

# NATIONAL EMERGENCY



## RESPONSE

Official Journal of the Australian Institute of Emergency Services

VOLUME 25 NO. 1 SUMMER 2011/2012  
PRINT POST PUBLICATION NO. PP337586/00067

# YOUNG VOLUNTEER'S ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME



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Level 2, 673 Bourke Street, Melbourne  
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Ph: (03) 9937 0200  
Fax: (03) 9937 0201  
Email: admin@cwaustral.com.au  
ACN: 30 086 202 093

#### EDITORIAL TEAM

Editor: Kristi High  
Associate Editor: Bob Maul LFAIES

Send articles for inclusion to:  
Email: editor@aies.net.au

#### WEBSITE

www.aies.net.au

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Summer 2011/2012 • National Emergency Response

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**Bob Maul, LFAIES**

*General Secretary/Registrar*

AIES is pleased to announce the following emergency service people became members of the Institute between September and November 2011.

Sze Him Stephen Chueng	St John	NSW
Graham Etherton	Australian Red Cross	VIC
Andrew Feagan	SES	VIC
Peter Franklin	Ambulance	WA/SA
Marco Klomp	Police	VIC
Basil Lyon	CFA	VIC
Christine Macmillian	AMSA	ACT
Ken Pickard	CFA	VIC
Jamie Ranse	St John Ambulance	ACT
Anthony Rohead	Airport Rescue	ACT
Brad Wessling	St John Ambulance	QLD

## PROFILE

**Bernadene Hansen, MAIES**



**B**ernadene Hansen recently joined the AIES through the recommendations of members

Graeme Hurrell and Adrian Stafferton, suggesting that membership would assist in the further development of her skills and knowledge in emergency services.

Bernadene joined the lifesaving movement in 1999 at Mornington Life Saving Club in Victoria. Starting as a parent helper to the Nippers, she then moved to Club Captain, realising her interests laid in team management, training and the emergency services.

This then led to involvement in the development of clubs and training at a state and national level. A particular specialty of Bernadene's is inflatable rescue boat training.

Bernadene has recently been actively involved in training crews, drivers, training officers and assessors. She has also been involved in the review and implementation of safer operation and training practices.

This then led to organising search and rescue activities, with cross organisation involvement. By putting this together and pooling resources, skills and knowledge have been shared to be a positive step for emergency services.

Bernadene is a mother of six children, which she says helps keep her young, laugh, and feel supported. She also loves music, water and keeping fit – interests that help motivate her to continue to be actively involved in all things in life.

## EDITOR'S REPORT

**Kristi High**

**W**elcome to the Summer 2011/12 edition of *National Emergency Response*. And, what an issue it is.

We are very lucky to have a number of knowledgeable emergency management experts, who are also members of our Institute, contribute to the Journal this month.

Alastair Wilson, a 40 year veteran of emergency management and media in two countries, has shared two excellent articles with us. It is an honour to have his views published in our Journal.

Most people call him 'crazy', but Peter

Graham's article about a weekend at Sweers (would make a great movie title) shows us there is nothing crazy about getting together every couple of months for Volunteer Marine Rescue training.

One of our newest, and one of our youngest, members have got off to an early start in embracing our Journal by each contributing articles that centre on the sea. Bernadene Hansen recently joined the AIES and we thank her for taking an active role in the Institute. Mickael Gieules penned a thrilling article about his experiences on training sail ship Young Endeavour, as the AIES Young Volunteer of 2010.

Thank you also to Tracey Toovey, who is the Association Secretariat of the Australian and New Zealand Disaster and Emergency Management Conference EARTH: FIRE AND RAIN, which is supported by the AIES, and to Martin Boyle for his compelling sequel to last issue's cover story about search and rescue in the grueling conditions of Antarctica.

It has been a great year for the Institute, with a record number of members joining, and a growing list of contributors adding enormous value to our Journal. Thank you to each and every author and photographer. On behalf of the National Executive, I wish you all a very happy and safe holiday season.



# FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Alan Marshall, FAIES

*National President*

## CHANGE, THE FOCUS

A change is a structured approach to shifting or transitioning individuals, teams and organisations from a current state to a desired future state. Disaster resilience is a long-term outcome, which will require a long-term commitment with shared responsibilities and distribution of knowledge.

"Every time history repeats itself the price goes up."

The focus is an interoperability model combined with community resilience; it calls for an integrated, whole-of-nation effort encompassing enhanced partnerships, shared responsibilities. The Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission uses the expression 'shared responsibility' to mean increased responsibility for all. It is a better understanding of the risk environment, the disaster impacts, and an adaptive and empowering community that acts on this understanding of shared responsibility. It does not mean equal responsibility. There are some areas in which the state fire authorities will be more capable than individuals when it comes to identifying risk associated with bushfires. While the strategy focuses on natural disasters, the approach it articulates will also be applicable in preparing communities to deal with other disasters such as pandemics and terrorist events. The preparedness requires the full application of the interoperability planning model of accounting for emergency management and incident response contingencies within the context of the stress and chaos of a major effort.

## EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND PREPAREDNESS

The bush fire season, according to the advanced weather charts, looks to be another busy time. Are we prepared for any natural disaster using our emergency management principles?

The emergency management contributes to community safety through the reduction of the impact of emergency related events that can cause death, injury, loss of property and community disruption. It brings together the normal endeavours of government, voluntary and private agencies in a comprehensive, accountable and coordinated way through prevention, response and recovery. Preparedness – a state of being prepared and ready for action – is the exercising of measures to ensure that should an emergency occur, communities, resources and services are capable of coping with the effects. The planning process includes the identification of risks that are likely to affect the assets and people in the municipal district and the steps to be taken to address those risks. It also allows organisations involved in dealing with emergencies and their impacts, the opportunity to discuss the capabilities and to exercise the plans of other organisations and municipalities.

Planning documents are rarely referred to during an emergency. In fact, the need to refer to plans may indicate a lack of familiarity with the arrangements, communication methods and personnel.

The management task is to bring together in an integrated organised network, the resources of many agencies and individuals who can take appropriate and timely action to prevent or mitigate the emergency. It needs to be a community focused, an all hazards all agencies approach, which is confidence driven. The contribution of individuals and communities towards their own safety before and during emergencies must still be enhanced by being prepared, by the use of early warning systems, effective community training and involvement programs, secure methods of communication, including social networks.



## RESILIENCE PROGRAMS – VOLUNTEER AGENCIES

The Natural Disaster Resilience Program is provided by the Commonwealth Attorney General's Department to support state and territory initiatives to reduce the impact of natural disasters, enhance community resilience and support emergency volunteers. Each year, the Commonwealth will provide up to 50 per cent of the total cost of the proposals up to a set amount.

