Tuesday 20 November, 2007

Emergency Services Upgrade for Cyclone Season

Chief Minister and Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services Clare Martin today announced a range of improvements in emergency preparedness as the Territory enters the cyclone season.

The Chief Minister said the Government was continually working to improve preparation for cyclones and other emergencies.

“The Territory is a wonderful place to live with a unique lifestyle but it is prone to cyclones and other emergency events, and I’d urge members of the community to be prepared,” Ms Martin said.

“Some of the improvements we’ve made ahead of this cyclone season include increased Emergency Service staff numbers, new search and rescue capabilities, stronger capacity to enforce cyclone clean up and better information for the public.

“I would also like to urge people to support our volunteer organisations such as the Northern Territory Emergency Service and consider becoming a volunteer.”

NTES Director Peter Davies said volunteers provide an invaluable service for the community in times of need.

“We welcome volunteers, we will train them and have specific areas where we need extra people such as marine search and rescue and vertical and flood boat rescue.”

Ms Martin said a range of measures had been introduced across Government:

- A new NTES vertical rescue team finished training in October and has already completed its first rescue. It specialises in rescues from cliffs and depths;
- A new marine search and rescue capability is being revitalised with a refurbished boat;
• New laws passed last month to enable special cyclone clean up orders to be made earlier – up to 48 hours before a cyclone is expected to strike. The laws include increased penalties for those ignoring orders during disaster operations;

• Three more full time positions in the NTES with an emphasis on training;

• Improved advice for the public on cyclone preparation available on the NTES website or from the NTES office;

• Upgrades to Nightcliff and Taminmin Cyclone shelters;

• A memorandum of understanding between the Departments of Health and Community Services and Local Government and Housing and relief agencies such as the Red Cross to define welfare roles and responsibilities during and after a disaster;

• A new web-based Katherine flood map to guide residents who may be considering evacuating; and

• An extension of flood monitoring systems for rivers such as the Adelaide and Daly.

The NTES website is:

www.emergency.nt.gov.au

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