Staff Health, Safety and Wellbeing 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 [http://www.emergency.qld.gov.au/emq/css/emergencykit.asp](http://www.emergency.qld.gov.au/emq/css/emergencykit.asp) e.g. torch, battery operated radio, spare batteries, first aid kit, plastic bags, change of clothing, valuables, important phone numbers, cash, emergency medications etc.
- be aware of your local council flood plans, evacuation routes and centres.
- prepare your workplace as well as you can if time and safety of staff and students permits. Further information is available at: [http://www.health.qld.gov.au/disaster/default.asp](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.
- Stay informed - listen to local radio or ABC radio. If internet access is available monitor the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) website – [www.bom.gov.au](http://www.bom.gov.au) and/or information – [www.abc.net.au/local/](http://www.abc.net.au/local/).

Driving

- Contact RACQ 131940 or local Police for road closure updates.
- Ensure staff do not drive through flood waters.

Returning to the workplace

- Follow the advice and instructions of your local emergency management authorities before returning to the workplace.
- Be mindful that animals and reptiles may have been washed into buildings – seek assistance if you have concerns about removal of live or dead animals.
- 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 going; will help be needed?
- Ensure no one uses vehicles or equipment they are not trained to use e.g. chainsaws, boats, earth moving equipment etc.

Electrical Safety

The following resources address electrical safety during floods and subsequent clean-up activity.

Health issues


- 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 available.
- ensure shoes are worn as debris and broken glass can be obscured by water, mud and silt.
- wear protective clothing and equipment during clean up if there has been a back flow of sewerage into the house.
- 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**

If you are unable to attend your usual workplace because of the storms or flooding please contact your supervisor as soon as it is practical to do so. As public service employees, you are entitled to special leave following a natural disaster. This applies if you need to stay home to protect property, have temporary repairs made, restore belongings and clean up. For further details please speak with your supervisor.

If your home is safe and secure but you are unable to get to work or your workplace is closed please discuss with your supervisor alternative work arrangements where possible. This may include telecommuting or working from home, or working from another office, school or government workplace.

**Employee Assistance Service (EAS)**

A wide range of supportive psychological health and wellbeing services are available to employees and workplaces. These services may include:

- Potentially traumatic incident referral, support and advice; short term counselling; referral to appropriate internal or external services; manager advice and support.


**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](http://education.qld.gov.au/health/contacts/contacts-rehab.html)

**More information**

- [Queensland Health](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/disaster/default.asp)