



BE READY
CAIRNS

Your essential guide to natural
disasters in the Cairns region

BEING READY FOR DISASTERS



The Cairns region is a beautiful, tropical area that is vulnerable to natural disasters.

Being ready for disasters is a shared responsibility between emergency services and communities.

People who are well-prepared know what to do and can look after themselves, leaving emergency services to focus on those who really need help.

Local governments play an important role in planning disaster response and building disaster resilience in the community. This includes helping people become more self-sufficient during disasters.

Three steps to be ready: **PLAN. PACK. LISTEN.**



Have a household or business emergency plan



Pack a household or business emergency kit



Listen to the radio and check the Cairns Disaster Dashboard for emergency information.

In a disaster, there may not be much time to prepare. While we may receive pre-warning of a cyclone and heavy rain, this may not be the case for a tsunami, landslide, earthquake or bushfire.

All Cairns residents and businesses need to Plan, Pack and Listen to be ready for a disaster at any time.



Cairns Disaster Dashboard

- Emergency news
- Road conditions
- Power outages
- Weather warnings

www.disaster.cairns.qld.gov.au

PREPARE YOUR EMERGENCY PLAN

- Queensland can be affected by severe storms, cyclone, storm surge and flooding.
- Make a plan, preparation is key.

Know your area

- Check with Cairns Regional Council whether your area is prone to storm surge, flood, tsunami, wildfire or landslide.
- Ask about emergency and evacuation plans for where you live and work.
- Find out what support is available to your household via emergency services.



Check to see if you are in a storm tide zone
cairns.qld.gov.au/stormsurge

Discuss your action plan

- What could happen in a disaster?
- Where could you be when an emergency occurs?
- How will you contact each other?
- Where would you go if you needed to evacuate?
- Do household members have medical conditions or special needs?
- How would you care for your pets?



Pets (except assistance animals) are not allowed in storm tide cyclone shelters or places of refuge.

Record details



- Two emergency contacts
- One emergency meeting place on higher ground or out of the disaster zone
- Information on the hazard zone you live in and evacuation routes
- Phone numbers for everyone in your household
- Specific medical conditions, essential medications, and doses
- Pet details – description, name, vet, registration and microchip numbers, medications
- All tasks required for household safety (eg. storing electrical items off the ground, switching off mains supplies, sandbagging drains)

Download an Emergency Plan template

www.cairns.qld.gov.au/community-environment/natural-disasters/household-emergency-plan



Educate your household

- Teach children how and when to call 000
- Know basic first aid
- Ensure everyone knows where, how and when to turn off the mains power, water and gas.

The image shows a thumbnail of a form titled 'Our household emergency plan'. The form is divided into several sections with green headers: 'PERSONAL INFORMATION', 'EMERGENCY CONTACTS', 'MEDICAL CONDITIONS', 'PET DETAILS', 'HAZARD ZONE', 'EVACUATION ROUTES', and 'HOUSEHOLD SAFETY'. Each section contains various fields for text entry, checkboxes, and dropdown menus.

Display your emergency plan and emergency contact information on the fridge.

Provide copies to household members, relevant friends, family and neighbours and keep a copy in your household emergency kit.



Emergency Kit Checklist

Collect the items below and keep them in a sturdy, easily transportable bag or box.

Tick them off as you go:

- Battery-operated radio and spare batteries
- Torch and spare batteries
- Candles, lighter and waterproof matches*
- Water in sealed containers (10L per person)
- Non-perishable food – enough for 3-4 days
- Portable gas stove with fuel*
- Can opener and utensils
- Combination multi-tool
- First aid kit and manual
- Medication
- Toiletry and sanitary supplies
- Change of clothes and strong shoes
- Special need items for infants, the elderly and people with disabilities
- Pet food, water and other animal needs*
- Cash (ATMs may not be available)
- Personal documents (insurance details, photos etc)
- Emergency phone numbers
- Strong plastic bags

** You may not be able to use some items at evacuation centres or other places of refuge.*



LISTEN AND BE AWARE



If English is not your first language

TIS National's immediate phone interpreting service is available 24 hours a day, every day of the year by calling 131 450.

