

5.2 Cyclone Response

Policy Number	5.2	Date Commenced	20 February 2013
Date Adopted	20 February 2013	Resolution Number	19/02/2013/007
Review Timeframe	4 years		
Last Review Date	August 2019	Next Scheduled Review Date	August 2023

Document History

Version	Date Amended	Details Comments e.g. Resolution Number

OBJECTIVE

To establish a plan that provides direction to staff in the event of a Tropical Cyclone.

POLICY STATEMENT

The aim of this cyclone response plan is to ensure that the Coomalie Community Government Council staff and assets are as safe as possible under a cyclone threat and Council properly discharges its “duty of care”. In dealing with cyclones, the safety of people will at all times remain paramount.

The preparation, shutdown and re-opening of the Council in the event of a cyclone will be managed in accordance with these obligations, taking into account all available and relevant factors.

Cyclone Procedures

Introduction

The Northern Territory is an area subject to the destructive forces of tropical cyclones. Although the cyclones themselves cannot be prevented or controlled, it is possible to reduce their debilitating effects through careful preparation and planning.

All employees have specific responsibilities prior to and following a cyclone. Statements of these functions are included in this document.

The Northern Territory Counter Disaster Council monitors all developing cyclone threats. In the event that the level of threat is believed to warrant the closure of Government schools and offices, the Counter Disaster Council will recommend such action to the Chief Minister for approval.

Following approval from the Chief Minister the NT Emergency Services will notify all Government CEOs and the community. A media release will follow to advise the general public. The CEO is responsible for activating Councils Cyclone Procedures. Staff will be advised when the following stages are activated.

Warnings issued

Cyclone Watch

A cyclone watch is issued if a cyclone or potential cyclone exists and there are strong indications that winds above gale force will affect coastal or island communities within 24 to 48 hours. The report gives an estimate of the cyclone location, severity, category, and direction and identifies the coastal area that could be affected. Watch reports are issued every six hours.

Cyclone Warning

A cyclone warning is issued as soon as a tropical cyclone is expected to cause gales or stronger winds at coastal or island communities within 24 hours. It identifies the communities being threatened, contains the cyclone's name and category, its location, intensity (including maximum wind gusts) and its movement. Forecasts of heavy rainfall, flooding and abnormally high tides are included when necessary. Communities under threat are also advised to take precautions necessary to safeguard their lives and property.

Pre-Cyclone Preparation Stage – Working Hours

Staff are to continue working. Advance preparation such as tidying up of work areas, locking away of information and files currently not in use should be undertaken.

The office is not to close until the CEO advises staff to do so and may approve early departures on a case-by-case basis to ensure that those staff with an urgent need to leave in advance may do so. The timing of the closure of schools and Government offices will not necessarily coincide. In the event of schools closing earlier than the Council the CEO would release parents (staff) who are required to collect their children from schools.

The CEO may use discretion to ensure that those staff with an urgent need to leave during the preparation stage may do so. In general, staff should not require time to tidy up homes or to shop for essentials etc as this should have been done well in advance, either at the start of the cyclone season or when the initial cyclone watch was issued.

If staff are sent home, they will be considered to be on paid leave until the all clear by Government is announced. Staff must then return to work if in normal business hours. In cases where extended leave is required, normal leave provisions will apply.

Pre-Cyclone Preparation - Tidy up Stage

- Desks are to be cleared and all documents to be filed in a safe place such as a filing cabinet or compactus unit. All files, business critical information and confidential information must be locked away.
- Furniture should be moved away from windows where possible, ideally to be grouped in the centre of a work area.
- Computer equipment should be stored away from windows in secure storage areas where possible.
- All Council vehicles should be filled with fuel and secured in the garage area of the workshop. Vehicles which are home garaged are the responsibility of the employees to whom they are assigned.
- Check battery operated equipment such as torches and portable radios are working and backup batteries are available.
- Plant, equipment and items stored in the Council yard should be secured, moved or tied down.
- Jerry cans and fuel operated equipment that may need to be used to assist in a post cyclone cleanup e.g. chainsaws should be filled with fuel.

The CEO is responsible for ensuring that these procedures are carried out in a timely manner.

Pre-Cyclone Security Stage

- Secure all doors and windows and cease business transactions. Turn off and unplug electrical equipment, e.g. printers, fax, photocopy machines, urns, coffee percolators, microwave ovens. Place phones on the floor under a desk.
- Secure workshop roller doors.

General

Staff should ensure that they are prepared at home in case of a cyclone by following guidelines given by the NT Emergency Service (copies of cyclone information brochures can be obtained from NT Emergency Services Phone: 8922 3630 Fax: 8947 2162) i.e. clear all debris from the yard, have on hand a supply of tinned food and baby needs (where required), a battery operated radio and a torch.

Those who intend to vacate their premises should make sure they are aware of the location of public shelters and the requirements therein. Staff should familiarise themselves and their families with the different warnings issued and ensure that their personal arrangements are made well in advance, preferably at the start of the cyclone season.

The CEO and Managers should hold details of employees' addresses and telephone numbers for contact should it be necessary.

Note

Once a cyclone has been declared, the Police take charge of the Shire and Council staff participate in the Local Counter Disaster Plan for the Shire. The Local Counter Disaster Plan ties in all local resources during the cyclone and during the recovery phase. A copy of the plan is available on G drive under Policies and Procedures, the Counter Disaster Plan Folder.