

# Preparing for Cyclones





**Message from the Premier of Queensland,  
Anna Bligh and the Minister for Emergency Services,  
Neil Roberts.**

In Queensland we enjoy a wonderful climate and lifestyle which is the envy of many people worldwide.

Cyclones are an inevitable part of life in Queensland and history has shown that we cannot afford to become complacent about the dangers that they present.

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It is vital that people living in areas prone to cyclones take action now to prepare their homes and their families so that damage can be minimised.

A few hours spent making your home secure, putting aside supplies and discussing an evacuation plan with your family could mean the difference between life and death.

We strongly urge you to read the information in this booklet carefully and to take immediate action by following the checklists included in this booklet.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anna Bligh". The signature is fluid and cursive.

**Anna Bligh MP**  
Premier

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Neil Roberts". The signature is fluid and cursive.

**Neil Roberts MP**  
Minister for  
Emergency Services

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## Cyclones are destructive and inevitable

Every year between November and April, the coastal regions of Queensland are at risk of being hit by cyclones.

A cyclone is a violent storm characterised by high winds rotating around a calm centre that can produce winds in excess of 200 km/h. These strong winds can cause extensive damage to property and turn debris into dangerous missiles.



Cyclones can also bring flooding rains, which cause further damage to property, and increase the risk of drowning.

Many cyclones also bring about storm surge, which is a rapid rise in sea level that moves inland very quickly. Storm surge can damage buildings and cut off evacuation routes and be the cause of injuries and sometimes death.

While most deaths from cyclones occur as a result of drowning, many lives have been lost due to collapsing buildings or flying debris which can become lethal in high winds.

## Being prepared is your responsibility

Preparing your family and your home for a cyclone is your responsibility.

Every person who lives in the cyclone-prone areas of Queensland must recognise this and make it a priority between the months of November and April.

While local, state and federal governments can spend millions of dollars every year on disaster mitigation, response and recovery, these efforts can be worthless if families do not take the proper precautions themselves.

This booklet explains in detail the preparations that you will need to make during cyclone season in order to minimise the damage to your home and maintain the safety of your family.



## Before the Cyclone Season

There are many important things that you can do now to prepare your family and your home.

### How to prepare your family

- ▶ Compile a list of emergency phone numbers and keep it somewhere that is visible to all family members. (See page 15)
- ▶ Nominate an interstate family member or friend to be a point of contact in case you and your family become separated during the cyclone.
- ▶ Find out if your home is located in an area that could be prone to storm surge or flooding by contacting your local council.

- Identify the strongest part of the house (usually the smallest room) and ensure everyone knows where this is in case you need to seek shelter in your home.
- Ensure at least one person in your household knows first aid.

Keeping a lightweight portable gas cooker in your garage may be useful in the event of a long-term power disruption.

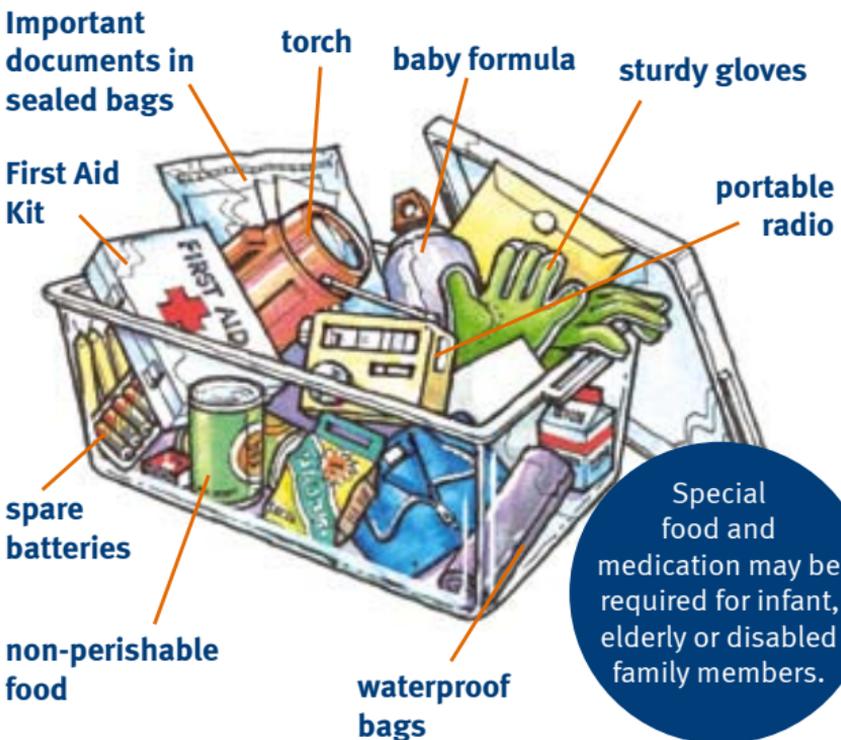
## Prepare an Emergency Kit

Every family should have a fully stocked Emergency Kit stored safely in their home.