Volunteer agencies are called upon to provide resources within the limit of their means. Where a volunteer agency expends extraordinary funds providing resources for emergency response or recovery to the extent that it seeks financial reimbursement, it should notify the control agency, or the agency to which it is providing services, at the earliest possible opportunity, preferably before deployment commences.

## JOURNAL CONTRIBUTION AWARD

Keeping to the theme of our Journal, each year the General Council awards a contribution of a published article in *National Emergency Response*. I encourage you all to continue the delivery of your excellent articles to your magazine.

On behalf of the General Council of the Australian Institute of Emergency Services, I wish you all the best wishes for the festive season, continue networking, and stay healthy and safe. ●

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# WHAT REALLY IS RISK COMMUNICATION?



Alastair Wilson,  
MAIES FEMPA

Risk communication is a relatively new field of study, which has been concerned with the problems arising from the communication of scientific and technical assessments of risk to various sections of the public.

These problems have largely been construed as technical ones, such as how to transfer difficult material from experts to the general public with maximum effectiveness while minimising loss of accuracy and content. Perhaps because technical or practical concerns have dominated, debates that have occurred in the literature of risk analysis have had little impact on the field of risk communication.

A consequence of this is that studies of risk communication have tended to be asymmetrical. It is recognised that members of the public and community groups perceive risks differently from those who construct risk assessments, or commission them. If this disparity did not exist, risk communication would be a relatively straightforward business. It is generally assumed that expert risk assessments are accurate and correct. This being so, the self-imposed task of risk communicators is to disseminate various truths to an audience that is deficient in

some fundamental and obstructive way, beyond ignorance of the facts.

Those to whom risk assessments need to be communicated are perceived to lack reason or be hampered by an assortment of psychological and political disabilities – bias, special interest, ideological commitment, and so forth. The asymmetry arises both from the implicit model of communication at work (communication in one direction – top to bottom and from the knowing to the ignorant), and from the assumption that the expert communicators or assessors possess a series of positive attributes (rationality, political neutrality) that are denied to the public.

The notion that risk assessments might be socially constructed, ideologically driven, and politically contaminated, is rarely contemplated. Without wishing to prejudge the issue, the acknowledgement by risk communication analysts of some of the best research in risk assessment would not only restore balance but also offer the prospect of more effective communication.

An example of the asymmetrical model is provided in the work of Vincent Covello, Detlof von Winterfeldt and Paul Slovik, who have written extensively in this area. They provide a model of risk communication as a message originating at a source and being channelled to a receiver. Based on wide literature surveys, they summarise the problems that can arise in each of these four aspects of risk communication:

1. The **message** may contain significant uncertainties and be technically complex
2. The experts and communicators themselves, the **source**, may fail to gain the trust of their audience, fail to make clear the limitations of their knowledge, disagree with each other and lack an understanding of the interests and concerns of the public
3. The **media**, or **channel**, may sensationalise the issue and distort the message
4. The **receivers** of the message may have inaccurate perceptions of levels of risk, strong unshakeable beliefs, and overconfidence in the ability to avoid harm, and difficulties in understanding the information.

Not only must we raise, by direct action, the level of sophistication of the public's thinking about risk issues, but we must also do what we can to increase the number of people who can communicate effectively about risk.

Much risk communication is therefore purposefully undertaken to correct the public's false view of risk and draw it more in line with the correct view of the risk experts. However, risk experts and government officials are not the only ones that communicate about risk. A range of interest groups, environmentalists and community spokespeople communicate risk either by intention or accident. ●

## About Alastair Wilson

Alastair Wilson has enjoyed a four-decade career in the media and in emergency management, both in Australia and New Zealand. After time spent in the New Zealand Army, in an armoured regiment, he moved into the New Zealand Police Force.

His media career started as a radio journalist in New Zealand and on arrival to Australia in the 1970s, Alastair worked in commercial radio and television, the ABC, a stint in mainstream and community newspapers, and then into the fledgling industry called public relations in South Australia and Western Australia.

After a colourful decade managing public affairs he turned to freelance journalism. In 2000, an opportunity too good to miss presented itself in Canberra and he accepted a public affairs role within the Industry Department, then later the Immigration Department.

Three years later he wound up in the Attorney General's Department as media liaison officer for Emergency Management Australia.

For a number of years, Alastair lectured and trained in media issues management and crisis communications, mainly at the Australian Emergency Management Institute in Victoria. Now in semi-retirement, Alastair is focusing on facilitating workshops and exercises, training, running hypotheticals, and writing on topics related to crisis communications.

*Excerpt from: 'The Tangled Web of Risk Communication' by Sharon Beder*

# A WEEKEND AT SWEERS



The Gulf of Carpentaria zone for Volunteer Marine Rescue (VMR) is required to meet with the other units from the gulf zone every 12 weeks, as is the case with the other four, more southern, zones of VMR on the east coast. In August, a weekend zone meeting for the gulf was held on Sweers Island, located at the southern end of the gulf near Mornington Island.

**Peter (Crazy) Graham**

*Photos by: Susan Lee and Narelle Coates.*

*VMR Weipa and Gulf Zone President*

Unlike our east coast units that drive to their respective zone meetings and drive home afterwards, this is not the case for the gulf units. Weipa to the north has a steam of some 16 hours and Aurukun south of Weipa, with a similar time frame. Karumba is four hours, Burketown around two and Mornington Island unit with around an hour or so steaming. This is, of course, weather permitting.

As the units of the zone have very little contact with each other, or for that matter with any other search and rescue (SAR) assets, it is an opportunity not

to be missed when a zone meeting is held. The man responsible for the order of activities on the weekend was Paul Poole. Paul has been my long suffering vice president of the zone and fellow member of the state council for Volunteer Marine Rescue Association Queensland for the past 12 years.

Unlike our east coast cousins, where meetings tend towards the politics of the operation, gulf zone meetings are an opportunity to get in some combined training and learn new skills that are not always present in these remote units. Following an invitation to any member

from around the state to attend, Weipa had three crew from Currumbin, on the Gold Coast, fly into Weipa at his or her own expense. They joined the two crews taking Weipa's 10 metre Noosa Cat Rescue 1 down to Sweers. David Hodge from VMR Mackay also attended, in company with the Burketown vessel Firefly.

The Weipa crew set off late Thursday afternoon in moderate seas that deteriorated as the night went on. The Aurukun contingent was to join us but due to an electrical issue could not continue with the voyage. The Currumbin







*Jimmy Wilson on the Mornington Island VMR boat.*

group took turns at the wheel and found that the challenges were somewhat different to the Gold Coast with no points to navigate from, nor any lights or beacons for the next 500 or 600 kilometres. The Gold Coast boys were actually lapping up the experience of being bucketed around and gaining some serious open water helm time. By sun-up the next morning, and 1400 litres of fuel later, the rough weather had managed to stir up a bucket or two of sludge from the bottom of the port fuel tank, which resulted in a very slow port engine. It was decided that we would all head into Karumba and take it from there. As we approached the port, VMR Karumba's vessel Redemption came out and escorted us in.



