



NATURAL DISASTER INFORMATION FOR THE AGRICULTURE AND FOOD INDUSTRIES

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Overview

This booklet contains information to assist the agriculture and food industries respond to a natural disaster. It has been prepared in response to the Dialogue for Action on Natural Disaster Preparedness hosted by the Honourable Tim Mulherin MP, Minister for Agriculture Food and Regional Economies on 4 October 2011. It includes a contact list of key agencies in a disaster and websites containing disaster related material as well as general information to help prepare for and respond to a natural disaster.

Disaster resilience is significantly increased by proactive planning and preparation for the protection of life, property and the environment through an awareness of threats, associated risks and local disaster management arrangements. Accordingly, it is important that individual producers and businesses consider the potential impact that a natural disaster could have on them and identify potential mitigation options that could be employed.

For example, owners of livestock should have a plan for shelter or evacuation ahead of a natural disaster and sufficient supplies of animal food. Businesses that are reliant on external supply should identify what resources they need to keep their operation running and if reliant on utilities such as electricity and water should have a plan for being able to continue in the event of their disruption.

If the agriculture and food supply chain sector has planned ahead for natural disasters, this will improve the resilience of rural communities which in turn will reduce their vulnerability and reliance on response agencies. This will better enable response agencies to focus on those who are unable to provide for themselves.

However, in events beyond the capacity of producers and business to manage for themselves, the government provides assistance under the joint Commonwealth State Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA).

How is the disaster response coordinated?

Emergency management disaster response

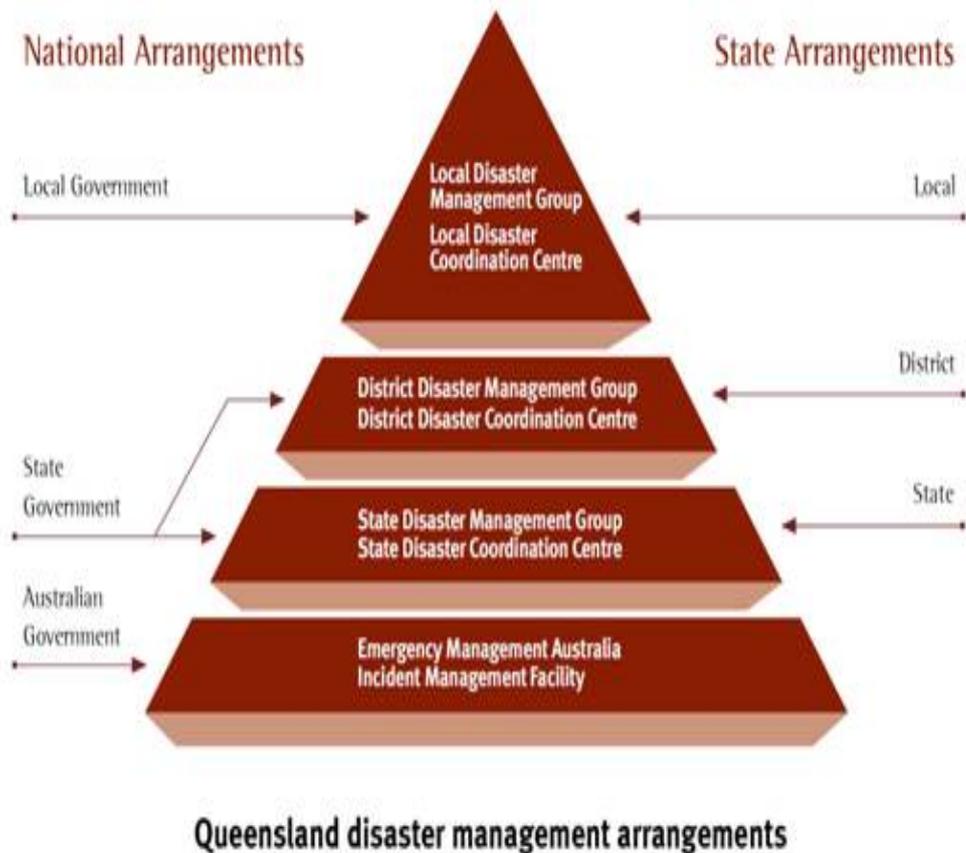
Queensland has a tiered framework for responding to natural disasters with local, district and state disaster management groups established to provide effective operational service delivery in support of local communities.

