



Gippsland Lakes Flood warning system



Frequently asked questions



Hollands Landing, June 2007 (photo courtesy of W Gilmour, West Gippsland CMA)



FLOOD STORM
EMERGENCY **132 500**

For more information visit
www.ses.vic.gov.au

What is the Gippsland Lakes Flood Warning System?

Until recently, there was no way to measure the depth of water in the Gippsland Lakes in a way that would help predict floods. This meant that it was not possible to warn people of the possible impacts of flooding.

Height gauges have now been installed in five locations on the Gippsland Lakes at Metung, Lakes Entrance, Paynesville, Hollands Landing and Loch Sport. These gauges give information to the Bureau of Meteorology about changes in lake height. The Bureau combines this information with data about river flows, wind and tide heights to make predictions about possible flooding in the Gippsland Lakes.



Flooding in Gippsland Lakes, June 2007

Who issues the flood warnings?

The Bureau of Meteorology is responsible for issuing warnings about flooding. The Victoria State Emergency Service (SES) will then provide more information about the impacts this flooding may have. For the Gippsland Lakes, warnings will be issued at Minor Flood Level and Major Flood Level.

A Minor Flood Level Warning for the Gippsland Lakes means that:

- Lake levels start to flood waterside car parks and boat ramps.
- Puddling will occur on and beside low-lying roads and properties.
- Storm water drains may start to flood internal roadways and properties.
- Some caravan parks and local low lying roads may start to flood.

Major Flood Level Warning for the Gippsland Lakes means that:

- Lake levels rise and extensive flooding in the towns and on lakeside farmland.
- Residential and commercial properties may flood.
- Major traffic routes may be closed and properties and towns may be isolated
- Numerous evacuations may be required.

How are flood warnings issued?

Official warnings are issued in a variety of ways, including:

- Bureau of Meteorology website at bom.gov.au/warnings.
- SES website at ses.vic.gov.au and click on Emergency Warnings.
- Emergency Broadcasters such as ABC Gippsland, SKY news, and other local radio and television stations.
- Telephone Alerts. SES can use the Emergency Alert computer program to issue a telephone alert. The operator draws a polygon on a map and all the phones in that area plus all the phones with billing addresses in that area will receive a message. This program sends a voice message to landline phone lines and a text message to mobiles. The telephone alerting system is not automatic. It is used when the emergency services decide it is necessary.

How much warning will I get?

Gippsland Lakes flooding is caused by flooding of one or more of the Latrobe, Thomson, Macalister, Avon, Mitchell, Nicholson and/or Tambo Rivers. You will usually hear warnings given for locations on these rivers before warnings are issued for the Gippsland Lakes.

Flooding in these rivers typically takes one to three days to raise the water level of the Gippsland Lakes. However, very low lying areas such as the Esplanade in Lakes Entrance and the township of Hollands Landing can be affected more quickly.

The Gippsland Lakes Flood Warning System only predicts lake flooding from rivers. Flash flooding caused by localised heavy rainfall or local drainage problems during severe storms is unpredictable and can happen very quickly. There is no guarantee that you will get an official warning.

How do I know how deep the water will get?

Predicted flood depths are based on height at the gauge and not on depth of water in the street. More detail about the impacts of local flooding can be found by:

- Reading the Local Flood Guide for your area, if available (a list of these is on the SES website).
- Contacting the planning section of your local council or Catchment Management Authority.
- Asking neighbours and others with reliable local knowledge.
- Looking at photos from previous events.
- Local flood markers on roads and buildings.

Every flood is different so it is not always possible to say exactly how this flood will affect you. However, past events and local knowledge can give you an idea of the kinds of impacts you may experience.



Flooding in Gippsland Lakes, June 2007

What about evacuation?

During a flood, Victoria Police, SES and other emergency service providers may advise you to evacuate to keep you safe. It is important that you follow this advice.

There are two types of evacuation warnings that may be issued during a flood:

- **Prepare to Evacuate** - means you should act quickly and take immediate action to protect your life and property. Be ready to leave your property if advised to do so.
- **Evacuate Immediately** - you must leave immediately as there is a risk to lives. You may only have minutes to evacuate in a flash flooding situation.



Evacuation in Newry, June 2007

Remember you can leave at any time if you feel unsafe. You do not need to wait to be told to evacuate.

Will the Gippsland Lakes Flood Warning System warn me of ocean level rises?

No. The Gippsland Lakes Flood Warning system only provides information for flooding that occurs as a consequence of heavy rainfall. Ocean sea level rises are based on long term predictions rather than short term weather events.



Flooding in Gippsland Lakes, June 2007

Will SES sandbag my property?

During a flood, emergency services personnel may supply limited numbers of sandbags for properties at risk of over floor flooding and may help lay sandbags. There are guidelines on the SES website on how to lay sandbags properly. However, all SES work is prioritised and you may not get the resources you want. It is every property owner's responsibility to look after their own safety, so plan ahead for what you might need.

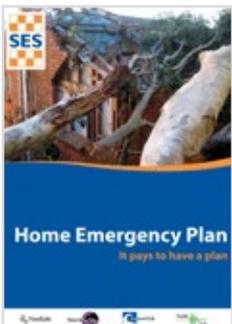
SES volunteer crews complete a number of tasks during flooding, including:

- Flood protection work for important infrastructure such as telephone exchanges and utilities.
- Support for residents and businesses.
- Providing emergency services with information on what is happening for keeping community information up to date.
- Preparation for evacuation if necessary.



Sandbagged substation, June 2007 flood

For help during floods and storms call SES on 132 500. A call taker will record your details and send them to the most appropriate SES unit. These requests for assistance are assessed by SES and our SES volunteers will complete them in priority order.



How can I get help to make a Home Emergency Plan?

Information on preparing for, responding to and recovering from a flood is available on the SES Website at ses.vic.gov.au.