

A Message from the Chief Executive



The end of the financial year signals a busy time for many of us, juggling daily activities with the demands of the budget cycle, end of year reporting, business planning and the like. However this time of year allows us to reflect on what we have achieved over the past 12 months and plan the coming year's activities.

I am pleased with the sector's achievements over the past year, including the tireless efforts of our staff and volunteers in preventing and responding to emergency incidents. We saw some of the state's most extreme fire risk days, not to mention the deployment of around 800 personnel to assist with the Victorian bushfires and the response to the heatwave which tested the mettle of many in the sector.

Apart from our operational response, we have also made significant headway on a number of sector initiatives. These include; the release of the sector's Strategic Directions document and the identification of common Key Focus Areas for planning, budgeting and reporting, as well as the review of a number of pieces of legislation, the appointment of the South Australian Computer Aided Dispatch contractor, and the completion of more recommendations from the Wangary Inquest.

More recently, the drafting of the amended *Fire and Emergency Services Act* is well underway in consultation with the agencies and Parliamentary Counsel, and is expected to be introduced into Parliament shortly.

But the work doesn't stop once the new legislation is tabled in Parliament. Work has started on mapping out a program to communicate the changes to stakeholders and to identify the work needed to translate the legislative changes into work practices.

Two other major initiatives of the sector have been the establishment of the Bushfire Task Force and the review of the Emergency Information Warning System, both arising from the Victorian bushfire experience.

The Task Force was established by the Minister for Emergency Services in April and has met on four occasions. It is headed by CFS Chief Officer, Euan Ferguson and has representation from the State Emergency Service (SES), Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS), SAFECOM, Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH), South Australian Police, State Recovery Office, Department of Planning and Local Government and Cabinet Office.

Issues for discussion have been the "Prepare, Stay and Defend or Go Early Policy", local government and community engagement, the dissemination of public safety information, planning and construction standards and native vegetation and public land fire management amongst others. The Task Force reports to the State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) and the Minister on a bi-monthly basis.

The Emergency Information Warning System has also been a focus of the Task Force. Following an announcement by the Council of Australian Governments to establish a national telephone-based warning system for all hazards, SAFECOM, on behalf of SEMC, is coordinating South Australia's representation on the national work group. Our representatives are leading the development of a business case to identify funding requirements for the telephone system and associated community education programs.

On a lighter note, one of the activities I take great pleasure in, is recognising and thanking our legion of volunteers. The recent Volunteer and Employer Recognition and Support Program event held in Kingston and National Volunteers Week both provided good opportunities for the sector, the media and me personally to acknowledge publicly the work of our volunteers (see page 5 for more details).

So as the 2008/09 financial year draws to a close, I urge you to take pride in all that you have achieved and to look forward to the next 12 months with enthusiasm.

Thank you,



From the Board

Update from the SAFECOM Board meeting held on 29 May 2009.

CORPORATE SERVICES

Financial Report

A significant governance responsibility of the SAFECOM Board is the financial stewardship of the sector. At the May meeting, the Board received reports that indicate the effectiveness of our financial management and reporting systems, noting that the sector is forecasting to complete the year's recurrent operating activities within budget. The Board was informed that there are risks to achieving the budgeted level of capital expenditure, the majority of which relate to major projects, for which approval has been received from the Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF) to carry the budget forward to match the progress of the projects. An area of Board discussion was the structural arrangements that exist across the sector for the delivery of capital projects, some of which are centrally managed and coordinated, while other elements are agency based. The Board discussed the relative merits of the various approaches and has indicated that this is an area that will be further reviewed following the approval of the agency workforce plans which will provide a current reference point.

The Board approved MFS to acquire land at Jose Street, Murray Bridge, for future development. There was detailed discussion about the process of land acquisition and it was requested that a set of draft principles be developed. The principles would address such issues as the Board's commitment to seamless integration and the complementary principle of precinct style developments. Noting that the 10-year asset plan is due for consideration at the June meeting, the Board has requested that the plan identify integration opportunities adopting a sector-based approach.

Human Services Report

Information was received regarding workforce and industrial issues. All agency workforce numbers are consistent with the DTF caps except the MFS, which exceeds the cap in order to meet expected staff attrition and the need for additional staff as the MFS Seaford Station nears completion.

