



NATURAL DISASTERS AND SEVERE WEATHER EVENT POLICY

1. PURPOSE

The policy provides information and guidelines to help protect the health, safety and wellbeing of WWF-Australia staff, and other persons against the risks posed by natural disasters and severe weather conditions.

2. POLICY

- 2.1. WWF-Australia staff, volunteers, interns and contractors (from here on referred to generally as 'staff') are not required to attend their normal place of work if a natural disaster and/or severe weather condition warning has been issued. As a guide, if schools and government departments are closed WWF-Australia workplaces in the vicinity will also be closed.
- 2.2. WWF-Australia staff are encouraged to avoid travel where there is a natural disaster and/or severe weather watch or warning and ensure travel is undertaken either prior to or following a natural disaster and/or severe weather event.
- 2.3. Managers of staff not attending their normal place of work due to a natural disaster and/or severe weather condition watch or warning are to act as the communication channel between staff and People & Culture and/or an Executive team member.
- 2.4. Staff absent from their normal place of work due to a natural disaster and/or severe weather condition warning are expected to work remotely if they have appropriate equipment to work virtually in a safe manner and where environmental conditions do not pose a threat to working either online or offline.
- 2.5. Staff are required to attend their normal place of work only after official clearance has been received from the local authority.
- 2.6. Staff will not engage in business activities external to their normal place of work including fieldwork of any description, while a natural disaster and/or severe weather condition or warning is either posed or current.

3. SOURCES OF AUTHORITY

- 3.1. There are no specific legislative provisions that govern natural disasters and/or severe weather events. However, WWF-Australia refers to the model Work Health and Safety Act and state WH&S Acts pertaining to safety, risk assessment and control/mitigation, and duty of care. Other workplace health and safety policies are available on the wiki should be referred to as a further source of reference.

4. OBJECTIVES

- 4.1. To mitigate the risks associated with natural disasters and/or severe weather events that have the potential to adversely affect the health, safety and wellbeing of WWF-Australia staff, volunteers, interns, contractors and other persons normally present at a WWF-Australia workplace.

5. SCOPE

- 5.1. This policy applies to all WWF-Australia staff, contractors, volunteers and interns and other persons present (e.g., visitors, office leasees) at all WWF-Australia normal places of work both whilst in Australia or while travelling/working elsewhere in the world. The policy, formerly known as the Tropical Cyclone and Other Extreme Weather Conditions Policy, has been broadened to reflect changes in climate patterns related to climate change as natural disasters and/or severe weather events more frequently impact upon areas outside of tropical cyclone zones. While the policy specifically addresses conditions relating to severe weather, the principles contained within the policy may be applied to other events such as bushfire, earthquake, landslides, flooding etc.



6. DEFINITIONS

<i>Normal place of work</i>	The "normal place of work" is the place where a staff member, volunteer, intern or contractor normally performs the duties of his/her employment, such as an employer's business premises, including a home office where an agreed work pattern for home working has been granted.
<i>Natural disaster</i>	Natural disasters are driven primarily by weather and geology. Examples of weather-driven natural disasters include bushfire, flood, heatwave, cyclones, landslides, east coast lows and thunderstorms. Geological-driven hazards include earthquakes and tsunamis.
<i>Severe weather</i>	Severe weather includes: sustained winds of gale force (63 km/h) or more; wind gusts of 90 km/h or more (100 km/h or more in Tasmania); very heavy rain that may lead to flash flooding; abnormally high tides (or storm tides); unusually large surf waves expected to cause dangerous conditions; widespread blizzards in Alpine areas.
<i>Severe weather warning services</i>	The Bureau of Meteorology issues severe weather warnings for potentially hazardous or dangerous weather that is not directly related to severe thunderstorms, bushfires or tropical cyclones (See below). Standard Emergency Warning Signal (SEWS) are sounded only for the most serious events. A severe weather warning will usually be updated every 6 hours.
<i>Severe thunderstorms</i>	While we experience many thunderstorms, those more intense are referred to as severe thunderstorms. The Bureau of Meteorology considers a severe thunderstorm to be one that produces any of the following: large hail (2cm in diameter or larger); damaging wind gusts (generally wind gusts exceeding 90 km/h); heavy rainfall, which may cause flash flooding; and tornadoes. Severe thunderstorms can be quite localised and can develop quickly. The exact location of severe thunderstorms can be hard to predict. The warnings are usually issued without much lead-time before the event.
<i>Severe bushfires</i>	The Bureau of Meteorology issues Fire Weather Warnings when weather conditions are conducive to the spread of dangerous bushfires. Warnings are generally issued within 24 hours of the potential onset of hazardous conditions. Warnings are also broadcast on radio and television and will advise of the level in accordance with the National Fire Danger Rating System.
<i>Tropical cyclone:</i>	Tropical cyclones are low pressure systems in the tropics that, in the Southern Hemisphere, have well defined clockwise wind circulations with a region surrounding the centre with gale force winds (sustained winds of 63 km/h or greater with gusts in excess of 90 km/h). If the sustained winds around the centre reach 119 km/h (gusts in excess of 170 km/h) then the system is called a severe tropical cyclone. These are referred to as hurricanes or typhoons in other countries.
<i>Tropical cyclone severity categories</i>	The severity of cyclones is described in terms of categories ranging from 1 to 5 ¹ related to the zone of maximum winds. An estimate of cyclone severity is included in all tropical advices. Using this severity scale as a guide, managers and staff are able to assess the degree of the cyclone threat and take appropriate action. The categories do not refer to the amount of flooding or storm tides. If a storm tide is expected it will be mentioned separately in the cyclone warning.
<i>Tropical cyclone watch</i>	A watch is issued every six hours when there are indications that gales or stronger winds are expected to communities within 48 hours but not within 24 hours. It details the communities expected to be affected and gives a brief estimate of the cyclone's location, intensity, severity category and movement.

