



The Australian Warning System

General AWS FAQs

These are general AWS Questions – for people who are just learning about the project, and want to know how it will affect them. These FAQs and more information can be found on the AWS website, at www.qfes.qld.gov.au/AWS

What is the Australian Warning System (AWS)?

The AWS is a new national approach to information and warnings during emergencies like bushfire, flood, storm, extreme heat and severe cyclones.

The AWS uses a nationally consistent set of:

- triangle icons, and
- warning levels – Advice, Watch and Act, and Emergency Warning
- colours – yellow for Advice, orange for Watch and Act, and red for Emergency Warnings, and terms to tell people what they need to do to be safe from that disaster at that point in time – like ‘move to higher ground’, ‘shelter indoors now’, or ‘stay informed’

The AWS was designed based on feedback and research across the country and aims to deliver a more consistent approach to warnings, no matter where you are.

What do the colours and levels mean?

Advice level warnings are yellow, and it means you’re not in danger, but you need to take some early actions, like staying informed.

Watch and Act level warnings are orange, and it means conditions are changing and you need to start acting now to be safe, like preparing to take shelter, preparing to leave or moving to higher ground.

Emergency Warnings are red. This is the highest level of warning and it means your life could be in danger. You need to act immediately to be safe, like leave immediately, seek shelter now, or in some cases, you might be told it’s too dangerous to leave.

Why do we need the AWS?

Until now, every state and territory in Australia did warnings differently. This was confusing to people new to the area or visiting, and people who live near state borders. The Royal Commission into National Natural Disasters made recommendations for all states to implement the AWS and educate communities about warnings.

Having nationally consistent, action focused warnings means that, no matter the hazard or where you are in the country, you’ll be able to understand the warnings, know what the level of danger is, and what to do to keep yourself and your loved ones safe more easily.

Where do I find warnings for my area?

- Bushfire warnings will be on the QFES website, Facebook and Twitter.
- Extreme heat warnings will be on the Queensland Health website.
- Storm, flood, and cyclone warnings will be found on your council’s disaster dashboard (visit their website to locate it), social channels, opt-in messaging system (if they have one in place), and local ABC radio stations.



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Will The Bureau of Meteorology weather warnings still be issued?

The Bureau (BoM) will continue to issue weather forecasts and warnings based on the weather. AWS warnings will compliment Bureau warnings by providing information like telling people in specific streets to evacuate due to flash flooding or storm surge, including information on the location evacuation centre, its address, and whether animals are allowed.

All AWS warnings focus on community safety actions and include a link to the BoM for up-to-date weather information.

How do I get ready for a natural disaster before it happens?

The [Prepare page](#) on the QFES website has information to help you be ready before disaster strikes, including [packing an emergency kit](#) and [preparing your home](#). And don't forget about the family pets, with helpful information to help your furry friend on the [RSPCA website](#).

What about warnings for other hazards?

For now, AWS warnings apply to bushfire, storm, flood, cyclone, and extreme heatwaves. In time, other hazards could be added to the list.

How will I receive warnings?

You can turn notifications on for posts from social media channels of the agency you want to receive warnings from. Staying connected to your local government, or areas you frequently visit will help keep you informed for warnings.

If you are travelling outside of your usual area, we recommend checking the weather forecast to see if there is going to be a need to stay informed.

You can tune into your local ABC Radio, find that channel at reception.abc.net.au and keep it on hand so if you don't have internet or power, you can catch the emergency broadcast on a radio.

Will I always get a text message?

If there is an Emergency Alert associated with the warning, you will most likely get a text message from +6444 444 444. But not all warnings come with an Emergency Alert – if you see inclement weather, that's a good time to seek out actions from your local government, QFES, or Queensland Health.

How will I know that the warning applies to me/my address?

Warnings that are AWS compliant will have specific locations that need to take action. Sometimes they are broad, applying to suburbs or neighbourhoods, and in other cases there are specific actions only small subsets of the community need to take.

Where should I go if I get a warning?

AWS compliant warnings will give you the address of any available shelters, evacuation centres or safe spaces that have been designated in an emergency.



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If you don't drive, it is important to work out safe spaces you can walk to in an emergency, or a friend who can pick you up. It's important to remember that in a disaster, public transport may not be running, and roads may be closed – try to be prepared for this.

Sometimes the warning will advise you to shelter in place. This means it is important for you to be prepared – have a kit at home with all the things you might need if you don't have power for a few days, or aren't able to leave the house.

How is this different to the bushfire warning signs (Australian Fire Danger Rating System)?

The Australian Fire Danger Rating System (AFDRS) tells you how dangerous a fire would be if it were to happen that day – based on environmental factors like weather and vegetation. When you see an AFDRS warning for an area you are visiting or live in, it means to make sure that you take extra care to not cause a fire. This means avoiding lighting camp fires, some types of 4WD and some outdoor activity. Visit <https://www.qfes.qld.gov.au/prepare/bushfire/fire-danger-ratings> for more information.