您只需要拨打电话 131 450 就可以获得 TIS National 全年每天24小时提供的即时电话传译服务。

Le persone che non parlano inglese possono avere accesso in modo immediato a interpreti tramite TIS National chiamando il numero 131450.

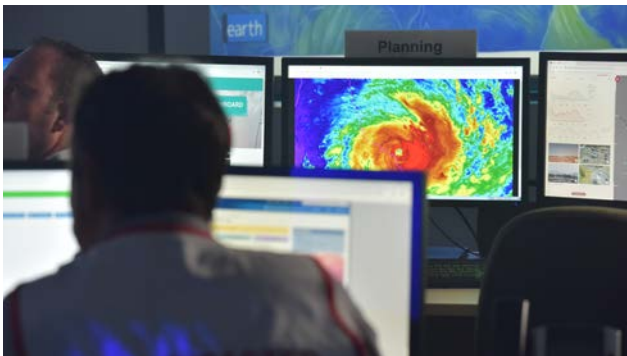
131 450번으로 전화하시면 TIS National이 제공하는 즉석전화통역을 연중 매일 24시간 이용하실 수 있습니다.

El servicio de interpretación telefónica inmediata de TIS National está disponible las 24 horas del día, todos los días del año marcando el 131 450.



If you are deaf, hard of hearing or have a disability that makes it hard to understand the information or communicate with emergency services, use the National Relay Service to contact the Cairns Local Disaster Coordination Centre:

- TTY/voice calls **133 677**
- Speak and listen **1300 555 727**
- SMS relay **0423 677 767**





Log on

- Cairns Disaster Dashboard
www.disaster.cairns.qld.gov.au

The Cairns Disaster Dashboard has the latest weather warnings, road conditions, flood cameras and power outages.



- Bureau of Meteorology - www.bom.gov.au
- Facebook - [@CairnsDisasterCentre](https://www.facebook.com/CairnsDisasterCentre)



Tune in

- ABC Far North – 801AM, 95.5FM, 106.7FM
- Bumma Bipperra Media – 98.7FM
- Cairns Community Radio – 89.1FM
- Information will also be broadcast by other radio stations and TV channels
- If you are deaf or hard of hearing, contact Deaf Connect Cairns on 4032 3033



Listen Out

- For the Standard Emergency Warning Signal (SEWS). This is a wailing siren sound used at the beginning of serious warnings on radio and television.
- For sirens and loud-hailer announcements
- For Emergency Services personnel who may doorknock
- For Emergency Alert voice messages to your landline and text messages to your mobile issued by the State Disaster Coordination Centre

Register for Cairns Alert text messages. Cairns Alert is an opt-in service issued by Cairns Regional Council.
www.cairns.qld.gov.au/online/cairns-alert



EARTHQUAKE

There are many records of earthquakes in the Cairns region although the region has not yet been severely affected by this hazard.

The impact of an earthquake depends on its depth, its magnitude from 1-10 (1 may not be noticeable to 10 causing significant damage) and proximity to inhabited areas. Earthquakes can occur at any time of day and any time of year.



What will happen?

- Sometimes preceded by stillness, dogs barking, birds flying in flocks
- Sometimes sounds such as rolling or rumbling
- Movement of the earth
- Items may fall, and walls may crack
- Power may go out, or sprinkler systems or fire alarms may turn on



What should I do?

If you are indoors:

- Take cover – get under a sturdy table, bed or other piece of furniture or shelter in a doorway. If cover is not available, cover your face and head with your arms and crouch in an inside corner.
- Stay away from glass, windows, outside doors and walls, and anything that could fall.
- Stay inside until the shaking stops. There may be aftershocks.
- Don't use lifts.
- Follow any instructions from emergency services.

If you are outside:

- Stay there.
- Move away from buildings, streetlights, and electricity wires.