*Tracking an Emergency Indicating Radio Beacon.*

Time was getting away from us, and Paul Poole who owns and operates Savannah Aviation as well as his VMR commitments. Paul offered an aircraft to pick us up at Karumba and take us on to Sweers. Subsequently, the Weipa contingent arrived on time, albeit minus our vessel. On arrival we were met by Tex Battle who operates the island and the small tourist fishing village with his partner Lyn. Tex and Co. has provided a radio watch for aircraft and vessels for more than 20 years, and assists in search and rescue operations in this very remote part of the country. Time was ticking and no time was lost in being shown our beds and meeting the rest of the crews, renewing old friendships, and making new ones.

The activities came thick and fast and kept all on their toes for the weekend. Guest speakers were John Rice and Chris Jones from Australian Marine Safety Authority (AMSA), who gave some interesting perspectives on where they, as an organisation, saw VMR in the big picture along with some very interesting background to some of AMSA's tougher SARs. John and Chris travelled from Canberra, and their input into the training with Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) tracking techniques was indeed very valuable.

It is a major morale boost for crews when the faceless organisations that call them out at 2am on a wet stormy night make the effort to show some appreciation and turn up and thank the crews face-to-face. Personally, I thought the way the AMSA gentlemen handled the situation after activating a real time beacon instead of the test one was quite inspiring.

While some crews were combing the island locating beacons, others were being skilled in how to survive around helicopters. A good old southern American, complete with rebel yell and two tours of Vietnam under his belt, conducted these sessions. Richard Guy is his name and his advice and war stories held each and every session spellbound. After each theory session the groups were taken out to the lawn beside the meeting area and introduced to a real live set of spinning helicopter blades. Paul had weaved his magic and secured a helo for the weekend. It was indeed interesting to note just how low the crews approached the running helo after a couple of head lopping stories and photos. At this point, I would like to thank Rick for bringing his helo all the way from Cloncurry to ensure a real hands-on experience with the machine.



Top: Burketown Rangers share their knowledge. Above: Inflating the life raft demonstration.

One of the absolute highlights of the weekend for me was the presentation by Terrance Taylor (Wrangler) and Vernon Yanner who are members of VMR Burketown and are also active members of the indigenous Land and Sea Rangers programme. If these two are any indication of the standard of rangers this programme is turning out, then it is money well spent. Following their presentation it was obvious to all units that this programme is one of great importance, and as VMR in the gulf we must support and assist in any way possible. The gathering was

most impressed with the state-of-the-art, hand held device that assists the rangers in the field. It will identify by photos the different types of illegal vessels that come into the zone. It can also assist in determining where washed up drift nets come from. The location can be downloaded in real time. It can even record conversations of the rangers with fishermen and at a later date be mentored by experts as to how they handled the encounter. The list goes on and on. The passion these two have for the tasks at hand was certainly infectious.



The gulf zone is an end-of-the-road place where all sorts of very interesting folk end up living, and marine rescue can take on a very different outlook. Take the Burketown VMR for example. Here, 160 people live on a salt pan in the middle of nowhere. A call out begins with a tractor ride down the main street and out across the huge expanse of the salt pans. After kilometres of salt pans there is the boat ramp, more like a mudslide that enters the Albert River at right angles to the current. This makes for challenging entry and exits, particularly when the river runs flat out during the three months or more of the wet season. Next challenge is the high speed twisting, turning, river journey. Avoiding the rocks, bars and ox bow bends, that have you heading north, then south, north again and back to south, you will eventually be delivered to the unmarked, unlit mud delta. Now it is just a simple matter of finding your way out to sea through this ever shifting maze so you can now begin whatever

*Exercise in tracking an Emergency Indicating Radio Beacon.*



it is you have been tasked to do. Of course, this is more difficult when the operation is carried out at night.

Meanwhile, it is still Saturday on Sweers and there is life raft drills in the ocean. All carried out after the appropriate warnings on the abundant marine predators. Other vessels were out chasing beacons while others were engaged in beach refuelling and the dangers involved there in – crocodiles being high on the list. Back at base camp, it was all about how to keep all your fingers when adjusting a tow line. Time was also spent on other units' vessels learning how this and that operated, or discussing a better way of doing things. That night, it was a chance for all to catch up and find out what's been happening in the corners of the zone and to get some one-on-one time with the guest speakers. Sunday morning saw a hearty breakfast followed by the zone meeting and the Annual General Meeting. Robert Brock, the state training officer for VMR,

*(A) vital aspect of these meetings is the sense of belonging they give to these remote units to the bigger family of SAR, not only in Queensland, but nationally.*

gave a presentation on where we are statewide and what the future may hold for the association. This was followed by John Rice being given the chair to declare all positions vacant and calls for nominations. No other nominations were received so the same result as in the past 12 years was returned – myself as President and Paul Poole Vice President.

It is vital that these more remote units can access this very -on approach to training. They have little, if any, contact with other units year in and year out. Training manuals are all very well and good but the standard of numeracy and literacy in some of

these units does not always allow crews to gain their full potential at times, making this type of weekend training so much more meaningful. The other vital aspect of these meetings is the sense of belonging they give to these remote units to the bigger family of SAR not only in Queensland, but nationally. Needless to say, if while reading this you think your organisation could contribute to these weekends and assist in any way, please get in contact.

Sunday lunch saw us all heading off home so we can do it all over again in another 12 weeks in yet another part of this fascinating part of Australia. ●

# IN BRIEF

## BEYONDBLUE



AIES is encouraging all members to look after their own mental health, and watching out for their co-workers, by seeking support from *beyondblue*, the national mental health initiative. *beyondblue* provides a national focus and community leadership to increase the capacity of the broader Australian community to prevent depression and respond effectively. The organisation was founded in 2000, and aims to build a society that understands and responds to the personal and social impact of depression, works actively to prevent it, and improves the quality of life for everyone affected. Depression and anxiety are illness – not weaknesses, and with the right treatment most people recover. To find out more about depression, anxiety and related conditions, available treatments, and where to get help call *beyondblue* on 1300 22 4636 or visit [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

## EUREKA CHALLENGE

Almost 1900 participants took on the Eureka Challenge in Melbourne in November, raising \$230,000 for charity partners Interplast and Whitelion. The Emergency Services Challenge was fully booked with around 100 participants including personnel from MFB, Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, CFA, and Aviation Rescue and Fire Fighting, some of whom travelled from country Victoria, plus a group of firefighters from New Zealand. The fastest team for the Emergency Services Challenge was a group of firefighters with the team name *Rescue Me* – made up of Scott McGraw (who actually climbed three times on the day), Steve Axup, Sandy Hearn, and Kylie Evans.

