

## Hon Pete Malinauskas MLC

Minister for Emergency Services

Tuesday, 16 August 2016

### **SA firefighters hone catastrophic event response**

The State's ability to respond to a catastrophic event is being further strengthened today, with emergency services teams beginning a 48-hour earthquake recovery simulation exercise.

The exercise will challenge 21 Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) firefighters and six State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers to safely rescue multiple casualties from a collapsed five storey building.

The firefighters participating will become members of South Australia's 'Urban Search and Rescue' (USAR) team which will grow from 243 to 270 members on the completion of the training. The team includes firefighters, paramedics, engineers, doctors, canine handlers, forensics and other specialists.

The 'Urban Search and Rescue (USAR)' (Category 2) training facilities at the MFS Angle Park Training Centre are recognised as the best in Australia.

The exercise forms part of a three week accreditation course that focuses on tunnelling, shoring and stabilising structural collapse sites using specialist equipment for the purpose of saving lives.

### **Background**

South Australia's USAR team members hail from the MFS, SES, Defence SA, SA Health, and Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI).

The USAR team is ready to be deployed at short notice locally, nationally and internationally.

The team is required to be self-sufficient in a disaster zone. They have capability to provide their own food, equipment and accommodation for a minimum of 10 days once deployed.

The training, valued at \$888,000 is funded by the Emergency Services Levy (ESL).

### **Quotes attributable to Emergency Services Minister Peter Malinauskas**

In South Australia, we have been relatively fortunate not to have experienced a catastrophic

earthquake. However, it is vital that we have the ability to respond to any local, national or international disaster.

Our state training centre is recognised as the best training facility of its kind in Australia. This is another example of how the Emergency Services Levy is funding critical training, and equipping our emergency services to protect our community.

Following this intensive three-week intensive training course our team of USAR specialists will be boosted from 243 to 270 personnel.

### **Quotes attributable to MFS Commander Colin Lindsay**

The need for nationally consistent USAR capability was recognised more than 20 years ago after structural collapse incidents such as the Newcastle earthquake and Thredbo disaster.

USAR has a multi-agency and multi-jurisdictional approach, meaning every state and territory in Australia has a USAR capability, as well as almost every country in the developed world. When a major disaster occurs, USAR teams will often travel between states or countries to assist.

South Australia's USAR personnel have previously been deployed to the Brisbane floods and Christchurch earthquake, so many of our instructors have invaluable personal experience.