

SA USAR team deployed to Christchurch

Thursday, 3 March 2011

This weekend, a South Australian team of nine Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) specialists will begin a 10 day earthquake recovery deployment in Christchurch, New Zealand.

The team will comprise of five Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) firefighters, one State Emergency Service (SES) personnel, two SA Ambulance Service (SAAS) paramedics and a South Australian USAR trained Engineer. They'll join the latest deployment of Australian USAR specialists to New Zealand, replacing Australian personnel who were deployed last week.

MFS Chief Officer, Grant Lupton coordinates South Australia's USAR Capability. He said the earthquake has affected us deeply as Australians.

"Due to our shared histories, the close proximity of our neighbours and the ANZAC spirit that has helped define our two nations, Australians have felt the effects of this natural disaster - almost as if it had happened here.

"Adelaide is a sister city of Christchurch, and many of us have strong ties to New Zealand. As such, it is my hope that South Australia's USAR deployment to New Zealand will be a formal expression of our State's heartfelt sympathy and desire to help a sister city in need," Chief Officer Lupton said.

The South Australian USAR deployment team consists of:

- One team leader (MFS)
- Three rescue specialists (2 X MFS, 1 X SES)
- Two Hazardous Materials USAR specialists (2 X MFS)
- Two USAR trained Paramedics (2 X SAAS)
- One South Australian USAR trained Engineer.

Tasks the team will be likely to face include; conducting searches and rescues, handling hazardous materials incidents, assessing structural integrity and risks, victim recovery and infrastructure assessments.

SES Chief Officer, Chris Beattie said that the South Australian State Emergency Service was always prepared to support communities during times of disaster.

"We have highly trained and well equipped responders who give selflessly of their time to help others. This deployment will no doubt be tough and exacting - but as a team the South Australian contingent will be up to the task."

SA Ambulance Service A/Chief Executive Officer, Aaron Chia said, "SA Ambulance Service is proud to be able to support the National USAR response to NZ during their time of great need. We will be deploying two highly skilled Special Operations Team Rescue Paramedics as part of the South Australian contingent."

The remaining 155 SA USAR Taskforce personnel continue to be on stand-by to assist with any further deployments to Christchurch or elsewhere, if requested.

MEDIA NOTE: Media are welcome to join members of the SA USAR team at Adelaide Airport from 11.15 am on Friday, 4 March. Their flight, QF 736 is scheduled to depart at 12.15 pm.

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

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