



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 from emergency services during this time.

Preparation for flood 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 emergency accommodation.
- Prepare your workplace, taking into account time available to respond and the safety of staff and students. Further information is available from the department's [Disaster and emergency management](#) webpages.

Response to a flood event

- Follow the advice of emergency services 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 or ABC radio stations. If internet access is available, monitor the [Bureau of Meteorology website](#) and [abc.net.au/local](#).

Driving

- Visit [Queensland traffic](#) or [RACQ road conditions](#), or phone the 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

Safety

- Follow the advice and instructions of your local authorities before returning to your workplace.
- Wear protective clothing during the clean-up.
- Ensure shoes are worn as debris and broken glass can be obscured by water, mud and silt.



- Where damage to a facility has been identified, please check the asbestos register. If the presence of asbestos is confirmed or assumed, the area must be immediately vacated and procedures in the [Asbestos Management Plan](#) followed.
- 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 person.
- If solar systems have been impacted by flood water, do not touch the solar panels, wiring or inverter and arrange for an inspection by an electrician. For more information about electrical and power safety including solar power and generators see the [Electrical Safety Queensland 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 that 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.
- For further information on potential dangers that should be considered, including chemicals, biological hazards and psychological stress and fatigue management, mould, water contamination, bacterial infections, insects and other animals, visit [Worksafe Queensland](#) and the [Queensland Government's Disaster website](#).

Health

- Ensure all staff and students wash their hands thoroughly with clean water and soap after contact with flood water or contaminated water or materials, especially prior to eating, preparing 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 available.
- Ensure staff and students cover up, wear insect repellent to minimise mosquito bites and remain sun safe.
- For mosquito management: D2M schools contact appropriately licenced pest control businesses directly following departmental procedures; QBuild schools contact the QBuild Maintenance Response Centre. Following treatment, staff and students should not re-enter site until advised by Principal.
- Discard any food that has been in contact with flood water.
- Use bottled water or boil tap water for drinking until advised otherwise.
- For more information visit [Returning to affected buildings](#).

Special leave provisions

The [Special leave directive](#) provides special leave with pay for up to 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.

See the [Special Leave Directive 05/17](#) and [Accessing Special Leave following disaster or emergency events fact sheet](#) for further information.

Employee assistance program (EAP)

Immediately after a natural disaster, and during recovery efforts, it is common to experience 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, LifeWorks by Morneau Shepell](#), 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 holiday periods.

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.

See [Coping after natural disasters](#) for further information.

Organisational Safety and Wellbeing

Staff may also require support regarding the management of incidents 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](#)