

Crisis Management Case Studies



Tropical Cyclone Ului, a Category 3 storm system with winds gusts of up to 200 kilometres, crossed the north Queensland coast at 1:00am, Sunday 21 March 2010. The impact caused widespread but moderate damage across the region and cut power for several days to an estimated 60,000 homes and businesses between Airlie Beach and Townsville.

Maxi Action

www.maxiaction.com.au/

Maxi Action has been operating high quality day-long sailing adventures to the Whitsunday Islands for the past 16 years. Guests experience a cruise to destinations such as Whitehaven Beach, Blue Pearl Bay as well as spectacular local reef diving spots. Maxi Action's vessel, Maxi Ragamuffin, is one of the great icons of Maxi yacht racing, contesting eight Sydney to Hobart races and taking line honours no less than three times. At 80ft, she is also one of the largest and fastest boats sailing the Whitsundays region.

Maxi Action operates out of Shute Harbour and employs 10 casual workers.

1. Risk Management

Maxi Action's Business Plan does include a section on risk management. Nevertheless, because the region is vulnerable to serious weather events, the company also has a separate and much more detailed Cyclone Management and Action Plan.

2. Cyclone Warnings

There was adequate time to prepare for Ului. Maxi Action's management began tracking the cyclone's path on the preceding Wednesday, three days before Ului hit. Management followed media reports and referred to the Bureau of Meteorology website for more comprehensive information.



3. Preparations

On the Thursday, when Management knew Ului was heading straight for the coastline, preparation moved into full swing. The Cyclone Management Plan was activated. Built to withstand heavy ocean conditions Maxi Ragamuffin has had plenty of experience in wild waters. For her owners, riding out the storm safely meant first suspending cruise operations. As the weather had been severe for a number of days, cancellations had already been done and bookings were suspended for at least one week prior to Ului. Owner, Skipper and Deckhand attached the cyclone bridle and made sure the vessel and all onboard sails and equipment were either secured or removed. Maxi Ragamuffin was then put on her mooring at Shute Harbour.



Meanwhile, in the office, management diverted the phone system to mobile phones to ensure all telephones lines were still operational.

Owner and crew then turned their attention to their personal essential items such as fuel for vehicles, extra long-life food supplies, gas, batteries, getting cash out, charging all mobile phones and cameras, as per their Cyclone Management and Action Plan.

4. The Impact

Ului slammed into Airlie Beach in the very early hours of Sunday morning. While Maxi Ragamuffin was fully prepared to meet the storm front, other boats were not.

At the height of the storm a barge that had been moored close by dragged its mooring and smacked into Maxi Ragamuffin causing her mooring to become loose and also drag. Maxi Ragamuffin then dragged her mooring across Shute Harbour, smashing into the Shute Harbour Jetty and causing major damage to her Portside and fairly large sections of the deck, the mast and rigging. Maxi Ragamuffin then spun around this time causing damage to the Stern and Transom. Steel and wood parts from Shute Harbour Jetty were embedded in the Portside and Deck of Maxi Ragamuffin.

The incident closed down Maxi Action operations for almost three months.

The loss of business hit hard. In the midst of the crisis management had to advise all agents that the vessel would be out of action for sometime. However, without power or phones this took five days to achieve.

Everything, including sails, carpets, cushions, merchandise, supplies, equipment, etc. had to be unloaded from the Maxi Ragamuffin and stacked in Maxi Action Office. Many supplies had to be thrown out due to water damage and over the following weeks/months supplies that were not affected eventually reached their 'expiry date' and also had to be dumped. Carpets and cushions had to be cleaned and some needed total replacing.

On top of everything, dealing with cancellations and the inability to take forward bookings were ongoing anxieties.

With no work to pay their team of casuals many of the staff were forced to find work elsewhere.

Once the company had a firm completion date for repairs to the vessel, all booking agents were notified of the start date via email. Management also personally visited all local agents. We received very warm support from all agents. In readiness, new staff were recruited and trained; fresh supplies were ordered, loaded and packed onboard (merchandise, chocolate bars, chips, soft drinks, alcoholic beverages).

Maxi Action's insurance company was very good. Management contacted them within a few hours after personally assessing the damage to Maxi Ragamuffin. The insurance company quickly accepted that it was storm damage and all claims were processed smoothly. Maxi Action Management itemised all action taken, supplies purchased, and work carried out on their own spreadsheets, which assisted the insurance company with the claim.

5. Lessons Learned

1. In the case of Maxi Ragamuffin, very little could have been done to avoid the accident. Circumstances were clearly beyond the owner's control and nothing they did or didn't do would have made a difference to the outcome.
2. Boat security measures at Shute Harbour should have been more specific in their requirements. All boats should be equipped with Cyclone Management & Action Plans, particularly those left on moorings. There needs to be more comprehensive standards about preparing private and commercial vessels for cyclones. The Local Government Authority offered some good information but it was not boat specific.
3. Harbour and Marina operators could also decrease their fees as an incentive to boat owners to bring their vessels into berths rather than leaving them on moorings during severe weather events.
4. Overall, the owner thought the region, as a whole was well prepared for the cyclone and recovered reasonably well.

Log: Tuesday 23 March 2010

Vessel: Maxi Action ICM

Task: Unload Vessel

Licensed Charter yacht catering for up to 63 persons per day.

9 hours each: Five staff members.

Started at office at 7:30am. Finished at Office at 4:30pm.

