

# Queensland Tsunami Notification Guidelines

*Disaster Management Act 2003*





## Queensland Tsunami Notification Guidelines

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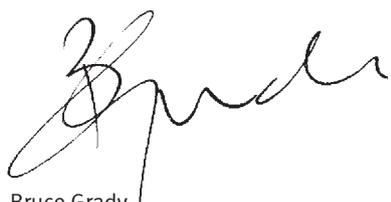
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# Queensland Tsunami Notification Guidelines

## Authorisation

The Queensland Tsunami Notification Guidelines have been developed by Emergency Management Queensland, Department of Community Safety, in accordance with s. 63 of the *Disaster Management Act 2003*.

The Queensland Tsunami Notification Guidelines are hereby authorised by the Assistant Director-General, Emergency Management Queensland.



Bruce Grady  
Assistant Director-General  
Emergency Management Queensland

Date:

## Endorsement

A tsunami, meaning “harbour wave” in Japanese, is a series of waves caused by large-scale disturbances of the ocean. Recent years have demonstrated that they are a serious threat to communities. The 2004 Indian Ocean and the 2011 Japanese tsunamis were among the deadliest natural disasters in human history and some of the biggest natural disasters in modern history.

Australia is surrounded by approximately 8,000 kilometres of active tectonic plate boundaries capable of generating a tsunami. One-third of earthquakes worldwide occur along these boundaries. The impact of a tsunami on vulnerable, low lying areas on the Australian coast could cause a significant disaster.

The Queensland Tsunami Notification Guidelines outline the national approach to tsunami warning products and Queensland’s responsibilities in relation to the notification process for tsunami warning products at State, district and local government levels. Furthermore, it provides agencies with guidance in the development of internal strategies and processes for the management of a tsunami warning that requires a coordinated approach across Queensland.

The Queensland Tsunami Notification Guidelines are hereby endorsed by the State Disaster Management Group.

Chair  
State Disaster Management Group

Date:

## Aim

The aim of these Guidelines is to provide guidance regarding the roles of government and non-government agencies and other organisations in planning for and disseminating tsunami warning products to vulnerable communities.

## Acknowledgements

The assistance and cooperation of officers of Emergency Management Queensland (EMQ), the Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, Queensland Police Service, State Disaster Coordination Group member agencies and local government representatives who contributed to the development of these Guidelines is appreciated.

## Amendments

Proposals for amendment or addition to the contents of these Guidelines are to be forwarded to:

Assistant Director-General  
Emergency Management Queensland  
Department of Community Safety  
Attn: Disaster Management Standards Branch

Postal Address:	GPO Box 1425 BRISBANE QLD 4001
Physical Address:	Emergency Services Complex 125 Kedron Park Rd KEDRON QLD 4031

Version control of these Guidelines is managed by the EMQ Disaster Management Standards Branch. Reissue of these Guidelines following amendment or review will be recorded in the table below and advice of reissue will be distributed throughout the disaster management network. Recipients should take all appropriate action to ensure they are in possession of the most recent version, and that previous versions in both hard copy and electronic forms are archived accordingly. Further information can be requested by contacting the EMQ Disaster Management Standards Branch.

Version	Amendment	SDMG Endorsement Date

## Review Date

The Assistant Director-General, EMQ, Department of Community Safety is to ensure that this guideline is reviewed at least every three years, following significant events or as required.

# Queensland Tsunami Notification Guidelines

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## 1 Background

The *Disaster Management Act 2003* (the Act) directs the State Disaster Management Group (SDMG) to prepare a plan for disaster management for the State.<sup>1</sup> The plan is to include provision for, inter alia, the roles and responsibilities of entities involved in disaster operations and disaster management for the State.<sup>2</sup>

On 2 April 2007, Australia was alerted to a tsunami threat from an earthquake off the Solomon Islands by the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) under equipment and protocols developed as part of the Australian Tsunami Warning System project. Although the wave that subsequently reached the Queensland coast posed negligible risk, the warning caused several anxious hours for the Queensland community.

In October 2008, the BoM implemented the final stage of its warning system. Following analysis of this new approach the Queensland Tsunami Notification Protocol was developed and issued in 2009.

