**Wet season rain causes freight chaos**

As the wet season is in full swing it is a timely reminder that Katherine is one of the two largest populated towns that are affected by floods in the Northern Territory. Therefore it is important to know your local community plans, prepare an emergency kit and decide where you will shelter, should the need arise.

With warnings in place for when the Katherine River reaches specified heights at the Nilmukul Centre, there should be adequate time to be ready should your residence look likely to become cut off or you need to evacuate.

Do you need to escape? If so check your neighbours and plan how you will get there.

Despite good organisation and planning, sometimes unforeseen things occur, but help is not far away.

The Northern Territory Emergency Service has a small group of local volunteers who stand ready to assist the Katherine region should help be needed.

Unit Officer Neil Henley said Katherine volunteers have been called out to conduct floodboat operations, searches, tarping and chainsawing downed trees.

In the 2010 Queensland Floods, Katherine volunteers were also given the opportunity to be part of the NTES deployment to Brisbane and later to Townsville.

“Our members are driven by a desire to serve their community in a way that is tangible and a little bit on the edge,” Deputy Unit Officer Ron Green said.

“Sure, there are times when you are in the pouring rain at night with water running inside your raincoat and wondering why you are not curled up fast asleep in a dry bed. But it is all part of the experience.”

\* Be prepared this wet season - get your flood brochure at the Katherine Times office.

\* TALKS about establishing a freight hub in Katherine have become louder again, after heavy monsoon rain caused havoc across the Territory.

The railway line between Katherine and Darwin was cut south of Adelaide River last Wednesday, when rain washed out embankment material from under the sleepers, creating freight chaos in Katherine and causing shops shelves to stay empty for hours.

Rail owners Genesee and Wyoming managing director Greg Pauline said trains had to be terminated in Katherine and containers had to be transported to Darwin on trucks.

The Ghan passenger train was also affected with its trips from Darwin to Adelaide on Thursday being cancelled.

Truck drivers spent up to 12 hours at the Katherine freight terminal, waiting for trains to be unloaded. Within the first few hours after the railway track closure tracks already had to park in double lines along the Victoria Highway while waiting for their turn to be loaded.

A Katherine Woolworths staff member said the store’s supply truck had also been caught in the freight chaos, delaying delivery of fresh produce by hours.

Katherine Mayor Fay Miller said the chaos - which was resolved after the railway connection was repaired late last week - would highlight the need of a freight hub in Katherine.

“The importance of having the intermodal freight hub and another high level bridge across the Katherine river will arise each wet season when there is a threat to the provision and delivery of goods and services north of Katherine,” she said.

“Unfortunately we have already experienced significant disruptions during past wet seasons which should already be sending a strong message to both the Federal and Territory government.

“It is good planning to have the infrastructure in place sooner than later.”

Ms Miller said while the intermodal freight hub is on the Northern Territory Government’s agenda, the discussion of a high level bridge was not.

“One is definitely conducive to the other,” she said.

“The only link there is between Katherine and Darwin is one high level bridge.

“Imagine the pandemonium should anything happen to our one link.”

Meanwhile, Katherine’s Low Level bridge stays closed until further notice due to flooding, and Katherine Parks and Wildlife Rangers advise that a crocodile has been sighted in the area and urge locals to stay out of the water.

Several other roads across the region - including the Roper Highway at Roper Bar and the Buchanan Highway at the Dowdham crossing - also remain closed due to flooding.

> Be prepared this wet season - get your flood brochure at the Katherine Times office.