Vehicles x 3: Landcruiser, Daihatsu Feroza, Toyota Crew Ute. These 3 vehicles made 3 return trips each from Maxi Action Office in Cannonvale to Shute Harbour Jetty, each time each all three vehicles were fully loaded. The 3 drivers were Kim, Anita & Wendy.

All items were carefully unloaded on to the dock at Shute Harbour, then carried up the ramp and along the jetty to the vehicles, loaded into the vehicles, driven back to office at Cannonvale then unload and stacked neatly and out of the weather. Some of the items below (especially the sails) are extremely heavy and it took all 5 of us to carry each of them from the vessel to the vehicle.

Items unloaded from vessel:

- Head Sail (unfurled, flaked and then removed from vessel, all 5 of us required to do this)
- Main Sail (removed from mast, folded up correctly and then removed from vessel, all 5 of us required to do this)
- Spinnaker
- Staysail
- Sail bag from Boom
- All cushions. Which were wet – some soaked through (1 full car load in itself)
- All carpets which were wet
- All raincoats (60+) and coat hangers some were wet
- All galley items (note all cans of drink removed from vessel filled 10 large plastic tubs):
 - Dry Stores: cups, plates, cutlery, napkins, tissues, roll towels, coffee tea, sugar, sweet biscuits, salt, pepper, chocolate bars, chips, cheezels, water crackers, cartons of water, soft drinks, beer, spirits and wine, long life milk, long life soy milk. Some items were wet and damaged including chips, chocolates, roll towels & napkins
 - Crew food items : Vegemite, Peanut butter, Cordials, Margarine, Cup of soups, mugs, bowls, plates, assorted teas, Milo
 - Cleaning products & cleaning Items. Note: we always keep a minimum of 2 each of cleaning items onboard (Dishwashing Detergent, Multipurpose, Cleaner, Jiff, Mr Sheen, Pinocleen, Windex, Domestos, Carpet Cleaner, Febreze, dust pan & brush, broom, chux roll, scourers, garbage bags, recycling bins)

- Cold Stores: soft drinks, water, spirits, beers, wines, condiments (2.5 kilo size jars Chutney, Mustard, Mayonnaise, French Salad Dressing, Sweet Chilli Sauce), milk, margarine, cordial. A few of these items were wet and damaged (some cans exploded) and had to be sorted and then thrown out
- All plastic containers + lids for storage of all the above items including stainless steel serving jugs, serving bowls, also large plastic serving bowls & large plastic serving utensils, 2 x large stainless steel kettles + lids. Cane basket for serving drinks.
- Numerous non-slip mats which lined all cupboards and drawers
- Large rubber matting for dive gear
- 1 x large cling wrap + dispenser
- 2 x fans for cooling passengers if below at lunchtime
- 1 x ghetto blaster
- 3 x small eskies for crew lunches
- 2 x large eskies for ice and cold drinks
- All Head items (note the 2 head onboard both have the same items in them so the below is X 2):
 - Linen (tea towels, hand towels, beach towels, head towels, table cloths), including some linen which was wet
 - Cleaning products
 - Spare toiletry items (toilet papers, tampons, sharps bin)
 - Bin for sanitary items, toilet brush and holder
- Merchandise Cupboard (Note we always keep a minimum of 2 of each of our clothing items onboard):
 - entire range of merchandise, including fleeces, polo shirts, long sleeve t-shirts, caps, coolers, post cards, posters, Whitsundays Book and Underwater cameras
 - EFTPOS equipment, forms and paperwork
 - sea sickness tablets
- Merchandise display – one of each item (additional to above)
- First Aid Supplies (2 x large boxes), boxes of disposable gloves, tissues, spare first aid supplies such as Betadine Spray, Cotton Wipes, Band Aids, Aeroguard, Stingoes – some of which were wet and damaged and had to be thrown away
- 4 x 2 ltr bottles of vinegar (for stingers)
- First Aid Oxygen & Tank
- Life Jackets (x 63) (this alone almost filled 2 cars)
- All SCUBA Dive Gear (including wetsuits)
- All stingers suits (5 large plastic tubs)
 - Over 200 stingers suits in sizes ranging from child 4 to adult XXXL. Many of these stinger suits were wet – some soaked through
- All snorkel equipment (7 full large plastic cartons) including:
 - Snorkels (child and adult sizes)
 - Masks (child and adult sizes)

- Fins (ranging in sizes from child 10 through to adult XXL)
- Spare parts / equipment and accessories for above (straps, snorkel keepers etc)
- Floatation Aids (boogie boards, inflatable life vests, pool noodles)
- Removal of all signage, permits and certifications from walls (Food Safety, Eco Certification, Registration Certificate, Pricelists for beverages and merchandise)
- Chart Table all necessary paperwork to run a charter yacht including:
 - Charts
 - Permit folders
 - Maintenance Folder
 - Operations Folders
 - Skipper Training & Induction Manuals
 - Deckhand Training & Induction Manuals
 - Hostess Training & Induction Manuals
 - Vessel Induction Sheets
- All Passenger Information, Pamphlets & Booklets on (some wet and damaged and had to be sorted and thrown out):
 - Great Barrier Reef, Marine Mammals, Corals & Polyps etc
 - Whitsundays Islands National Parks
 - Eco Certification
- Emptied and wiped out all fridges onboard
- Emptied and wiped out all cupboards onboard

1.5 hrs Wendy Ovenden

1pm - 2pm on Thursday 1st April 2010, 9:00am – 9:30am Tuesday 6th April 2010