



VOLUNTEER TRAINING NOTE 1

How South Australia responds to disasters - Background Briefing

These notes provide an overview of Emergency Management (EM) arrangements in South Australia.

Fundamentals

The PPRR model within EM is commonly in use and has four fundamental principles:

Prevention Preparedness Response Recovery

These form a continuous interconnected circle of actions, and everyone in the community has a role in each, ranging from the individual landowner considering their own circumstances through to Statewide agencies targeting actions and implementing procedures and Plans for the community as a whole.

For this reason SAVEM, like all other Emergency Services, has a continuing 'peace time' program of community awareness, training and resourcing; and then when activated, uses the SAVEM Plan and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's) in response and recovery.

Overview

Emergency response overall is controlled at State level. It is important to understand that formal arrangements for Emergencies differ from State to State.

In South Australia the Premier is charged by legislation in the South Australian Emergency Management Act (2004) as the Minister responsible for Emergency Management. The State Emergency Management Plan (**SEMP**) is effectively a set of Regulations under that Act. The legislative arrangements delegate control to the Commissioner of Police, removing politics from the discussion. South Australia Police (SAPOL)'s Emergency Management unit works with EM issues all the time.

The State Emergency Centre in Carrington Street in Adelaide is "stood up" when necessary. It is here that all primary Emergency agencies interact and coordination occurs.

Those tasks then extend outward to other agencies who fall under the 'umbrella' of the primary agency,

The type of Emergency determines which agency is the Control Agency. For example, the Country Fire Service (CFS) is the Control Agency for bushfires, the State Emergency Service (SES) for flood, and SAPOL for road accidents.

Where SAVEM fits

SAVEM is a **Participating Agency** under Primary Industries and Regions SA (**PIRSA**) in the Agriculture and Animal Services (AAS) Functional Service (FS).

SAVEM therefore is a formally included and integral part of the official Emergency services structure.

Other Participating Agencies under the AAS FS include the RSPCA, the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) and Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR).

Animal rescue organisations who are not a formal part of these arrangements therefore are not Emergency Management agencies, and thus are not trained and equipped to operate in disaster areas other than in a supporting role.

The circle of actions

As noted above, a model of Emergency Management in common use has four continuous and overlapping phases:

Prevention includes actions as diverse as the individual landholder clearing fuel load on their land in readiness for summer, through to the State Budget resourcing Emergency Services with equipment and training ahead of actual events.

SAVEM has a continuous rolling community awareness program including information brochures and an outreach public speaking and presentation calendar.

Preparedness includes the Bushfire Survival Plans of individual households, and at a State level, the public information issued by agencies about the wide range of matters that are needed to be dealt with in disasters. SAVEM trains in a hierarchy of courses internally through Level 1, Team Leader, specialist topics and Exercises out of season; and encourage our volunteers to participate in target courses run by other agencies including CFS and PIRSA.

The bonus to the volunteer in attending these courses is that everything in Emergency Management training is 100% translatable to everyday workplace and life skills.

Response is the most publicly visible element in emergencies. The road crash, the oil spill, the bushfire. Each brings visible activities and media interest.

The Control Agency is supported by other Emergency Services, such as Bureau of Meteorology to provide weather information, Police to control access to danger areas and search premises, and agencies providing evacuation centres and emergency shelter to the affected communities and their own personnel.

SAVEM activates through PIRSA, via structured protocols (which are described in later training modules).

SAVEM trains to a very strong culture of safety and discipline and respect for other Emergency Services.

Following chain-of-command and good communications protocols are critically important.

One of the hardest parts to understand initially is "hurry up and wait", a frequent maxim in this work. (Refer SAVEM Newsletter February 2014 for more on this).

Recovery is the longest phase. It begins at the same time as Response and continues long after the emergency is contained. It draws in not only the Emergency response sectors in agencies, but also draws on the ability of communities to support one another through both formal and informal methods.

In Government, Primary Industry and Regions SA (PIRSA) deploys its Veterinarians and Animal Health officers to work with affected livestock, while in the community Primary Producers SA Inc coordinates feed supplies and emergency agistment as well as infrastructure replacement such as fencing.

Communities have shown their ability to help one another. This seems to become stronger the further the event is from the metropolitan area of Adelaide.

SAVEM remains a contact point as long after the event as necessary, as affected animals come out of previously affected but inaccessible areas. This timescale is determined on a case-by-case basis. SAVEM links to animal rescue groups for long term rehabilitation and to agencies noted above in helping people during the long process of coming to terms with the aftermath; by being a conduit for information and reassurance.

This is serious

Facing Emergencies is a constant reality in this wide brown land. It therefore becomes everyone's task to be part of the arrangements.

Structured arrangements serve the community well. Without these, prevention and preparedness are much harder to assemble and secure.

It takes an organised relationship between neighbours and between agencies to achieve effective outcomes.

The academic literature is starting to describe various short and long term effects on communities of natural disasters, and the costs of recovery, versus the cost of prevention and preparedness programs.

Structured arrangements in response and recovery mean that the lines of responsibilities and communications are clearly marked. This minimises duplication, and provides reassurance that enables each agency to focus on its part in effective Emergency response. These interdependencies are described in detail in later training modules.

It therefore is not helpful for individuals to instigate private actions. For example, entering a fireground without authorisation may result in that person being injured by falling burnt timber in a still hazardous location. This requires an in-field crew from another agency being redirected from their primary task to effect a rescue.

SAVEM will not tolerate "freelancing". SAVEM is very protective of its reputation. We have a very strong positive culture of safety and discipline. This in no way should be seen to diminish the positive valuable work individuals can do, particularly in actions which expand on the support given to the formal agencies.

In this regard social media is still an uncertain entity which will continue to evolve. It brings people together, but it also gives the uninformed the impression that they too can act as if they were trained and accredited. Worse, circulating wrongful or misleading information is a real danger.