The report included information regarding our health, safety and welfare (HSW) performance, and the Board noted the need to improve the timeliness of incident and injury notification to the HSW Branch, to ensure early intervention and successful outcomes for injured workers. The Board requested that a campaign to reduce this delay be initiated quickly.

SAFECOM Workforce Plan

SAFECOM governance requires a workforce plan be submitted to the Board prior to 30 June each year. A draft 2009 SAFECOM workforce plan was presented to the Board, as part of the consultation process, prior to formal submission of the plan for approval. The Board's views were noted and consultation will now occur with staff. The plan will be presented at the all staff meeting on 22 June 2009.

The Board also noted the significant workload and resource requirements necessary to implement an Early Warning System in time for the 2009/10 Fire Danger Season. It was requested that the workforce plan note the resource requirements necessary to achieve this goal.

From the Board

STRATEGIC SERVICES

Volunteer Insurance

Insurance for SES volunteers will be improved following a Board decision to extend permanent disability and death cover.

As part of a paper on insurance for volunteers, it was noted that the CFSVA has a death or permanent disability of volunteers policy.

The Board agreed that this insurance cover should be extended to include SES volunteers at an estimated additional cost of \$11,000 per year.

The Board also determined that SAFECOM should seek to have emergency service volunteers included in the Commissioner for Public Employment's Standards.

As well, the Board sought information at its next meeting about insurance arrangements for retained firefighters.

Audit and Risk Management

In addition to the minutes of its meeting, and as part of improved reporting arrangements, the Board received a highlight report from the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

The purpose of the Committee is to help the Board assure that all agencies comply with good governance principles and manage their operational and administrative risks. The following is an outline of some of the key issues discussed by the Committee :

- **Auditor-General's 2008 Interim Audit** - 21 of 24 recommended actions from the audit have been completed. The three remaining actions are:
 - Payroll Policies and Procedures
 - Bona Fide Reports
 - SES Wages Enterprise Agreement.
- **SAFECOM's Compliance Program** has been developed and reviewed by all directors and managers across the sector to prepare for the Auditor-General's assessment of our compliance against Treasurer's Instructions 2 and 28. Areas that still need to be addressed are: Maintenance of Contract Registers and Receipt of Goods Procedures.
- **Current internal audits** – Justice's Internal Audit is currently undertaking audits on the Policy Development and Management Framework, sector-wide compliance with Treasurer's Instructions 2 and 28 and the procurement, servicing and salvaging of appliances/vehicles/vessels.

The Board also determined that it would review the risk registers of all agencies at its August meeting.

Policy and Procedure Framework

The Board has asked that consultation with the associations and unions occur on this framework before it is approved.

From the Board

SAFECOM Board visits the South East

Fire prevention, emergency response, volunteer management and community resilience were the focus of the Board's recent visit to Kingston, Robe and Salt Creek in the state's South East.

After arriving in the South East on Thursday 28 May, the Board attended a special event at the joint SES and CFS facility in Kingston to acknowledge a group of self employed volunteers as well as employers who support their staff to volunteer with the local emergency service organisations.

The event, which was attended by over 100 people, was part of SAFECOM's Volunteer and Employer Recognition and Support Program (VERSP) recognising employer-supported volunteering within the sector.

A total of 17 employers and self-employed volunteers from the Lacepede, Robe, Lucindale and Naracoorte regions were awarded with certificates of recognition. One of the recipients was Ashley Wilkin, a self-employed CFS volunteer, whose company Zacher Engineering encourages staff to volunteer within the local community and during emergency incidents shuts up shop to assist. Ashley spoke at the VERSP event about his experiences as a volunteer and as an employer of volunteers.

The following day, upon completion of the Board's monthly meeting, Board members met with representatives from the Robe and Naracoorte / Lucindale councils at the Robe CFS Station to discuss some of the issues relevant to the region. One topic of discussion was the funding secured by the councils through the Natural Disaster Mitigation Program to develop a Community Emergency All-Hazards Risk Management Plan for the area.