This should include a portable radio, a torch, spare batteries, first aid kit, non-perishable food, sturdy gloves, waterproof bags, candles, matches, essential medications and copies of important documents (eg insurance details, birth certificates, prescription refills) in sealable plastic bags.

**Queensland Ambulance Service recommends that families include the following in their First Aid Kit:**

- |                               |                              |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 packet of plastic strips    | 1 stainless steel scissors   |
| 1 roll of non-allergenic tape | 2 square gauze swabs         |
| 2 sterile eye pads            | 1 bottle antiseptic cream    |
| 4 triangular bandages         | 1 wound closure steri-strip  |
| 1 conforming gauze bandage    | 1 bottle antiseptic solution |
| 1 sterile combine dressing    | 5 alcohol swabs              |



## Develop an evacuation plan

It is essential that you spend a few minutes with your family now to talk about what you will do if an evacuation becomes necessary.

Contact your local council if your family requires special assistance to evacuate.

*Remember that evacuations are only ordered if storm surge or flooding is likely.*

- ▶ Identify a safe place to evacuate to if storm surge or floods are threatening. Family or friends who live in secure accommodation that is further inland and on higher ground are the best option.
- ▶ Listen to local Community Service Announcements (on radio, television and in newspapers) to identify the preferred evacuation routes for your area.
- ▶ Ensure you have a supply of fuel stored safely in your garage in case you need to evacuate at short notice.
- ▶ Practise a drill with your family to ensure everyone is familiar with the evacuation plan.

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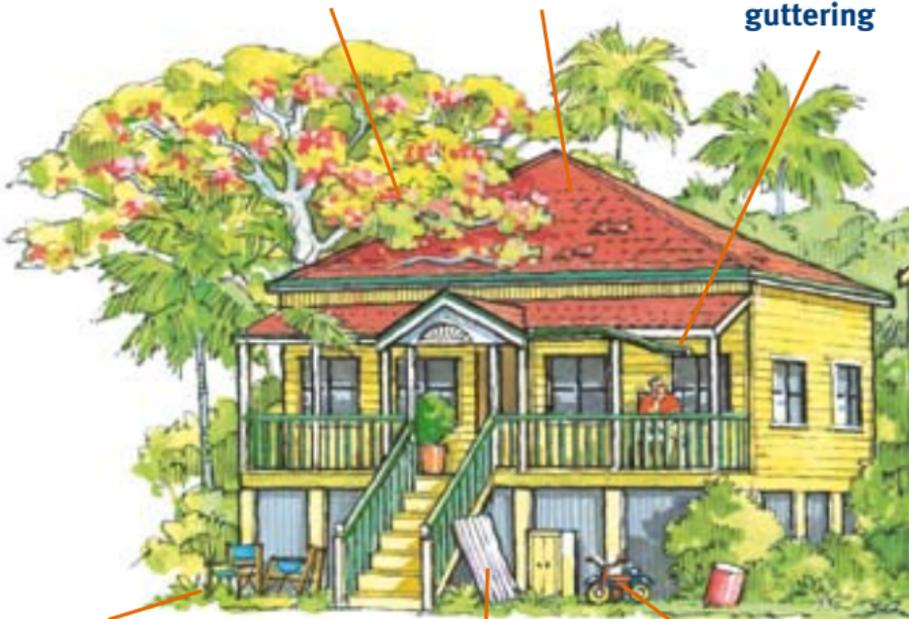
## An unprepared home



overhanging branches

loose roof tiles

loose guttering



unsecured garden furniture

dangerous debris

unsecured childrens toys

- ▶ Ensure everyone is familiar with the Standard Emergency Warning Signal (SEWS). SEWS is generally broadcast when a cyclone is expected to hit within 12 hours. Find out more at <http://www.disaster.qld.gov.au/disasters/warning.asp>
- ▶ Decide how you will look after your pets if you cannot take them with you.

## How to prepare your home

- ▶ Contact your local council to check that your home has been built to cyclone standards.
- ▶ Ensure your home and contents insurance covers you for storm surge, flooding and cyclone damage including clean-up and debris removal.
- ▶ Check the condition of your roof and repair any loose tiles, eaves or roof screws.
- ▶ Ensure windows are fitted with shutters or metal screens.
- ▶ Trim any branches overhanging your house and clear gutters of leaves and debris.

