

Appendix 10 - Townsville

Extreme Weather Event Contingency Plan
2025-2026



Queensland
Government

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Document history

Date	Version	Comments
September 2023	1	Original
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Townsville

This port-specific plan must be read in conjunction with the full Extreme Weather Event Contingency Plan document available on the MSQ webpage <https://www.msq.qld.gov.au/safety/preparing-for-severe-weather/extreme-weather-contingency-plans>.

Extreme Weather Event

The hazards covered under this plan include CYCLONE and FLOOD. One or more hazards may occur simultaneously.

Advice – Yellow



Destructive Winds, Swell, Rain or Riverine Flooding Forecast Within 24-48 Hours

Masters and owners are to **Prepare Now** for potential destructive winds, swell, rain or riverine flooding forecast within 24-48 hours.

Masters and owners should **Monitor Conditions** and **Stay Informed**, monitoring the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM), Local Government website, MSQ dashboard, VHF channel 12 and where possible consider implementing their extreme weather contingency plans.

It is better to secure your vessels early as you may not be able to attend to it later.

BE AWARE of flood waters. River conditions can change rapidly and with little notification.

Townsville Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) will broadcast the advice, information and directions on VHF channel 12 and 16 as appropriate. Vessels should monitor VHF channel 12 and 16 for updates.

Review and enact severe weather procedures for the relevant type of event.

ABC radio will provide updates of BOM warnings.

Large commercial (trade) vessels

- Vessels at anchor must ballast down with engines on standby and be ready to proceed to sea at short notice.
- Vessels alongside may continue to load at the discretion of the Regional Harbour Master but must be ready in all aspects to depart at short notice.
- All marine services (tugs, lines crew, and so on) are to be available at short notice.
- The Harbour Master may commence directing ships to leave the port.
- Vessels are not permitted to enter the pilotage area without the approval of the Regional Harbour Master – approval may be given if fully satisfied that the ship can safely conduct operations and depart before cyclonic conditions affect the pilotage area.

Small commercial, domestic commercial and recreational vessels

- Vessel masters and owners on moorings should be aware of apparatus integrity.
- Mooring lines are to be doubled with secondary lines to alternative cleats.
- Have sufficient line to secure your vessel and position spare fenders and lines.
- Ensure ropes and other synthetic fibres are in good order and are suitable for the vessel.
- Check boat cleats for integrity, ensure lines are made fast to substantial boat parts, for example mast steps, winches and so on, bearing in mind cleats are known to have been torn out of decks.
 - Remove all sails, furling sails, awnings and items of high windage and stow securely.
- Dinghies/tenders to be inverted on deck to prevent filling with water and securely lashed.
- Ensure that all scuppers and freeing ports are clear and will remain clear.
- Confirm that all bilge pumps are operational.
- Secure all hatches.
- Reduce wind loading to a minimum and stow all loose gear below.
- Shore power and water leads are to be disconnected.
- Keep storm anchors and spare warps ready at hand but well secured to prevent them creating a potential hazard such as fouling propellers in the event you must move the vessel.
- Make sure you comply with all directions issued by the Regional Harbour Master or his/her delegates; and
 - Listen to and monitor radio broadcasts/ other media outlets and Local Government websites for updates on conditions and advice warnings.
- If your vessel is a trailable vessel and your plan requires it to be out of the water, this period is the time to act.

Vessels are to comply with routine vessel traffic management procedures unless otherwise authorised by the Regional Harbour Master.

Watch and Act – Orange



Destructive Winds, Swell, Rain or Riverine Flooding Forecast Within 12-24 Hours

Leave/evacuate Now – If your extreme weather event plans requires that you to relocate within the local area or depart for sea.

Monitor conditions as they are changing – Regularly checking the BOM, Local Government websites as well as maintaining a listening watch on VHF channel 12 or 16 where appropriate.

Do not enter flood waters – This includes by vessel such as passive craft, tender or small craft.