The fastest overall male was Mark Bourne with a time of 8 minutes 22 seconds, and the fastest overall female was the reigning champion Alice McNamara with a time of 9 minutes 33 seconds.



## EARTH: FIRE & RAIN

AIES is supporting the Australian and New Zealand Disaster and Emergency Management Conference EARTH: FIRE & RAIN to be held in Brisbane on 16-18 April 2012. The Conference will provide a forum to examine the issues surrounding natural and man-made hazards. Delegates will have more than 50 presentations to choose from consisting of keynote addresses, concurrent sessions and workshops over the three-day conference. Emergency services managers, policy makers, government researchers, academics, planners, risk assessors, insurers and financial institutions are encouraged to attend. For more information go to [www.anzdm.com.au](http://www.anzdm.com.au), contact Joint Association Conference Coordinator Angela Stuart on 07 5502 2068 or email [admin@anzdm.com.au](mailto:admin@anzdm.com.au)

This conference is a joint initiative of the Australian Institute of Emergency Services (Queensland Division), the Australian and New Zealand Mental Health Association Inc and the Association for Sustainability in Business Inc.

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# SAVING LIVES IN THE SURF



**Bernadene Hansen, MAIES**

In September, 34 volunteer members from 16 life saving clubs across Victoria headed to Woodside Beach Surf Life Saving Club to take part in a search and rescue exercise that took place out of McLoughlans Beach on the state's east coast. The exercise was an upturned boat with four people missing.

The undertaking of the exercise was the brainchild of Adrian Stafferton from Venus Bay SLSC and Graeme Hurrell, Woodside Beach SLSC. They believe that for the organisation to grow operationally as an emergency service, exercises like these need to happen. Their aims were to mentor individuals in developing skills, which would then assist those individuals to take the acquired knowledge back to their clubs, districts and regions. It also was seen as an opportunity to identify organisational strengths and weaknesses, and develop stronger training and operational processes to fill the gaps. Another was to see how well, when resources such as inflatable rescue boats and jet skis from various locations were brought together, actually worked.

Unit Commander Paynesville Water Police Sergeant Alan Rice and Gippsland Water Police Senior Constable Jenkin Steed also attended the day. Our initial plan, after talks with Senior Constable Graeme Shoobert, was to have them assist in providing water safety and observe the exercise. They must have felt that we had that well covered as they shadowed the Officer in Charge



*Top: The search and rescue exercise was successful with all missing persons located.*

*Above: Members from 16 life saving clubs took part in a training exercise on Victoria's east coast recently.*

and the Search Forward Commanders providing effective feedback of the reasoning behind all actions, and assisting the progression of more innovative thinking. Officer in Charge David Gazzo from Bonbeach SLSC said, "I realised within the first five minutes of the exercise that Alan's feedback was amazing and I was going to learn so much from the experience."

The exercise saw a successful outcome with all missing persons being located and handed over to other emergency services. The teamwork and coordination shown by the participants is to be commended, showing that a unified direction in training is taking place. Participants took on varying roles with the exercise and even the patients, Ryan Hurrell from Woodside Beach SLSC and Abbie Hansen from Mornington LSC, reported being involved at that level gave them a better understanding on

how a patient would be feeling.

"We were in wetsuits with clothes on top and we were surprised how quickly we got cold," Ryan said.

"We knew people were looking for us and we were part of a controlled exercise. Being patients helped us realise some of the emotions that would occur in a real life situation, at times we felt frustration, disappointment and stress, all these factors can lead to irrational decisions and we felt this gave us a great insight into how a patient would feel and react."

This beneficial exercise provided an advancement of knowledge on both the individual and organisational scale. Much gratitude and thanks goes out to all those involved who made this a memorable weekend. A special thank you goes to Woodside Beach SLSC, Adrian Stafferton, Graeme Hurrell and Gippsland Water Police. ●



Communities affected by the Black Saturday bushfires came together to acknowledge the first anniversary of the tragic event, held on 7 February 2010, that claimed lives and property in Victoria.

Photo: Keith Pakenham. © CFA Strategic Communications.

# SELF-RELIANCE THE NEW PARADIGM

Alastair Wilson,  
MAIES FEMPA

**W**ith rising severity and increasing regularity, there are natural disasters making an impact not only on the physical nature of our nation's communities but on the Australian psyche. The call from all quarters now is for community and indeed individual self-reliance.

No longer can we categorise the big weather-driven events generally into regions – cyclones in the top-end, floods in the middle, fires in the south, and the really big events all being off-shore. A decade ago, the devastating

9/11 twin towers attack in New York frightened governments around the globe into reviewing their national security arrangements and the western world's law agencies began ramping up their terror protection and preparation for unknown attempts to disrupt civil society. Just four years later, bombings in London's underground compounded the effort only to be followed by a string of murderous strikes on every continent, the latest surprising the peaceful nation of Norway.

The funding that has been poured

into national security has been extraordinary. The National Counter Terrorism Committee rapidly expanded its drive to equip police forces, the military, border agencies and intelligence organisations with the latest devices in an attempt to detect likely transgression on our shores. A major advertising campaign thrust a hotline number and the catchy *Be Alert, Not Alarmed* motto onto everyone's fridge door. Small successes followed with arrests of a few suspected bomb makers and the border agencies increasing



their surveillance for unwanted airport arrivals. Now agencies are redefining their worry hats for computer hackers and cybercrime.

But through the decade, all this security activity left the natural disaster agencies behind, even though we continued to suffer annually from cyclones, fires, floods and tsunamis that seemed to be slowly increasing their impact on our populace.

States and territories, and national emergency bodies, often struggled for recognition and support. But as always, nature has nudged us towards reality with substantial natural events to remind governments at all levels to examine their responsibilities, plans and capabilities. The newly minted climate change philosophy started to take hold.

To kick start the move towards this new paradigm, former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd made the unequivocal linkage between the security world and the emergency management sector by claiming events to be together in the all-hazards basket. Speaking on future risks in his National Security Statement I (2008), Mr Rudd said, 'Climate change represents a most fundamental national security challenge for the long term future.'

### SELF-EXAMINATION OUTCOMES

The first outcome of this self-examination, pushed along by nervous politicians striving to find appropriate answers to constituent calls for greater action, has been to thrust funds and fingers at the emergency management leaders in an effort to build capacity to handle big emergencies.

A second outcome emerging from this self-examination has been the realisation that no one government or one state, and certainly no one single agency, can any longer be expected to cope on its own. Judicial inquiries, from the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission to the current flood response reviews in both Queensland and Victoria, have all raised a fundamental issue: If a community is to be better prepared for natural disaster and their local response and recovery agencies better equipped to bring a community back to some degree of normality, then there must be collaboration and collective action. This undeniably includes individuals.

