

SAFETY ALERT #2



WATER SAFETY DURING STORMS

As Canberra continues to experience above average rainfall, the risk of flash flooding in our waterways is increased. Children and young people should be reminded to stay away from stormwater drains and pipes in the local areas and should be educated about the dangers of stormwater.

The issue

Stormwater drains and systems are dangerous and unpredictable during dry times however, the risks significantly increase after high rainfall. It is timely that we remind children and young people of the dangers associated with playing in or near in stormwater drains.

Stormwater risks

Children or young people playing around or near stormwater systems are at risk at any time in dry or wet weather.

Stormwater drains can be open channels and usually have no fencing and meaning they are easily accessible to children and young people.

Dangers and risks exist due to:

- Water in the drains rising quickly and unexpectedly, even when it's not raining in the local area.
- Challenges related to children and young people exiting a stormwater drain quickly, if needed.
- Shallow water being powerful and could knock a child or young person over.
- Slippery surfaces due to slime build up increases risk of slips and falls.
- Drains can contain pollution like debris, dangerous chemicals, and dangerous bacteria.

Storm education and water safety

Educating children and young people about the dangers of accessing or playing in and around Canberra's urban waterway systems is vital.

Schools are encouraged to discuss water safety and stormwater dangers with students, particularly as Canberra experiences unusually high volume of rainfall at your next upcoming assembly or in class. Parents should also be reminded through the school newsletter to talk with their children about the risks.

Water safety education resources

ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA) conducts a community awareness campaign yearly with the [StormSafe](#) program. As part of this campaign, they offer school visits to talk about preparing, responding and recovering from storms and floods and a range of resources.

As summer approaches it is also important to consider water safety more generally. Below are some resources that may be useful for raising water safety awareness at your school:

[Royal Life Saving Australia](#) have developed a general 'Water Smart' education program which provides classroom-based resources for students from preschool to year 10.

The [Aqua Safe Water Safety and Awareness Program](#) is a joint initiative between Royal Life Saving ACT and the ACT Government, through the Education Directorate. The program is designed for Year 2 students attending ACT public schools and consists of a 10-day block of pool-based sessions and 5 x 40-minute classroom sessions.

If stormwater blockages or overflow are an issue at or near your school

As heavy rains and debris place extra burden on the stormwater network, blockages and overflow can occur which can present danger to people and damage to property. If you see issues with the stormwater network at or near your school, call Access Canberra on 13 22 81 to arrange an inspection.

In a stormwater emergency

Call ACT Police on 000 and inform your Director of School Improvement (DSI) when practical.

All student incidents must be reported in the School Administration System (SAS). Notifiable incidents for students and staff must be reported on Riskman immediately.

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Important Contacts

For further information and advice please contact:

EDU Work Health and Safety Hotline

T: 02 6207 0614 or E: whs.edu@act.gov.au