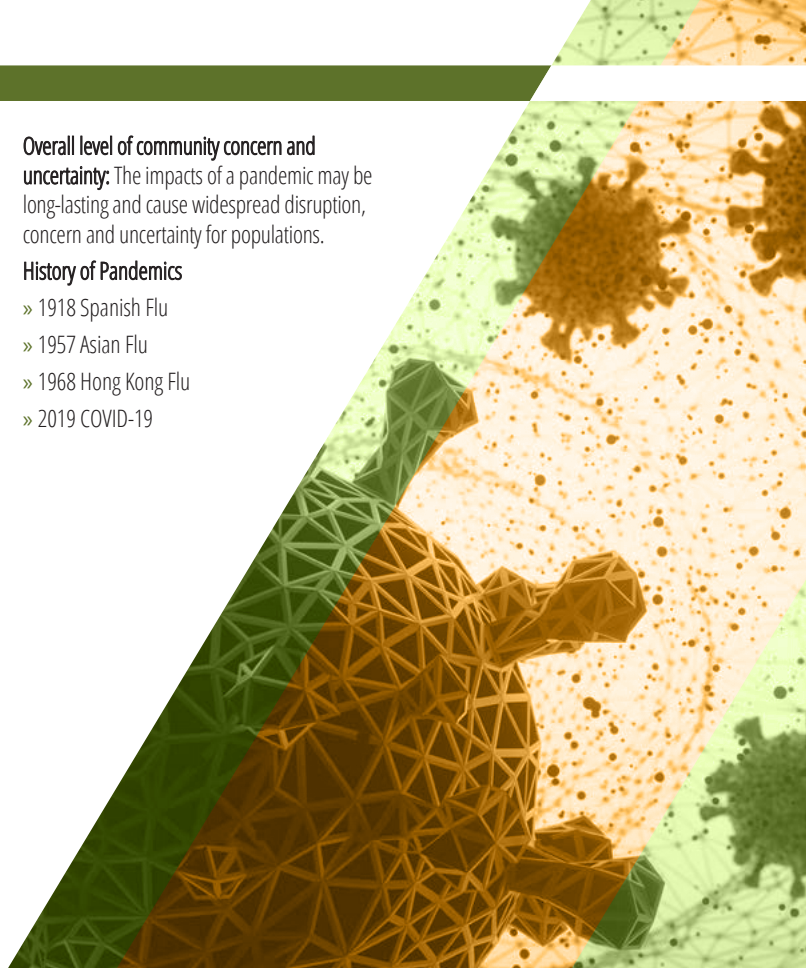
Scale of impact: A pandemic could impose a major strain on health and emergency services, and social and economic functioning generally. When a significant proportion of the population is affected, this can lead to disruption of critical infrastructure or services.

Duration of impact: The first wave of a pandemic may last several months, and can be followed by further waves of infection, with less intense periods of infection as more people become immune.

Overall level of community concern and uncertainty: The impacts of a pandemic may be long-lasting and cause widespread disruption, concern and uncertainty for populations.

History of Pandemics

- » 1918 Spanish Flu
- » 1957 Asian Flu
- » 1968 Hong Kong Flu
- » 2019 COVID-19



HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

HAZARD ZONES: (Storms, floods, bushfires)

WHERE WE WILL GO IF LEAVING: (Family, friends, neighbours)

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

HOW WE WILL GET THERE:

EMERGENCY MEETING PLACE:

OUR EMERGENCY KIT IS LOCATED:

ESSENTIAL MEDICATIONS:

PETS:

INSURANCE DETAILS:

DOCTOR:

SCHOOL:

CHILDCARE:

WORKPLACE:

FRIENDS:

NEIGHBOURS:

OTHER:

HELPFUL HINTS

- » Resupply before disaster events;
- » Carry plenty of water;
- » Carry insect repellent;
- » Black soil becomes boggy when wet;
- » Don't park under trees during storms;
- » Don't enter floodwaters in a vehicle or on foot;
- » Get off the road for heavy vehicles (if possible);
- » Don't enter storm water drains;
- » Beware of washouts along roads;
- » Know the UHF channels in the areas you are travelling through; and
- » Be aware of a lack of mobile phone reception.

BARCOLDINE REGIONAL COUNCIL

P: 07 4651 5600 barcaldinerc.qld.gov.au

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BARCOO SHIRE COUNCIL

P: 07 4658 6900 barcoo.qld.gov.au

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BLACKALL-TAMBO REGIONAL COUNCIL

P: 07 4621 6600 btrc.qld.gov.au

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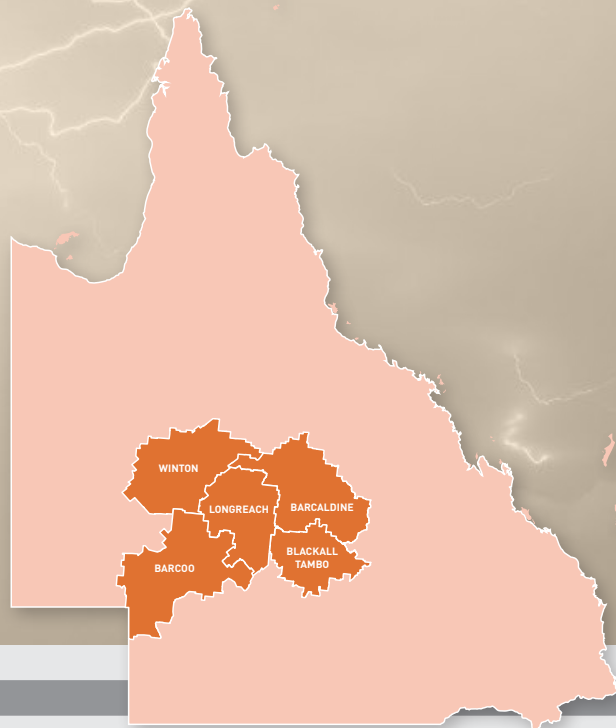
LONGREACH REGIONAL COUNCIL

P: 07 4658 4111 longreach.qld.gov.au

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WINTON SHIRE COUNCIL

P: 07 4657 2666 winton.qld.gov.au



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PAGE 4: STORMS

qld.gov.au/emergency/dealing-disasters/disaster-types/cyclone-severe-storm

PAGE 6: BUSHFIRES

ruralfire.qld.gov.au/BushFire_Safety/Pages/tune-in-to-warnings.aspx

ruralfire.qld.gov.au/BushFire_Safety/Pages/Prepare-for-bushfire-season.aspx

PAGE 8: HEATWAVE

health.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0032/628268/heatwave-response-plan.pdf

redcross.org.au/get-help/emergencies/looking-after-yourself/heatstroke-and-heat-exhaustion

PAGE 10: PANDEMIC

getready.qld.gov.au/understand-your-risk/types-natural-disasters/pandemic

MAGNET

MAGNET

EMERGENCY CONTACTS:

POLICE / FIRE / AMBULANCE: 000

—

SES (STATE EMERGENCY SERVICE): 132 500

—

ERGON ENERGY: 13 16 70

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT & MAIN ROADS: 13 19 40



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