If you are in a vehicle:

- Stop as quickly as safety allows and stay in the vehicle. Avoid stopping near or under buildings, trees, overpasses and electricity wires.
- Proceed cautiously once the earthquake has stopped.

If you are trapped:

- Do not light a match or use a lighter.
- Keep as still as possible.
- Cover your mouth with a handkerchief or clothing.
- Tap on a pipe or wall, or call out so rescuers can locate you.
- Call 000.

LANDSLIDE

Landslides can injure people and animals and damage property, as well as isolate communities.

The largest recorded landslide in the Cairns region was in 1951 when 10km of the Captain Cook Highway was buried under earth and debris at Ellis Beach.

Landslides are mostly caused by heavy rain when the top saturated layer of soil slips down the hill and takes whatever is on the land with it.

Sudden events are the most dangerous because of the lack of warning and the force of its impact.



What will happen?

You may notice changes in the yard or house such as:

- Leaning trees, slumping earth, movement in fences or trees, cracks in paths
- Outside walls start to pull away from the building; new cracks appear in plaster, tile, brick, or foundations; doors or windows stick for the first time
- Rumbling sound that increases as the landslide nears. A trickle of falling mud or debris may precede a larger slip.



What should I do?

- Be aware of the area you live in. Is it close to a hillslope, cliffs, or steep rocky area?
- If there has been a period of heavy rain, you may be at risk of a landslide
- If it is safe to do so, leave the area and go quickly to your agreed safer place
- Advise neighbours and emergency services
- If you cannot leave, move to a second storey if there is one. Otherwise curl into a tight ball and protect your head.



After a landslide

- Be alert for emergency information or instructions
- Stay away from the slip area
- Watch for flooding or debris flow
- Check for injured and trapped people near the slip, without entering the slip area
- Look for and report broken utility lines, damaged roads etc.



BUSHFIRE

Although we live in the Wet Tropics, bushfires can happen.

They may start through arson, an accident or a controlled/prescribed burn. If you light a fire, you are responsible for controlling it.

Fire risk increases with a long period of hot, dry weather and when it is windy. The fire season in Far North Queensland is through the winter and spring months. Information about fire risk and danger periods is issued by fire authorities.



What will happen?

- If a prescribed burn is going to happen near your area, you will be told directly ahead of time (via letter, property visit, media).
- If fire danger levels are rising in your area, information will be broadcast on all usual media and websites.
- Fires can move extremely fast
- If lives or property are threatened, you will receive warning messages.



What should I do?

- Keep an eye on the Rural Fire Service website (see the back of this brochure) when hot, dry conditions exist
- Keep grass cut and vegetation clear of your property
- Don't dump green waste in neighbouring reserves or bush areas
- Move flammable items away from the house
- Keep access to the property clear for fire trucks
- When warnings are given, act immediately on the instructions provided
- Don't wait. Leave when advised, even if it feels safe



After the fire front has passed

- Wait until the all-clear by local emergency services before leaving your safe area and returning home
- Consider using a face mask or similar
- Check around the property for live electricity, leaking gas, sewage leaks, hot embers, overhanging trees or branches and structural damage
- If unsure about the safety of your property, seek advice from local emergency services. Don't take any risks



TSUNAMI

Tsunamis are a series of long ocean waves or surges, caused by a major disturbance to the sea floor such as an undersea earthquake, landslide or volcanic eruption.

The Great Barrier Reef does not provide complete protection against tsunamis. A tsunami could be triggered, and we may have only a few hours' warning.



Tsunamis can travel as fast as a plane and reach hundreds of kilometres inland, hitting distant communities after they are generated.

The force of the water may be so strong it carries away vehicles, boats, bridges and buildings.

Rather than one huge wave, a tsunami may look like a rapidly rising or falling tide and occur as a series of waves with periods of time in between.



What will happen?

Tsunamis can happen any time of year.

