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Government
of South Australia



Emergency Management

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SOUTH AUSTRALIA'S DISASTER RESILIENCE NEWSLETTER

2013 flooding continues to impact Kangaroo Island

Flooding and inundation has affected the low-lying and land-locked MacGillivray/Haines area of Kangaroo Island since June, 2013, continuing into the winter of 2014.

To date, the estimated damage bill from the event is more than \$9 million.

The flooding was the result of an extraordinary rain event in June, 2013, which preceded heavier than usual winter rains. The many natural lagoons overflowed onto roads, paddocks and yards.

The flooding damaged and closed many roads and resulted in significant financial loss and disruption to farming and tourism businesses and residents. Impacts have included daily disruption to school bus routes; vehicle damage from driving through saline water; loss of pasture and vegetation; loss of crops; loss of farm animals due to drowning and de-stocking; and loss of tourism accommodation income due to closed roads.

So far, the disaster also cost the Kangaroo Island Council \$529,000 in emergency road repairs.

Utilising State Government discretionary funding, a Flood Recovery Co-ordinator from the was appointed in December, 2013.

One of the community-driven tasks for the co-ordinator was to undertake an impact assessment and this was completed in February and March, 2014.

The impact assessment team identified more than \$9 million of financial cost to the community which included about \$2.7 million in direct losses to farming businesses.

It also identified a large percentage (60 per cent) of residents who had felt the effects of isolation and or stress over the preceding nine months because of the flood waters.

Residents face the prospect of the same problems recurring this year as normal winter rains are expected to swell lagoons again.

This atypical disaster has posed complex questions for recovery.

While the recovery process can start during the response phase of a disaster - such as fire or flash flooding - the ongoing and insidious nature of this disaster posed challenging issues.

How can a community start to recover when the full extent of the damage is not yet revealed? There is little chance of relief from the effects of the disaster for some time and the disaster may continue into the next wet season and beyond.

A multi-agency approach was employed with regular meetings of the Kangaroo Island Flood Recovery Committee. This committee represents health, primary industries, emergency services, council, environment, waste collection and other stakeholders.



A home resources kit was developed to provide residents with information about personal wellbeing, financial help and council contacts. This information was delivered to residents during the impact assessment visits and through regular newsletters.

Key aspects of the recovery process have included:

- improving communication with the community through newsletters, email, home visits and community meetings
- use of a local cricket ground as a social and meeting place for residents
- providing a central point of contact at the council through the Flood Recovery Co-ordinator
- identifying what is important to the residents for the future of the region and starting to formulate a plan to address issues such as drainage and better roads
- involving all agencies in maintaining services and road access
- responding to individual concerns while focussing on region-wide solutions, and
- providing an opportunity for people to tell their stories.

The recovery process for the people of MacGillivray /Haines still has a way to go and will depend on the outcomes of this winter.

Through the recovery work done so far, it is anticipated that the community will face this winter better equipped to deal with the ongoing disaster.

Shauna Black

Local Flood Recovery Co-ordinator
Kangaroo Island Council



Each decision and action makes us more vulnerable to disasters – or more resilient to them. Thus disaster risk reduction involves every part of society, every part of government, and every part of the professional and private sector.” United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction.



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National certification for incident management

At the May 2014 meeting of the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council (AFAC) it was resolved to progress a national certification scheme for incident management including the establishment of a national certification panel.

This scheme will provide for significant improvements in capability, enhancements to interstate support and substantial professional credence for individuals who obtain certification.

It represents a significant national project for the emergency management sector.

The national certification of incident management is part of a professional pathway being developed for fire and emergency service personnel.

While 'accreditation' of personnel to conduct incident management roles and the authority to appoint individuals

to incident management teams will remain with agencies and jurisdictions through the legislative authority given to chief officers, AFAC will be establishing 'certification' requirements centred on experience, education, ethics and examination of individual achievement.

These requirements will be set by an industry certification panel, establishing professional standards around AIIMS.

This formal recognition, for paid, part time and volunteer staff, is likely to begin in late 2014 and is expected to take three to five years to fully implement.

It will be voluntary for individuals to seek national certification and the entire approach and process is being overseen by the AFAC Board.

More information on the scheme is available from the AFAC website www.afac.com.au.

Productivity Commission inquiry into natural disaster funding arrangements

The inquiry was announced by the Commonwealth Government in December 2013 to examine the national expenditure of disasters, and the effectiveness of current mitigation support arrangements.

South Australia welcomes this inquiry because the impact of natural disasters on community living standards and the rising costs of disasters will become increasingly important as we prepare for more frequent and extreme weather events.