The successful meeting, involving Deputy CEO of Robe, Ronni Barnden and some of the people working on the plan, highlighted the two greatest risks facing the region; bushfire and flooding from the Mosquito and Morambro Creeks. The meeting also acknowledged the need for local government, community members and the emergency services sector to all play a part in emergency management and share in the responsibility of building community resilience.

Friday afternoon saw the Board complete its trip to the South East with a visit to the Salt Creek CFS Station. The 20-member strong brigade is unique due to its remote location, with a diverse skill set enabling them to respond to a range of incidents, including first response to medical emergencies, and a close working relationship with the Department for Environment and Heritage in protecting the area's conservation parks.

The Board's productive visit to the South East helped to further develop the relationship between the local councils and the emergency services sector and gave the Board an opportunity to thank and acknowledge the contributions of the local emergency service volunteers.



Above: The 100 strong audience at the VERSP event at the joint Kingston CFS and SES facility.



Below: Ashley Wilkin (centre) receives his certificate of employer recognition at the VERSP event.

Volunteers

Volunteers: Everyday people, extraordinary contributions

Last month our fire and emergency services sector volunteers from the CFS and SES were officially thanked as part of National Volunteer Week.

This year's theme was 'Everyday people, extraordinary contribution', which highlighted the fact that every volunteer's contribution is extraordinary, because that person cares enough to be a volunteer.

SAFECOM Chief Executive David Place said volunteers should feel proud of their commitment to the State's response and recovery efforts.

"National Volunteer Week was our opportunity to thank each and every one of our volunteers for their dedication to their communities and to the CFS and the SES, we couldn't do it without you."

The week began with an official launch in Rundle Mall that saw distinguished speakers, including the Minister for Volunteers the Hon. Tom Koutsantonis, the Deputy Lord Mayor, Stephen Yarwood and His Excellency the Governor of South Australia, Kevin Scarce, thank South Australian volunteers for their contribution to the State and kick off a week of events to recognise their efforts.

David attended the launch alongside acting CFS Chief Officer Andrew Lawson and SES Chief Officer Stuart Macleod, together with CFS and SES volunteers who brought along their brigade and unit appliances and the SES rescue dogs to promote their emergency service organisations.

During the week, volunteers were recognised through a variety of means including the regional Volunteer Support Officers getting creative and organising local signage to thank the volunteers – these signs were displayed in Port Pirie and on the main street in Murray Bridge.



Above: The SES rescue dogs and their volunteer handlers were a crowd favourite at the state launch of National Volunteer Week in Rundle Mall.



Above: CFS Morphett Vale volunteers join in the fun celebrating National Volunteer Week.

To further show appreciation for the thousands of people that dedicate their time to volunteer within the fire and emergency services sector, SAFECOM, on behalf of the SES and CFS, placed print adverts in over 30 metropolitan and regional newspapers and organised 20 community service announcements with the ABC that went to air throughout National Volunteer Week.

A good deal of positive media coverage was also generated, with several CFS and SES volunteers being profiled in local newspapers and participating in radio interviews. A significant number of print media articles also ran throughout the period, which demonstrates a keen interest in the role volunteers play in the South Australian community.

The SAFECOM I.T. Department also created a 'National Volunteer Week' animated banner for the SES, CFS and SAFECOM website homepages that linked to a separate National Volunteer Week page.

Although the week acted as a formal reminder of the extraordinary contributions volunteers make to our community, it is important that the efforts of volunteers are recognised everyday, as without them, the fire and emergency services sector could not function as it does.

Building Partnerships

Our sector is about building safer communities. We continue to forge alliances and collaborative partnerships with government, non-government and not-for-profit agencies to ensure that the safety of the community is maintained, minimising the risk of loss to life, property and the environment, not only on the land but also in the vast oceans and other waterways.

Emergency Management Plans - Hazard Leader Organisations

Natural disasters, which are predicted to increase in scale and frequency, are estimated to cause more than \$1.14 billion damage a year to homes, businesses and infrastructure, and serious disruption to communities. A greater investment in disaster mitigation will likely reduce the economic cost of natural disasters.

