

What's that about?

Why doesn't Hydro Tasmania provide **flood warnings**?



Flood warnings and alerts

The Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) provides a flood warning service for Tasmanian rivers. The Bureau delivers this service through its Flood Warning Centre and Regional Forecasting Centre based in Hobart.

The warnings they provide are used by the Police, State Emergency Service (SES) and local authorities to plan their emergency responses.

It's really important that there is a single source of information during a potential flood emergency. Mixed messages can lead to confusion, unnecessary damage to property and even lives being lost.

Hydro Tasmania assists BoM with its forecasting by providing the data that we collect, but more on that in a moment.

Where to get BoM flood warnings

The Bureau issues *River Alerts* to the general public via a fax, sms or email whenever a designated rain

or river station exceeds a 'threshold condition'. This service is mainly for farmers, industry and councils within the floodplain, adjacent to rivers, who may need to shift, modify or protect valuable assets (stock, pumps, fences and other equipment).

A *River Alert* is not a guarantee of flooding just an advisory that certain conditions have been exceeded.

More detailed *Flood Warnings* are sent to the media and agencies that have an emergency management responsibility (such as SES/Tasmanian Police). They are also posted on the Bureau of Meteorology website.

More information on the flood warning services provided by the BoM is available at:

<http://www.bom.gov.au/water/floods/floodWarningServices.shtml>

The Tasmanian flood warnings are available at:

<http://www.bom.gov.au/tas/warnings/index.shtml>



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Hydro Tasmania's interactions with BoM during a flood

Hydro Tasmania assists BoM by providing flow, water level and rainfall data which uses it as part of its flood prediction models. We've been providing this information for over 10 years. This information is incorporated into BoM's flow forecasting models and assists them in deciding when to issue a flood warning or flood alert.

During a flood event we are in regular contact with the Tasmanian flood warning officers at BoM.

Typically Hydro Tasmania collects rainfall, level and flow data every 4-6 hours at our monitoring stations. This is plenty of data for our normal operations. However, when there is high rainfall, which may lead to flooding, we retrieve the data more frequently – so both Hydro Tasmania and BoM can use more up to date information for making decisions.

Can Hydro Tasmania help to decrease the size of a flood?

The dams operated by Hydro Tasmania can't simply stop any potential flood.

If a large amount of rainfall is predicted and there is a high degree of confidence about the forecast then the water level in some of the lakes may be able to be lowered - we call it 'drawn down'. The amount that is able to be drawn down depends on the existing water inflows and the size of the outlet.

We do not draw down a lake every time there is some chance of heavy rain. If the forecast rain does not fall then it can take many days to refill the lake. This causes serious problems for our power generation system - power generation would be constrained at the downstream power stations which can have repercussions for security of power supply.

We assess the situation on a case-by-case basis and where it can be accommodated we do draw down lakes to help reduce the risk of flooding.

