

EMA Update

Emergency Management Australia provides national leadership in the development of measures to reduce risk to communities and manage the consequences of disasters.

EMA Update keeps AJEM readers abreast of the activities that assist this aim.

EMERGENCY WARNINGS – DOES EVERYONE GET THE MESSAGE?

The third millennium has to date been subject to a range of catastrophic disasters from both natural and human caused events. Furthermore, there is nothing to suggest that with the ever present threat of a terrorist attack and the potential effects of global warming, this trend will not continue. The consequences for vulnerable communities continues to be of concern to governments at all levels and it is imperative to find measures to reduce community vulnerability as a matter of priority.

A common question in the aftermath of the more significant disasters that have occurred in recent years has been the effectiveness of emergency warnings to the public. The provision of authoritative, timely, accurate and believable warnings in crises enables communities to take protective action and can serve to reduce casualties and the loss of life and property.

In recognition of the importance of clear and timely communications during a crisis, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) commissioned a *Review into Government Communications During a Crisis*. One aspect of this multi-faceted review involved a survey of State and Territory emergency warning arrangements for “all hazards”. One of the recommendations of this survey was the establishment of a national forum to enable the sharing of information on best practice and a nationally consistent approach to emergency warnings. Such a forum would also provide a means of engaging with all sectors of the community including people with disabilities and those from remote and culturally and linguistically diverse communities to ensure that their emergency warnings needs are met.

The Attorney-General’s Department was given responsibility for implementing some of the outcomes of the PM&C review and, in particular, Emergency Management Australia (EMA) was tasked to facilitate the establishment of the *National Forum on Emergency Warnings to the Community*.

The inaugural meeting of the National Forum was conducted in Adelaide on 29 and 30 March 2007. The meeting was opened by Tony Pearce, Director General of EMA, and brought together representatives from the three tiers of Government, national peak and research bodies, and advocacy groups representing people with a disability and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. These included:

- Australian Government agencies, including Indigenous Coordination Centre representatives;
- State and Territory Government agencies and emergency service organisations;
- Local Government and Municipal Associations;
- Australian Red Cross;
- Australasian Fire Authorities’ Council;
- Australian Federation of Disability Organisations;
- Blind Citizens Australia;
- Deafness Forum of Australia Ltd;
- Federation of Ethnic Communities’ Councils of Australia;
- Australian Communications Exchange;
- Telecommunications and Disability Consumer Representation;

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- National Information Communication Technology Australia,
- Surf Life Savers Australia, and
- Relevant Working Groups, including the Remote Indigenous Communities Advisory Committee and the National Community Safety Working Group.

The National Forum will act as a conduit — a connector and value adding mechanism for and between the existing bodies of work nationally that address the dissemination of emergency warnings to the public. The Forum brings together key players and stakeholders and serves as a vehicle to identify and address impediments and obstacles; build partnerships; consider new technologies and share information on best practice approaches leading to the achievement of a nationally consistent approach to the dissemination of emergency warnings to the community.

It will identify, link and share strategies for public engagement and education as they relate to community warning systems; focus on issues impeding the delivery of emergency warnings to target audiences, and promote and influence the adoption of improved emergency warning systems which are accessible to the entire community, including people with a disability and those with cultural, linguistic or geographic diversity.

The National Forum will also facilitate improved information flows between jurisdictions, agencies, organisations and other relevant working groups to ensure consistency of emergency warnings and their initiation.

The inaugural meeting heard presentations from a range of stakeholders to inform the development of a nationally consistent approach. The meeting also identified a conceptual framework upon which the work of the National Forum is to be based. The framework provides for prediction, interpretation, message construction, communication and protective behaviour. As a priority, the Forum agreed to progress work on message construction, communication and protective behaviour including:

- developing a national approach for consistent emergency warning messages and to ensure that they are accessible and easily understood by all;
- developing a nationally consistent communication strategy and principles ;
- identifying gaps in the current public awareness and education programs, and
- developing a national community awareness and education approach.

It was agreed that the Forum Secretariat, through EMA, would explore the adoption of the Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) as the national standard in Australia for the electronic distribution of emergency warnings to the community.

Participants supported this inaugural meeting as an excellent first step in identifying the issues for nationally consistent emergency warning systems involving all sectors of the community.

The next meeting will be held in the second half of this year at a location to be advised.

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EDUCATION AND TRAINING

School Education Update **Interactive Learning Object (Resource)**

EMA are working with multi-media consultants to develop an interactive learning object (resource) aimed at middle years (upper primary/lower secondary) students which will engage them in:

- a) identifying risks from natural disaster to their immediate community; and
- b) emergency preparedness and preparations in the Australian environment.

The interactive resource will raise awareness of local risks of natural disaster, emergency management processes and enhance community resilience to the effects of natural disaster. The resource will be linked to state and territory curriculum frameworks and will be available on the EMA Schools website by the end of September 2007.

For further information contact
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EMA's Inclusive Emergency Management with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities (CALD) Program

The EMA four-year program, a component of the National Action Plan (NAP) to Build on Social Cohesion, Harmony and Security has commenced.

