

WHAT TO DO WHEN A NATURAL DISASTER AFFECTS YOUR TOURISM BUSINESS



A natural disaster can affect your tourism business in many ways. Your employees, customers, competitors and the local community may also be affected. Planning and preparing before a natural disaster happens can ensure that your business recovers quickly.

PREPARE

Plan to manage your risk

- » Develop and maintain a Business Continuity Plan and Emergency Response Plan
- » Make contact with your Local Disaster Management Group for updates/advice
- » Maintain an updated list of key emergency contacts
- » Consider what advice you will need to provide your guests (see tourist information flyer)
- » Minimise risk by having a risk management plan
- » Consider adequate insurance (check the fine print!) and a clear cancellation policy.

DID YOU KNOW?

80% OF BUSINESSES THAT DON'T HAVE A CONTINUITY PLAN DON'T SURVIVE MORE THAN 2 YEARS AFTER A MAJOR CRISIS. FOR EVERY DOLLAR INVESTED IN NATURAL DISASTER MITIGATION, THREE DOLLARS IS SAVED IN RECOVERY COSTS.



RESPOND

Put your plans into action

- » Activate your emergency response plan and crisis management team.
- » Contact your Regional Tourism Organisation or local council for advice.
- » Keep informed — tune in to ABC local radio, liaise with emergency services and local council/regional tourism organisation for information and advice.
- » Monitor the situation and local impacts to decide if your business should temporarily close.
- » Activate your crisis communication plan and update your website/social media.
- » Consider evacuating (either voluntarily or by emergency services direction) to a predetermined safe location (usually an evacuation centre or cyclone shelter). Evacuation centres are a last resort and provide basic amenities.

ACCOUNT FOR EVERYONE

REMEMBER TO KEEP AN UPDATED LOG OF GUESTS STILL IN YOUR CARE TO ENSURE EVERYONE IS ACCOUNTED FOR IN THE EVENT OF AN EVACUATION.



FIRST 24 HOURS

DAYS 2 – 14

- » Consider business impacts, access routes and condition of local attractions and services when deciding to encourage or postpone customers.
- » Update customers, staff and partners — website and social media are crucial, use a consistent script for telephone for and email enquiries, contact suppliers.

RECOVER

Get back to business

- » Activate your business recovery plan.
- » Plan alternative facilities for periods of disruption.
- » Find alternative suppliers for critical supplies or essential services.
- » Identify which markets to target in the short-term.
- » Determine if you are eligible for assistance e.g. government grant, postponement of mortgage payments or negotiating payment terms.

NEW IDEAS

IF PART OF THE REGION HAS BEEN DAMAGED, HAVE IDEAS READY FOR NEW ITINERARIES AND IDENTIFY ALTERNATIVE ENJOYABLE ATTRACTIONS THAT SUIT DIFFERENT MARKETS.



HOW TO HANDLE CANCELLATIONS

One of the greatest challenges when trying to operate a business following a natural disaster is how to manage booking cancellations.

There are a number of options you might consider.

IF A GUEST CANCELS — if a guest cancels a booking or checks out early if you have an accommodation business (and there is no booking condition), you should apply your cancellation policy. However, it is preferable that you talk to the customer to negotiate other arrangements, especially if there is a real threat of an emergency.

IF YOU CANCEL — if you cancel a booking that you have already accepted, you are in breach of a contract and the customer is entitled to claim damages from you to compensate them for any loss.

CONSIDER THE ALTERNATIVES YOU CAN OFFER — resorting to legal process is expensive and time-consuming, so it is better to find an outcome that satisfies both you and your customer. Consider alternatives such as:

- » credit notes
- » transferring the booking to another date
- » transferring the booking to another business in your group or another business in the broader region.

This advice is provided as guidance only. For further information, contact Queensland's Office of Fair Trading www.qld.gov.au/law/fair-trading or 13 QGOV (13 74 68).

WHERE TO FIND MORE HELP

- » For assistance on how to prepare business continuity and emergency plans and other response and recovery materials: **BUSINESS QUEENSLAND** (go to www.business.qld.gov.au and search for "tourism") or Australian Government's 'Don't risk it!' guide (go to www.icrtourism.com.au and search for "Don't Risk it for Tourism Businesses").
- » For information on how to prepare for different types of natural disasters, including checklists for evacuation and emergency kits: **GET READY QUEENSLAND** (go to <https://getready.qld.gov.au/homepage>)
- » For weather warnings and emergency alerts: **BUREAU OF METEOROLOGY** (go to www.bom.gov.au) and Queensland Government alerts (go to www.qld.gov.au and search for "alerts").
- » For road conditions and closures: **RACQ** (go to www.racq.com.au) or **QLDTRAFFIC** (go to www.qldtraffic.qld.gov.au)
- » For recovery assistance: **NATURAL DISASTER RELIEF AND RECOVERY ARRANGEMENTS** (go to www.disasterassist.gov.au) or **BUSINESS QUEENSLAND'S GRANTS AND ASSISTANCE FINDER** (go to www.grants-and-assistance.services.qld.gov.au)
- » For translating and interpreting: **TRANSLATING AND INTERPRETING SERVICE** (go to www.tisnational.gov.au) or call 131 450
- » For advice and support if your business has been forced to close or reduce operations: **CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY QUEENSLAND** (go to www.cciq.com.au) or call 1300 731 988
- » The **AUSTRALIAN TAXATION OFFICE** have a dedicated hotline you can call for assistance in getting your tax back on track when the immediate emergency has passed. Call 1800 806 218, or find out more at www.ato.qld.gov.au/naturaldisasters

