

10 May 2018 Hobart Extreme Weather Event and Flooding An Emergency Management Response

ABSTRACT

KEYWORDS – Hobart, Floods, 2018, Emergency, Response.

Introduction

On Thursday evening, 10 May, an intense low pressure centre and trough developed off the east coast of Tasmania. As a result of these intense weather conditions, the City of Hobart was subject to damaging south-easterly winds with peak gusts of around 100km/h.

A number of City of Hobart crews were placed on standby to respond to any calls for assistance.

At around 10.30pm intense rainfall developed and a large number of calls for assistance were received with flooding reported at numerous locations around Hobart.

The Bureau of Meteorology reported that a record 235mm of rain fell on kunanyi / Mount Wellington in the 24 hours to 9am on Friday smashing the 2012 record of 185mm. Hobart received 129mm of rain which made it the wettest May day on record.

In Hobart, this amount of rainfall equated to less than 1% chance of occurring each year. On Mount Wellington the rain event was rarer than a 0.5% chance of occurring each year. So what Hobart experienced on that night was an extremely rare event.

The City of Hobart's Emergency Management Plan was enacted at approximately 11.00pm with an Emergency Management Coordination Centre and an Operations Centre established.

The City's workforce was engaged and throughout Thursday evening and Friday morning prevented loss of life by closing flood affected roads to motorists. When the rain abated, work began immediately in the early hours of Friday morning to unblock drains and clear debris from roads.

An Evacuation Centre was established which accepted a number of people throughout the following week.

Immediate Impact on the Community

During the storm, between 12,000 and 15,000 homes lost power. The State Emergency Service logged more than 400 calls for assistance, with an additional 110 requests logged by Tasmania Fire Service. The State Emergency Service's analysis of calls for assistance indicates that there were 340 calls for private dwellings, 18 for businesses and 18 regarding infrastructure.

While there were no reports of personal injury to individuals or presentation to hospital directly attributable to the event, many individual stories of psychosocial impact and personal distress have emerged.

Infrastructure Damage

There was significant damage to infrastructure, including:

- Private buildings and structures;
- Public buildings and structures;
- Parks infrastructure;
- Bushland fire trails;
- Waste Management Centres;
- Roads Infrastructure and
- Waterways and Stormwater Infrastructure

In order to identify this damage, the City engaged a team of officers and consultants to undertake a methodical condition and safety inspections of all of its infrastructure.

The City's losses fell into three distinct categories:

- Insurable losses
- Damage to essential public assets
- Damage to non-essential infrastructure

Council officers continue to capture all costs associated with the repair to ensure that a record is kept for future claims from the Federal Government's National Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRRA).

Review

A review of the emergency response and recovery activities were undertaken. A number of opportunities for improvement were identified including establishing cost codes in advance of emergency events, formalising processes to respond to weather warnings and additional training for emergency management staff.

Conclusions

From an emergency response perspective, the City of Hobart's actions that were undertaken were in line with the Council's Emergency Management Plan and were considered to have been very successful from an emergency response perspective.

Notwithstanding this, a number of opportunities for improvement have been identified and will be implemented as necessary.

Geoff Lang,

City of Hobart, Hobart, TAS