In November 2010, the Queensland Tsunami Notification Protocol was updated to reflect the outcomes of the review of Queensland's disaster management legislation and policy conducted in 2009, including amendments to the Act and agreed policy changes to the Queensland disaster management arrangements. The most significant amendment was the change of the title to 'Guidelines', to provide the document with the authority of s.63 of the Act, and refinements to the dissemination of warnings at the district level.

This 2012 version clarifies the process of notifying local governments and reflects machinery of government changes.

## 2 Scope

These Guidelines indicate the responsibilities of government and non-government agencies, and other organisations for disseminating warning products. They do not address response issues subsequent to those warning products; this detail is to be found in respective disaster management plans.

## 3 Australian Tsunami Warning Authority

The Joint Australian Tsunami Warning Centre (JATWC), operated by the BoM and GeoScience Australia, is the issuing authority for tsunami warning products for Australia. All warning information is publicly accessible through the BoM website ([www.bom.gov.au/tsunami](http://www.bom.gov.au/tsunami)).

**Note that information and warnings released by other International Tsunami Warning Centres such as the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center and Japan Meteorological Agency should not be relied upon or referenced as the information is not applicable to the Australian coastline.**

<sup>1</sup> *Disaster Management Act 2003*, Sections 18 (f) and 49 (1)

<sup>2</sup> *Disaster Management Act 2003*, Section 49 (2) (b)

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## 4 Warning Products

A description of the JATWC warning product suite issued is listed below:

- **National No Threat Bulletin:** To advise people that the earthquake has been assessed and that no tsunami threat exists to Australia or its Territories.
- **National or State / Territory Watch:** To advise people that a tsunami threat to Australia or its Territories may exist and that they should look out for further updates.
- **State / Territory Warning:** To advise people that a tsunami threat to their State / Territory does exist and to advise them of the level of threat (marine or land) and action they should take.
- **Tsunami Watch or Warning Cancellation:** to advise when the main threat to Australia and its Territories has passed or a tsunami fails to eventuate.
- **National Warning Summary:** To provide the public, media and emergency authorities with the status of tsunami warnings nationally.
- **Event Summary:** To provide the public, media, emergency authorities and government with summary information that can be used in post-event analysis.

JATWC will make these available:

- through the BoM website ([www.bom.gov.au/tsunami](http://www.bom.gov.au/tsunami)) and through the 1300 TSUNAMI automated recording number; and
- directly by email and / or fax through the BoM to media outlets (for broadcast), and State government departments, local government, other Australian Government agencies and other key recipients (including Queensland Police Service (QPS)).

In addition, the JATWC will notify the BoM's Queensland Regional Office by telephone before issuing a tsunami warning. The BoM's Queensland Regional Office will in turn confirm receipt of warning products by the State Disaster Coordination Centre (SDCC) by telephone call.

While not responsible for passing warning products to the public, the Department of Community Safety (Emergency Management Queensland (EMQ)) is responsible for ensuring that warning products are passed on to specified entities<sup>3</sup>, and that the arrangements are in place to ensure the community is aware of the meaning of the warning products and the accompanying safety messages.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix A

### 5 Principles

- a) **Redundancy of communication channels.** Redundancy in communication channels for passing tsunami warning products to organisations and the community is highly desirable and underpins these Guidelines. Broadcast media provides one element of this redundancy. Government agencies at State, district and local levels provide the other.
- b) **Timeliness for action and communication.** These Guidelines are based on the assumption of a minimum of 90 minutes warning of a tsunami's arrival in accordance with JATWC protocols. Activities during this period, therefore, may occur concurrently, and warnings must be passed on rapidly.
- c) **Staged approach to information dissemination.** Some warning products can include detailed information regarding locations and the level of threat. Due to technological constraints, it may not be possible to immediately disseminate complete warning products containing all information. In order to avoid any possible misunderstandings arising from paraphrasing when passing on messages the SDCC and other agencies with dissemination responsibilities are to use the following abbreviated message format:  
  