The program is aimed at:

- raising CALD communities' awareness of emergency management;
- enhancing community resilience to the effects of disasters;
- increasing CALD community engagement in emergency management volunteer activities; and

- enhancing the relationship between the CALD communities and the emergency management sectors

To date the following activities have been undertaken:

- The national reference group has met. This group comprises of representatives from the emergency management and CALD communities sectors. This group has been established to provide high level expertise and guidance on the program.
- Data has been collected to inform the culturally specific national school education emergency management resources for youth. This has been done through research and by jurisdictional workshops.
- Work with the Australian Emergency Management Volunteers Forum to plan workshops looking at recruitment and retention of CALD volunteers in emergency management.
- A national workshop was held to highlight the issues for CALD communities in the emergency management context.
- Jurisdictional working parties have been established to plan community based projects.
- Consultants have been engaged to assist EMA with these activities.

The revised "Guidelines for Working with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities in Emergency Management" has been completed and is about to be published. It will be available on the EMA website as well as in hardcopy.

If you would like more information on the EMA's Inclusive Emergency Management with Culturally Diverse Communities (CALD) Program please contact Judy Parker on (03) 54215229 or by e-mail on judy.parker@ema.gov.au

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

ONE DAY WORKSHOPS How to increase the cultural diversity of your volunteers. Workshops on recruiting volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds.

A series of one day workshops, designed to enhance the cultural diversity of volunteers involved in emergency management, will be held across Australia later this year. The aim of these workshops will be for emergency management agencies to connect with multicultural communities and to develop sustainable and long-term strategies to involve culturally diverse communities in volunteer groups related to emergency management.

Workshops will provide participants with a range of practical approaches to recruit, manage and support volunteers from culturally diverse backgrounds. In addition to their very practical focus, the workshops will specifically address volunteer management in an emergency management context. Using a problem-solving and hands-on approach, case studies will explore situations and challenges facing emergency management agencies. The three general areas covered will be:

- **Recruitment:** how to recruit, undertake effective promotion, analyse and understand your local demographics, who are the community gatekeepers, what are the information channels and how to form strategic partnerships.
- **Volunteer management:** how to overcome obstacles, identify different approaches to communication, how to deal with the challenges and benefits of diverse views and values, how to work with people who have varying English language skills, how to make sure people understand their roles and responsibilities.
- **Support and mentoring:** how to foster connections with people whose first language is not English, how to engage role models and enlist buddies.

The workshops will be open to people in emergency management agencies who manage volunteers and are part of a number of projects outlined on pg. 62.

For further information and to register your agency participation, contact Julien Nicolas on 03 54215295 or by e-mail on julien.nicolas@ema.gov.au

KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

Community Development Branch

Australian Emergency Manual Series

The third edition of *Storm and Water Damage Operations* has recently been published by EMA. This manual is part of the *Skills for emergency services personnel* stream and is designed to provide emergency service personnel with a basic reference for storm and water damage operations. The techniques and principles in the manual are designed for immediate and temporary storm and water damage repairs. *Storm and Water Damage Operations* is intended for use in the planning, training and operations of emergency service personnel and organisations.

Storm and Water Damage Operations – Third edition is available in PDF format on the EMA website, www.ema.gov.au, or through the print-on-demand facility accessed via EMA's website. Limited print copies are also available to emergency service personnel via the State Training Manager for the State Emergency Service in each jurisdiction.

For further information contact Kate Keane
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EMA Library

The annual Australasian Libraries In the Emergency Sector (ALIES) workshop was held from 1–5 April 2007 in Mount Macedon with a theme of 'Mapping knowledge: where in the world are we?' The workshop was attended by 40 representatives from 30 ALIES libraries. Members identified key issues for ALIES to focus on over the next 12 months, and new working groups have been established to provide a coordinated approach to a number of major issues including consortia, marketing, technology, thesaurus development, and cooperative journal indexing. ALIES will progress these issues by collaborating with key emergency management organisations, groups and committees.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Australian Journal of Emergency Management

The Journal is published quarterly and is disseminated throughout the emergency management community and related disciplines, in Australia and overseas. Articles identifying and discussing issues, policies, planning or procedural concerns, research reports and any other information relevant to the emergency/disaster management community are welcome.

Refer to the EMA website (www.ema.gov.au/ajem) for current and past issues and information on how to subscribe and contribute.

Letters to the Editor

The Journal welcomes Letters to the Editor. Please note that letters should be no more than 300 words. Letters exceeding this limit may be edited or refused. Letters must be in good taste and focus on issues of emergency management or past AJEM content.

Letters must contain a name, address and daytime phone number of the author. Unsigned letters or those submitted without a phone number will not be considered.

Regular contributors should submit letters on varied subjects. Letters by the same author that reiterate opinions previously expressed may not be published. The editor reserves the right to reject or edit any Letter to the Editor.

Advertising in AJEM

Display and classified advertising may be accepted for publication with the agreement of the Editor-in-Chief. The editor reserves the right to insert the word "Advertisement" above or below any copy.

Conference Diary

Full details of local and international conferences relating to emergency management are available from the EMA website. For information, please visit www.ema.gov.au.