



Natural disaster reporting and declaration

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Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define the role of NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI) personnel in natural disaster and agricultural natural disasters damage assessment reporting and declarations.

Scope

This policy applies to all NSW DPI and Livestock Health and Pest Authority (LHPA) personnel, involved in natural disaster and agricultural natural disasters damage assessment reporting and declaration processes.

This policy is part of the NSW emergency management system's recovery arrangements under Part 6 of the NSW State Disaster Plan and the NSW Recovery Plan.

Policy

1. *Definition and Purpose of a Natural Disaster Declaration*

Under joint State-Australian Government Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements (NDRAA), a natural disaster is defined as a serious disruption to a community or region caused by the impact of a naturally occurring rapid onset event that threatens or causes death, injury or damage to property or the environment and which requires significant and coordinated multi-agency and community response.

Such serious disruption can be caused by any one, or a combination, of the following natural hazards: bushfire, earthquake, flood, storm (including hail and severe dust), cyclone, storm surge, landslide, tsunami, meteorite strike or tornado.

Drought, frost, heatwave, epidemic and events where human activity is a significant contributing cause (e.g. poor environmental planning, commercial development, personal intervention (other than arson), accident or technological failure) are NOT natural disasters.

Declaration of a natural disaster triggers a range of assistance measures for those affected by the disaster. Whether a full Natural Disaster or Agricultural Natural Disaster is declared determines the range of assistance available.

2. *Difference between Declarations for Natural Disaster and Agricultural Natural Disaster*

A full natural disaster falls under the NDRRA and generally involves public infrastructure damage. These are normally declared by the Treasurer or Premier and usually based on Local Government Areas (LGAs). Full natural disaster declarations provide a range of assistance measures to primary producers, small business and others.

In situations where there has been too little public infrastructure damage to support a full natural disaster declaration, but there has been significant agricultural damage, the Minister for Primary Industries may declare an Agricultural Natural Disaster. In this instance only primary producer assistance is available in the form of loans and transport subsidies. Such areas can include smaller rural areas hit by a natural disaster and fringe areas to full natural disasters.

3. *Reporting Requirements for Natural Disasters Declaration*

It is essential that damage assessments are reported as soon as practicable after the event, but preferably within 2 weeks, so that this information can be used for consideration of a natural disaster or agricultural natural disaster declaration. An assessment for possible declaration can only be done on a single event. In a significant event the declaration is likely to be made quickly by Government. In these cases fringe LGAs/part LGAs may require assessing for inclusion if it meets the threshold.

It is the responsibility of the Regional Director (RD) to coordinate the collation of damage information from natural disasters impacting on agriculture and animals in their region. Assessors appointed by the RD must be independent of the natural disaster and not benefit from the declaration. RDs should have the report entered in TRIM, approved then assigned to the Manager, General Emergencies Preparedness & Response (GEPR). This can include collating data on damage to support the implementation of grants and other support measures.

The Manager GEPR is responsible for providing damage information to Ministry for Police and Emergency Services (MPES) as required to support full natural disaster declarations, and for preparation of Agricultural Natural Disaster declaration recommendations for Minister for Primary Industries approval.

The Director Media and Communications is responsible for ensuring drafting of a media release for Agricultural Natural Disaster declarations.

Damage must total more than \$240,000 to meet Agricultural Natural Disaster declaration criteria. Damage may include crops, horticulture, stored fodder, infrastructure and livestock. Information required in the report includes the location, description of the event, area affected in hectares, number of properties affected, type of damage, and estimation of cost of damage. Refer to procedure Assessment and Reporting of Natural Disasters.

4. *Announcement of Declarations*

When a natural disaster or agricultural natural disaster is declared, a statement to media is released and the event is posted on the RAA website at: <http://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/assistance/natural-disaster-relief/declarations>.

5. *Further Information on Assistance Measures*

Information on Natural Disaster Assistance Schemes and recovery arrangements is located at

- Ministry for Police and Emergency Services and website at <http://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au/content.php/937.html>
- Rural Assistance Authority at <http://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/assistance/natural-disaster-relief>
- NSW DPI transport subsidies claim forms can be found on the NSW DPI website at <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/emergency/flood>

Procedures

- Assessment and reporting of natural disasters

Roles and responsibilities

- Regional Director: Appoints independent assessors; collation and approval of regional damage information from natural disasters
- Manager GEPR: Collation and submission of information for declarations

Delegations

- Nil

Legislation

- Nil

Related policies

- Nil

Other related documents

- Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements
- NSW Disaster Assistance Guidelines

- NSW Recovery Plan
- NSW State Disaster Plan

Definitions

- Agricultural natural disaster: As per natural disasters but only primary producer assistance is available
- GEPR: General Emergencies Preparedness & Response
- LGA: Local Government Area
- LHPA: Livestock Health and Pest Authority
- Natural disaster declaration: Declaration of a natural disaster event activating assistance measures
- Natural disaster: A serious disruption to a community or region caused by the impact of a naturally occurring rapid onset event that threatens or causes death, injury or damage to property or the environment and which requires significant and coordinated multi-agency and community response
- NDRRA: Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements
- NSW DPI: NSW Department of Primary Industries (formerly Industry and Investment NSW)
- RAA: NSW Rural Assistance Authority
- RD: Regional Director or Assistant Regional Director

Superseded documents

This policy replaces:

- Circular 03/028

Revision history

Version	Date issued	Notes	By
1	10 October 2011	New policy	Agricultural Protection Officer

Review date

10 October 2012

Contact

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