The SEMC is committed to disaster mitigation and in 2005 agreed to establish Hazard Leader Organisations (HLO) for nine identified State hazards. These hazards are Animal and Plant Disease, Bushfire, Counter Terrorism, Earthquake, Escape of Hazardous Materials, Extreme Weather, Flood, Human Health and Urban Fire.

The HLOs report to the SEMC via the State Mitigation Advisory Group and are required to develop a hazard plan for their specific hazard. Each HLO has been nominated because of its legislative responsibility or specialised knowledge, expertise and resources to undertake a leadership role for planning emergency management activities for a specific hazard. Recent examples of hazard leadership include;

- The Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation (Flood Hazard Leader) which is working with key stakeholders, including the Flood Control Agency (SES), DEH Coastal Management, Stormwater Management Authority and City of Playford Council to respond to the Buckland Park Township Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which considers the flood risk and flood treatment programs necessary for the proposed township which includes 15,300 dwellings, housing 33,000 people.
- The Bushfire Task Force which has been established by the CFS (Bushfire Hazard Leader) to advise the SEMC on the implications for South Australia from the Victorian Bushfires. This will result in a revised Bushfire Hazard Plan that takes into account the new “upper extreme” frame of reference.

Whilst each HLO is continuing to develop and mature their hazard plans, SAFECOM is working with other states and territories to produce National Risk Assessment Guidelines. The guidelines are almost complete and will provide a more rigorous and consistent approach to identifying emergency risks at the state and local level.

Swine Flu Update

Although the Human Swine Influenza Virus H1N1 09 is not particularly virulent, it is proving to be very contagious, and therefore it is timely to remind people of the characteristics of influenza viruses. Influenza is transferred through the community on an individual's hands and through tiny droplets which are released into the air when an infected person coughs and sneezes.

The roll out of SA Health's '*Wash, Wipe, Cover - don't infect another*' program (**Wash** your hands often, **Wipe** down surfaces, **Cover** your coughs and sneezes) across the sector continues, with a range of actions being undertaken including Wash, Wipe, Cover fact sheets and posters being placed around worksites, alcohol-based hand rub, tissues and waste bins being placed in reception areas, alcohol-based hand rub and alcohol wipes being placed next to equipment that is shared by multiple users e.g. photocopiers, and surgical masks being issued to First Aid Officers.

If any member of a workgroup appears to have flu-like symptoms (fever and cough, sore throat, fatigue and respiratory illness) they will be asked to put on a surgical mask, leave the worksite and seek medical attention. Staff sent home with flu-like symptoms will be required to obtain a medical clearance before returning to work.

People are reminded that while the seasonal flu vaccine does not give protection against human swine influenza, it does provide protection against other circulating seasonal influenza virus types. SA Health recommends that all people over six months of age be vaccinated. Vaccination will also reduce the overall burden of seasonal influenza in the community and, in turn, reduce the burden on our hospitals and health system.

For further information on swine flu check www.flu.sa.gov.au

Building partnerships

Tonga Royal Visit

Tonga's Crown Prince His Royal Highness Prince Tupouto'a Lavaka and Her Royal Highness the Crown Princess Nanasipau'u Tuku'aho were recently welcomed to MFS' Wakefield Street headquarters. Minister for Emergency Services Michael Wright officially welcomed the guests with a short address, commending the partnership between the two governments and their fire services.

His Royal Highness took the opportunity while in South Australia to visit headquarters to meet those involved with the sustainable development program that has been operating between the Tonga Fire Service (TFS) and the MFS since 2002.

The sustainable development program provides for the development and implementation of a long-term sustainable framework to enable the TFS to achieve a high level of excellence in the provision of fire and other emergency services.

The focus of the program is providing training opportunities for the TFS staff. Over the past four years, 10 senior fire officers from Tonga have travelled to South Australia to receive training on six separate occasions, ranging from two weeks to two months. This has included hot fire training at the CFS Brukunga training facility. MFS Officers have also conducted assessment and training activities in Tonga. The Adelaide Tongan community provides support for visiting TFS Officers whilst here in Adelaide.

Along with this valuable training and exchange of knowledge with Tonga, a range of surplus fire and rescue equipment has been donated including a total of 10 MFS and, more recently, three CFS used fire appliances.