¹ See Attachment 1 for Tropical Cyclone Categories



Tropical cyclone warning

A warning is issued every three hours when there are indications that gales or stronger winds are expected to affect communities within 24 hours. As well as information provided in a watch advice, warning advices also inform of expected maximum wind gusts. Forecasts of heavy rainfall, flooding and abnormally high tide are including where necessary. Communities under threat are also advised to take precautions necessary to safeguard their lives and property. When a cyclone is under radar surveillance close to the coast, hourly advices may be issued.

The general name given to tropical cyclone watch or warning messages is an 'advice' or 'tropical cyclone advice'. A tropical cyclone advice is prefixed "FLASH" when it is the first warning to a community not previously alerted by a cyclone watch. It is also issued when major changes are made to the previous warning due, for example, to unexpected movement towards the coast or rapid intensification.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES

7.1. Executive Management are responsible for:

- Upholding their WH&S responsibilities as an 'officer' under the Work Health and Safety (WHS) Act.
- Ensuring that all relevant legislation and policies are adhered to.

7.2. People & Culture are responsible for:

- Providing advice to all WWF-Australia staff regarding the legislation, policies and procedures.
- Identifying and addressing non-compliance.
- Assisting managers and staff with coordination and response in the event of natural disaster and/or severe weather conditions.

7.3. National Health and Safety Committee are responsible for:

- Reviewing policies and procedures against real events, debriefing events and providing recommendations to the Executive.
- Advising and supporting managers, staff and other persons present at WWF-Australia workplaces during a natural disaster and/or severe weather event.

7.4. Managers are responsible for:

- Ensuring staff do not attend the workplace when there is a natural disaster and/or severe weather condition warning advising of a threat to the area.
- Monitoring and updating staff on changes in a natural disaster and/or severe weather condition status.
- Notifying People & Culture and/or WH&S Committee members / Health and Safety Representatives of a natural disaster and/or severe weather watch or warning, the estimated period of office closure and the whereabouts of each staff member as soon as practicable after the watch or warning has been issued.
- Not approving fieldwork of any kind when there is a reasonable expectation of a natural disaster and/or severe weather condition.
- Cancelling pre-approved fieldwork immediately once a natural disaster and/or severe weather watch or warning has been issued.
- Ensuring leave applications are submitted where paid staff have been unable to work.

7.5. All staff, volunteers, interns, contractors and other persons are responsible for:

- Following the reasonable instructions of the manager.
- Not attending the workplace in accordance with a natural disaster and/or severe weather condition warning.



- Not returning to the workplace until officially advised by the local authorities that it is safe to do so.
- Advising the manager and/or People & Culture of their whereabouts.
- For paid staff, submitting a leave application where the staff member has been unable to work as a result of natural disasters and/or severe weather.

8. PROCEDURES

8.1. During normal business hours

- 8.1.1.** Once a natural disaster and/or severe weather watch or warning is issued, the manager or other authorised staff member should convey to staff the advice of the local authorities.
- 8.1.2.** Once a natural disaster and/or severe weather condition watch is issued, the manager should immediately recall staff attending any activities outside of the normal workplace activities such as external meetings or fieldtrips and cancel all planned activities. If it is safer to return directly home as opposed to the normal place of work, managers should authorise staff to do so and ensure they have returned home safely via telephone, text or email.
- 8.1.3.** Staff are to monitor websites, phones apps, television and/or radio for updates on the development of a natural disaster and/or severe weather condition. E.g., during cyclones battery powered radios may be used for this purpose.
- 8.1.4.** Where the threat of a natural disaster and/or severe weather event is likely to impede a staff member's travel home, the manager should make a decision on who the event will impact and make arrangements for the staff member to leave at the appropriate time to return safely home. This decision may also be made by People & Culture and/or and Executive team member, and will generally be made via a Safety Alert email.

