

Cyclone Gabrielle Emergency Response & what we learnt at a practical level

What local Hawkes Bay business owners said

"Having an emergency response plan in place is a critical part of workplace safety. It is essential that employers identify potential hazards and have a plan to respond quickly and effectively in the event of an emergency". (Worksafe NZ)

What's all this mean & what really needs to be considered at a practical level?

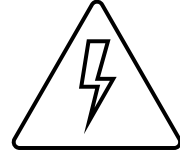
- For years Business Continuity Plans & Emergency Response Plans have been documents created, reviewed & part of a business risk management plan
- The last few years with covid have tested our Business Continuity Plans & now Cyclone Gabrielle has tested our Emergency Response Plans
- **The following information are the immediate things that came to mind when Hawkes Bay business owners talked about Cyclone Gabrielle & what they did, both at home & work** (in no particular order)

Key lessons for both business & home

- Watch the warning signs
- Immediate response
- Communication
- Look after the team & family
- Personal hygiene
- Payroll & receivables
- Generators
- Things you need
- Insurance
- Who can support you
- Work & community hub
- Key information
- Play the long game
- Random thoughts

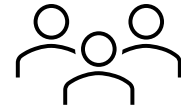
Watch the warning signs

Know your local area, keep an eye on Civil Defence & weather info, be aware of local risk such as rivers/drains that have flooded before, things don't happen at a convenient time. Have pre arranged meeting points for family & business. Consider alternative temporary business locations early. Fill water containers early



Immediate response

Keep yourself & your family safe & let people know you're safe. Have team NOK details & try & check in with everyone. Try & get around & check on your team. Your business can make a difference in the community. Different events require different thinking (flood, cyclone, earthquake, tsunami)



Communication

Needs to be a major focus & continuous (think family, team, clients, community). Look at options such as different cell providers, Star Link, vehicle RTs. Have a battery radio available. Have spare battery packs for cell phones. Don't rely on fibre or having internet, or even cell cover for the 1st few days

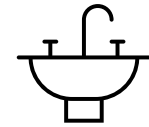


Look after team & family



Think about wider family & community. How can you use your business resources to help others. What immediate support can you give. Let people know you are there to help

Personal hygiene



Watch personal hygiene, food contamination, dirty water, cuts. Try & keep clean. Flush toilets with grey water *(we used swimming pool water – John Hutchinson)*. If you have a bio cycle septic tank, consider what will happen with no power. Bury or remove contaminated meat & food away from the house

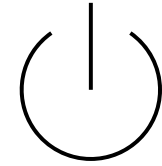
Payroll & receivables



Decide quickly how you will pay the team & communicate with them (remember limited or no internet). Decide how to get invoicing out & pay receivables (keeping the \$ flowing is vital). Communicate issues if you can. Consider who can access bank logins to spread risk

Generators

Decide if you think you'll need one in advance for work or home (if you had no power for 10 days how would you cope). If you have one, make it a community resource. At work, consider if upgrades needed to switchboards to allow large generators to be plugged directly in. Watch running time as fuel is limited. Noisy generators can draw unwanted attention at night. Consider what SCE (safety critical elements) need power. Keep them serviced (fresh fuel, run every couple of mths, new ones run in & run in oil replaced). Petrol or diesel & have fuel available. Decide what to power (keep the use limited – don't waste fuel running every item you normally would)



Things you need

Water for at least 3 days per person & limit use (bottled, tank, rain water, swimming pool (flushing toilets) etc) (It was about 5 days before we had access into town to get fresh water, 3 weeks until water at home & about 10 days for power– for other communities it was a lot longer – John Hutchinson). Fuel for vehicles (always keep filled above half), generators & cooking (spare gas bottle on hand), dry & canned foods (share with the community if you don't need it), hygiene products, baby requirements (nappies, milk powder), headlamps, candles, 1st aid kits, grab bag, batteries, a sense of humour



Insurance

Understand what your policy covers & more importantly doesn't cover, both at a personal & business level



Who can support you & who can you support



It's ok to ask for help & it's ok to feel despondent. Check in with people. Get support from out of region people if able. If able, leverage off your business location to help the wider community. Think how to contact & support people in isolated communities. Keep in touch with people. Keep in touch with suppliers & have a plan if normal suppliers are unable to trade. Be prepared to be frustrated by 'authorities'. Be in touch (if you can) with the bank early if needed

Work & community hub



If you have resources (power, water, internet, food, space) allow work to become a hub, both for business & the wider community. Let people charge devices, contact family. Get some generators / portaloos early if you can. Have a plan to split teams into different locations as required

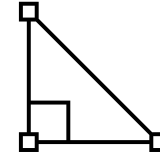
Key info



Be aware of immediate support from banks, insurance companies, regional authorities, civil defence, government. At home, have some cash. Ensure important data is backed up (both personal & business, even though you might not be able to access it immediately) Keep receipts & take pictures of everything (both before & after an event)

Play the long game

It can feel like there is no light at the end of the tunnel (there is). If people offer to help, let them. Life will return to 'normal' at some stage (it just may be a long time). Try not to feel overwhelmed. It may feel like you are forgotten about after the initial response, so keep in touch with people



Random thoughts



If you didn't 'live it' it is hard to relate. Try not to have 'survivor guilt'. Solar power is all good, but you need to be able to store before you use, otherwise it's not too much help. Decide what level of risk you are prepared to take in preparedness. Don't expect external help for a few days at least. Supply chains may be out for extended periods. Consider having bulk water on site (1000 lt tanks). Don't have a 'it will never happen to me' view.

Focus on personal safety. Communicate & communicate. Expect things to be a shambles & the left hand not knowing what the right hand will be doing. Don't rely on rumours. Run a white board if at work with 'known' info. Keep an eye on transport corridors. If you have evacuate from home & can't go back immediately, how will you cope. Who can you call on.

Be aware of theft & looting – it's real. Sitting in the car at news time & listening to the radio is a good time to charge devices. Make sure your business has a working capital buffer. Watch the 'booze' intake

Stay safe, keep in
touch with people
& communicate

Thanks to those that gave their thoughts & first hand experiences

Hopefully this may help you prepare for a similar event

If you'd like any more info give me a buzz or flick me an email today on:

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Pics front & back are of John Hutchinson's property at Whirinaki, Eskdale www.planaconsulting.co.nz