Townsville VTS will broadcast the advice, information and directions on VHF channel 12 and 16 as appropriate. Vessels should monitor VHF channel 12 and 16 for updates.

Enact severe weather procedures for the particular event, for example; cyclone, flood.

ABC radio will provide updates of BOM warnings.

Large commercial (trade) vessels

- All large commercial vessels, underway in the vicinity of the port will be directed away.
- All large commercial vessels at anchor, will likely be directed to proceed to sea.
- All marine services are to be mobilised to assist clearing the pilotage area;
 - Ships alongside will be scheduled to depart as soon as marine services are available (if conditions deteriorate rapidly, it may be necessary to depart without normal marine services to minimise the risk associated with remaining in port, as approved by the Regional Harbour Master).
- VTS will coordinate the safe and orderly evacuation of the pilotage area and commercial port.

- Ships are to report on Channel 12 when clearing the pilotage area; and
- Ship masters must determine their own course of action to avoid the cyclone once clear of the pilotage area – no direction or recommendation will be made with regards to cyclone avoidance or the safe navigation or operation of the vessel.
- Harbour Tugs and port operation vessel will enact their contingency plan once the last Trade vessel has departed.

Small, commercial, domestic commercial vessels and recreational vessels

- Small commercial vessels will enact their plan and proceed to their storm moorings.
- All vessels in a marina should by now be securely moored with additional lines.
- All other boats should be relocated to their nominated cyclone mooring in accordance with their plan; and
- Some commercial vessels (ferries, tugs and so on) and facilities will receive specific advice and instructions through direct messaging from the Regional Harbour Master.
 - Some activities will be suspended, and restrictions may be placed on the movements of other vessels. This may include directed evacuations, instructions to remain and shelter in place or instructions not to enter flood waters.
- Listen to radio broadcasts, monitor the Council websites and check weather forecasts to evaluate weather conditions and determine evacuation plans on the advice given.

Note: At this stage MSQ may be making preparations to transfer operations as per MSQ's contingency plan.

Emergency Warning - Red



Destructive Winds, Swell or Riverine Flooding Forecast Within 6 Hours

Seek/take shelter now - Your actions should be directed towards your own personal safety.

Mariners should understand that may be too late to consider the safety of your vessel, noting that the port may be closed and/or vessel movements restricted depending on the threat to safety of vessel movements. **Extreme weather**

conditions may limit the ability of emergency services to assist you should you run into difficulties.

Flying debris may be a major danger to any persons on vessels and mariners are advised to stay indoors.

- Townsville Region will declare a Red Emergency Warning when an extreme weather event is issued by BOM.
 - The Red Emergency Warning will be communicated through an appropriate combination of VHF radio warning messages or Notices to Mariners or/and media releases. Stay informed by monitoring weather updates from BOM and local government authority.
- This means all vessels should have enacted their safety plans and should be secured in place.
- Mariners should maintain a listening watch on VHF frequencies 12 and 16, for updates on port status.
- MSQ operations delivered from Townsville may be suspended. Some essential services will be delivered from other VTS centres.

Port Closed

- The Regional Harbour Master may effectively close the port, wholly or in part, by giving general or particular direction to restrict the:
 - Entering or leaving of vessels in or out of a pilotage area; and/or movement of vessels in the Pilotage area. Such direction will be appropriate with the threat to the safety of shipping or the environment and may occur at any time prior to the extreme weather event but it is most likely to occur 6 hours prior.
 - The closure of the port or restriction on vessel movements will, as far as practical, be implemented in consultation with key authorities and in a timely manner to minimise risks.
- Vessels are not to leave their cyclone moorings or designated areas until the official all clear is given by the Regional Harbour Master. Only movements of a critical emergency nature will be permitted during a Red Alert.
- All vessels are expected to have enacted their vessel safety plans noting that the port is closed and/or vessel movements restricted commensurate with the threat to safety or the environment.
- Mariners should maintain a listening watch on VHF channels 12 and 16 and follow advice/directions given by VTS.