In addition to fire appliances, the program has supplied items including breathing air sets, personal protective clothing and vehicle rescue tools that became available as part of an upgrade to MFS equipment. SAFECOM has also donated surplus computers to establish a computer training facility at the Tonga Police and Fire Services' compound located in the country capital, Nuku A'lofa.



Top left: His Royal Highness Prince Tupouto'a Lavaka shares a laugh with Emergency Services Minister Michael Wright.



Top right: His Royal Highness Prince Tupouto'a Lavaka, David Place, Andrew Lawson and Grant Lupton.

Community Safety

Together with its agencies, SAFECOM consistently works to build and maintain the safety and resilience of the South Australian community through a range of activities including community education initiatives, training, collaborative partnerships and special campaigns.

State search and rescue experts put to the test

South Australia's rescue capability is not only growing in stature within the emergency services sector but its profile is also sparking interest from outside the sector. One interested party at the recent Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) Category 2 Technician Course was Channel 10's children's education program 'Totally Wild' which sent a television crew down to the USAR training site to film the canine search team for an up and coming episode.

The functional USAR training site at the MFS Angle Park Training Centre realistically replicates the collapse of a multi-tenancy building and is capable of supporting a wide variety of rescue scenarios simultaneously.

The latest course comprised 25 participants including MFS firefighters, SES rescuers and SA Ambulance Service rescue paramedics together with engineers, HAZMAT and health experts and a canine search team.

The three-week course culminated with a simulated earthquake exercise conducted over 48 hours. The team of rescue specialists and trainees worked together to search for, locate and retrieve trapped casualties in a collapsed six-storey building. Technical search equipment such as cameras, thermal imagers and acoustic sensors, in conjunction with disaster search canines, were used throughout the exercise to identify where and how casualties were trapped. The rescue process involved breaching concrete walls, assisting and extricating victims.

MFS District Officer and USAR Project coordinator, Colin Lindsay said the USAR training program was intensive and tested the mettle of all MFS, SES and SA Ambulance Service personnel involved.

"The 48-hour exercise is a test of endurance and team work that requires the technicians to rotate through 12 hour shifts, bed down in tents and survive on ration packs when they are away from the Salvation Army catering van.

"International experience shows that about 80% of casualties in major disasters are removed from collapsed structures through initial rescue efforts by local emergency services and community members.

"More profoundly trapped casualties require the specialised equipment, technical expertise and integrated response that is being fostered, developed and maintained through the USAR taskforce.

"The USAR exercise is a great example of how the MFS, SES, SA Ambulance Service and experts from other agencies work hand in hand during disaster response and recovery," Colin said.

The USAR Category 2 Technician Course is run twice a year with the next course scheduled to run in 2010.



The USAR training site at the MFS Angle Park Training Centre.

Community Safety

SACAD project update

One of the sector's biggest projects is developing and implementing a new Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system for emergency services.

The South Australian Computer Aided Dispatch (SACAD) project is a combined initiative with SAFECOM, SA Ambulance Service and SAPOL to replace the old CAD systems in each agency. Within SAFECOM, the new system will be used in the Adelaide Fire Communication Centre and the SES State Coordination Centre at 99 Wakefield Street, as well as the CFS Air Desk in Waymouth Street.

The integrated solution will offer significant advantages including; increased reliability, resilience and support to emergency crews on the ground, more versatile call taking and dispatch processes, better maps, improved information sharing and real time incident transfer between the different emergency services organisations.

The project is being undertaken by a dedicated project team, and is being directed by a Project Board that includes representatives from SAFECOM, MFS, CFS, SES and the Department of Justice. The Board meets monthly to monitor progress and look at cross-agency project issues, resources and forward planning.

After the selection of the successful CAD supplier (Intergraph Corporation) was completed in October 2008, the project moved into (and is now nearing the end of) the 'solution definition phase'. During this phase work has been done to determine exactly how the new CAD will be configured to meet the sector's needs and what operational changes will be required. This includes changes within the communications centres, as well as to operational processes used by MFS field staff and CFS and SES volunteers across the state.