Co-chairs of the National Emergency Management Committee (NEMC) Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department Roger Wilkins AO, and Deputy-Secretary in the Prime Minister and Cabinet Department Dr Margot McCarthy, are quite clear in the *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* released in February: 'Application of a resilience-based approach is not solely the domain of emergency management agencies; rather, it is a shared responsibility between governments, communities, businesses and individuals.'

The strategy commits the NEMC to consult with experts from Commonwealth, State and local governments and bring together representative views of our community, non-government organisations, business, and not-for-profit groups

*Nature has nudged us towards reality with substantial natural events to remind governments at all levels to examine their responsibilities, plans and capabilities.*

into a comprehensive strategy. This group will also be tasked with considering further those lessons arising from the recent bushfires and floods that could benefit from national collaboration. A national implementation plan is to be developed, which in turn will inform local action.

The Attorney General Robert McClelland, the country's senior emergency minister, made it clear in a recent Ministerial Council meeting (which includes a local government representative) that he expected his council to: '...lead governments toward a national, integrated approach to building disaster resilience and the delivery of sustained behavioural change and enduring partnership across Australia.'

The Ministerial Council Communiqué commits the national government to scoping a mapping of disaster risk relating to riverine flooding, flash floods, storm surge and coastal inundation, as well as developing an action plan with the Building Codes Board, Standards Australia and planning officials at all levels of government to influence land-use planning.

Speaking in a Brisbane emergency response and recovery conference at the end of July, Mr McClelland summed up the feelings of citizenry across all regions: "...last summer's disaster season marks the continuation of a trend towards increasingly severe and costly disasters over the last few years.

"With the predicted effects of climate change pointing to more frequent and severe weather events, it is clear to me we cannot keep reacting in the same way. If we do, we can only expect the same hardships, year after year."

Neil Comrie AO, APM, Chair of the Review of recent Victorian floods, in his interim report gave a strong indicator of the way the self-reliance call will head in the near future. He identified 26 themes raised consistently by councils

across the state's flood ridden north. From limited capacity to undertake roles during large scale and protracted events, to lack of coordination, shortages of resources, and the widely acknowledged lack of municipal flood plans.

Mr Comrie's final report is expected out by the end of the year. Queensland's flood review report is due in the New Year. Local government is expected to feature large in both reports.

Could we hope that the state reports reflect the bigger picture? As the Attorney General's Brisbane conference, *Resilience Strategy*, comment makes clear: "To create a resilient nation, we all need relevant knowledge, skills and abilities to take appropriate action. We all need to work in partnership with the emergency services, local authorities, and other bodies to manage risk and to minimise the impacts of disaster.

"To that end, the strategy calls for greater individual and community empowerment, rather than relying on post disaster recovery efforts and financial assistance." ●



# BUILDINGS FALL, COMMUNITIES CRUMBLE

Disasters affect us in many ways. Damage to or destruction of homes, property and cherished belongings together with the obvious physical effects including loss of loved ones, pain or physical challenges are usually apparent. Initial short-term emotional effects such as fear, acute anxiety, grief, and emotional numbness are very common.

Tracey Toovey

*Association Secretariat Earth: Fire & Rain Conference*

**H**owever, the emotional impact of a disaster often manifests some time later and can continue for many years to come.

While effective disaster management seems to revolve around PPRR – prevention, preparedness, response and recovery, what do we know about the long-term human and social effects and how do we recognise the warning signs of a fractured community?

According to a recently released assessment prepared by the United States Federal Emergency Management Agency of the Post (Hurricane) Katrina Emergency Management Reform Act, introduced after the devastating hurricane, significant improvements have been made in the approach to preparedness.

‘Preparedness is the aggregate of all measures and policies taken by humans before an event occurs that reduces the negative impact that otherwise would have been caused by the event.’ (Sundnes and Birnbaum, 2003)

While there is still more work to be accomplished, the Act recognises the need to focus on engaging the whole community in preparedness activities and a shift to a collaborated approach that engages with partners at every level of government together with non profit organisations and the private sector is the key to success.

The newly created USA National Mass

Care Council launched in June this year, just two months short of the five year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. It is expected the council will better facilitate the planning and coordination of mass care services including shelter and food during future disasters.

Emergency communication methods have been completely overhauled in recent times and the way we now communicate in a disaster environment leverages cutting-edge technology together with important social media tools to communicate in a more effective and dynamic way.

In addition to our preparedness and recovery activities, disaster mitigation is also an important part of preparing for disasters and as such the ongoing development of tools to assist continues to find new ways to alleviate the impact of disasters.

While great progress has been made in these areas since Hurricane Katrina (2005), that undoubtedly proved valuable in dealing with Hurricane Irene recently, and some important improvements have been made in relation to the human and social side of disasters, little has been reported in generic disaster circles about the ongoing impact on mental health and communities in general.

According to the University of New South Wales paper *Managing the Psychological Effects of Natural Disasters*, mental health problems often increase



as time progresses and victims become weary due to the ongoing anxiety caused by delayed reconstruction, community recovery and ongoing financial tension.

Economies can be undermined by damage to infrastructure and the capacity to work, and in some cases communities struggle to sustain an adequate level of productivity and can be severely destabilised.

It is thought that while the mental health effects of a catastrophe can be felt for years, even decades, afterwards, the casual link between the disaster and observed mental health problems may not be obvious.

As a response to the mental health needs of people affected by Katrina a response program *Skills for Psychological Recovery* (SPR) was established to assist people with ongoing problems. The program, based on evidence supported strategies proven to reduce the major problems evident after a disaster was introduced during the weeks and months after the hurricane.

This approach was also adapted in the aftermath of the Victorian Black Saturday bushfires in 2009. Assistance was offered





*A group of friends debrief after Hurricane Katrina (2005). An assessment of the disaster has been released, which recognises the need for community engagement in preparedness activities before an event like Katrina occurs.*



to all survivors providing information, social support and referral if necessary and SPR was then provided for those deemed to have ongoing problems in the months afterwards. Many health professionals were trained across Victoria in these skills and this approach appears to have been a significant improvement over previous disaster responses.

Social support systems play an extremely important role in assisting communities deal with the impact of the stress related to dealing with disasters. It is believed that disruption of the family or community may in fact be more psychologically devastating than the disaster itself, as social disruption both reduces and interferes with the healing process.

Some communities have a history of past disasters and the trauma of a new disaster may arouse old anxieties. Feelings of helplessness may be exacerbated and in some cases disaster weary communities struggle to find the energy to continue to assist others.