The principal structures that make up Queensland's disaster management arrangements are:

- Disaster management groups operating at local, district and state levels and which are responsible for the planning, organisation, coordination and implementation of all measures to mitigate/prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters;
- Coordination centres at local, district and state levels that support disaster management groups in coordinating information, resources and services necessary for disaster operations;
- State government functional agencies through which the functions and responsibilities of the state government in relation to disaster management are managed and coordinated; and
- State government threat-specific agencies responsible for the management and coordination of combating threats.

In the event of a natural disaster, businesses and producers faced with difficulty should attempt to resolve them at the Local Disaster Management Group (LDMG) level in the first instance. LDMG's are chaired by local government. Where problems cannot be resolved at the LDMG level, the LDMG can filter information to the District and State Disaster management level for an escalated response.

The disaster response structure can be seen from the chart below.



Agriculture and food supply chain

To assist DEEDI understand the impact that a natural disaster (or other significant event impacting agriculture) is having on industry, the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Regional Economies can convene a agriculture and supply chain control group (control group).

The control group is an information gathering and sharing forum which brings together government, local government and industry representatives in order to identify key issues impacting on the agriculture and food and supply chain sector.

The control group will meet/teleconference on a regular basis during and immediately after a natural disaster. Participants share information to gain a better understanding of what is happening on the ground. This understanding will shape the prioritizing of the activities necessary for disaster response from the perspective of agriculture, including appropriate natural disaster activations to deliver recovery assistance. Financial assistance after natural disaster is discussed further on page eight.

The control group can provide information to other government agencies eg Transport and Main Roads, Emergency Management Queensland. Should individual producers and businesses have particular issues of concern that they consider need to be considered at the State level, they should be raised with local government or their peak industry group who are participating in the control group.

The control group process is separate to the disaster response coordination framework of the Emergency Services agencies mentioned in the previous paragraph.

Contact list

DEEDI

Call centre 13 25 23 (cost of a local call within Queensland) or 07 3404 6999
8 am to 6 pm Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday
9 am to 6 pm Thursday

Other agencies

QRAA 1800 623 946

For life or property emergency events Triple 0 (000)

Emergency Management Queensland 3247 8938

State Emergency Service (SES) 13 25 00

Power supply:

South East Queensland (SEQ) [Energex](#) 13 62 62
Outside SEQ [Ergon Energy](#) 13 22 96

Road conditions:

Department of Transport and Main Roads

1300 130 595 for 24-hour state-wide road reports.

13 19 40 for road conditions for Brisbane, Gold and Sunshine Coasts areas only.

Websites

Business information www.deedi.qld.gov.au

Disaster preparedness and recovery www.business.qld.gov.au/risk-disasters/cyclone-flood-disaster-recovery/index.html

NDRRA activations <http://disaster.qld.gov.au/Financial%20Support/Activations.html>

QRAA www.graa.qld.gov.au

Bureau of Meteorology Dangerous Weather warnings www.bom.gov.au

Energy supply (SEQ) www.energex.com.au

Energy supply (outside SEQ) www.ergon.com.au

Traffic and travel information www.131940.qld.gov.au

Local government directory <http://dlgp.qld.gov.au/local-government-directory>

Financial assistance after disaster (disaster activations for primary producers and business)

Financial assistance programs in response to a natural disaster are established under the joint Commonwealth State Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA). The NDRRA provides a suite of pre-approved measures which can be provided to businesses, primary producers and non-profit organisations to assist recovery after a natural disaster. These measures are able to be cost shared between the State and Australian Governments.

The agriculture and supply chain control group mentioned on page 6, as well as regional DEEDI staff and disaster management groups are the key source of information on natural disaster activations.

All NDRRA financial assistance to business and primary producers is contingent on the applicant having suffered direct damage as a consequence of an eligible natural disaster. In other words the NDRRA will not assist with loss of trade or other consequential losses caused by a natural disaster (eg an inability to bring products to market or reduced prices for produce). The NDRRA is not a compensation scheme.