**'The Bureau of Meteorology has issued a tsunami no threat bulletin / watch / updated watch / warning / updated warning / cancellation / summary\* for parts of Queensland. Please call 1300 TSUNAMI, that is 1300 8786 264, or log on to [www.bom.gov.au/tsunami](http://www.bom.gov.au/tsunami) for the full text of the message'**
- d) **Sources of reliable information.** Reliable information regarding any tsunami threat is essential for organisations and members of the community. Reliable sources of information in Queensland regarding tsunami warning products are:
  - JATWC website, [www.bom.gov.au/tsunami](http://www.bom.gov.au/tsunami)
  - 1300 TSUNAMI (1300 878 6264)
- e) **Facility plans for action.** Under these Guidelines, any facility where large groups of people congregate (including, but not limited to: shopping centres, auditoriums, or hospitals) in vulnerable areas should have, and practise, a tsunami plan for the receipt of warning products and subsequent actions as advised by local government. Tsunami warning communication and response plans should be integrated with other site / facility emergency response and evacuation protocols. Annual reviews of disaster management plans at local, district and State levels should assess these tsunami plans.
- f) **Use of assets outside risk areas.** Agencies should consider using assets, facilities and resources NOT at risk, and OUTSIDE any potential threatened area, to assist in the passage of warning messages.
- g) **Shared responsibility, clear arrangements and mutual understanding.** All agencies shown in these Guidelines share responsibility for passing on warning products to their communities of interest. They must know what actions others covered by these Guidelines are taking to avoid repetition and confusion during the transmission of warning products. This requires individual agencies to identify, within their area of responsibility, those facilities, organisations or hubs where provision of warning products is in the public interest, and how such warning products will be provided. Those agencies should inform others at local, district and State coordination centres of what will be done, and when.

Agencies should record their arrangements in site / facility emergency response and evacuation plans or disaster management plans (as applicable), and share them with other stakeholders at the relevant level. Annual reviews of disaster management plans at local, district and state levels should assess these plans.

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## 6 Responsibilities

### 6.1. Australian Government

These Guidelines are based on Australian Government authorities undertaking the following:

- issuing tsunami warning products from the JATWC;
- ensuring signage and other aspects of the warning system are common across Australia;
- being responsible for the transmission of warning products from JATWC to Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) for onward passage to larger ships;
- being responsible for the transmission of warning products from JATWC to the Australian Government's Crisis Coordination Centre;
- being responsible for the transmission of warning products from JATWC to Airservices Australia for onward passage to commercial aircraft approaching affected airports; and
- being responsible for the transmission of warning products to any other Australian Government agencies in at-risk areas within Queensland, including Defence establishments.

The BoM's Queensland Regional Office will arrange transmission of warning products pertaining to Queensland to other agencies. The BoM will directly transmit warning products free of charge via email or fax<sup>4</sup> to:

- Broadcast Media;
- The SDCC;
- State Government departments / authorities / agencies, local governments, and other Australian Government agencies, including port and airport authorities, on request; and
- Any other public interest agencies, on request.

On request, the BoM will make warning products available to other private or commercial bodies or agencies under cost recovery arrangements.

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix A

## 6.2. State Government

### *Planning phase*

- a) To avoid repetition and confusion during the transmission of warning products, each SDMG member agency is responsible for informing appropriate District Disaster Coordinators (DDCs) of the outlets, clients and contact points that will be contacted by that member agency in the event of a tsunami warning. Note: this information may be provided to DDCs by State Disaster Management Group (SDMG) member agency representatives on District Disaster Management Groups (DDMGs) or under other arrangements as appropriate.
- b) The SDCC is able to send Emergency Alert messages to zones at risk from tsunami, and can store geographic information provided by local governments to send messages to pre-established at-risk areas. However, the ability to send large numbers of messages in a state-wide or national event such as a tsunami warning is constrained by the system's capacity limits. Emergency Alerts should not be relied on by local government as the sole method of passing tsunami warnings. Further information is contained in the Queensland Emergency Alert Guidelines, available at [www.disaster.qld.gov.au](http://www.disaster.qld.gov.au).

### *During an event*

- a) The SDCC will disseminate tsunami warning products directly to State Disaster Coordination Group (SDCG) contact officers, SDMG members, EMQ regional staff, DDCs, and relevant local government contacts. The decision to supplement any JATWC warning product for Queensland is initiated at state level by duty staff at the SDCC.
- b) Queensland government agencies have particular responsibilities for passing on warning products to those within their areas of responsibility as outlined in Appendix A.