The impact of disasters on children often goes unnoticed as parents, grandparents

*In the wake of a disaster, marital conflict and distress rise, increases in divorce rates follow, parent-child conflicts increase and more cases of intra-family violence (child and spouse abuse) have been reported.*

and other extended family members are struggling with complex issues.

Children often experience death, destruction, terror and the absence of their parents. They can also be affected by their parents and other trusted adults' reactions to the disaster, which often magnifies their own fear. They have less ability to judge what fears are realistic and those that are not. Regardless of the source, children's responses to disasters must be taken seriously.

Disasters create tears in the tissues of social life. In the wake of a disaster, marital conflict and distress rise, increases in divorce rates follow, parent-child conflicts increase and more cases of intra-family violence (child and spouse abuse) have been reported. Rates of community violence, aggression, drug and alcohol

abuse and the rate of legal convictions in the wake of a disaster also increase.

There is no doubt that disasters place a tremendous strain on traditional community social roles, patterns of social status and leadership so what can we do to identify the key indicators of a fractured community?

It can be difficult to identify people who will eventually develop persistent emotional problems after disasters. As a community, perhaps we could monitor those at risk at subsequent time points and ensure easy access to mental health practitioners who can facilitate their recovery.

The world, as we know it, will struggle to sustain significant losses in human development caused by catastrophic disasters and being better prepared is the key to preserving human health in the wake of them. ●

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# YOUNG VOLUNTEER EMPOWERED AT SEA

*We were able to learn who we are as individuals in ways no school, university or other textbooks can ever show you.*

Mickael Gieules, from Pendle Hill in Sydney, was honoured by the AIES Young Volunteer 2010 Award for his ongoing contribution and commitment to his role as a St John Ambulance Cadet Leader. In December 2010, he boarded the Young Endeavour sail training ship to develop skills in teamwork, leadership and communication, as part of his award from the AIES. This is his story of an 11 day journey of a lifetime.

**Mickael Gieules, MAIES**

*AIES Young Volunteer 2010*

*Mickael Gieules (centre) enjoyed learning "priceless lessons" and making "life long friends" on his Young Endeavour adventure.*



**F**erociously gliding through the infamous Bass Strait, 34 metres above deck, drenched by an overwhelming gust of rain, chilled by single digit temperatures we hang untying our sails from the tight grips of our gasket.

I untie the last knot to enable pure white sails to graciously flow into place to be tightened, and aid an increase in our speed through the magnificent 04:00 moonlit sky.

This was one of my voyage's most memorable moments, truly encompassing my Young Endeavour experience.

On 5 December 2010, I nervously flew to Devonport, Tasmania, to embark on the most challenging and beneficial experience of my life. A group of 32 young people from across Australia ranging in age from 16 to 23 years and hailing from all walks of life gathered on a 44 metre iconic sail yacht –

The 'Blue Watch' brigade.



the Young Endeavour – to embark on our journey from Devonport to Sydney on Voyage 21/10. To us, sailing was a mystery and a language we'd never heard before. Commands like, 'blue watch', 'set the main staysail', 'heaving in on the sheets', 'checking away on the furling line' – at first it was like a blur.

Yet, 11 days and 586.7 nautical miles later, we had successfully sailed into Sydney harbour loud and proud of our empowering journey.

Sailing through the Tasman Sea and the Victorian Coast, a group of seven individuals and I formed the 'blue watch'. We quickly started to work as unified teams to ensure we smoothly sailed to our goal destination. Days were filled with a well-balanced program ranging from fun games to learning imperative skills such as navigation, steering, watch duties, communication and trust building experiences among our teams. Watch shifts were filled with constant sailing and we, as individuals, grew to accept and encourage individuality in a powerful close-knit team. Within our watches we were able to grow as individuals as well as an important part of the team. Tasks were set to challenge us both physically and mentally, and we were able to learn who

we are as individuals in ways no school, university or other textbooks can ever show you. Over the 11 day journey everyone grew as individuals and part of a team. Trust was built among the crew and a level of mateship and companionship formed that no written language could encapsulate.

*As part of the crew, I was able to learn skills and techniques to influence decisions by the command team from the ground up.*

On day nine of our voyage, we elected our command team that would lead the crew for a set of 32 tasks as we sailed the ship by ourselves. Captain, sail master, navigators, watch officer, cooks were replaced by the youth crew to sail through the next 24 hours. I was not selected to be part of the command team, however being part of the crew taught me more about myself than I ever thought possible. As part of the crew, I was able to learn skills and techniques to influence decisions by the command team from the ground up. It clearly demonstrated how individuals could influence change in our individual organisation or work place. This is a skill that I can now use in all aspects of my life.

My communication and teamwork skills greatly benefited from this trip and is something I will never forget. I am now more confident in my team leading skills and team work abilities.

As a youth member of the Young Endeavour, I am equipped with skills

and attributes which I can take back to my emergency service work, confident in my ability to lead and be part of a team in any environment.

I thank the Australian Institute of Emergency Services for the opportunity of a lifetime. I challenge all youths to take part in the Young Endeavour experiences. I guarantee that no matter how confident and well you think you know yourself, you will learn priceless lessons and make life long friends. I have enjoyed the voyage immensely and grateful for all aspects of the voyage.

Finally, as Captain Damien would always say: Youth Crew CARPE DIEM – Seize the day. ●



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DHS Emergency specialises in creating the most advanced emergency and pre-hospital equipment available. The sister company to ETT produces and supplies hospital, pre-hospital, retrieval and rescue solutions to emergency services and Australian industry.

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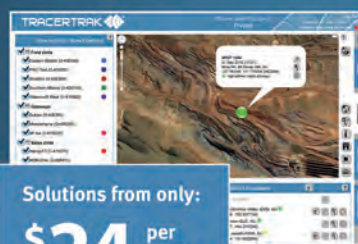
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# NEW ZEALAND TO HOST GAMES



*Touch rugby is one of the six sports to be contested in the first ever trans-Tasman Clash. Photo: Police Council of Sport.*

**W**ith just a couple of months to go before sports registrations close for the 2012 Australasian Police and Emergency Services Games, the excitement is starting to build.

New Zealand will host the games for the first time since 1996, with the Hutt Valley the venue for the event, which runs from 2-9 March 2012. Personnel from a range of eligible emergency services agencies throughout Australia are invited to attend.

About 40 sports will be contested, ranging from angling, aquathlon, swimming, track and field, and tug-of-war. To date, half of the competitors registered are from Australia, with the remainder spread across all regions of New Zealand. It is anticipated that over 2000 competitors will attend the games.

Games Director Alison Murray said there was an event in the programme to appeal to everyone.

"The sporting timetable for the week of the games offers plenty of variety," she said.

"We are very keen to see competitors get involved in more than one event, and have ensured that there aren't too many sports clashes.

