

CYCLONE GABRIELLE TIMELINE



Cyclone Gabrielle began effecting Tairāwhiti on the 13th of February 2023 and has had a devastating effect on the region. For only the third time in New Zealand's history, a National State of Emergency was declared on the 14th of February. The timeline below provides an account of the key milestones, decisions and coordination efforts of the Tairāwhiti Civil Defence Emergency Management, and their emergency management partners, in the Readiness, Response and immediate Recovery phases. The Recovery phase has continued well beyond the scope of this timeline (19 February).

CDEM response
 Built environment impact
 Environment impact
 Public announcement
 eTxt Alerts
 Readiness
 Response
 Recovery

4th FEB // SATURDAY // 12:00

@ First e-mail within Gisborne District Council (GDC) providing heads up on weather system that eventually becomes Cyclone Gabrielle.

6th FEB // MONDAY // 12:30

First indications that meteorological modelling is very consistent suggesting that the weather system emerging is likely to impact region.

7th FEB // MONDAY // 14:00

Concluded the debrief of Cyclone HALE.

8th FEB // TUESDAY // 05:30

GDC message internal staff to be prepared to support what is coming

9th FEB // THURSDAY // 17:30

Image of cyclone track sent to Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) and Communications Team.

9th FEB // Incident Mangement Team (IMT) // 09:00

9th FEB // THURSDAY // 10:30

Public notification of weather warning. Public advised to start preparing. GDC crews clearing drains.

10th FEB // FRIDAY // 15:00

GDC CDEM activates. GDC staff physically move to co-locate to coordinate response.

10th FEB // IMT // 08:30

10th FEB // FRIDAY // 10:30

MetService issues Heavy Rain Watch for Gisborne from 3pm Sunday to 12pm Tuesday. Could be upgraded to Orange or Red in coming days. You need to prepare now – particularly around rivers and low-lying areas.

SAT 11TH FEB

10:24

10:24

11:30

MetService adds a Strong Wind Watch (up to 130khp) to their Heavy Rain Watch (up to 400mm and with peak intensities of up to 30mm/h), with biggest impacts likely on Monday and Tuesday. Message mentions the Weather Watch could be upgraded to Orange or Red.

13:29

Heavy Rain warning for Te Tairāwhiti Gisborne region – RED

15:00

Further MetService warning. Now includes wave height estimates (up to 8m).

Advice on how to prepare:

- Prepare grab bags in case you need to evacuate. Make sure you have all your medication.
- Keep your phones charged. Have a plan if the power goes off – have a torch handy.
- Power cuts could affect EFTPOS and ATM machines, so make sure you have some cash at home, or enough supplies to see you through for 3 days or more.
- Check on your neighbours, friends and whānau or anyone who might need your help, especially those affected by recent flooding.
- If you're in an area known to get cut off and have high medical dependencies, please make plans to move to town where it's easier to access medical needs.
- Be prepared for roads including state highways to close.

17:30

First Community-Link hui to brief latest information and to check in on preparedness across the region. Seven Civil Defence containers (each with 100 kai boxes; 50 household boxes and hygiene packs) have been dispersed to six marae across region.

18:00 IMT

Upgrade to Red Severe Weather Warning for north of Tolaga Bay.

18:30


Further MetService warnings. Provides updated timing – expected to hit Sunday.


21:00





Gisborne to Tolaga Bay is upgraded to an Orange Weather Watch. Provided updated rainfall and wind estimates. Adds river levels estimates and warns of flooding.


Te Tairāwhiti Weather Warning – Cyclone Gabrielle
Heavy Rain Warning for Gisborne – Orange
 Area: Gisborne north of Tolaga Bay
 Valid: 3:00pm Sunday to 6:00am Tuesday. Expect 300 to 400mm of rain. The most rainfall is forecast on Monday when 200 to 300 mm of rain is expected, with peak intensities of 20 to 30 mm/h.
 Heavy rain can cause streams and rivers to rise rapidly. Surface flooding and slips are also possible and driving conditions may be hazardous.



SUN 12TH FEB





10:00  IMT meets and decides to locate some critical staff in Ruatoria.





12:00  Port has been cleared – Vessels leaving anchorage are required to be out by noon.

13:30     - Summer camping sites are closed.
- Community link teams are activated and ready.
- Landowners of buildings prone to slips have been advised to close or relocate.

15:24  Waikohu Civil Defence notify residents to stay vigilant and start preparing

16:00   - Heaviest rain Monday afternoon and evening.
- Extreme rain, wind, and waves predicted.

16:49     Waikohu Civil Defence notify residents that, if needed, Te Karaka Area School will be a Welfare Centre.

