

Health & Safety Fact Sheet

Staff health, safety and well being in flood affected areas

While the following general information is provided to assist in preparation for potential flooding and clean up activities, it is important that you heed the advice and instructions of your local emergency management authorities during this time.

Preparation

The following are tips for preparing your workplace before flooding:

- prepare an emergency kit including emergency phone numbers, mobile phone if one is available, portable radio, torch, spare batteries, first aid kit, strong plastic bags for clothing, valuables, plastic sheets, timber strips, hammers and nails for temporary repairs.
- be aware of your local council flood plans, evacuation routes and centres.
- prepare your workplace as well as you can, time and the safety of staff and students permitting. Further information is available at: <http://www.health.qld.gov.au/disaster/default.asp>
- Follow the advice of your local emergency management authority during a flood warning or evacuation.
- Ensure students do not swim in or access flood waters as fast currents and submerged debris can present serious drowning risks.

Driving

- Contact your local Police for road closure updates.
- Ensure staff do not drive through flood waters where the depth or current is unknown.

Returning to the workplace

- Follow the advice and instructions of your local emergency management authorities before returning to the workplace.
- Search for any animals e.g. snakes that may present a hazard to people on the site.
- Ensure gas, electricity, water and sewerage have been checked by the relevant authority prior to using.
- Don't use gas or electrical appliances which have been in flood water until checked for safety.
- There is an increased risk of injury to staff when performing duties not normally part of their daily routine e.g. heavy lifting during cleaning of debris. If manual tasks are unavoidable think ahead, plan and decide:
 - Can a trolley or other handling aid be used?
 - Where is the load to end up?
 - Will help be needed?
- Ensure nobody uses vehicles and equipment they are not trained to use e.g. chainsaws, boats, earth moving equipment etc

Health issues

[Queensland Health](#) provides information on minimising the risk of injuries, illnesses and infection.

Please remember to:

- ensure all students and staff wash their hands thoroughly with clean water after contact with flood water and prior to eating, making food, pre and post first aid etc.
- ensure students and staff cover any cuts or abrasions – use waterproof dressings if they are available.
- ensure everyone at your workplace wear shoes as debris and broken glass can be obscured by water or remaining mud and silt.
- wear protective clothing and equipment during clean up if there has been a back flow of sewerage into the house .
- be mindful that animals and reptiles may have been washed into buildings – seek assistance if you have concerns removing live or dead animals.



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- ensure staff and students cover up and wear repellent to minimise mosquito bites.
- discard any food that has been in flood water. (except those items that are waterproof e.g. tins)
- boil tap water until advised otherwise.

Special Leave provisions/Leave issues

The Special Leave Directive (18/09) provides for special leave with pay of up to five (5) working days per calendar year where an employee is prevented from attending their normal place of employment because of floods, cyclonic disturbances, severe storms or bushfires.

An employee who is prevented from attending their normal place of employment may be granted leave in the following circumstances:

- it is not practicable for the employee to attend for duty at another Government office;
- the employee is absent from his or her usual place of residence on approved leave or during a weekend and is unable to return in sufficient time to attend the normal place of employment or it is not practicable to attend duty at another Government office;
- where the employee is required to return home before the employee's usual ceasing time to ensure personal safety, the protection of the employee's family and property or the availability of transport facilities which may be disrupted or discontinued because of weather or environmental conditions;
- where the employee must, of necessity, remain at home to safeguard the employee's family or property;
- where the employee remains at home to have temporary repairs effected, restore belongings, clean up etc;
- where the employee is travelling on transfer and is unavoidably delayed from arriving at the destination. (An officer may also be allowed reasonable expenses necessarily incurred for accommodation and meals for the officer and family.)

See the [Special Leave Directive No 18/09](#) for further information.

Employee Assistance Service (EAS)

Our Employee Assistance Service (EAS) provides a range of supportive psychological health services to employees. The service is available for all staff at any time and provides services such as free confidential counselling, critical incident debriefing and developing psychological resilience.

Further information and contact details for the Employee Assistance is available at the Creating Healthier Workplaces website at: <http://education.qld.gov.au/health/employee.html>

Organisational Health

Staff may also require the services of Injury Management Consultants/Rehabilitation and Return to Work Coordinators for assistance in lodging any WorkCover and Q Super claims that may arise. Contact your TAFE or Regional Office <http://education.qld.gov.au/health/contacts/contacts-rehab.html>

Further information is available in a range of Queensland Health Fact Sheets at: <http://health.qld.gov.au/healthieryou/disaster/default.asp>

More information

Contact Regional [Senior Health and Safety Consultants](#) for health and safety enquiries

