

Cyclone Safety

A cyclone is a storm accompanied by high speed whistling and howling winds. It brings torrential rains.

Where does a cyclone come from?

A cyclonic storm develops over tropical oceans like the Indian Ocean and Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. Its strong winds blow at great speed, which can be more than 118 kilometers per hour.

What are the visible signs of a cyclone?

When a cyclonic storm approaches, the skies begin to darken accompanied by lightening and thunder and a continuous downpour of rain.

How does a cyclone affect us?

- ❑ A cyclone causes heavy floods.
- ❑ It uproots electricity supply and telecommunication lines. Power supply shuts down and telephones stop functioning.
- ❑ Road and rail movements come to halt because floods damage rail tracks and breach roads. Rail movements are also disrupted because of communication failure.
- ❑ The inclement weather conditions also disrupt Air services. Seaports stop work due to high winds, heavy rains and poor visibility. Sometimes ships overturn or are washed ashore. The high speed winds bends and plucks out trees and plants.
- ❑ A cyclone tears away wall sidings and blows off roofs of houses.
- ❑ Houses collapse and people are rendered homeless. In villages kachha houses get blown away. The speeding winds cause loose metal and wooden sheets to fly turning them to potential killers. Broken glass pieces can cause serious injuries.
- ❑ The floodwaters can take time to recede.
- ❑ The floodwaters can turn the fields salty.
- ❑ Bridges, dams and embankments suffer serious damages.
- ❑ Floods wash away human beings and animals and make water unfit for drinking. There can be outbreak of diseases like Cholera, Jaundice or Viral fever due to intake of impure water. Water gets contaminated because of floating corpses of animals and human beings and mixing of sewage stored food supplies, get damaged.

Which areas are exposed to a cyclone in Gujarat?

In Gujarat, the Saurashtra-Kachchh region experiences a cyclone. The port towns of Veraval, Porbandar, Jamnagar, Dwarka, Okha, Kandla and Bhavnagar and other minor port towns suffer most.

Does a cyclone follow a particular path?

It is often difficult to predict where a cyclone will strike. When it starts moving from oceans (in Gujarat it is Arabian Sea) towards the land area, a cyclone can change track and hit areas other than those anticipated earlier.

Has any early warning system been evolved for the occurrence of a cyclone?

Yes. In India, the Indian Meteorological Department has developed a four-stage warning system for a cyclone.

How does the system operate?

This warning is about the possibility of a cyclone when a low pressure depression develops in oceans. For Gujarat, the development of such a depression in the Arabian Sea is indicative of a cyclone attack.

The Alert stage

This warning is given 48 hours prior to the time when a cyclone is expected to hit the land.

The Warning stage

This is the stage when a cyclone gets formed. The warning is given 24 hours before the anticipated time of arrival of a cyclone.

Cyclone arrival

This warning is issued 12 hours before a cyclone is due to hit the land. The warning gives information about cyclone and will continue until the winds subside. In sea ports, danger signal are hoisted about the impending cyclone.

From where can people access cyclone storm warnings?

Warnings about storms, their intensity and the likely path they may take are regularly broadcasted by radio and television network continuously until the storm passes over.

What to do before and during a cyclone.

- Have your dwellings checked before a cyclone season starts and carry out whatever repairs that are needed.
- Talk to children and explain about cyclones without scaring them.
- Create storm awareness by discussing effects of a cyclonic storm with family members so that everyone knows what one can and should do in an emergency. This helps to remove fear and anxiety and prepares everyone to respond to emergencies quickly.
- Keep your valuables and documents in containers, which cannot be damaged by water.
- Keep information about your blood group.
- Keep lanterns filled with kerosene, torches and spare batteries. These must be kept in secure places and handy.
- Make plans for people who are either sick, suffer from disabilities, aged and children.
- Store up at least seven-day stock of essential food articles, medicines and water supply.

- Keep blankets & clothes ready for making beds. Also keep cotton bandages and several copies of photographs of family members in case they are needed for identification purposes after the storm.
- Store some wooden boards so that they can be used to cover windows.
- Keep trees and shrubs trimmed. Remove damaged and decayed parts of trees to make them resist wind and reduce the potential for damage. Cut weak branches and make winds blow through.
- All doors, windows and openings should be secured.
- Continue to listen to warning bulletins and keep in touch with local officials. Keep radio sets in working condition. Battery powered radio sets are desirable.
- Evacuate people to places of safety when advised.
- Take steps to protect your assets.
- Store extra drinking water in covered vessels.
- Remain calm.

What one should not do during a Cyclone attack?

- During the storm do not venture out unless advised to evacuate.
- If you have a vehicle and wish to move out of your house, leave early before the onset of a cyclone. It is often best to stay at home
- Avoid remaining on the top floor of dwellings. Stay close to the ground.

- Fishermen are advised not to venture out into the sea. They should keep boats and rafts tied up in a safe place.
- Avoid taking shelters near old and damaged buildings or near trees.
- Do not touch power lines. One may get electrocuted.

What to do after the storm.

- Watch out for broken glass and other sharp items in debris.
- Watch out for snakes and insects. Try to call for help.
- Listen to the advice of local officials and emergency workers.
- Be sure that the storm has subsided before venturing out.
- It is advisable to wait for the "all clear message" on radio and TV networks.
- Wait for emergency relief teams to arrive. It may take a little time before relief becomes effective.
- Stay away from flooded areas.
- Fishermen should wait for at least 24 hours before resuming fishing.
- Volunteer to help people who may need assistance like:
 - Bringing evacuated people back home and in recording damages suffered
 - Rendering first aid to the wounded
 - Donating blood
 - Locating places where dead bodies can be kept until they are disposed off
 - Organizing clearing-up so that normalcy returns as soon as possible