## 6.3. District Disaster Management Groups

### *Planning phase*

- a) DDMGs in conjunction with EMQ have the responsibility for reviewing and assessing district and local disaster management plans, encompassing the receipt and onward passage of tsunami warning products where appropriate to district and area risk profiles.
- b) To avoid repetition and confusion during the transmission of warning products, DDCs are responsible for ensuring that local government are notified of those outlets, clients and contact points within local government areas that will be contacted by the state agencies in the event of a tsunami warning.
- c) The planning phase includes close cooperation between the DDMG and local government agencies through formal arrangements, including routine DDMG meetings, and informal networks.

### *During an event*

- a) All vulnerable Local Disaster Management Groups (LDMGs) should be registered to receive tsunami warning messages from BoM and the SDCC.
- b) The DDC is responsible for contacting vulnerable LDMGs within the district in accordance with the district protocols to ensure the LDMG have received disseminated warnings. DDMG members will be notified via local arrangements, and the DDMG member is responsible for ensuring that their agency is advised of the warning.
- c) EMQ Regional Offices will confirm the receipt of disseminated warnings by vulnerable LDMGs. This is a supplementary message to those provided by the BoM and the DDC.

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## 6.4. Local Government

### *Planning phase*

Local government should take a risk-based and collaborative approach to the development of plans, warning systems and contact lists. This approach should identify those elements within the community vulnerable to a tsunami threat, take account of complementary existing tsunami warning systems operated by agencies within their boundaries, and encourage community resilience by advocating for the community and businesses to make their own arrangements for the receipt of warnings. This approach should define the responsibilities of local government itself and appropriate methods of delivering on these responsibilities.

Local governments should, where appropriate, ensure they are registered to receive tsunami warning products from the BoM and the SDCC.

### *During an event*

Local governments should carry out their responsibilities defined in the planning phase. It is anticipated that these may include responsibility for ensuring warning products are passed on to:

- a) local government outlets;
- b) LDMGs;
- c) local government managed facilities and camp sites; and
- d) other vulnerable land and marine based elements of the community.

Local plans should contain a communications strategy with pre-scripted messages based on established JATWC messages to be delivered by identified local leaders, usually the Mayor or other designated LDMG representative.



### 7 Passing Messages To The Public

- a) Broadcast media will carry messages distributed directly by the JATWC. Radio and television broadcasts may be preceded by the Standard Emergency Warning Signal (SEWS) if authorised by the BoM. Local broadcast media may be used to carry messages tailored by LDMGs to their local communities.
- b) Telephone is the most appropriate alert, particularly at night. The use of local or agency mass phone dialling message systems for alerting should be used, commensurate with the risk.
- c) An effective way to pass warning products, particularly to those on the immediate coastline, may be by siren. Local government may choose to use this option - based on a risk assessment of their local area.
- d) Use of radio, public address systems, and variable messaging signs should be used, as appropriate.
- e) In remote northern coastal locations the Cairns School of Distance Education may have potential, albeit limited, to pass on messages to their service recipients.
- f) Further considerations for public information and warnings are contained in the Department of Community Safety publication 'Queensland Local Disaster Management Guidelines' available at [www.disaster.qld.gov.au](http://www.disaster.qld.gov.au).

### 8 Maintaining And Testing Response Arrangements

- a) The BoM, the SDCC, and other agencies with responsibilities for the transmission of warning products will review and update details of recipients of the warning service quarterly.
- b) The system is to be tested at least annually by agencies involved through the promulgation of 'No Threat' warnings as part of a standard dissemination system to all stakeholders.

# Queensland Tsunami Notification Guidelines

## Abbreviations

ADF	Australian Defence Force
AMSA	Australian Maritime Safety Authority
BoM	Bureau of Meteorology
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
DCCSDS	Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services
DDC	District Disaster Coordinator
DDMG	District Disaster Management Group
DETE	Department of Education, Training and Employment
DEW	Department of Energy and Water Supply
DNPRSR	Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing
DTMR	Department of Transport and Main Roads
EMQ	Emergency Management Queensland
ICA	Insurance Council of Australia
JATWC	Joint Australian Tsunami Warning Centre
LDC	Local Disaster Coordinator
LDMG	Local Disaster Management Group
QH	Queensland Health
QPS	Queensland Police Service
SDCC	State Disaster Coordination Centre
SDCG	State Disaster Coordination Group
SDMG	State Disaster Management Group
SEWS	Standard Emergency Warning Signal
SLSQ	Surf Life Saving Queensland

