

## CYCLONES

### 1. General Information

The Top End of the Northern Territory is subject to tropical cyclones generally from November to the end of April. Although cyclones cannot be prevented or controlled, it is possible to reduce their impact both at the workplace and at home through careful preparation and planning.

This information provides a general guide and instructions to Remote Health Staff on their responsibilities and actions in the event of a cyclone. It is important to note that the stages described in the procedure may be slightly different from local community terminology however the stages identified in the text boxes are consistent with the Bureau of Meteorology cyclone warning system.

In the event of a cyclone in communities where there is a Police presence – the Officer in Charge will be the Local Counter Disaster Controller under the Local Counter Disaster Plan. Where there is no Police presence, the Counter Disaster Plan will be implemented through the Community Council in collaboration with the nearest Police.

### 2. Definitions

Nil.

### 3. Responsibilities

#### 3.1 All Health Centre Staff

- Ensure a pre cyclone season clean up of residence
- Preparing a personal emergency kit including food and water supplies (approx. 2 days supply)
- Participate in checking of Emergency Equipment (including Disaster Packs)

#### 3.2 Health Centre Managers

- Ensure the routine check of Emergency Equipment (including Disaster Packs)
- Coordinate a pre cyclone season clean up of Health Centre grounds
- Coordinate the implementation of Health Centre cyclone plan
- Participate in local Community Counter Disaster as per plan
- Provide the point of contact between the Health Team and the Local Counter Disaster Controller

#### 3.3 Nursing Management

- Ensure that staff contact details are current
- Ensure that Remote Health Staff are aware of current cyclone warnings
- Organise the provision of cyclone education by teleconference in October of every year

### 4. Procedure

#### 4.1 Before the Cyclone Season

- Review Community Disaster Plans and current work place cyclone procedures
- Check Health Centre and Staff Accommodation for potential dangers. Clear property of loose material that could cause injury and damage due to strong winds.
- Ensure all staffing details regarding contact numbers are current and provide this information to Nursing Management

|   |        |                         |
|---|--------|-------------------------|
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- In case of a storm tide warning, know your nearest safe high ground and the best access route
- Prepare a personal emergency kit (eg medications, food and water) at home.
- Prepare a portable radio with fresh spare batteries, torch, candles and matches etc.

#### 4.2 Cyclone Warning System

## Cyclone Watch

### Stage 1

A watch is issued if a cyclone or potential cyclone exists and there are strong indications that winds above gale force will affect coastal communities within 24 to 48 hours. The report is issued every 6 hours and gives an estimate of the cyclone location, severity category, direction of movement and identifies any coastal area that could be affected.

- Listen to radio / TV for further information
- Staff should continue to work and complete advanced preparation such as tidying up.
- Notify any off duty staff within the community
- Review any clients with the DMO that may need evacuation for the duration of the cyclone eg antenatal clients. The review of these clients needs to occur early. Aviation services may relocate aircraft during cyclone warning stage.
- Review any planned patient travel with Patient Travel Services. Consider areas that patients may be travelling to. If Darwin or Gove Hospitals are placed on cyclone warning all elective surgery and specialist clinics will be cancelled.

## Cyclone Warning

### Stages 2 - 6

#### Stage 2 - Standby

A cyclone warning is issued as soon as gales or stronger winds are expected to affect coastal communities with 24 hours. It identifies the communities being threatened and gives the cyclones name, its location, severity category and its direction. Forecast of heavy rainfall, flooding and abnormally high tides could also be included.

- Batten down the Health Centre
  - o secure doors,
  - o board or tape windows,
  - o store loose items inside,
  - o store water,
  - o fuel vehicles.
- Check Emergency Equipment.
- Check satellite phone is working and fully charged.
- Ensure all staff are aware of the location of Emergency Equipment during the cyclone and which staff member has this responsibility.
- Review client medication requirements, dispensing extra supplies as required.

#### Stage 3 – Activation

This phase of the warning is given when destructive winds are likely to affect the region within the next 6 – 12 hours.

- Aero Medical Services will decide whether to relocate aircraft out of danger. AMS will notify the Senior DMO and Top End Remote Manager if aircraft will be out of the region.

*Note: Relocation of the aircraft must take place prior to cross wind limits reaching 25knots. Therefore, at the Pilot's discretion AMS may relocate aircraft during Stage 2 – Standby.*

|   |        |                         |
|---|--------|-------------------------|
| Developed by: Professional Practice Group | Page 2 | Reviewed: April 2007    |
| Endorsed by: NT Best Practice Group       |        |                         |
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- Unplug computer equipment, covering with plastic and place under desk or other appropriate location.
- All Medical Records are to be returned to filing cabinets and locked prior to departing the Health Centre.
- Deliver Disaster Packs to designated Cyclone Shelters into the care of a responsible community member.
- Establish which *safe area* each staff member will be going to and when. Arrange a contact point for staff to meet **after** the ALL CLEAR is given.
- Vehicles are to be place under cover (hand break on and in gear).
- Locate Emergency Equipment with designated RAN.
- In the event that schools have closed, parents required to collect children should be released from duties.
- Non essential staff should be stood down once all preparations have been finalised.

## Take Shelter

### Stage 4

An official announcement will be made to the public advising all persons to take shelter.

- Take Cover in a *safe area*.
- Stay inside and shelter well clear of windows in the strongest part of the house – bathroom, internal toilet or passage-way.
- Listen to your portable radio for cyclone updates.
- If the house starts to break up, protect yourself with mattress, blankets etc. Anchor yourself to a strong fixture.
- Beware of the calm eye. Don't assume the cyclone is over – if a calm period occurs this may be due to the eye, violent winds will soon resume from the opposite direction.

### Stage 5

Destructive winds have reached the boundary of the region.

### Stage 6

This will be declared when winds no longer pose a threat to the region. NOTE: It should be remembered that the all clear has not been announced and that stage 5 may be re-declared if necessary.

- Don't go outside until officially advised that it is safe.
- Listen to local radio for official warnings advice.

## All Clear

### Stage 7

The "All Clear" will be declared when it is considered safe for the public to leave their shelter. A formal advice giving the **All Clear** will be made by the Local Controller of the Counter Disaster Team once the cyclone has passed and poses no further immediate threat.

### 4.3 Disaster Recovery

Only once the "All Clear" has been declared. Health Centre Staff should meet at the designated meeting place and review any loss or damage. An assessment on the working capacity of the Team and Health Centre needs to be made.

|   |        |                         |
|---|--------|-------------------------|
| Developed by: Professional Practice Group | Page 3 | Reviewed: April 2007    |
| Endorsed by: NT Best Practice Group       |        |                         |
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The Health Centre Manager is to report this information to:

- Nursing Management and
- Local Controller of the Counter Disaster Team.

The Local Controller of the Counter Disaster Team has the responsibility to report damage to Emergency Services and coordinate further disaster recovery measures.

## 5. Forms

Nil.

## 6. References and Supporting Documents

Related Atlas Items:

Disaster Management

[Disaster Packs](#)

[Local Counter Disaster Plans](#)

|   |        |                         |
|---|--------|-------------------------|
| Developed by: Professional Practice Group | Page 4 | Reviewed: April 2007    |
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