- Information will be broadcast on all usual media and websites, including the Cairns Disaster Dashboard.
- You may receive emergency alerts through mobile phones and hear the Standard Emergency Warning Signal (SEWS)
- If you're at the beach or can see the ocean, you may notice water withdrawing or suddenly becoming shallow, or unusual waves approaching.



What should I do?

Tsunamis can happen any time of year

- Evacuate to higher ground
- Get away from the coast. You can use the storm tide zone maps for guidance on reaching higher ground. **Do not go to Copperlode Dam or the Tablelands.**
- **Take your emergency kit and your pets with you**
- Follow local instructions and take immediate action



FLOODING

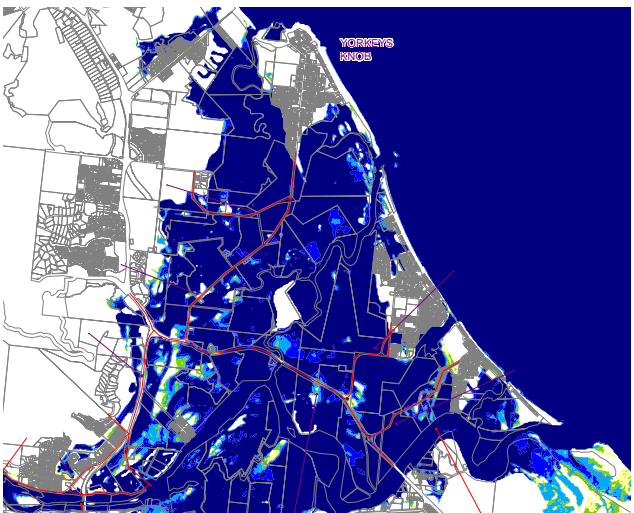
Cairns experiences flash flooding where water levels rise rapidly in drains, creeks, and rivers.

Localised flooding may occur, where some suburbs flood while others do not. Significant rainfall on the Tablelands may bring large volumes of water toward Cairns, causing rivers to swell. Water levels will rise when high tides happen at the same time.



What will happen?

- If flooding is likely, the Bureau of Meteorology will issue advice.
- A Flood Warning is issued when flooding is occurring or expected to occur. A Severe Weather Warning is issued when flash flooding is expected.
- Warnings will be broadcast on all usual media and websites, including the Cairns Disaster Dashboard.
- Drains, creeks and rivers may fill rapidly with fast-flowing water, which can spread to houses and streets.
- You may not be able to get in or out of your house or street.



Find out if you are within a flooding zone by heading to:
www.cairns.qld.gov.au/community-environment/natural-disasters/flooding

What should I do?

- Stay informed at Cairns Disaster Dashboard and local radio as conditions could change quickly
- Decide if you will stay at home or evacuate
- Sandbag areas at risk from flooding
- Secure loose items around the property
- Unplug electrical equipment to avoid damage
- Move household items to a higher place. This is important for electrical items, chemicals, and perishable food.
- Keep refrigerator and freezer doors closed
- Switch off power at the switchboard, gas and the main water valve
- Boil tap water in case of contamination
- If you are in an area affected by flooding and can't move to higher ground, follow your household emergency plan and move to your pre-arranged location. Take your household emergency kit
- Never drive, walk, swim or play in floodwaters.



After flood waters have gone down

- Do not return to a flood zone until there is official advice it is safe to do so
- Check if electricity, gas or water supplies have been affected
- Avoid power lines or other electric lines and cables. Electrical items must be checked by an electrician before use
- 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 any instructions for treating water and throw out any food exposed to floodwater
- Treat all items exposed to floodwater as contaminated. Wash yourself thoroughly



HEAT WAVE

A heatwave occurs when there are three days and nights in a row with unusually high temperatures compared to average temperatures at that time of year.

In Cairns, a heatwave is most common between November and March.



Low-intensity heatwaves

This may only have minor impacts.



Severe heatwaves

Can impact vulnerable groups such as:

- older people
- babies and young children
- pregnant and breast-feeding women
- those with underlying medical conditions



Extreme heatwaves

Very uncommon and dangerous for everyone, even people who are healthy.