18:00     - GDC staff arrive in Ruatoria and conduct community visits to reinforce preparedness.
- Heavy vehicle restrictions on unsealed roads commence.

12:00 IMT

13:00

Three GDC staff plus NZ Police, FENZ and St Johns depart Gisborne for Ruatoria - stops in at Tolaga Bay. Take Starlink, digital radio, wifi capability and satellite phones.



14:00

Chief Executive Group pre-discussion for state of emergency declaration



15:00 IMT

16:00

- Second Community-Link hui #1: shares latest information and completes a roundtable check on preparedness across each of the regional Civil Defence posts.
- Reconfirms that this event is regionally managed and locally coordinated. Single source of truth for weather forecasts as issued by the ECC.
- Extra staff bought into GDC.
- Schools north of Tolaga shut.
- Subscribe to flood warning text alerts



16:49

Waikohu Civil Defence activates its headquarters as a precautionary measure.



08:30 IMT

08.30

- Emergency Coordination Centre activated
- Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) staff deployed into four sites across the region



08:43

All GDC managers asked to identify staff who can support the evacuations centres if these need to be activated.




09:07

A local state of emergency has been declared for the Tairāwhiti region this morning. It will last for 7 days and be reviewed as the event unfolds.




09:17

 *The current Hikuwai River water level at Willowflat is 8.0m and rising and is currently predicted to peak at 10.0 metres at 21:00 tonight based on the current river level model.*


09.45

09.45 LOCAL STATE OF EMERGENCY declared

10.00

 All non-essential Council services and community facilities are closed and will remain closed until further notice.

10.57

 *The current Te Arai River water level at Pykes Weir is 2.0m and rising and is currently predicted to peak at 3.3 meters at 23:00hrs tonight based on the current river level model. This is subject to change if the forecast rainfall intensity increases. Please refer to CDEM updates on the GDC website.*

10:50

Wastewater treatment plant emergency screen becomes operational



11:00

First reports of flooding.




Rivers expected to peak between 02:00 and 04:00 so consider self-evacuation.



Evacuation centres to open this afternoon.



11.25

 Open first sewer scours at Wainui due to overloaded system

12:00 IMT

12.04

12:00


Water tanker on route to Te Puia hospital.














































12:45

NZDF depart for Ruatoria



 *The current Hikuwai River water level at Willowflat is 10.5m and rising. This is subject to change if the forecast rainfall intensity increases. Evacuation now. Please refer to CDEM updates on the GDC website.*

MON 13TH FEB

	13:00			
	Notification that SH35 between Okitu and Lottin Point will close at 1900.			
	13:30			
	GDC staff escort four USAR staff to Tolaga Bay (and surrounds) to get eyes-on known vulnerable sites that will likely need USAR attention in coming days.		14:00	
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First notification for some residents to self-evacuate (Tolaga Bay, Manutuke and Hicks Bay areas). Police and Fire and Emergency assisting. - First notification that welfare centres will be open from 1800. - Website links for river levels and river webcams provided. 
				15:00 IMT
	15:00			15:00
	Staff deployed to Ilminster Intermediate and House of Breakthrough to open first two welfare centres (expected to open at 1800)			1500 Waka Kotahi notification that SH35 from Tokomaru Bay to Tolaga Bay is closed. SH2 north to Opotiki is closed.
	15:00			15:00
	NZ Police conducting road checks across region and cleared camping grounds			First power outages - 70 connections.
	15:30			16:00
	SH35 is closed from Lottin Point to Opotiki. Local roads - 32 closed.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entire region moved to RED severe weather warning. - Go home, stay home and stay safe. - Updated rainfall and rain intensity information provided. 
	16:04			17:00
	Waikohu Civil Defence advises resident to use the afternoon to self-evacuate so that the roads can be clear between 6pm and 7am.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Power outages (560 households in Tolaga Bay). 
	18:00			
	Civil Defence Centres open and a list of all locations published.			19:00 IMT
	19:00			
	SH2 closed between Wairoa and Napier.			Latest river level data published (and still rising). Bridge at Arero Road, Mangatuna washes away.
	19:43			19:02
	Waikohu Civil Defence advises that for those wanting to evacuate, you must do it now. The window is closing as movement after 8pm is putting yourself and emergency services at risk.			<i>The current Waimata River water level at Goodwins Road Weir is 7.04m and rising and is currently predicted to peak at 8.2 metres at 01:00hrs tonight based on the current river level model.</i>
	21:07			21:12
	<i>The current Waimata River water level at Goodwins Road Weir is 9.03m and rising and is currently predicted to peak at 10 metres at 02:00hrs tonight based on the current river level model.</i>			<i>The current Waipaoa River level at Kanakania Te Karaka is 7.5m and rising and is currently predicted to peak at 8.2 metres at 01:00hrs tonight based on the current river level model.</i>
	21:16			21:19
	<i>River levels and surface water is causing us serious concerns all over Gisborne City and the region. For those residents who are in low lying areas or near rivers, please monitor the situation and evacuate to your nearest evacuation centre if necessary. The evacuation centres are at House of Breakthrough in Lytton West, Ilminster School De Latour Road and Poho Rawhiri Marae, Inner Kaiti (Rafurly Street).</i>			<i>The current Te Arai River water level at Pykes Weir is 4.9m and rising and is currently predicted to peak at 5.3 metres at midnight tonight based on the current river level model. This is subject to change if the rainfall intensity increases. Please refer to CDEM updates on the GDC website.</i>
	21:30			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Anticipate issues with flood warning system. - First indications of telemetry data going awry. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Urgent flood warning. - Residents in Riverside Road and Graham Road in low lying areas need to move now. 
	22:00 IMT			22:00
	22:19			22:30
	Waikohu Civil Defence advises that the river level at Kanakania bridge is 7.5m			Break in pipes detected both upstream and downstream from the Waingake water treatment plant. First message to restrict water use.
				CDEM advises CommunityLink that they need to monitor river levels locally.