Financial assistance to businesses and producers under the NDRRA is broken into three categories:

1. Category B (assistance to business, primary producers and non-profit organisations, government and the community). Eligibility for this assistance is made available by NDRRA activation. Activation is for local government areas and is based on an assessment of need by the Queensland Government with information sourced through the control group, regional staff, disaster management groups and local government. Category B assistance is the standard assistance in response to a natural disaster and it is expected that it should be sufficient assistance to respond to non-severe natural disasters.
 - Freight subsidies for primary producers of up to \$5,000 per property for the movement of materials to assist in recovery (eg emergency fodder, building materials, fuel and water). Available through DEEDI.
 - Standard concessional loans for primary producers of up to \$250,000. Available for activities such as repair work, replanting, restocking and meeting carry-on activities such as essential property operations and paying rent and rates. Available through QRAA
 - Standard concessional loans for small business (less than 20 employees) of up to \$250,000. Available for repairing or replacing damaged plant, equipment, buildings, supplying stock and carry on requirements such as essential property operations and paying rent and rates. Available through QRAA.

Where an individual producer has been disaster impacted however the wider local government area did not suffer significant damage such as to warrant an area activation, the producer can apply to DEEDI for an Individual Disaster Stricken Property (IDSP) declaration. On assessment by DEEDI of the damage to the property an IDSP will enable the producer to apply for loans through QRAA and/or freight subsidies.

2. Category C – Special Disaster Assistance (clean up and recovery grants) to businesses, primary producers, non-profit organisations. Category C grants can be up to \$25,000 (with the limit to be determined at the time of the disaster) and are broken into two levels: Tier 1 (which can provide grant funding without proof of expenditure) and Tier 2 (which will provide grant funding on proof of expenditure). Category C grants are potentially available in response to severe natural disaster where it is determined that standard NDRRA assistance (Category B) will be

insufficient to assist with community recovery from a natural disaster. This determination will be based on input from control groups, regional staff, disaster management groups and local government. Category C recovery grants are not a standard assistance measure and their introduction in response to a disaster requires the written approval of the Prime Minister.

3. Category D - Exceptional Disaster Assistance (relief measure can be tailored to the event). Approval to introduce Category D requires the approval of the Australian Government. Category D will only be introduced when the nature and severity of the event is such that standard assistance under Category B and the special disaster assistance under Category C will be insufficient to assist with recovery. The type of assistance measure that will be available will be designed to fit the event.

Pre-disaster check list

The best way for business to cope with a natural disaster is to have a plan before it strikes. Time and clear thinking are luxuries in an emergency situation, which is why it is so important to be prepared.

Getting business ready for a natural disaster includes such tasks as developing an emergency plan for business, organising proper insurance and training staff in first aid and evacuation procedures.

Have you:

- clearly identified and analysed the possible risks to your business from a natural disaster?
- checked with your local council and become familiar with your community disaster plan, and become aware of the local evacuation centre locations and any preferred routes?
- identified the local information channels and processes for alerts and updates on the natural disaster?
- compiled a list of current emergency phone numbers, including numbers for your local police, fire, ambulance, State Emergency Service, local council, gas and electricity companies, and staff contacts?
- packed laptop and mobile phone(s) with spare batteries and car chargers?

Staff preparedness

Have you:

- consulted with staff about the situation?
- allocated tasks for your staff to prepare the business for the event?
- ensured staff safety by sending them home when necessary?

Stock and equipment

Have you:

- ensured enough stock is on hand to supply your business and/or customers in the critical period after the event eg sufficient fuel for generators/fodder for livestock?
- identified where equipment and vehicles will be relocated or put in place procedures to protect it?
- kept enough spare parts on site to ensure your equipment is operational for some weeks after the event has passed?
- planned for the possibility of an extended power outage, including relocating any perishable stock to an alternative location?
- obtained a generator (if applicable) and sufficiency of fuel supply, if this is to support your business after the event?
- established reciprocal help arrangements with similar businesses in areas that are unlikely to be affected by event damage?