"For example, a swimmer will be able to enjoy two days in the pool early in the week, attempt the triathlon midweek and then do an open water swim a few days later."

While there are medals to be won for the top performers, and elite competition is expected, the focus of many who enter the games is on participation. Entrants in individual events will compete in age groups, and mixed and social divisions will be available in many team sports.

For the first time in the games' history, the epitome of sporting competition will take place with a trans-Tasman clash scheduled for the final day of competition. The best Australian Police

and Emergency Services athletes will take on New Zealand's finest in six sports – netball, twenty-twenty cricket, golf, touch rugby, soccer and hockey.

To close off the week, a spectacular closing ceremony is planned. A selection of local bands will provide entertainment and the venue will be themed to ensure a memorable night.

Ms Murray said attending the games was also an opportunity to catch up with friends and family, and to have a great time enjoying all that Hutt City has to offer.

"Located just 15 minutes north of Wellington, the Hutt Valley has a number of affordable accommodation options, and plenty of things to see and do.

"Visitor highlights include wine tours, wildlife parks, shopping, historic sites and a huge range of outdoor activities."

A full list of sports is available on [www.apandesgames.com](http://www.apandesgames.com). For more information about the 2012 host city visit [www.huttvalley.nz](http://www.huttvalley.nz) ●



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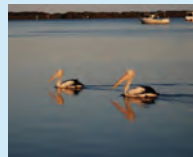


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# SEARCH AND RESCUE IN ANTARCTICA

## PART 2 - EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

In Part Two of Martin Boyle's Antarctica series, he explores the emergency management framework used across the Australian Antarctic Territory, the way emergency response is managed, and how this fits in strategically with other national programs across Antarctica.

*Inflatable rescue boat in sea ice. Photo: Martin Boyle.*

**Martin Boyle, MAIES**

### THE BIG PICTURE

Crisis management and emergency response in Antarctica is a complex beast. The overarching international alliance that governs activities across the continent is the Antarctic Treaty System. The Treaty applies to the area below 60 degrees south latitude and designates Antarctica as a natural reserve. The coordinating body of the Treaty is the Council of Managers of National Antarctic Programs (COMNAP), which was created in 1988 to bring together treaty signatories to develop best practice systems and support operational activity in Antarctica. There are currently 29 national programs with stations, bases and depots spread around the continent. In response to an Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting resolution in 1998, COMNAP developed a *Framework and Guidelines for Emergency Response and Contingency Planning in Antarctica*. This framework provides the basis for national programs to develop crisis management and emergency response plans.

Each national program has its own emergency management framework loosely based around the COMNAP system. Antarctica NZ and the US National Science Foundation have also developed a best practice unified incident management system integrating both programs at the tactical level to coordinate response to any incident in Antarctica. The system combines the best of the US centric National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the NZ Coordinated Incident Management System (CIMS) with the underlying principle being unified command and the integration of mutual aid. In East Antarctica the Australian, Chinese, Russian and Indian programs are also actively working together and have recently formed the Larsemann Hills emergency coordination group. These national programs actively assist each other and share emergency contacts, operational information, and the movements of aviation and maritime assets on the continent.

Search and rescue (SAR) systems in the Antarctic are based on the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and International Civil Aviation

Organisation (ICAO) global plans. The Antarctic continent is split into five maritime and five aeronautical Search and Rescue Regions (SRR), covered by Rescue Coordination Centres (RCC) based in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Chile and Argentina. Around the Antarctic continent only the Chilean and Argentinean SRRs maintain dedicated SAR assets using their joint Antarctic Naval Patrol which operates in the summer months and only around the Antarctic Peninsula on the highest traffic routes. The RCCs are also responsible for the COSPAS-SARSAT satellite distress beacon detection system that goes all the way to the South Pole and covers the Antarctic region.

The exception to this coverage is Land SAR. In Antarctica, no individual nation is responsible for coordinating Land SAR. It has traditionally fallen to national programs and continental stations. It is one of the long standing Antarctic principles that each country provides assistance when necessary in the event of an emergency. Mutual aid between programs is the key to survival in the Antarctic.



SAR missions in Antarctica not only have to deal with extreme temperatures and the inherently dangerous environment but also the remoteness. This is what makes SAR in Antarctica different. It can take weeks, or even months, for any assistance to arrive. In recognition of these factors and due to increased tourist and private expeditions in the region, a meeting was held in Chile in late 2008 to better coordinate SAR response in Antarctica. This was a major step forward and the first time all SAR stakeholders had actively collaborated to improve information exchange and coordinate channels of communication. This proactive exchange has paid dividends during recent SAR operations across the Antarctic.

Aside from national programs, the other major SAR resource in the Antarctic is tourism operators. The International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) maintains a strong network of members. It has been proactive in developing a series of recommendations and emergency contingency and search and rescue plans for Antarctic cruise vessels. IAATO vessels are also bound by the International Safety Management (ISM) code and must have safety management systems in place.

One of the most difficult challenges in Antarctica is a SAR involving a large number of people. Incidents involving passenger vessels and commercial aircraft are extremely challenging to manage. Even small numbers of people can quickly overwhelm the available SAR resources. In November 2007, the MV Explorer was holed by ice in the Bransfield Strait on the Antarctic Peninsula. Luckily there were three other passenger vessels within 40 nautical miles that were able to provide assistance. One hundred and fifty four people had to be evacuated to Chilean and Uruguayan Antarctic stations on King George Island. It then took a further two days to transfer them to Punta Arenas. It was a truly international rescue operation with seven countries and IAATO members playing a part. However, if this incident had happened in a less frequented area such as East Antarctica the outcome could have been very different.

There is an increasing trend for private expeditions and adventurers to visit Antarctica. Unlike National Antarctic Programs and IAATO members, private expeditions in some cases have no SAR



FTO Tom Meldrum at Mawson. Photo: Martin Boyle.

coverage and therefore rely on assistance from the nearest station when they get into trouble. The most recent example is the Norwegian Wild Viking expedition to the South Pole. Out of the five crew members of the 14 metre yacht Berserk, only two survived to make it to the US station McMurdo. The other three are still missing, presumed dead. They had planned to traverse from Scott base to the South Pole on quad bikes following in the footsteps of Amundsen. This would have been a challenging journey given the time of year and impending winter conditions. They did not register their intentions or seek permission to undertake their journey. The two survivors were rescued and returned to New Zealand on the last US program flight of the season.

