



11 June 2007

Ambulance storm response

Heavy rains and high winds across New South Wales over the past few days have placed significant demands on the Ambulance Service.

Central Coast and Hunter district ambulance officers provided 949 responses on Friday, an increase of more than 300 on average expected workload.

Air Ambulance Emergency Helicopters responded to **51** incidents. Most notably Westpac rescue helicopters 1 and 2¹ rescued the 21 crew of the "Pasha Bulker" off Nobbys Beach in Newcastle on Friday morning. Other helicopter retrieval missions included winching people from rooftops, surf and from dangerous flood waters.

To meet the increased demand, off duty staff were recalled and crews from surrounding areas including Sydney and the Central Coast were deployed to the area. Local ambulance officers also worked extended shifts in treacherous conditions even, in some cases, when their own homes had been threatened or damaged.

Mr Greg Rochford, Chief Executive of the Ambulance Service of NSW today praised the response from the community and emergency workers.

"This is a time of great distress and sadness for so many community members and our thoughts are with those who have suffered as a result of the extreme weather over the last few days."

"I would like to thank Ambulance staff who have worked alongside thousands of other emergency workers throughout the long weekend to respond to emergencies and to help coordinate resources and communication between agencies. In particular, we have worked closely and effectively with Hunter New England Area Health Service personnel"

¹ The Westpac rescue helicopters operate as part of the Ambulance Emergency Medical System helicopter network with ambulance clinical and rescue crew.



Ambulance Service of New South Wales

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“I have been impressed by the orderly and sensible response to this crisis from both emergency workers and the general public alike. I have no doubt that these efforts have contributed to reducing the level of loss and suffering.”

Many of the calls for ambulance assistance have been to persons suffering mild hypothermia from exposure to flood waters, and to assist people trapped by the flood waters in their cars or houses. Other common calls have included wounds from storm debris, slips and falls from slippery floors, and motor vehicle accidents on wet roads.

Some of the incidents attended by Ambulance during the last two days are attached.

Ambulance Triple Zero call takers and dispatchers responded to record numbers of triple zero calls during the past few days.

Support and administrative staff also require recognition for the important assistance and cooperation provided to operational officers.

~ ENDS ~

For further information or local media opportunities please contact Ambulance Media on (02) 9320 7796.



Some of the incidents attended by Ambulance over the last two days

- A 61 year old female at Hawks Nest struck by a falling tree suffering a serious head injury.
- A man in his 20s in Rose Bay hit by a roof tile blown from six storeys above.
- An elderly couple at Clarence Town who died when their vehicle was swept off a bridge and became submerged in high flood waters.
- Approximately 66 children and adults at New Lambton who required rescue when their preschool was flooded in. Some suffered shock but none required transport to hospital.
- Two young boys at Maryland who were pulled from storm water, one suffering a near-drowning.
- At Somersby after a roadway collapse 5 persons in a car were washed into flood water, and subsequently died.
- A man in his 40s at East Seaham required urgent air evacuation after a quad bike accident left him with a broken leg in rising flood waters.
- A 15 year old boy at Adamstown was pulled from a storm water drain suffering a serious head injury.
- A man and his rescuer at Leconfield suffered hypothermia as a result of prolonged exposure to flood waters.
- A minibus was swept sideways in flood waters at Narara, trapping the driver. He was freed and found to be suffering from hypothermia.
- At Wyong 65 residents of an aged care facility required evacuation due to rising flood waters. Ambulance and SES worked into the evening to relocate 34 stretcher patients to Gosford Hospital and 31 walking patients to a local golf club.



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- At Singleton 44 nursing home residents, including 37 stretcher patients were relocated to Singleton Hospital with the assistance of the Australian Army.
- 14 patients from Maitland Hospital were transferred to Kurri Hospital to ensure adequate hospital beds were held available prior to the flood peak.
- Emergency medical supplies were transferred from Sydney to replace stock in the Ambulance Service store damaged by flood waters.