A concern has been the increasing imbalance between Commonwealth spending on disaster mitigation (such as the Natural Disaster Resilience Program) and spending on post-disaster relief and recovery. For example, South Australia receives \$2m a year for the NDRP program whilst Queensland received \$5 billion Commonwealth funding between 2010-11 and 2012-13 for post-disaster reconstruction.

While South Australia has not experienced a major disaster in recent years, the state and zone emergency risk assessments highlight why we need to put our effort into disaster prevention and community resilience.

While all levels of government are promoting the economic and social benefits of disaster prevention and community preparation, the Commonwealth funding for disaster mitigation has declined in real terms over the past decade. The Productivity Commission's website provides more information and will publish the responses from states and territories, various sectors and agencies.

Planning and service delivery for children and youth across all phases of emergency management.

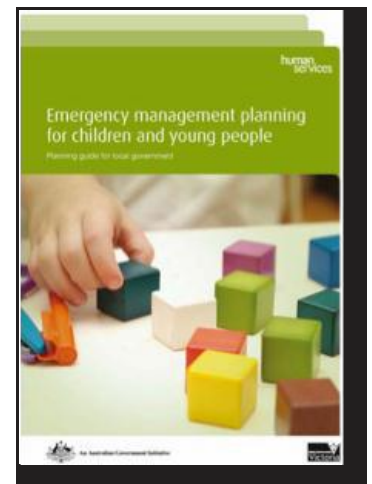
Children and young people account for around a quarter of Australia's population.

They have unique needs and can be particularly vulnerable in emergency events. Children are different from the adult population physically, psychologically and developmentally and their needs in emergencies and disasters should be considered in emergency management planning.

This was a significant learning from the Black Saturday bushfires.

The Victorian Government received Commonwealth Government funding to produce the Emergency Management Planning for Children and Young People Planning Guide.

The guide outlines best practice and provides practical steps to ensure the unique needs of children are not overlooked. You can download a copy of the guide from the Victoria Government website.





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New AEMI lessons management book released

A new Lessons Management Handbook (Handbook 8) has been produced by the Australian Emergency Management Institute as part of the Australian Emergency Management Handbook Series and the National Strategy for Disaster Resilience.

As stated in the handbook's introduction: "Lessons Management is an overarching term that refers to collecting, analysing and disseminating experiences from operations, exercises, programs and reviews.

"A consistent approach to the management of lessons is an essential component for an organisation to become a learning organisation. Organisations are seen to be learning when their structures, systems and cultures are able to evolve based on past experiences."

"Interoperability of lessons management systems across agencies, sectors and jurisdictions will facilitate information sharing and national analysis".

The term 'lessons management' is now preferred to the often misused term 'lessons learned' due to the fact that 'lessons learned' implies an end state – that the lesson has been 'learned' when often it has merely been observed.

The actual learning process involves a lot more investment by an organisation in terms of planning and training in order to achieve a lesson 'learned'.

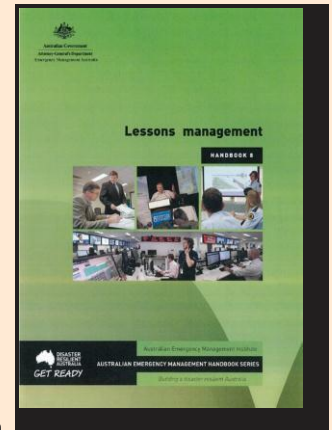
Too often in the past, this oversimplification of the learning process has meant that valuable insights from past experiences have been lost, condemning us to repeat past mistakes with often expensive and sometimes tragic outcomes.

This important and very practical handbook can be downloaded from the Emergency Management Australia website.

Details of the Handbook Series are available at <https://ema.infoservices.com.au/items/HB8-1ST>

Bob Stevenson

State Emergency Management Planning Officer
SA State Emergency Service



What do older people's life experiences tell us about emergency by Victoria Cornell

In late 2010, I was fortunate to be awarded a Resthaven Incorporated PhD research scholarship in emergency management and older people.

I started the PhD in January 2011 under the supervision of Professor Paul Arbon at Flinders University. I did my research on a full time basis, submitting it to the examiners in January 2014 and, in May of this year, I was awarded my PhD.

Anecdotally, older people are considered to be under-prepared for emergency events. However, they are rarely engaged directly to understand their knowledge and experience of emergencies and their feelings regarding emergency preparedness.

Discussion thus far largely considers the development of tools and checklists that will help older people prepare for emergencies rather than what might influence their decision to prepare.

The study took a qualitative approach as the aim was to explore and understand whether people's life experiences have influenced their perception of preparedness and what it means to them to be prepared for an emergency event.

During the research, I interviewed 11 people - eight women and three men - who ranged in age from 77 to 90 years. All participants lived in their own homes, in the greater Adelaide or Adelaide Hills areas, and received low-level in-home care (which, for example, included assistance with shopping or housework).