During June and July work will be done to finalise all of the detailed specifications, and the implementation approach and time scales will be planned in more detail. At this stage expected implementation is late 2010 or early 2011.

Further updates will be provided in future editions of COMmEnt. For more information, contact Andrew Hoyle on 8204 3797.

Triple Zero not Triple 'Oh'

Emergency services personnel are reminded that the official terminology for the emergency response number **000** is Triple Zero – not Triple 'Oh'.

With alphanumeric keypads on mobile and fixed line phones it is possible that in a stressful emergency situation a member of the public may dial the letters OOO (which is '666') rather than the numeric zero, in their panicked state.

It is important that the correct terminology is used in all verbal communication with internal and external stakeholders – especially the media - as concerns have been raised that announcers and presenters on radio and television have been using the alternative Triple 'Oh' which may lead to confusion.

Reminder: 2009 Safer Community Awards - entries close 3 July 2009

The Australian Safer Community Awards, sponsored by the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department in conjunction with states and territories, recognises outstanding achievements and innovation in emergency management.

Applications are sought for projects that promote community safety in the context of emergency management including risk assessment, research, education and training, information and knowledge management, and prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.

For more information, please visit http://www.safecom.sa.gov.au/site/emergency_management/safer_community_awards.jsp.



Community safety

SES State Rescue Challenge

This year, State Rescue Challenge teams competed for the newly instituted SES Chief Officer's Shield and the opportunity to compete at the National Disaster Rescue Competition, which will be held in Brisbane later this year. The Tea Tree Gully 2 team took out this prize along with the opportunity to travel to Queensland to show off their skills!

The State Rescue Challenge involved six teams of SES volunteers being put through their paces with a series of exercises ranging from general rescue through to a very challenging vertical rescue where live casualties were rescued from a three-storey building.

Held in conjunction with the overall State Rescue Challenge, the Road Crash Rescue Challenge provided a challenging and meaningful experience for SES volunteers, offering them the opportunity to further develop their skills through the exchange of rescue techniques and ideas. SES volunteers from Mount Gambier, Yankalilla, Renmark and the South Coast teamed up to form the Road Crash Rescue Challenge Team 1 and took out the title.

The two-day event provided a great opportunity for SES members to enhance their operational rescue skills. The purpose of the Challenge is to promote best practice for SES crews in serving their local communities, to foster excellence and innovation in rescue and to promote the spirit of cooperation and friendly competition among SES volunteers – this, it achieved.

SES Chief Officer Stuart Macleod praised all the SES volunteers who took part.

"Each and every volunteer who participated showed an enthusiasm, dedication and drive that demonstrates the quality of our emergency services here in South Australia," Stuart said.

The next State Rescue Challenge is scheduled for 2011.



Above: Participants from the SES Noarlunga Unit administer first aid to a "casualty" as they prepare to rescue them from a steep slope.



Above: Winners of the SES State Rescue Challenge Tea Tree Gully 2 Andy Dunkley, David Zakrzewski, Phillip Hosking, Nigel Woods, Andrew Buckle (Team Leader), Andrew Woolman (Deputy Team Leader).



Above: Winners of the SES State Road Crash Rescue Challenge - Team 1. Harry Climas, Mt Gambier, John Edge, Yankalilla, Fred Brehin, South Coast, Jessica Haywood, Renmark, Tim Murphy, Mt Gambier.

Thank you



St James' Primary School

ABN 79 469 343 054
SKELLATAR STOCK ROUTE
MUSWELLBROOK 2333 PO BOX 606
Telephone (02) 6543 3094 Facsimile (02) 6543 2297
Email: admin@mswbrk.mn.catholic.edu.au

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SAFECOM
Ministerial Liaison

8/04/09

To South Australia's State Emergency Services,
Please accept this collage as a gift which reflects our
appreciation for all the good work you do to keep our
communities safe.

We honour those who have died in the recent and tragic bush
fires. We give gratitude to the brave men, women and children
who continue to define and give testimony to the strong,
enduring and resilient spirit of what it means to be an
Australian.

We continue to hold you in our thoughts and prayers.

Sincerely

Shanelle Thomas

Shanelle Thomas

(Principal)

