

In this factsheet:

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- Safety

Your safety, and that of those around you, is of paramount importance property can be replaced... people can't.

PEOPLE**Disclaimer:**

Information provided is broad level guidance only; landowners should seek region-specific and location-specific information and professional advice prior to action.



Courtesy-Desert Channels Queensland and Burnett Mary Regional Group

Planning

The preparedness and response section of your property management plan should contain a sub-section on personal safety. Personal preparedness is more than a high and dry spot with plenty of water and food - it is about being mentally prepared, having communication and safety networks in place, practicing evacuations (especially if you live in a high risk area), using your checklists and testing your backup options.

Make sure the whole family is part of the planning and practice process, because you never know who will be called on to act or lead in a time of stress and crisis. Everyone should know:

- how to use communication equipment
- who to call
- the meaning of the official flood warnings
- techniques and procedures for conserving power, food and water
- basic first aid (be sure to include any critical medication)

Where your water supply is dependent on an engine-driven pump, ensure you have plenty of fuel on hand coming into the flood season, and that the pump is not at risk of submersion.

The Beige - Planning factsheet has specific details on property management planning, historic flood levels, and official Bureau of Meteorology flood warning categories. Importantly, know and understand the impact of the local flood gauge levels which relate to each of these official flood warning categories. If you are a relative newcomer to the area, tap into local knowledge - there is nothing like it.

As a potential flooding weather pattern sets in, those living in rural areas are often already isolated from formal community evacuation centres, so you need to organise to stay with friends, family or neighbours if you are forced to evacuate.

Share your preparedness plan and checklist with these people as they are your safety and support network.

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Don't leave anything to chance; keep your checklist up to date - it will ensure you and your family don't forget anything in the stressful time when you are under threat. When it comes to personal safety and the home, there is little difference in planning, preparation and actions between urban and rural situations, so make use of available resources... simply adapt them for your circumstances. Web search for 'get ready what if emergency plan' to get started.

By sharing knowledge and working with your neighbours, you create a community with resilience, awareness and a self-managed response strategy. The more self-reliant you are, the less likely you will need to call on stretched emergency services.

It is sometimes the case that rural homes are less well prepared for a flood event, as resources are concentrated on the production unit. For information on securing your home, web search 'emq prepare your home'.

Mitigation

As a rural resident you will be in tune with the weather, either by observation or monitoring broadcasts - your livelihood depends on it. If your house is subject to inundation, you should be even more finely attuned, and be as flood proofed as possible and prepared to evacuate at short notice.

Move livestock, machinery and consumables well in advance so you are free to concentrate on personal safety, as the trigger point for evacuation or isolation approaches.

Make sure you have adequate supplies of food, water and fuel. Depending on where you live, the amount will vary: in coastal streams where floods usually come and go in a matter of days, a week's worth of supplies may be adequate; if you live on a languid inland river system, you may need a month's worth, or more. Be aware that ground and surface water may be contaminated during a flood, so ensure you have sufficient alternative water supplies.

To avoid congesting the network, use the telephone for emergency calls only. Instead, use social media, email and text messaging for general communication. Social media is a good way to let family and friends know you are okay.

Conserve your mobile phone battery by reducing screen brightness, select airplane mode, close unnecessary apps, minimise photos, turn off location, don't play music, videos or games, and only use when necessary.

If you lose power, you can charge your mobile phone in your car. Just be sure your car is in a well-ventilated place (remove it from the garage) and do not go to your car until any danger has passed. You can also listen to your car radio for important news alerts.

Recovery and assistance

Recovering from a major flood event will vary depending on the extent of the damage, and could range from repairing infrastructure and restoring production, to piecing together shattered lives. Wherever you fall on that spectrum, there is an avenue for assistance. This may vary from neighbourly help to Government financial assistance.

- The Queensland Government has Immediate Hardship Assistance, for power loss and food vouchers, and isn't income or asset tested.
- The Australian Government's Disaster Recovery Payment (available through Centrelink) provides one-off assistance payments and short-term assistance where income has been affected as a direct result of a declared disaster.
- Your local council disaster recovery centre will also be able to provide advice.

Health

The emotional stress of a major flood event can affect people in a different ways... the good news is, there are many avenues for assistance including:

- Queensland Alliance for Mental Health (Disaster and Response Recovery)
- Red Cross (Psychological First Aid)
Lifeline (13 11 14)

The post flood environment, with its standing water and mud, is not a particularly friendly one for the elderly, chronically ill, pregnant and very young. As well as the risk of infection and disease, there is the physical danger, so it is best to avoid wading through flood waters.

Use thick gloves wherever possible, and wash your hands thoroughly with sanitiser or soap and water, especially before eating and drinking.

Wear enclosed shoes, long pants and long sleeves to protect from skin damage - treat any cuts or abrasions with disinfectant and cover with a water-proof dressing as there is a high risk of infection.

Be wary of snakes, spiders, mosquitoes and other biting insects that have taken refuge in debris, or become active after floods. Personal insect repellent can reduce the risk of contracting mosquito-borne disease.

Be aware of the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning - ensure engines are run in well ventilated areas.

Without power, the food requiring refrigeration can quickly spoil. During a power outage, avoid opening your fridge or freezer; this only allows cold air out and warm air in. These units are extremely well insulated and can maintain low temperatures for considerable time. However, if you have concerns about the safety of your food, err on the side of caution... if in doubt, throw it out!

Water

As rural landholder, you will most likely provide your own water supply. If your water storage may have been contaminated by flood waters, avoid its use until its quality can be tested. If in doubt, water for human consumption should be boiled for at least five minutes then allowed to cool. Alternatively, use an appropriate water filter or purifier, or seek professional advice on other treatment options.

Stagnant water, receptacles and uncovered rainwater tanks are breeding grounds for mosquitoes which carry diseases such as Dengue Fever, Ross River Virus and Barmah Forest Virus. As soon as possible, take action by covering and treating tanks, and draining standing water.

Rubbish

If in doubt, contact your local council for advice on the disposal of flood-damaged building material, household goods, or flood-borne rubbish - see Blue - Rubbish and Debris factsheet for more information.

If you like technology, web search 'self recovery app' and download the app that features critical tips for preparing for, surviving, and recovering from disasters.

Remember, act early! It's better to take action that proves unnecessary, than to fail to act and be caught in a life-threatening situation.