In the interviews, the emergency events that the participants had experienced were nominated by them. I did not ask whether they had experienced specific events, such as a bushfire or flood. The events were wide-ranging and included health issues, natural hazard events, human-induced events and (for the time in which they occurred) socially unacceptable events such as teenage pregnancies.

I found that the participants felt that being prepared for an emergency is not a one-off activity that is achieved upon completing a preparedness checklist or a safety plan. It is an ongoing process built upon over many years.

Experience, strength and ability to cope is gathered from many aspects of life, both the big events and the small. This process leads to a feeling of comfort, safety and security. While they might not define themselves as 'being prepared', the people I interviewed certainly considered themselves to be resilient. They accept their limitations and feel confident they can cope.

Given the lack of engagement to date, this is a key finding as it has implications for how older people may (and should) be engaged in the future. They should not be approached as a 'vulnerable' group as such but rather as a group that has some specific needs.

It should also be acknowledged that they are a group that also has a wealth of positive attributes in terms of knowledge, experience and sense of community.

The material gathered in this research shows that for these older people being prepared is principally a mental state of being.

In accepting their advancing years and deteriorating physical ability, the participants gain comfort in knowing that their life experiences (including the emergency events they have lived through) have left them feeling comfortable and strong enough mentally to deal with any potential future emergency.

The research therefore has implications for the emergency management sector in terms of developing well informed policy and practice.

By understanding what influences older people living in the community to prepare for emergency events – indeed, understanding that for this group of older participants being prepared is less important than being resilient – the emergency services sector can establish how best to assist them in their emergency preparedness planning rather than making assumptions about what this target group wants or needs.

For further information on Victoria's research, please contact her on cornell.vicki@safecom.sa.gov.au



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New Triple Zero app launched

A new Triple Zero Kid's Challenge Smartphone and Tablet Application has been launched.

The new safety game is available for free download from iTunes and Android Market Place.

This app is perfect for raising awareness in primary school-aged children and can be played on current and limited legacy Apple iOS and Android devices.

The Android version is available at Google Play - <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=air.au.com.A360entertainment.TripleZeroKidsChallenge>

The iOS version is available at iTunes - <https://itunes.apple.com/au/app/triple-zero-kids-challenge/id679476707?mt=8>



Impact of February, 2014 winds felt for weeks in Adelaide

If you're involved in emergency services from a paid or volunteer perspective it's going to be very difficult to forget February, 2014.

The widespread impact of such ferocious wind for a very

The main issues that became evident over the initial response to the incident from a volunteer perspective were:

1. Preparedness (Not only of the community for such a large scale, widespread event but also emergency services agencies and associated essential services work crews).
2. Communication between various responders and even between units/brigades in the same service.

While some areas of Adelaide received only minor to moderate damage, others received dozens of jobs. The area most impacted was Adelaide's Eastern Suburbs where hundreds of jobs were handled by volunteers across multiple days of prolonged response.

The vast majority of calls from the public related to tree limbs or, in some cases, entire trees dropping on roadways and properties due to the high wind.

Once the initial rush calmed and a picture began emerging of the scale of the incident, it was very clear that this was widespread and very big.

The SES State Duty Officer was requesting information from SES Units on the number of tasks outstanding, tasks complete, tasks underway and the number of crews on the road. By mid-morning the question was:

"Do you want help?"

Simply put, yes! In my 14 years in the SES this is only the second time I can recall the question being put to us at my home unit of Tea Tree Gully.

We had almost 100 jobs outstanding and only two vehicles on the road which meant without help we were in for a very long few days.

After multiple phone calls, clarification on numbers and follow ups we had an MFS Strike Team, a CFS vehicle and two vehicles fully crewed from our neighbouring SES unit at Enfield. A great assistance to us, but here's the problem: We've got vehicles and people coming to help but what can they do?

and team leaders to ascertain their capabilities, it was operational time that could have been better spent in the field.

Much can be learned and applied through this event. The community and services just weren't ready for the scale of the event.

The SES Community Engagement Unit has a large role to play in ensuring that there is better information available on how to prepare and protect yourself, your home and your family in extreme weather conditions.

Emergency services agencies scaled up operations quickly once the size of the event became clearer, communication systems were put in place, and operations continued to progress throughout the event.

The end result was that the jobs were complete, everyone went home safely and the community were all too aware of the huge scale of operation that emergency services as a whole undertook during that day.

Longer term, the various services involved on the day have a greater appreciation of each others' capabilities. Communications between the services have also improved.

The management of incidents on this scale is always going to be a testing experience that provides important learnings.

Hopefully these learnings can be pushed into any future situations that require a multi-agency response on a major scale.

Phil Tann
Unit Manager

Tea Tree Gully Unit

SA State Emergency Service