



Mitigating flood damage risks.

Floods are an unfortunate part of life for many people and businesses in Australia and the devastation they cause can be catastrophic. Sadly, the recovery from flood damage is often not as quick as people would hope and this can have significant consequences for businesses.

We can't prevent a flood from occurring, but we can take steps to reduce the impact of a flood. The tips below will assist business owners and their staff be better prepared for a flood and better able to prevent or reduce impacts to the business. They'll help you get back on your feet and trading again sooner.

For the purpose of this article, the definition of Flood is as per your Product Disclosure Statement (PDS), which is:

Flood means the covering of normally dry land by water that has escaped or been released from the normal confines of any of the following:

- a. a lake (whether or not it has been altered or modified);
- b. a river (whether or not it has been altered or modified);
- c. a creek (whether or not it has been altered or modified);
- d. another natural watercourse (whether or not it has been altered or modified);
- e. a reservoir;
- f. a canal; or
- g. a dam.

Pre-flood planning

- > Make yourself aware of the flood rating and likelihood for the location you're in. If new to an area, engage with others who live and work there to understand the flood history of that area.
- > When fitting out your business, consider using materials which are less susceptible to damage when wet, therefore limiting the potential need for replacement after a flood. If you're part of a larger organisation and don't have complete ownership or control over the fit out of your business, have a conversation with your organisation to raise their awareness of this need. This isn't always obvious to those who live outside of flood risk areas.
- > Have an evacuation plan and ensure all staff are familiar with this. It should include details on the likely warning timeframes and cover not just leaving the premises, but also the area if people need to move to higher ground. Again, engage with others in the area to assist in creating a safe plan.
- > Have a plan for moving stock, electronic equipment, and other moveable equipment and furniture where possible. This might be to a higher level of the building or to another premises/location less likely to be impacted by flooding.
- > Have a plan for sandbagging both outside the premises as well as inside over floor drains and toilets. There are sand-free sandbags available which are worth considering.
- > Prepare an emergency kit that allows access to important information, equipment or tools. There'll be occasions where the damage to a building is so great that it can't be safely entered. Therefore, business owners must consider what they'll need to access to both deal with the damage caused (such as insurance details and an asset register) and maintain business operations as much as is possible.
- > Have your data and any business information which is stored electronically backed up in a way that can be accessed off site. This is important if the premises can't be accessed or if information has been lost due to power shortages. Alternatively, consider cloud hosted storage solutions to protect your data.
- > Ensure your business' asset register is up to date. A detailed asset register means the process of an insurance claim is much faster and hassle free.
- > Discuss insurance cover, including business interruption, and its cost with your Guild Insurance Account Manager or insurance adviser and ensure you understand the financial protection afforded to you in the event of a flood.

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- > Have a maintenance program in place so your building and fit out is in an ideal condition. A building which has been allowed to deteriorate or has been poorly maintained may suffer more damage during a flood.
- > If there are maintenance issues with your building and you lease the premises, engage with your landlord as soon as possible to discuss a plan and the necessary action.
- > Develop a business continuity plan that will detail how you'll manage your customer needs as well as your business and financial needs immediately after a catastrophic event. Thinking about this before an event can make the immediate impact and stress more manageable.
- > Given there'll likely be high demand for many services and trades, it would be wise to create a list of local services before there's an urgent need. Utilise the knowledge of your local real estate agents; they can be a great support for putting you in touch with local trades and services.

Planning when a flood is imminent

- > Don't be complacent when there are flood warnings. Floods not only cause significant damage to buildings and other material possessions, but sadly they can lead to loss of life. Listen to all local advice and ensure you don't delay implementing your flood preparation plan in a safe way, given time available before floodwaters are forecast to inundate your property.
- > Have a plan for where and how you'll access local and current advice when a flood is approaching, to be sure you can make the most appropriate decisions regarding when to move furniture and equipment and when to evacuate.
- > When there are warnings that a flood appears likely, bring inside any outdoor furniture, equipment or other items where possible. This not only prevents them from being damaged by heavy rain and rising water levels, but also stops them from being washed away.
- > When evacuating a building due to a flood, where possible turn off the gas and electricity supply. Be sure you know how to do this ahead of time.

Post-flood response

- > Contact your Guild Insurance Account Manager or insurance adviser as soon as is possible to notify them of the event and any losses suffered.
- > If you begin the clean-up yourself and wish to dispose of any damaged and unsalvageable items, ensure you take a photo of these items first, and keep a list of what's been thrown out, to assist with your insurance claim.
- > If you aren't fully insured and are therefore managing aspects of the clean up and recovery yourself, it's advisable to begin by prioritising what needs to be done and determining how you'll do this and whose assistance you'll need. There are restoration services available that can assist with this.
- > Following natural disasters, there's often government support available to assist in the recovery. Be sure to stay up to date on what's available from your local, state and federal governments.



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