22:52



The Waipaoa River at Kanakania Te Karaka has reached 8.2m meaning those in the Ormond township should evacuate to higher ground of head to GDC welfare centres at Te Poho o Rawiri Marae Ranfurly Street.

23:00



If you're in a low lying area please move now to higher ground.

23:08



Waikohu Civil Defence advises that the river level at Kanakania Bridge is 8.1m

23:39



Waikohu Civil Defence advises that the Puha Bridge is cut off that there is surface flooding on SH2.

Experiencing issues with flood warning text system.



23:30



Flood risk area city maps published.



23:44



Waikohu Civil Defence advises that Nisbetts dip is now flooded. Please do not try and drive through.



00:00 IMT

TUE 14TH FEB

00:02



Waikohu Civil Defence advises they will reduce staff to skeleton crew for the remainder of the night which means their comms will be limited. Will not be evacuating anyone in the dark; will assess the situation at first light.

00:05

Waipaoa River at Kanakania has reached 8.2m. Ormond township asked to evacuate to higher ground. Ilminster Intermediate or Te Poho o Rawiri Marae Civil Defence welfare centres are open.



02:15



Communications cable severed impacting data and communications networks.

- Member of TEMO in Ruatoria calls NEMA to advise (via StarLink) that Gisborne is offline.
- ECC rings NEMA to advise Gisborne is cut off (via satellite phone), that there is widespread flooding, will assess further in morning.
- Decision to not allow supermarkets to open the next day - as eftpos down and concern of civil disobedience. NZ Police door knocked all supermarkets at 6am to advise.
- Airspace not in CAA or Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC) control. Forestry companies using their private helicopter contractors to and check forest blocks.



- Starting to consider how to commandeer fuel.
- (afternoon) Starting to put notes of helicopter windscreens to try and coordinate efforts.

03:00-04:00



Struggling to get Starlink set up in Gisborne city due to storm conditions. Start to make headway around 8am.

03:30



FENZ and Police begin a targetted (roads closest to river) evacuation of Te Karaka residents to Te Karaka Area School.



04:15



Waikohu Civil Defence decision to evacuate all Te Karaka residents.

04:24



FENZ use fire appliance sirens to wake all Te Karaka residents for evacuation.



06:00 IMT

08:43

08:43 NATIONAL STATE OF EMERGENCY declared

09:00 IMT

09:00



House of Breakthrough welfare centre is full.

Building inspectors deployed to conduct initial building assessments.



Wi Pere bridge - local roading notified of slash build up and risk.

Tokomaru Bay to Te Puia Springs road closed.



Breaks in water system. No water supply. Waipaoa back up treatment plant can only deal with 1/3 of normal town supply. Requirement to reduce water use.

Airdesk established in ECC.



09:00 -12.00



CDEM staff in Ruatoria relays to National Coordination Centre in Wellington that communications in Gisborne is out.

CDEM in Gisborne begin using 'runners' to communicate key messages.



11:00



- Gisborne and Wairoa - no internet, cell phones, eftpos or landlines since 0215.
- Critical water issues remain.
- Power out to wider region.
- Supermarkets and service stations closed.
- No 111 capability.
- Region cut off from Napier and Opotiki.
- Welfare centres in Gisborne - 1 at capacity, 2 have capacity.

