



Dam clever: the Floodsax absorb water and then protect against flood

Goodbye to the sandbag

...and hello Floodsax, the high-tech answer to an age-old problem

By Lydia Brisbout

Specs:

- » Energised with water from a bucket, watering can, hose or even the flood water itself.
- » Within three minutes the bag will expand to the size of a "traditional" sandbag.
- » Five year shelf life.
- » **Home Pac:**
Contains five Floodsax with four measuring 45cm x 35cm and one measuring 90cm x 9cm. When energised with water they will absorb up to 12 litres. Designed to protect one door. Cost \$99 including gst.
- » **Commercial Pac:**
Contains 20 larger Floodsax measuring 45cm x 50cm. When energised with water they will absorb up to 22 litres. Designed for larger situations. Cost \$349 including gst.

THE UBIQUITOUS SANDBAG – FILLED WITH soil and stacked in great numbers as flood waters threaten – may soon be a thing of the past. Floodsax Australia, a social enterprise of the Brotherhood of St Laurence, has acquired the rights to distribute a high-tech derivative called Floodsax.

They weigh just 0.2 kg, making them easy to transport and use, but contain crystals that can absorb up to 22 litres of water.

The Floodsax then mould to their setting and function as a traditional sandbag. They are puncture-proof, biodegradable and last for up to eight weeks.

The innovative product has already proved its worth, being rushed into service during the Melbourne floods in March.

Seeing the flooding around CBD shops on the news, Floodsax Manager Grantley Reed distributed the super-absorbent sacks to businesses, helping them limit damage to their stock and premises and – in some instances – keep trading.

Floodsax Australia hopes to work with individuals, local councils and state emergency services to promote comprehensive disaster management plans for communities and businesses.

The Mackay Regional Council – which has dealt with several major floods over the past few years – has already recognised the value of Floodsax and is subsidising the purchase of "inflatable flood bags" by residents.

"With the extreme weather conditions that

have occurred this year in Australia, we have seen that a lot of these events happen very quickly," Mr Reed told *Insurance News*.

"Floodsax are so portable and easy to use they empower everybody to help protect their home or business against flooding and accidental water damage, and it only takes minutes to energise the bags and deploy them."

He said Floodsax are particularly good for the infirm or disabled who would struggle with traditional sandbags, as well as businesses in retail complexes where flooding in one shop can affect a large number of premises.

Brotherhood of St Laurence General Manager Social Enterprises Jeff Moon says Floodsax also offer great advantages to insurers.

"It would be beneficial for insurance companies to give a rebate on their premiums to people or businesses who purchased Floodsax, because they could save thousands of dollars on one single claim. And usually if there is a flash flood you have hundreds of claims, so there is a multiple effect."

He says the sacks are also useful in the aftermath of flooding or water damage, because they can be used to soak up and remove contaminated water.

Floodsax business packs and home packs are being distributed through hardware retailers.

Profits are returned to the community through Brotherhood of St Laurence programs assisting low income and vulnerable members of society. □