Infrastructure

Have you:

- checked buildings are in a sound condition, especially the roof and eaves?

- trimmed any overhanging branches?
- cleared your property of any loose items that could become missiles during extreme winds e.g. sheet iron or wood?

Business documentation and records

Have you:

- understood your data and identified what data in your business is important? (Data for processing orders and customer records would be considered high importance.)
- backed up your data, identified where your back-ups are located (e.g. on laptops, PCs, servers or off-site) and secured them in a safe place?
- identified and prioritised your computer programs for business success (email, accounting, ordering applications) and secure the media (CDs/DVDs) and licences for these?
- identified what is needed to recover your programs and data (laptops, PCs, servers) and make provisions to commission these? Is network or internet access required?
- located and packed your critical documentation (e.g. insurance, financial, legal and/or identification documents) in a portable waterproof container?

A detailed disaster preparedness checklist for primary industries can be found at:

<http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/documents/Environment/DEEDI-factsheet-Producer-preparedness.pdf>

Generator hire

The availability of generators for hire during natural disasters has been raised as an issue of concern. Generator hire companies were contacted with regards to their generator hire policy during natural disaster. Some companies have a standby rate where utilities can pay a rate to keep a number of generators on standby to access in case of emergencies such as disasters. Should other businesses want to hire these generators the utility will be contacted and asked to release a generator from standby. Other companies have a first in first served basis. Should the need for a generator arise and none are available they can be sourced from elsewhere in Australia.

In addition, the local District Disaster Management Group (DDMG) (see page five for discussion) has the facility to source generators. Once an inquiry is escalated from the Local Disaster Management Group to the DDMG the District Disaster Coordinator (DDC) would then contact Q Build who has the means to source generators of various capabilities. On that basis, there should be little difficulty accessing a generator should the need arise.

Fodder drops

Background

In some instances during and after a natural disaster there may be a need to provide fodder assistance to livestock under welfare stress through lack of feed. Livestock might, for example, be stranded by a flood and require fodder which can only be delivered by air. This is an expensive exercise which, depending on the size and scale of the event, may not always be feasible.

The purpose of this policy is to define the different responsibilities of producers, industry and government with respect to animal welfare in a disaster event, and describe a process for coordinating the provision of fodder should that be necessary.

Key principles

- A) Animal welfare remains the responsibility of the person or persons looking after livestock at a particular time; this will usually be the owners or current managers of the livestock.
- B) In the case of livestock displaced to a different property as a result of a natural disaster, responsibility for the welfare of those livestock is normally that of the owner of the livestock. However, in circumstances where the owner cannot be contacted, the government and industry will determine the appropriate action to address the welfare needs of the animals.
- C) Responsibility for the cost of maintaining livestock generally rests with the owner. The provision of fodder and fodder drops (the fodder itself and aerial transport) is not eligible for standard NDRRA assistance so any such costs are borne by the owner.
- D) Depending on the scale of a natural disaster event, Category C recovery grant funding may be made available and these funds may be used to pay for fodder drops. In rare, exceptional and extreme events where large numbers of livestock are affected and provision of fodder is beyond the resources of the affected community, Category D assistance may include a fodder drop program after negotiation with the Australian Government.
- E) Even if a need is identified, human need for air transport will be a higher priority than the needs of livestock should there be a conflict.
- F) Fodder must comply with conditions established to address harmful contaminants, chemical residue concerns and the spread of weeds, pests and diseases.

Process

1. The requirement for the provision of fodder and/or fodder drops will be determined on a needs basis by DEEDI in collaboration with industry leaders.
2. This need cannot be determined in advance. A decision to conduct a fodder drop operation will be made in liaison with industry and will be based on factors such as scale, severity, location, need and competing priorities for aircraft and fuel.
3. If required, DEEDI will coordinate fodder drops in conjunction with relevant industry groups on a needs basis.
4. Fodder drops will be coordinated at a local level and, should a fodder drop program be judged necessary, the names of relevant DEEDI and industry coordinators will be made available through local media and industry mechanisms.
5. Coordinators will match requests for fodder assistance with available transport and fodder supplies. They will also develop a register of available fodder supplies.