## A well-prepared home



**no loose guttering**

**secure roof tiles**

**trimmed branches**



**no unsecured items in garden**

**window shutters installed**

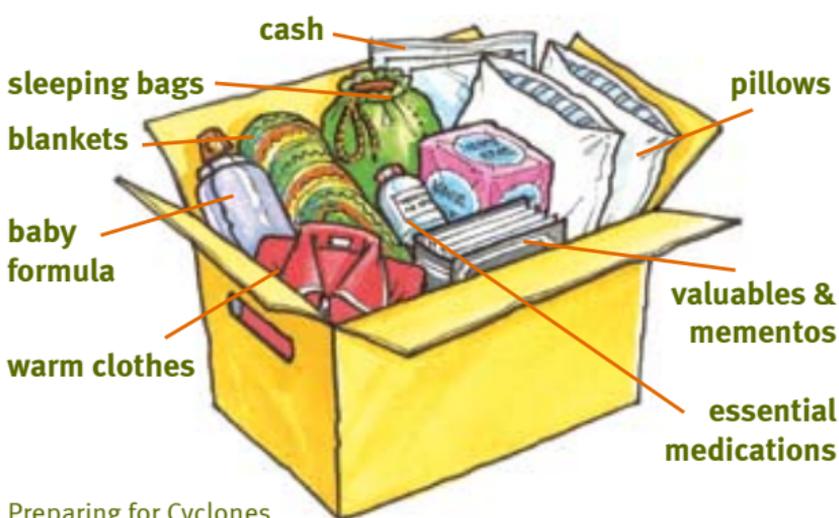
## What to do when a Cyclone Watch or a Cyclone Warning is issued

A Cyclone Watch is issued by the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) when gales or stronger winds associated with a cyclone are expected to hit **within 48 hours** but not within 24 hours.

A Cyclone Warning is issued by BoM when gales or stronger winds are expected to hit **within 24 hours**.

If you hear either a watch or a warning you should:

- ▶ Keep listening to your portable radio and watch the BoM website ( [www.bom.gov.au](http://www.bom.gov.au) ) to monitor the movement and severity of the cyclone
- ▶ Check that your Emergency Kit is complete and easily accessible
- ▶ Check that your neighbours are aware that a cyclone watch or warning has been issued
- ▶ Clear your property of all loose items. This means bringing outdoor furniture, children's toys and gardening equipment inside or under cover
- ▶ Secure any boats and move all vehicles and bicycles under cover
- ▶ Fill buckets and bath with water in case water supply becomes restricted and ensure you have sufficient water purification tablets to make the water drinkable
- ▶ Prepare an evacuation kit that includes warm clothes, essential medications, baby formula, nappies, valuables, important papers/photos/mementos in waterproof plastic bags, pillows, sleeping bags and blankets
- ▶ Withdraw a sufficient amount cash to cover essential items such as food, water or petrol and add this to your Evacuation Kit. (In the event of a power failure, both banks and Automatic Teller Machines may be inaccessible)



- ▶ If your windows are fitted with shutters, ensure these are closed securely. If not, tape your windows in a criss-crossing fashion using strong packing tape. This may not prevent your windows from shattering but it will hold the broken glass in place
- ▶ Bring children and pets indoors and remain inside until further advice is given.

## During a Cyclone

If a cyclone is approaching and an official evacuation order has **not** been issued, you may decide to shelter in your home until the cyclone has passed through.

### If you decide to shelter at home:

- ▶ Turn off all electricity, gas and water and unplug all appliances
- ▶ Keep your Emergency Kit close at hand
- ▶ Bring your family into the strongest part of the house
- ▶ Keep listening to the radio for cyclone updates and remain indoors until advised
- ▶ If the building begins to break up, immediately seek shelter under a strong table or bench or under a heavy mattress
- ▶ **BEWARE THE CALM EYE OF THE CYCLONE.**  
Some people venture outdoors during the eye of the cyclone, mistakenly believing that the cyclone has passed. Stay inside until you have received official advice that it is safe to go outside.



If you are driving when a cyclone hits, immediately park in an area that is clear of trees, powerlines and water courses and stay inside your car.

## If you must evacuate:

If an official evacuation order is issued then you and your family must leave your home immediately and seek shelter with friends or family who are further inland or on higher ground.

Ensure your pets are in a safe place (such as the garage or the laundry) if you cannot take them with you. Leave them with food and water but do not tie them up.

- ▶ Turn off all electricity, gas and water, unplug all appliances and lock your doors
- ▶ Ensure all family members are wearing strong shoes and suitable clothing
- ▶ Take your Emergency Kit and your Evacuation Kit and commence your Evacuation Plan
- ▶ If you are visiting or holidaying in Queensland and do not have family or friends to shelter with, contact your accommodation manager immediately to identify options for evacuation.

## After a Cyclone

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The time immediately after a cyclone is often just as dangerous as the initial event itself.

Many injuries and deaths have occurred as a result of people failing to take proper precautions while exploring collapsed buildings and sightseeing through devastated streets.