8.2. Outside of normal business hours

- 8.2.1.** Staff are to act on the advice of local authorities and not attend their normal place of work until confirmation is received from local authorities that it is safe to do so.
- 8.2.2.** Managers of staff not attending work due to a natural disaster and/or severe weather condition watch or warning are to act as the communication channel between staff and People & Culture and/or an Executive team member and advise of the exact nature of the watch or warning, the staff likely to be affected and their whereabouts as soon as practicable after the watch or warning has been issued. Managers are to advise People & Culture of the situation, the estimated period of office closure and the whereabouts of each staff member as soon as practicable after the warning has been issued.
- 8.2.3.** On their return to work staff are to submit a Leave Application - Special leave with pay - to the manager.

8.3. Staff, volunteers, interns, contractors or other persons at a WWF-Australia workplace are to submit an Incident Report where there was an incident (including near miss), and/or injury resulting from the natural disaster and/or severe weather event.

9. CONFIDENTIALITY AND DOCUMENT CONTROL

- 9.1.** This policy will be reviewed at least every five years or earlier if warranted.
- 9.2.** All policies are published on the wiki Habitat intranet which is accessible to all staff and volunteers.



APPROVAL

Signature	<hr/>
Name	Dermot O'Gorman <hr/>
Title	CEO <hr/>
Date of Issue	16.11.2005 <hr/>
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See Attachment 1 for Tropical Cyclone Categories



ATTACHMENT 1: Tropical Cyclone Severity Categories

The tropical cyclone season in Australia extends from November to April. Three Tropical Cyclone Centres provide tropical cyclone warning services. These are located in the Perth, Darwin and Brisbane Regional Offices of the Bureau of Meteorology. <http://www.bom.gov.au/cyclone/about/>

Australia

Category	Strongest gust (km/h)	Typical effects
1 Tropical Cyclone	Less than 125 km/h Gales	Minimal house damage. Damage to some crops, trees and caravans. Boats may drag moorings.
2 Tropical Cyclone	125 - 164 km/h Destructive winds	Minor house damage. Significant damage to signs, trees and caravans. Heavy damage to some crops. Risk of power failure. Small boats may break moorings.
3 Severe Tropical Cyclone	165 - 224 km/h Very destructive winds	Some roof and structural damage. Some caravans destroyed. Power failure likely.
4 Severe Tropical Cyclone	225 - 279 km/h Very destructive winds	Significant roofing and structural damage. Many caravans destroyed and blown away. Dangerous airborne debris. Widespread power failures.
5 Severe Tropical Cyclone	More than 280 km/h Extremely destructive winds	Extremely dangerous with widespread destruction.

Global

Tropical Cyclone Classifications (all winds are 10-minute averages)												
Beaufort scale	10-minute sustained winds (knots)	N Indian Ocean IMD	SW Indian Ocean MF	Australia BOM	SW Pacific FMS	NW Pacific JMA	NW Pacific JTWC	NE Pacific & N Atlantic NHC & CPHC				
0-6	<28	Depression	Trop. Disturbance									
7	28-29	Deep Depression	Depression	Tropical Low	Tropical Depression	Tropical Depression	Tropical Depression	Tropical Depression				
	30-33											
8-9	34-47	Cyclonic Storm	Moderate Tropical Storm	Trop. Cyclone (1)	Tropical Cyclone	Tropical Storm	Tropical Storm	Tropical Storm				
10	48-55	Severe Cyclonic Storm	Severe Tropical Storm	Tropical Cyclone (2)		Severe Tropical Storm	Severe Tropical Storm					
11	56-63										Hurricane (1)	
	64-72											Hurricane (2)
	73-85	Very Severe Cyclonic Storm	Tropical Cyclone	Severe Tropical Cyclone (3)		Typhoon	Typhoon	Typhoon	Major Hurricane (3)			
	86-89											
90-99												
12	100-106		Intense Tropical Cyclone	Severe Tropical Cyclone (4)	Typhoon	Typhoon	Typhoon	Major Hurricane (4)				
	107-114											
	115-119	Super Cyclonic Storm	Very Intense Tropical Cyclone	Severe Tropical Cyclone (5)				Super Typhoon	Super Typhoon	Super Typhoon	Major Hurricane (5)	
>120												