Extreme heatwaves can also damage infrastructure such as roads, electricity supply and transport.

What will happen?

- The Bureau of Meteorology will issue heatwave warnings if high, sustained temperatures are likely in Cairns.
- Information will be updated on the Cairns Disaster Dashboard.



What should I do?

Heat stress and heat exhaustion can have a significant impact on your health.



Keep cool

- Stay out of the sun between 10am to 4pm
- Drink lots of cool water
- Keep your home cool
- Wear lightweight, sun smart clothing
- Go to a cool or shady place



Be alert

Look out for signs of heat stroke which includes:

- Breathlessness
- Chest pain
- Confusion
- Intense thirst
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Cramps which get worse or don't go away

In severe cases you may experience heat stroke, where your body temperature is above 40.5C. This may cause internal organs and other bodily functions to shut down.

If you think you have heat stroke, seek immediate medical treatment.

CYCLONE & STORM SURGE

Cyclone

A cyclone is a violent tropical storm with very strong winds and heavy rain which can cause extensive damage.

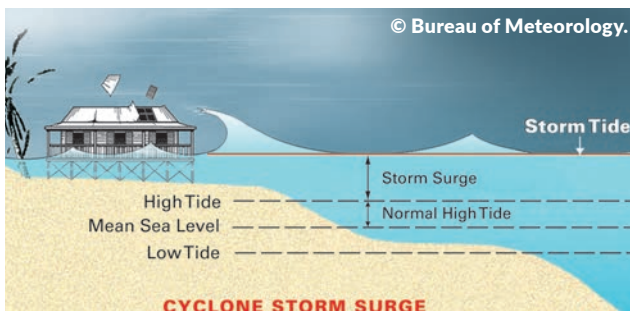
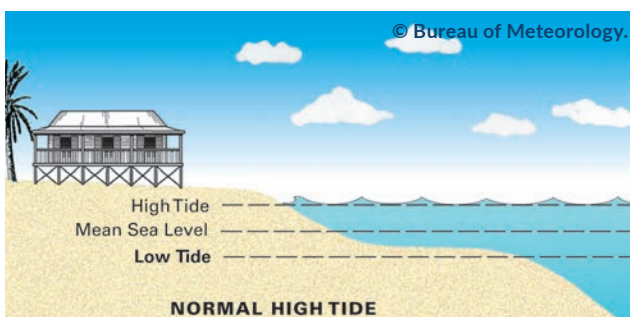
In Cairns, cyclone season is from November to April.

		Strongest gust	Typical effect of cyclones
Categories	1	90-124 kph	Negligible house damage; damage to some crops, trees and caravans; craft may drag at moorings
	2	125-164 kph	Minor house damage; significant damage to signs; trees and caravans, heavy damage to some crops, risk of power failure, small craft may break mooring
	3	165-224 kph	Some roof and structural property damage; some caravans and crops destroyed; power failure likely
	4	225-279 kph	Significant roofing loss and structural damage; many caravans destroyed and blown away, dangerous airborne debris; widespread power failures
	5	More than 280 kph	Extremely dangerous with widespread destruction

Storm surge

A storm surge is a rise in the ocean level caused by a cyclone.

Water can travel several kilometres inland, especially if the surge occurs around a high or king tide. A storm surge does not always accompany a cyclone.



Cyclone evacuation advice is based on the storm surge threat, not wind.



Official information

Official advice will be issued via radio, social media and websites, including the Cairns Disaster Dashboard. Refer to **Step 3: Listen and be aware** for more information.

Australian Warning System

This is a national system for issuing information and warnings for hazards including cyclones. Keep an eye out for information presented using the following system:



Advice

Stay up to date in case the situation changes.