Be aware of the period of relative calm that may be experienced during the passing of the 'eye' of the cyclone, before the winds resume from the opposite direction.

Advice – Yellow

After The Event Has Passed, Recovery Underway

Monitor conditions as they are changing – Regularly checking the BOM, Local Government websites, MSQ website/dashboard as well as maintaining a listening watch on VHF channel 12/16 where appropriate.

Do not enter flood waters – This includes by vessel such as passive craft, tender or small craft.

- The Regional Harbour Master will assess residual risks and determine which actions need to be addressed. Do not assume that as the extreme weather event has passed it is safe to move your vessel.
- Vessels, commercial and recreational, are not to leave their cyclone moorings or designated areas until the official all clear is given by the Regional Harbour Master.
- Owners and masters of vessels should be aware that aids to navigation may be affected by the extreme weather event and that other dangers may be present in waterways.
- Mariners should maintain a listening watch on VHF frequencies 16 and 12 and follow advice/directions given by VTS.
- Resumption of vessel movements will be at the RHM's discretion and can be in stages including limited Internal Port movements until the Channel or areas within the Port are deemed safe.
- Mariners are to consult the latest Notices to Mariners for updated information on Port depths, and conditions.
- Maritime infrastructure will need to be inspected to ensure that facilities are operational and fit for purpose.

All clear – White

Port open to all traffic, business as usual

A pilotage area may be re-opened by the Regional Harbour Master following direction to allow the entering or leaving of ships in and out of a pilotage area, or movement of vessels within a pilotage area. Such direction will be provided:

- When satisfied that all danger has passed, and the pilotage area is safe for vessels to re-enter or leave; and
- Following inspections and surveys to critical maritime infrastructure (for example navigational aids and wharves) as well as clearance of navigational hazards.

The VTS centre will coordinate the safe movement of vessels following the opening of the pilotage area in accordance with normal practice. Berths will be re-opened, and operations resumed when wind and sea conditions are within operational limits.

Masters are reminded that vessels must proceed at a safe speed to the prevailing circumstances of information and directions.

Owners and masters should inspect their vessel for any repairs or maintenance required and review their emergency preparedness plans.

Mariners are reminded to exercise caution, check broadcasts, warnings and Notices to Mariners as all navigational aids may not be restored and depths may have changed.

Communication

The successful implementation of this plan relies on high quality communication of information and directions.

VTS will implement the extreme weather event contingency plan on behalf of the Regional Harbour Master by acting as the central communications point.

"Townsville VTS" is the call sign for this service and monitors VHF channels **16, 12 and 13** until the port is on Red – Emergency warning or earlier if determined by the Regional Harbour Master it is no longer safe to maintain the station. Any warnings and directions will be issued on these channels.

If the plan requires actions such as port evacuation, closure of a port area and/or the movement of vessels to safer moorings, these actions will be communicated by the Townsville VTS and enforced by Regulatory Maritime Authorities.

Registration with the Early Warning Network on your local government website (if available) is recommended to receive severe weather advice.

The MSQ Extreme Weather Dashboard will be available for access by the public. The Dashboard provides information on alert levels throughout the state.

Identify and stay tuned and connected to local credible sources of information, as the BOM advises the Disaster Management Coordination Groups so that the local council and radio media outlets can advise current updates as they occur.

Updates on weather forecasts and conditions in your local vicinity may be broadcast by Marine Rescue Queensland, Volunteer Marine Rescue or the Coastguard, depending on your location. Please take the time to find out which organisation is operating in your area.

Key Contacts

Name	Contact Number
Regional Harbour Master	61 7 4421 0100
Townsville VTS	1300 721 263
Townsville VTS	VHF Ch 12 or 16

Key Websites

Name	URL
Detailed weather updates: BOM	www.bom.gov.au
MSQ Website	www.msq.qld.gov.au
MSQ Dashboard – detailed information on Port closures, Notice to Mariners, Tide Charts and more.	https://www.qldmaritime.msq.qld.gov.au