

Gulf fisherman thought he 'was going to die' in Cyclone Trevor nightmare at sea

ABC Rural

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Cyclone Trevor is expected to hit the NT coast as a category four system.

(Supplied)

A commercial fisherman in the Gulf of Carpentaria says he feared for his life, when he was caught in rough seas as Cyclone Trevor crossed Cape York Peninsula on Tuesday night.

Mackerel fisherman Bruce Davey, said a lack of communication meant his crew were not aware of the cyclone's path until it was too late.

"At 4 o'clock [Tuesday afternoon] the weather wasn't too bad, but little did we know that eight hours later we'd be up to our crotch in crocodiles battling life-threatening 30 to 40 knot winds and 3 to 4 metre swells side-on as we steamed north [towards safety]," he said.

"It was 2 o'clock in the morning [Wednesday]; we couldn't see two inches in front of us because of the rain.

"We were caught in the open ocean and we were just getting smashed by these line squalls.

"I've been at sea 45 years and, mate, I was crapping myself I tell you."

Mr Davey said his crew, which is made up of family members, were not injured and are now safely anchored near Seisia near the tip of Cape York.



Bruce and Janita Davey enjoying calmer waters aboard the FV Wildcard.

(Supplied: NT Seafood Council)

Shortwave radio shutdown risking lives, fisherman says

Mr Davey said in life or death situations, such as the one he faced this week, having access to shortwave radio "would have certainly helped".

The [ABC controversially switched off its shortwave radio service in 2017](#), which Mr Davey said was a mistake.

"We haven't got the shortwave radio service anymore so we can't get any ABC radio and there was so much lightning and thunder with the monsoon trough that there was too much static to be able to get BoM [Bureau of Meteorology] on the old HF radio," he said.

"So we didn't even know there was a cyclone brewing out there, I was lucky my wife called up [on the satellite phone] and said 'Do you know there's a tropical low in the coral sea?'"

'You feel so helpless'

Mr Davey said the sea conditions in the Gulf near Mapoon were nothing short of terrifying as Cyclone Trevor approached, and he was thankful his family was safe.

"It's such a horrible feeling, you feel so helpless out here when you've got your kids, your family out there and Mother Nature is just giving you a battering and you've got nowhere to go," he said.

"You feel so helpless and insignificant out there and I just thank God we made it here safely and we're now sitting in anchorage."

Tropical Cyclone Trevor is expected to enter the Gulf of Carpentaria later tonight, where it is expected to re-intensify to a severe category 4 system.

The cyclone is expected to make landfall between Borroloola and Groote Eylandt on Saturday.

[Mass evacuations have been triggered for Gulf communities](#), including the population of around 1,500 people on Groote Eylandt.