CYCLONE GILLIAN. WARNINGS, AWARENESS AND PREPAREDNESS

A HOUSEHOLD SURVEY CONDUCTED BY THE DISASTER STUDIES CENTRE OF JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY OF NORTH QUEENSLAND, ON BEHALF OF THE BUREAU OF METEOROLOGY

TOWNSVILLE, FEBRUARY 1997

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RESEARCH METHOD

A survey of 200 households was carried out in all urban suburbs of Townsville and Thuringowa between 18th and 20th February, one week after cyclone Gillian had approached the coast of Townsville on Wednesday 12th February. Households were selected randomly within each suburb. The number of households selected from each suburb was based upon the number of households enumerated in each suburb in the 1991 census. Thus the sample is proportionately representative of all communities within the urban area of Townsville and Thuringowa.

Data were collected by survey, using a questionnaire instrument which was administered directly to each respondent by a team of interviewers. This enabled both a rapid turn around of interviews as well as the collection of open ended comments or opinions. Answers were coded and analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). This report was written by David King, Director of the Centre for Disaster Studies, and interviews were carried out by Bretta Girling-King, Kate Girling-King, Tom Measham, Pip Moore, Jay Quadrio, and Tim Pulsford

RESULTS

Table 1. Public perception of cyclone warnings

Attitude to warning advice	Number of respondents	Percent
False alarm	22	11.1
Over reaction	53	26.6
Close call	82	41.2
Near Miss	28	14.1
Other	14	7.0

Table 2. Expectations of the Impact of the Weather Based on BOM advice

Weather impact	Number of respondents	Percent
Weather was less than expected	114	57.3
Weather was more than expected	7	3.5
Weather was as expected	78	39.2

Table 3. Did You Plot the Cyclone on a Map

Did you plot the cyclone	Number of respondents	Percent
Yes - in the telephone book	25	12.5

Yes - on another map	35	17.5
No	139	69.5
Other response	1	0.5

Table 4. Perception of BOM Statements on Cyclone Precautions

Preparation advice	Number of respondents	Percent
Very useful	68	34.2
Of some use	94	47.2
Of No use	37	18.6

Table 5. Perception of BOM Statements on Cyclone Precautions by Age

Age	Very useful	Some use	No use	Row percent
Under 30 years	12	25	7	22.1
30 to 60 years	43	57	19	59.8
Over 60 years	13	12	11	18.1
Column Percent	34.2	47.2	18.6	100

Table 6. Perception of BOM Statements on Cyclone Precautions by Occupational Category

Occupation Category	Very useful	Some use	No use	Row percent
Professional/Managerial	8	10	3	10.6
Clerical	11	9	7	13.6
Skilled Tradespersons	14	16	6	18.1
Semi skilled	6	10	0	8.0
Unskilled	4	7	6	8.5
Others *	16	32	5	26.6
Retired	9	10	10	14.6
Column percent	34.2	47.2	18.6	100

Table 7. Opinion on Other Cyclone Information in Telephone Book

Other information	Number of respondents	Percent
Very useful	21	10.5
Of Some use	33	16.5
Of No use	10	5.0
Did not know it was there	136	68.0

Table 8. Understanding of Cyclone Warning Advice

Cyclone Advice	Number of respondents	Percent
Easy to understand	189	94.5
Difficult to understand	10	5.0
Other response	1	0.5

Table 9. Source of Information on the Approach of the Cyclone

Source of information	Number of respondents	Percent
Commercial TV	81	40.5
ABC TV	13	6.5
Commercial Radio	76	38.0
ABC Radio	11	5.5
Friends and relatives	5	2.5
Employer	2	1.0
Other source	12	6.0

Table 10. Knowledge of the Location of the Nearest Cyclone Shelter

Knowledge of nearest shelter	Number of respondents	Percent
Yes	23	11.6
No	176	88.4

Table 11. Time of Hearing Cyclone Alert

Time of Hearing Alert	Number of respondents	Percent
Before 1 pm	86	43.0
Between 1 and 3 pm	26	13.0
After 3 pm	8	4.0
Not at all	79	39.5
Other response	1	0.5

Table 12. Time that Employer Instructed Employees to Leave

Time sent home	Number of respondents	Percent
Before 1 pm	20	22.0
Between 1 and 3 pm	17	18.7
After 3 pm	6	6.6
No instruction to leave	45	49.5
Other response	3	3.3

Table 13. Source of Information on Early Closure of Schools

Information on school closure	Number of respondents	Percent
School contacted you	14	22.6
You contacted school	3	4.8
Employer/public address	5	8.1
TV/radio	20	32.3
Unaware	3	4.8
Other source of information	17	27.4

Table 14. Level of Staisfaction of Parents with Early Closure Arrangements

Level of satisfaction with school	Number of respondents	Percent

closure		
Very dissatisfied	8	12.7
Dissatisfied	7	11.1
No opinion	7	11.1
Satisfied	29	46.0
Very satisfied	12	19.0

Table 15. Information on Early School Closure by Level of Parental Satisfaction

Information source	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	No opinion	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Row percent
School contacted you	1	1	1	7	4	23.0
You contacted school	0	0	2	0	0	3.3
Employer/public address	1	0	1	2	1	8.2
TV/radio	2	2	2	9	5	32.8
Unaware	1	1	1	0	0	4.9
Other source	2	3	0	10	2	27.9
Column percent	11.5	11.5	11.5	45.9	19.7	100