

# CYCLONE

THE northern coastal region of Western Australia is one of the most cyclone-prone areas in the world. This region experiences cyclonic winds and associated flooding, high seas and storm surge (which resembles a large, sudden tidal movement).

FESA is the Hazard Management Agency for tropical cyclones that cross the Western Australian coast. This includes responsibility for managing prevention (mitigation), preparedness and response and supporting recovery activities in relation to cyclones. FESA's Operational Services are responsible for development of the [State Tropical Cyclone Emergency Management Plan](#). Volunteer SES and Emergency Service (VES) units have prime responsibility for ensuring coordinated, timely and effective help is provided to communities threatened or impacted by cyclones.

## PREPAREDNESS

### PREPARING FOR THE WET SEASON

The coastal stretch from Exmouth to Broome has the highest incidence of tropical cyclones anywhere in Australia. FESA staff, local government and volunteers work together to prepare northern communities for the wet season and the threat of cyclones and flooding.

Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) and FESA staff conducted a tour of coastal areas in the Mid-West Gascoyne, Pilbara and Kimberley regions in October 2006 and addressed local and district emergency management committees, community members and media outlets in these areas.

Resource workers in the Pilbara region were identified as a key target group this year. A range of strategies to raise awareness were undertaken in partnership with Woodside, Rio Tinto and BHP Billiton, including dissemination of literature in induction packages, mail outs to employees' home addresses and reinforcement of safety messages during worksite meetings.

## RESPONSE

SES volunteers spent an estimated 1,351 hours responding to cyclone-related activities during 2006-07. Three tropical cyclones crossed the Western Australian coast – George, Jacob and Kara. A potential fourth cyclone, Isobel, failed to intensify and crossed the coast as a tropical low storm front.

### NOTABLE INCIDENTS

#### TROPICAL CYCLONE GEORGE – 4 - 15 MARCH 2007

TC George originated off the Queensland, Northern Territory and Kimberley coast as a low level system. As it travelled down the WA coast, the system intensified and crossed east of Port Hedland as a destructive category 5 cyclone.

SES volunteers, career and volunteer FRS firefighters, and FESA staff were involved in a range of activities, including pre impact warnings, coordination of preparedness activities including evacuation and assistance with post impact community recovery operations. Communities in Port Hedland and South Hedland, a number of mine site camps, many Remote Indigenous Communities, and pastoral stations sustained significant impact and damage.

TC George tragically left three fatalities, and numerous injuries as well extensive infrastructure damage and devastating property and environmental loss in its wake.

#### TROPICAL CYCLONE JACOB – 7 - 13 MARCH 2007

Although TC Jacob did not result in any significant wind damage, heavy rain added to rainfall from TC George and caused some concerns in relation to flooding on rivers east of Port Hedland.

## RECOVERY

FESA is responsible for the management of the [Western Australian Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements \(WANDRA\)](#), under which relief measures are provided on behalf of the State Government to assist the recovery of communities whose social, financial and economic well-being has been significantly affected by a natural disaster event.

During 2006-07, FESA proclaimed two cyclone events as eligible natural disasters under the provisions of the Western Australian Natural Disaster Relief Arrangements. These were:

- Flooding resulting from the combination of Tropical Low Isobel and a deep weather front in the Great Southern region.
- Tropical Cyclone George.

In partnership with the Department for Community Development and the Department of Agriculture and Food, FESA managed the provision of assistance to individuals and families, primary producers and local governments affected by these events.

\$2.4 million was provided towards recovery from the floods caused by Tropical Low Isobel. The funding was used to assist with clean up costs and restoration of essential public assets.

A further \$1.15 million was provided to assist with community recovery following Tropical Cyclone George. This funding was used to restore roads and other essential public assets.

### TROPICAL CYCLONE GEORGE – MAJOR INCIDENT REVIEW

A Major Incident Review was conducted following Cyclone George. This is in line with FESA policy and is also a requirement of the State Tropical Cyclone Emergency Management Plan 2004, issued under the authority of the State Emergency Management Committee.

The terms of reference for the review do not include examination of the circumstances of the deaths and injuries of individuals that occurred during Cyclone George. This is the responsibility of the State Coroner and WorkSafe WA.

The review will enable FESA and its volunteer groups to learn from the collective experience to make service enhancements for improved community preparation and response planning.

Responsibility for the review rests with the Professional Standards Directorate of FESA. An independent facilitator was retained to assist in the conduct of stakeholder meetings and to prepare the draft report which is imminent.