12:00 IMT



Convene meeting with all supermarket operators to determine stocking levels for fast moving consumable goods.



15:00 IMT

15:30



- Limited power restored.
- 111 capability for landlines restored.

15:30

- MetService reduces to ORANGE Weather watch.
- Peak river levels are announced. River levels receding.



18:00 IMT

21:00 IMT

WED 15TH FEB

05:00



Multiple water pipe breaks reported. Significant water supply crisis.



05:30



Conserve all water notice.

08:15



GDC staff member flies over water pipeline to assess damage. Takes 410 geo-referenced photos of pipe.



10:00 IMT

10:30



- All weather warnings lifted.
- Rivers receding.

- Power to most of Gisborne is restored.
- Surface flooding is subsiding.



10:45



Air New Zealand advises air connectivity is restored.

12:00 IMT

14:30



Airspace is closed to private aircraft

GDC suspends burials at Gisborne cemeteries for 10 days



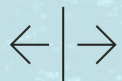
15:00



- Conserve power notice. Transpower is experiencing flooding at Redclyffe substation.
- 4,500 customers currently without power. No ETA on when power will be restored.
- Internet access very limited.



18:30



- Region remains cut off. No internet or cell phone coverage.
- Water levels critical.
- \$40 fuel limit imposed.
- Eftpos terminals into some supermarkets.
- Schools to remain closed until 20 Feb.
- 4,500 customers still with no power.

22,000 copies of Gisborne Herald printed and delivered to every Gisborne letterbox.



THU 16TH FEB

06:29



Power is restored to Tokomaru Bay

▲ 07:00 IMT

07:00



- Police informing of a weather-related fatality - next of kin yet to be informed.
- Two teams are deployed to Te Karaka for house inspections.

▲ 10:00 IMT

▲ 12:00 IMT

13:00



SH2 open but operating as a controlled route.

Trucks carrying food, water and fuel will travel from Opotiki by Downers. Two trips per day expected.



14:30



Internet, cell phones, ATMs and eftpos systems still largely unavailable.

▲ 15:00 IMT

17:30



Civil Defence Controller advises that where road access is impassable, personnel on flights have been able to get in contact with some isolated whanau.

Search and Rescue begin grid-search to check welfare



▲ 18:00 IMT



Where possible Civil Defence staff have gone up rural roads to locate isolated households and ensure we have some connection with them.



FRI 17TH FEB

▲ 07:00 IMT

09:30



Power restored to over 2,000 customers.

Community advised that free wifi (using Starlink) at Lawson Field Theatre can be used to connect with whanau (10 minute cap)



10:00



Power back on for most customers.



11:00

MAJOR water crisis. STOP ALL WATER USE NOW !!

The Waipaoa back up water treatment has failed. Gisborne has no water.



▲ 13:00 IMT

13:00



Rescue Coordination Centre (RCC) deploys helicopters independently into the region.

13:30



- SH2 to Opotiki will open 07.00-19.00 from Saturday. SH2 to Wairoa is open until 19:30.
- 1,100 customers remain without power.

- Starlink satellite connections are being sent to rural police stations.
- IT support to banks so they can distribute cash.
- Navy ship HMNZS Manawanui arrived at Eastland Port this morning after making a drop off of food supplies to Tokomaru Bay and Waipiro Bay. Will return to Tauranga to restock tomorrow before it returns with more supplies.
- Spark has restored 72 of 152 cell phone sites which lost connectivity.
- Civil Defence and MSD payments available.



▲ 16:00 IMT

17:30



SH2 to Wairoa will close at 19.30 tonight.

SAT 18TH FEB

▲ 07:00 IMT



11:00



- Plenty of fuel in the city with 100,000 litres arriving yesterday.
- No food shortages. Supermarkets have eftpos.
- Many cell phones now have text and call capabilities.
- Power back on for most people.

- Fibre cable still out.
- 85 homes yellow stickered, 10 red stickered.



▲ 12:00 IMT

▲ 17:00 IMT



18:30

19:00



Second special run of the NZ Herald delivered to all Gisborne letterboxes.



- Vehicles can move freely to Opotiki and Wairoa between 7am-7pm daily.
- SH35 between Tolaga Bay and Te Puia Springs remains closed.

23:00



Police urging affected people to register as safe online.

SUN 19TH FEB

8:00 IMT ▲

12:00 IMT ▲

17:00 IMT ▲



11:30

- Internet and phone services are coming back up slowly across the region.
- Continue to conserve water. Water is safe to drink (no need to boil)

