Cyclone contingency plans should be in place

Government of Western Australia
Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety

WorkSafe Division

MEDIA RELEASE

With the season's first cyclone having formed off the North-West coast, businesses throughout the State have been reminded to ensure that contingency plans have been established and are in operation.

WorkSafe WA Director Chris Kirwin said today it was crucial that everyone on both sea and land knew what to do when there was a cyclone in the area.

"Under workplace safety and health laws, employers must have adequate plans in place and provide adequate training to protect workers in the event of a cyclone," Mr Kirwin said.

"The Bureau of Meteorology has forecast a slightly lower than average number of tropical cyclones in the waters off the North-West coast this season.

"The average number of cyclones that approach the WA coast each year is 10 to 13, but it only takes one to cause significant damage and suffering, as demonstrated by the tragic circumstances surrounding Cyclone George in 2007.

"It's extremely important that everyone in a workplace – regardless of their employer - knows exactly what he or she needs to do in the event of a cyclone threat. This is particularly important on sites with employees of several companies where coordinated plans must be in place."

Fishing vessels need to keep a list of sheltered anchorages and have information on how to use them, along with a specific action plan for each vessel depending on the distance from the cyclone and safe havens.

For the fishing, charter and recreational sectors, the Department of Transport has cyclone contingency plans for regional boat harbours at Point Samson (Johns Creek), Onslow (Beadon Creek), Exmouth, Carnarvon, Coral Bay and Denham.

"Employers should not leave anything to chance when a cyclone is threatening, and must make sure safe work practices are in place well before a cyclone is in their vicinity," Mr Kirwin said.

"Whether the workplace is a fishing vessel or in a land-based location, everyone should be trained in the cyclone contingency plan and follow all instructions given when a cyclone is approaching."

Further information on cyclone contingency plans can be obtained by telephoning WorkSafe on 1300 307877 or on the website at www.worksafe.wa.gov.au. Information on Department of Transport plans can be obtained by telephoning 131156 or on the website at https://www.transport.wa.gov.au/imarine/boating-emergencies-and-incidents.asp.

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