### THE (SLIGHTLY) SMALLER PICTURE

The Australian SRR covers an area roughly one-tenth of the world's surface. This includes the majority of the six million square kilometres of the Australian Antarctic Territory (AAT). The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) is responsible for managing the RCC and any maritime or aviation response within the Australian SRR. AMSA does not have any rescue assets on the Antarctic continent and therefore relies on the Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) for support. To ensure clarity of roles a memorandum of understanding was drawn up between both agencies in 2009 to define the division of responsibility for Antarctic SAR. The AAD is responsible for Land SAR in the AAT for all Australian Antarctic program expeditioners and where practicable assumes coordination for other land based incidents including distress beacon alerts. Given the huge area to cover, remoteness,

lack of resources and extreme weather the reality is that any rescue could take a long time and would most likely be a multinational effort.

SAR in the AAT falls into one of five categories – station and field, aviation, maritime, medical, and non-AAD. Over the history of the Australian Antarctic program we have had numerous incidents in all of the above categories.

Emergency management across the AAT and sub Antarctic Islands is based on a three tier operational, tactical, strategic model. At the operational level an incident in the field is managed using resources on site. This could be at a field hut, deep field camp or an intermediate travel point. The trip or field leader would manage any localised response. Additional resources and tactical command at the next level would come from the nearest station or in the case of ship borne operations, the Aurora Australis. Managing an incident at this level falls under the remit of the station or voyage leader. Incidents that are more complex and require logistical support and a strategic overview are coordinated by the Crisis Management and Recovery (CMR) team based at the AAD headquarters in Tasmania, Australia.

The comprehensive emergency management model; mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery is used across the AAT. Each of these phases plays an important role in ensuring the safety of our expeditioners and providing operational continuity.

### MITIGATION

An effective risk management framework using ISO 31000:2009 is part of the AAD's mitigation strategy. A range of standard operating procedures (SOPs) for



Chinese expeditioner being evacuated using A319. Photo: Martin Boyle.



Casey fire team training. Photo © Tod Lolovski.

Antarctic operations are the key reference documents for daily business. Any non-standard programs or operations falling outside of the SOPs are subject to a job hazard analysis process. The AAD field safety system also incorporates preventative measures that have contributed to minimising the overall number of incidents. All field travel in the station operational area is on way pointed and caned routes. These are safe corridors of travel to various field locations that are regularly maintained and checked for hazards like crevasses and melt. Every party going off station must fill in a trip application with their intentions, call in when they leave station and reach their destination, and fill in a hut log book. Each member of the party must also carry minimum survival equipment and clothing with them. These measures make it easier to find lost parties and ensure their survival if an incident occurs.

## PREPAREDNESS

Preparation is the key element of any SAR activity. As I explained in the previous article the AAD's training system is based on three levels – survival, field travel and specialist. Survival and field travel training incorporate elements of basic search and rescue and emergency procedures. Specialist training not only includes SAR but also fire and medical response.

The majority of fire training is done in Tasmania prior to deployment. Wintering expeditioners spend seven days gaining skills in first response, confined space, breathing apparatus, hazmat, and emergency rescue. A fire chief and deputy are chosen from the group, and along with the station leader they do further training in response team management and fire investigation. Fire is one of the most serious hazards in Antarctica due to the exceptionally dry environment.

It can also be one of the most challenging due to a lack of water and its potential to freeze in the hose.

Generally, Australian stations only have one doctor who manages a fairly rudimentary medical facility. They are assisted by a lay medical team chosen from the wintering party. The lay team get ten days training in anaesthetics, theatre nursing and basic medical procedures. In any serious incident where the casualty needs emergency surgery it could be the doctor, diesel mechanic, chef or plumber putting you back together. This may not be such a bad team as the mechanic is good with pressures, the chef is skilled at cutting things up and the plumber is great with pipes! In all seriousness this has been the situation on a number of occasions. It would also be fair to say that any more than one casualty would overwhelm the medical facility.

The main difficulty we face with the emergency response teams is the small number of people on station. This is generally not a problem during the summer months when there could be up to one hundred people on station but during the winter months when the population shrinks to twenty hardy souls it can be challenging. It's not a simple matter of having everyone taking a turn on the roster as not all are suitable to do the various roles. In addition, you must have a certain number of people and skill sets on station at any one time.

Exercises and drills are a regular occurrence across the Australian Antarctic program. We run regular field SAREX, local search and fire drills on all of our stations. On board the Aurora Australis we have weekly musters and drills to familiarise expeditioners with emergency procedures as per the Safety Of Life At Sea (SOLAS) convention. Prior to opening the blue ice runway at Wilkins Aerodrome we also run an emergency response exercise as part of the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) requirements. At a higher level a number of strategic multi-agency discussion exercises are also run pre-season and for specific major projects. Over the last few years we have had scenarios including helicopter crashes, dive emergencies, and an outbreak of Norovirus on the ship.

The AAD spends a lot of time in planning for emergencies. The organisation has plans for fuel spill response, unusual animal mortality,

crisis management, and aerodrome emergency response to name a few. The division is also currently in the process of putting together emergency response plans for stations using ISO 22399:2007 Societal Security – Guidelines for incident preparedness and operational continuity management. Each deep field program we deploy also has its own emergency management plan specific to the operating environment.

## RESPONSE

On station, emergency response generally falls into two categories – SAR and fire. Both have separate alarms but the procedures are much the same. When the alarm goes off all expeditioners go to a central muster point and await instructions. A role call is taken while first response teams investigate in the case of a fire or gather personal equipment in a SAR. Depending on the nature of the SAR a rapid response team may deploy using quad bikes while the rest of the team follow up in a hagglands. During the winter these vehicles are kept in

the Emergency Vehicle Shelter. This is a temperature controlled building so that they can be deployed straight away without the need to de-blizz the vehicles. Helicopters, fixed wing aircraft and inflatable rubber boats may also be used to support the operation if conditions and availability permits.

The incident command system used on station is based on the Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS). The station leader is the Incident Commander and generally retains the planning function. The fire chief or SAR team leader manages operations, and the plant inspector (head diesel mechanic) or deputy station leader looks after logistics. The beauty of using AIIMS is that it is scalable, gives us interoperability with other national programs, and integrates well into the most commonly used incident command system in Australia.


## RECOVERY

Any emergency on station takes its toll. Every expeditioner on station plays a part in community life and when

something happens to member of what has essentially become your family it can be traumatic. To look after one critically ill person on station means all but essential operations have to shut down and everyone goes on a roster to assist. In a remote environment like Antarctica it can be a daunting prospect. All wintering expeditioners go through a psych debrief with the Army psychologist post deployment. Additionally, the AAD has a good employee assistance program and all incidents are thoroughly debriefed at their conclusion.

Recovery is not just about getting the station population back on its feet after an incident it's also about putting the season back on track. A single incident can mean redeployment of resources, schedule changes and the potential cancellation of field programs. Be safe. That's our key message to expeditioners.

In the final part of Martin Boyle's special Antarctic series for *National Emergency Response*, he will look at some of the incidents that have occurred in Antarctica and the lessons that were learnt. ●



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