

Staff health, safety and wellbeing in flood affected areas

The following general information is provided to assist in preparation for potential flooding and clean-up activities. Ensure you heed the advice and instructions of your local emergency management authorities during this time.

Preparation and issues to consider during flooding events

- Prepare an [emergency kit](#) including emergency phone numbers, portable radio, torch, spare batteries, first aid kit, change of clothing, valuables, important documents, cash, emergency medications etc.
- 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 from the department's [Natural disaster resources](#) webpage.
- Follow the advice of your local emergency management authority during a flood warning or evacuation.
- Ensure staff, students or visitors to the workplace do not swim in or access flood waters – fast currents and submerged debris can present serious drowning risks.
- Stay informed, listen to local radio station or ABC radio. If internet access is available monitor the Bureau of Meteorology [BOM](#) website and/or www.abc.net.au/local/

Driving

- Contact [Transport and Main Roads](#), RACQ on 13 1905, or your local police for road closure updates.
- Ensure staff do not drive through flood waters. Remember, if it's flooded, forget it.

Returning to the workplace

- Follow the advice and instructions of your local emergency management authorities before returning to your workplace.
- Ensure gas, electricity, water and sewerage have been checked by the relevant authority prior to using the facility. Do not use gas or electrical appliances which have been in flood water until checked by an authorised, competent person.
- For more information about electrical and power safety including solar power and generators see the [Workplace Health and Safety](#) website
- Be mindful that animals may have been washed into buildings – seek assistance if you have concerns removing live or dead animals.
- There is an increased risk of injury to staff when performing duties not normally part of their daily routine e.g. lifting during cleaning of debris. Plan ahead, use mechanical assistance (e.g. trolleys) where possible and seek help.
- Ensure no one uses equipment they are not trained and competent to use e.g. chainsaws, tractors, boats etc.
- [Allow grounds to dry out prior to use](#) to prevent floodwater contamination.



Health issues

- Ensure all staff and students wash their hands thoroughly with clean water and soap after contact with flood water, contaminated water or materials and prior to eating, making food, pre and post first aid as per standard hand hygiene protocols.
- Ensure staff and students cover any cuts or abrasions – use waterproof dressings if they are available.
- Ensure shoes are worn as debris and broken glass can be obscured by water or remaining mud and silt.
- Wear protective clothing during clean up if there has been a back flow of sewerage into buildings.
- Ensure staff and students cover up and wear repellent to minimise mosquito bites and to remain sun safe.
- Discard any food that has been in contact with flood water.
- Use bottled water or boil tap water to be used as drinking water until advised otherwise.
- For more information: <https://www.qld.gov.au/community/disasters-emergencies/returning-to-buildings/>

Special leave provisions/leave issues

The Special leave directive 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: 05/17](#) and Accessing Special Leave following disaster or emergency events [Fact Sheet](#) for further information.

Employee assistance service (EAS) – support for staff following a traumatic event or natural disaster

Immediately after a natural disaster, and during recovery efforts, it is common to experience some symptoms of psychological distress. With the support of colleagues, family and friends, most people will recover emotionally without the need for professional assistance. However, some people may be at risk of developing mental health problems without professional assistance. While some may benefit from psychological support almost immediately after a trauma such as a natural disaster, others may need to seek assistance weeks or even months afterwards.

Staff and immediate family members can contact the department's EAP provider, Optum, on **1800 604 640** if they need telephone or face-to-face counselling after a natural disaster. 24/7 emergency telephone counselling is available during the term and over the holiday period.

Managers wanting advice on how to help staff cope with the emotional aftermath of a natural disaster are also able to call the Manager Hotline on telephone 1800 604 640 for free, confidential consultations with senior advisors.

For more information, download the following:

[Accessing EAP following emergencies/natural disasters](#)

[Coping after natural disasters](#)

Organisational Safety and Wellbeing

Staff may also require support regarding the management of incident or injuries. Please [contact](#) your regional senior health and safety consultant or regional senior injury management consultant for assistance. If regional teams are not available – contact central Office staff.

More information

[Queensland Government Disasters and Emergencies](#)

[Department of Education – Disaster and Emergency Management \(OnePortal\)](#)