

# Frequently Asked Questions

## Special leave: Floods, cyclones, bushfires, and storms

### Overview

During an emergency event, Queensland Health continues to provide essential health services to affected communities. Our workforce are critical to supporting the ongoing response and recovery efforts.

All employees working for Queensland Health are essential to the safe operation of our hospitals and facilities. Essential workers include those in patient facing roles, however clinical support and operational staff are vital to the running of our facilities are also considered essential.

As we prepare for Tropical Cyclone Alfred, which is expected to make landfall in south-east Queensland by 8 March 2025, many of you may be concerned about how it might affect your ability to attend work and fulfill your responsibilities. **The Critical Incident Entitlements and Conditions (Directive 06/16 – the CID) has been activated for Tropical Cyclone Alfred and is effective from 2 March 2025 for a period of 60 days.**

We understand that extreme weather can impact staff availability and attendance. While we are committed to ensuring your safety, we encourage you to assess your own safety and make decisions based on official warnings and local conditions.

When there is a severe weather event, employees and line managers are encouraged to stay up to date with local communications. The safety, and that of your family and your property, is a priority during severe weather events.

These FAQ's outline commonly asked questions relating to leave and other arrangements to support employees when severe weather events happen. Speak with your line manager if you require support, leave, or to discuss alternate work arrangements if you are impacted by severe weather events. Employees and line managers can contact their local HR unit for additional guidance. Employee assistance service (EAS) providers are available to support all Queensland Health employees and their immediate family.

*This document is intended to provide general advice to Queensland Health employees and line managers on employee industrial entitlements during Tropical Cyclone Alfred. Please refer to the relevant Award / Certified Agreement.*

*QAS employees should contact their supervisors for relevant information as required.*

# Frequently asked questions

## 1 Who can apply for special leave?

Employees who are prevented from attending work due to severe weather events such as flooding, cyclones, storms, or bushfires, or where it is not practical for the employee to work from another location or to work remotely, may apply for discretionary special leave.

This leave may be accessed by permanent, temporary, full-time, and part-time employees and can be up to five working days in accordance with HR Policy C7 and must be approved by the applicable delegate.

Any requests for special leave above the five days allowable under Special Leave Directive 12/24, should be assessed on a case-by-case basis and any additional leave must be reasonable and proportionate to the circumstance. The delegation for additional special leave is at the discretion of the Director-General (or delegate).

## 2 In what situations can I access special leave for floods, cyclones, bushfires, or storms?

An employee who is prevented from attending their normal place of employment because of floods, cyclonic disturbances, severe storms, or bushfires may be granted leave in the following circumstances:

- when it is not practical to attend the employee's normal place of employment due to floods, cyclonic disturbances, severe storms, or bushfires, or it is not practicable to work from another location or work remotely.
- child/children's school or child care service provider is closed and the employee is unable to make alternate care arrangements.
- when required to return home before their usual finishing time to ensure personal safety, the protection of the employee's family and property or where the availability of transport facilities which may be disrupted or discontinued because of weather or environmental conditions.
- when the employee has been absent from their usual place of residence on approved leave or over a weekend/non-rostered period, and they are then unable to return in sufficient time to attend the normal place of employment, or it is not practicable to attend duty at another Queensland government location.
- where the employee must, out of necessity, remain at home to safeguard their family or property.
- when it is not practical to work from home or another location due to power outage.
- where the employee must remain at home to have temporary repairs effected, restore belongings or to clean up following a severe weather event.

## 3 Does special leave encompass penalty payments?

Full pay for the purpose of the Special Leave Directive means the employee's ordinary rate of pay and is inclusive of any fixed allowances that are part of the regular fortnightly pay, excluding shift penalties and consolidated shift allowance payments.

## 4 How do I apply for special leave?

Employees should contact their line manager as soon as practical and prior to their start time to advise of their absence from work. A leave application can be submitted through *myHR* as soon as it is practical to do so. *myHR* is also available as an app on your mobile device, if required. The leave type is listed under Special leave - "Floods, Cyclonic Disturbances, Severe Storms or Bushfires Leave".

Employees may be required to provide necessary evidence to support their claim. Line managers are encouraged to check their delegation prior to approving request for special leave.

## 5 What happens if I am a Queensland Health employee and a Defence Force Reservist, and I am directed to be deployed?

An employee who has been directed to assist in an emergency situation or a disaster situation in accordance with the *Public Safety Preservation Act 1986* or the *Disaster Management Act 2003* shall be granted leave for this purpose. Employees must have early conversations with their Line Manager. The employee is to be released as part of their defence force obligations.

*Declared state of emergency/disaster attendance:*

An employee who has been directed to assist in an emergency situation or a state of disaster in accordance with section 8 of the *Public Safety Preservation Act 1986* or part 4 of the *Disaster Management Act 2003*, **is to be granted leave** in accordance with Special Leave Directive 12/24. Leave is granted on full pay as required and is not debited from any leave account. Release of employees is not discretionary; however employees **must** advise their line manager as soon as possible of their requirement to report.

## 6 I am a Queensland Health employee and an emergency volunteer/ready reservist, and I'd like to volunteer?

Volunteer emergency attendance will only be granted having regard for the operational requirements of their workplace. These requests must be discussed with the line manager, prior to making a commitment for voluntary attendance.

An employee who is a member of the State Emergency Service (SES), voluntary member of a local firefighting unit, Rural Fire Brigade, auxiliary of a Fire Brigade, Honorary Ambulance Officer, St. John Ambulance volunteer, Red Cross volunteer, or any other emergency service, will be granted leave when an employee is released for called out for emergencies or to fight fires in accordance with Special Leave Directive 12/24.