Once you have been advised that the cyclone has passed you must adhere to the following:

- ▶ Listen to your radio and remain indoors until advised
- ▶ If you are told to return to your home, do so using the recommended routes only



*Your local SES can assist with debris removal and temporary repairs following a cyclone.*

- ▶ Do not go sightseeing
- ▶ Check on your neighbours if necessary
- ▶ Do not use electrical appliances which have been wet until they are checked for safety
- ▶ Boil or purify your water until supplies are declared safe
- ▶ Stay away from damaged powerlines, fallen trees and flood water



*Wading through floodwater is dangerous.*

- ▶ If your home has become uninhabitable due to cyclone damage, contact your local council to identify where you can seek further assistance.

### **For more information**

Visit the following websites for more information.

#### **Queensland Disaster Management Services**

[www.disaster.qld.gov.au](http://www.disaster.qld.gov.au)

#### **Emergency Management Queensland**

[www.emergency.qld.gov.au/emq](http://www.emergency.qld.gov.au/emq)

#### **Bureau of Meteorology**

[www.bom.gov.au](http://www.bom.gov.au)

#### **Emergency Management Australia**

[www.ema.gov.au](http://www.ema.gov.au)

## CHECKLIST: Is your home prepared?

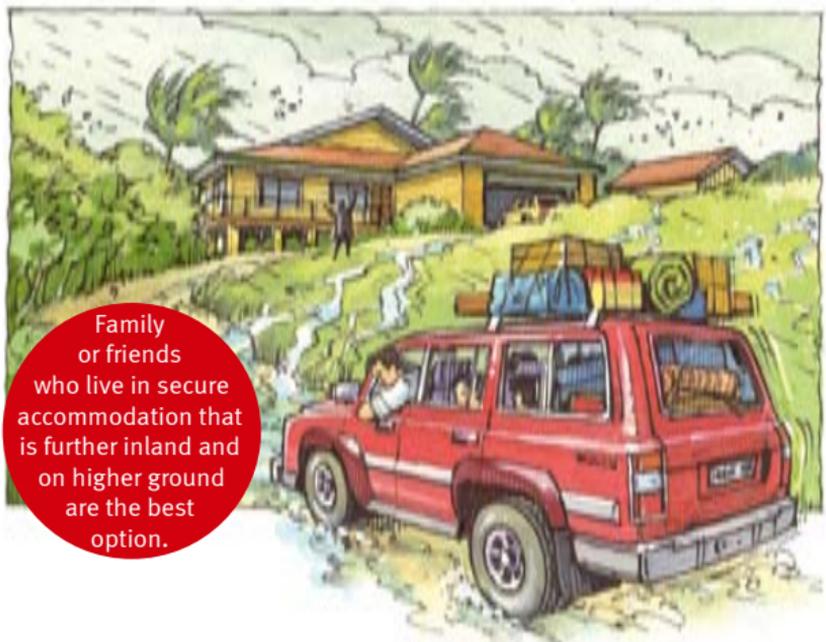
Complete this checklist in November at the beginning of the cyclone season.

- Have you trimmed overhanging branches?
- Have you cleared your gutters?
- Have you removed all loose items from your property?
- Is your roof and guttering secure?
- Have you installed metal window shutters?
- Have you prepared an Emergency Kit that includes the following:
  - portable radio
  - torch
  - spare batteries
  - first aid kit
  - essential medications
  - non-perishable food
  - sturdy gloves
  - waterproof plastic bags
  - candles and matches
  - important documents in sealed bags
- Do you have a spare supply of fuel in the event of an evacuation?
- Do you have an emergency supply of water?
- Does your family have an Evacuation Plan?
- Have you checked your insurance policy?

## CHECKLIST: Are you ready to evacuate?

Complete this checklist in the event of an evacuation.

- Has official advice been given to evacuate?
- Do you know where you are evacuating to?
- Is your evacuation point further inland, on higher ground and secure?
- Do you know the preferred route for evacuation?
- Is your vehicle full of fuel?
- Have you packed an Evacuation Kit?
- Do you have essential medications for your family?
- Have you packed important documents and valuables?
- Have you packed your Emergency Kit?
- Are your pets safe and secure?
- Have you packed emergency water supplies?
- Have you checked on any neighbours who are elderly or disabled?
- Have you turned off all the power, gas and water mains to your home?





# Emergency Contact List

Record your emergency contact numbers in the list below, tear out this sheet and display it clearly in your home so that it is visible to all family members.

- Police, Fire and Ambulance .....000
- State Emergency Service (SES) .....132 500
- Electricity provider .....
- Local GP or Doctor's Surgery .....
- Hospital.....
- Veterinary Practice .....
- Interstate Family Contact.....
- Local Primary School.....
- Local High School .....
- Mum's workplace.....
- Dad's workplace .....
- Local Council Office.....
- Neighbours.....
- Neighbours.....





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