

media release

SA Metropolitan Fire Service



'Emergency Interpreter' launched on Harmony Day

Monday, 21 March 2011

Communication can be a challenge at emergency incidents if English is not your first spoken language.

That's why the Minister for Multicultural Affairs, The Hon Grace Portolesi MP will today launch a new initiative for the SA Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) - '*Emergency Interpreter*'. The launch will take place at a special Harmony Day event at Adelaide Fire Station.

Emergency Interpreter is a system designed to help firefighters and people with limited English to communicate at the scene of an emergency incident, with the help of a phone interpreter.

MFS Commander of Community Safety, Glenn Benham said firefighters sometimes encounter emergencies where language is a barrier, but, in the true spirit of Harmony Day, the MFS would like to work with the multicultural community to overcome such barriers.

"*Emergency Interpreter* will allow firefighters improved access to interpreting services, to help bring an incident to a positive conclusion for all involved. We look forward to launching plans for this important initiative today," he said.

The project will be announced by Minister Portolesi at a Harmony Day afternoon tea involving firefighters and members of South Australia's multicultural community at MFS Headquarters, Adelaide, from 2.00 pm on Monday, 21 March 2011. **Media are welcome to attend.**

"In undertaking this very practical initiative of the Emergency Interpreter program, the MFS is acting on the theme for Harmony Day that 'Everyone Belongs'," Ms Portolesi said.

"By appreciating and respecting that our community includes many people from non-English speaking backgrounds, the MFS has devised a program to ensure that there is effective 2-way communication during the recovery part of a house fire. This is not only important for members of the public involved, but also for our fire-fighters and emergency crews."

The afternoon tea will welcome people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities to access fire safety and fire cause displays, activities for children, to enjoy both the antique 'Dennis' fire truck and modern appliances and to witness a road crash rescue demonstration.

Commander Benham said, "The MFS has been very proactive in the work it does with new and emerging communities, and looks forward to meeting with CALD communities in a relaxed setting where trusting relationships can be built."

The MFS offers home fire safety brochures in 16 different languages, to provide new and emerging communities with access to vital, possibly life-saving information.

To access the brochures, visit the Community Education section of the MFS website at: www.mfs.sa.gov.au

For more information about Harmony Day, visit: www.harmony.gov.au

For media enquiries and interviews call the MFS Media Line on (08) 8204 3770

Further information for the public:

Call the MFS Community Education Department on (08) 8204 3611 during business hours.
Country callers 1300 737 637.

www.mfs.sa.gov.au