## 7 Can I reverse my annual leave due to Cyclone Alfred?

Annual leave can be reversed with agreement from the line manager and where the employee makes themselves available to work. The employee must discuss their circumstances with their line manager before cancelling pre-approved leave.

## 8 Can I reverse my approved leave due to Cyclone Alfred and convert it to special leave?

No, you cannot cancel approved leave (e.g. annual leave, long service leave, accrued day off) and be entitled to special leave.

## 9 Can I be recalled from planned leave?

Every effort will be made to continue to honour approved leave and leave requests. If it is appropriate and necessary to maintain the provision of healthcare services, employees may be able to be recalled from planned leave or asked to cancel, defer or reduce their annual or long service leave.

It is not appropriate to direct an employee to return from maternity leave early where they have not agreed to do so. It is also not appropriate to direct an employee who is incapacitated for work (for example, on sick leave with or without pay), to return to work.

Individual circumstances will be managed on a case-by-case basis, through discussions between the manager and the employee. Management will actively consider fatigue implications as well as the circumstances surrounding the leave prior to making any decision to recall an employee from leave, cancel, defer, or reduce annual or long service leave.

Line managers must consider the recall provisions that are outlined in the following Queensland Health policies and Public Sector Directives:

- Annual Leave - [HR Policy C51](#)
- Long Service Leave - [HR Policy C38](#) and [Directive 10/24](#)
- Public Holidays [Attendance Recording and Reporting Requirements Directive 07/18](#)
- Compulsory Christmas/New Year Closure - [HR Policy C32](#).

The delegate, must complete the appropriate forms and progress the forms through *myHR* and consider the following as part of the decision:

- incurred expenses, such as deposit payments,
- payments for accommodation and/or for the employee and their immediate family or dependents
- expenses that are lost due to a recall, cancellation or deferral of leave by the delegate,
- Employees will be able to seek reimbursement for expenses unable to be recovered. Such reimbursement is conditional upon the employee producing evidence of losses incurred, in the form of receipts or other evidence to the satisfaction of the chief executive.

## 10 Can I work from home if I'm unable to access my workplace during a severe weather event?

Employees must speak to their line manager regarding suitable options. Employees who can fulfill their role and have permission to work from home, may work remotely where it is safe to do so. Employees are also encouraged to discuss concerns with their line manager who may put ad-hoc working arrangements in place for short period of time.

## 11 How will I be paid if my roster or requirements change based on the weather events?

**All employees must confirm their working arrangements with their line manager prior to commencing work.**

**Scenario 1:** Employee has **chosen** to arrive at work early whilst they are able to travel safely (there has been no direction from the workplace).

Employees who are concerned about accessing the workplace safely and choose to attend the workplace prior to their shift start time, will only be paid from the time they commence their shift.

**Scenario 2:** Employee has **chosen** to arrive at work early whilst they are able to travel safely. The employee advised their line manager they are available to commence work prior to their scheduled shift. The employee will receive entitlements from the relevant Award and/or Certified Agreement from the time they commence work.

**Scenario 3:** Employee has been **directed** to attend the workplace earlier than their rostered shift to ensure essential services are delivered.

I.e. An employee has been directed to attend the workplace at 10.00pm but their rostered shift starts at 6.00am.

Depending on the circumstances in the hospital at that time, employees may be able to:

- Between 10.00pm and 6.00am - be paid the on-call allowance for that period and rest if not required to work prior to start time; or
- be directed to commence work earlier than the shift start time (between 10.00pm and 6.00am) if their skills are required and be paid the recall provision of their relevant Award or Agreement.

Subject to the relevant industrial instrument, employees may also be entitled to other entitlements such as:

- A meal allowance or the provision of a meal (depending on the HHS)
- Accommodation allowance (where relevant)
- Fatigue provisions may apply

**Fatigue provisions** and employee safety must be reviewed throughout extended shifts.

## 12 What if it is unsafe for me to return home at the end of my shift?

Employees who cannot return home safely at the end of their shift should speak to their line manager to discuss the local arrangements. This may include somewhere to rest and refresh.

## 13 The roads to my usual work location have been impacted, however I am able to safely access another facility. Am I able to work from another facility/location?

Please speak to your line manager about deploying to another hospital or facility prior to doing so.

## Employee support

Employee safety and wellbeing is a priority. Line managers should also remind employees of the [Employee Assistance Services](#) available to all Queensland Health employees and their immediate family.

## Other resources

Employees are encouraged to keep up to date with the latest information at the following links:

- Be prepared: [www.getready.qld.gov.au/news/tropical-cyclone-alfred-march-2025](http://www.getready.qld.gov.au/news/tropical-cyclone-alfred-march-2025)
- Disaster management and current warnings: [www.disaster.qld.gov.au](http://www.disaster.qld.gov.au)
- School closure updates: <https://closures.qld.edu.au/schools.html>
- Cyclone weather information: [www.bom.gov.au/qld/warnings](http://www.bom.gov.au/qld/warnings)
- Power outages: [www.energex.com.au/outages/outage-finder](http://www.energex.com.au/outages/outage-finder)
- Find your Local Disaster Dashboard: [www.getready.qld.gov.au/find-your-local-council](http://www.getready.qld.gov.au/find-your-local-council)
- Flood awareness: <https://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/community-and-safety/community-safety/disasters-and-emergencies/be-prepared/flooding-in-brisbane/flood-awareness-map>
- Road closures: <https://qldtraffic.qld.gov.au>
- Listen to local radio.

It is also a good idea to remain in touch with your manager and keep up to date on any relevant information being shared by the workplace as per the local disaster or business continuity plan.