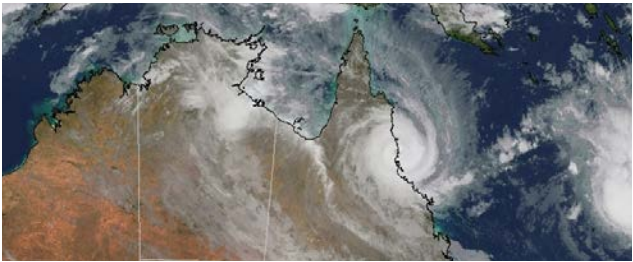
Watch and Act

Conditions are changing, you need to start taking action.



Emergency Warning

You may be in danger. You need to take action immediately.



Before a cyclone

- Stay informed at Cairns Disaster Dashboard and local radio as conditions can change quickly
- Check your household emergency kit is ready and nearby
- Tie down or pack away all outdoor items and furniture
- Close windows and doors
- Make sure your vehicle is full of fuel and park undercover if possible
- Ensure boats and caravans are garaged, otherwise secure them with strong ropes. Tie down unsecured sheds
- Fill drinking containers. Also fill your bathtub and wheelie bin with water which can be used to flush toilets if water supplies are affected
- Turn off and unplug all non-essential electrical equipment
- Follow your household emergency plan. If you need to evacuate, go to your pre-arranged safer location.



CYCLONE & STORM SURGE



During a cyclone

- Keep listening to your battery-powered radio for information
- Shelter in the strongest part of the building – this is often the bathroom, toilet, hallway or somewhere with few windows
- Mattresses, strong furniture and blankets can protect you
- Stay inside until advised that it is safe to leave.



After a cyclone

- Stay indoors until advised it is safe to go out
- Stay away from floodwaters – do not walk, drive, swim or play in them
- No sightseeing
- Stay away from fallen powerlines – they could be “live”
- Avoid making unnecessary phone calls. The phone system may be limited and should be kept available for emergency services.
- Check on neighbours
- Keep listening to your battery-powered radio for information
- Call the Cairns Local Disaster Coordination Centre if you need help or can provide useful information.

Shelters and evacuation centres

Residents and visitors outside storm tide zones should stay home (shelter in place) and make the recommended preparations.

If you are in a storm tide zone, your first and best option is to follow your household emergency plan and self-evacuate to your pre-arranged safer location.

Information and instructions about where to go and what to do will come from local emergency authorities.

Cyclone evacuation advice is based on the storm surge threat, not wind.

Public shelter options

Storm Tide Cyclone Shelters and local buildings activated as places of refuge are the last option for residents who live in a storm tide zone and have exhausted all other shelter options.

Both types of facilities are intended as a short-term shelter option (up to 18 hours) and have very basic amenities.

People in storm tide zones, with no other sheltering option, will be advised when storm tide shelters or local places of refuge are open. Do not assume that because a previous location was opened, it will be used again. Wait for information.

Staying in shelters and places of refuge

Shelters may be crowded and you will be sitting in a chair with ALL your belongings under your seat. These facilities have limited capacity and will be used to hold as many people as possible.

You need to bring food which doesn't require cooking. You won't be able to access power.

Alcohol, pets, non-prescription drugs and weapons are not allowed. Only water, basic medical support and toilets are provided. You may be in the shelter for 18 hours or more.

It is a condition of entering a shelter that you follow all instructions provided by shelter management. You can be refused entry, told to leave or prosecuted for not complying.

Evacuation centres

Depending on the scale and impact of the cyclone, local evacuation centres may be established after the disaster to support affected residents with short-term accommodation and recovery services.

Advice on the activation and location of these centres will be provided at the appropriate time.

Our household emergency plan

Household members

Name

Phone number

Hazard zones (eg Storm tide, bushfire)

Where will we go if we leave?

How will we get there?

Emergency meeting place

Essential medications

Pet details

Name

Registration #

Our emergency kit is located

Emergency contact

Phone number

Police/ambulance/fire

000

SES

132 500

Disaster Coordination Centre

1300 396 102

Ergon Energy

132 296

Main Roads

131 940

Doctor

School/Childcare

Workplace

Friends

Neighbours

Vet

Insurance Details

Policy number

Phone number

Home insurance

Contents insurance

Car insurance

BE READY
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