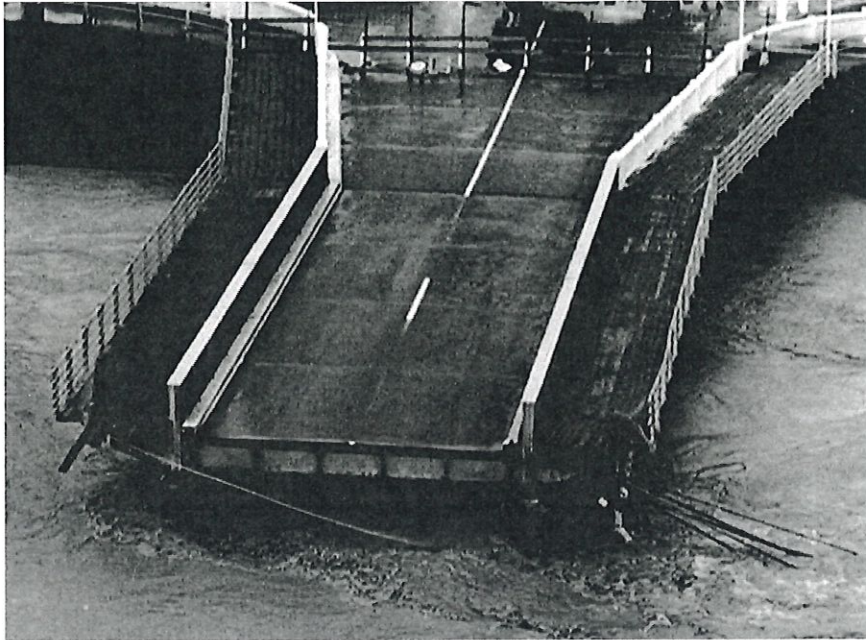


Cyclone Bola strikes

7 March 1988

MCH, 2020vvv

1988 p.191



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Cyclone Bola, one of the most damaging storms to hit New Zealand, struck Hawke's Bay and Gisborne–East Cape in March 1988. The weather system slowed as it moved over the area, bringing torrential rain for more than three days.

Worst affected was the hill country behind Gisborne. In places, more than 900 mm of rain fell in 72 hours, and one location had 514 mm in a single day – more rain than parts of Central Otago get in an average year.

The ensuing floods overwhelmed river stopbanks, damaged houses, knocked out bridges and sections of roads and railway lines, and destroyed parts of Gisborne's main water pipeline. Three people died in a car swept away by floodwaters, and thousands were evacuated from their homes.

Horticulture and farming losses amounted to \$90 million (equivalent to more than \$180 million today). Farmers lost large tracts of grazing land, and thick sediment from the ebbing floods smothered pastures, orchards and crops. The government's repair bill for the cyclone was more than \$111 million (\$225 million).

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