

SAVEM has been working in or around firegrounds since before Christmas. The dry lightning storm which ignited over 250 fires statewide stretched everyone's resources to the limit and beyond. We send our sincere sympathy to everyone who has suffered losses of homes, property, animals and their environment. Some have lost their life's work. Most of us cannot begin to know how that feels, and recovery will go on for a long time. Our thoughts are with you.

SAVEM thanks the many new volunteers who have registered with us over the last several weeks of what has so far been a fierce summer.

Outreach

SAVEM's diverse range of activities extend beyond the core focus of animal welfare and response and recovery after Emergency incidents. Response generates a large additional workload in the form of administration and volunteer management, and none of this is generally visible to observers. We thank you for your patience as we are often not able to reply individually immediately.

Recent examples: when response meets recovery

Our first response after the December 2013 Rockleigh fire (see December 2013 Newsletter) included contact with the Paech family on whose property the western edge of the fire was contained.

Quite separately we were offered a donation of hay from veterinarian Beck Stanton's brother Matt. Matt had some hay surplus to his requirements, and wanted to give this to a fire affected farmer.

SAVEM approached Coopers of Mylor, who donated transport and handling of the feed from Nangkita to Callington, and the Paechs had some extra hay for their sheep, having lost nearly all their pasture to the fire. Sincere thanks to all involved.

Similarly, on-going conversations with Natural Resource Management in Murray Bridge indicate that a consortium of parties will be drawn together toward support and resourcing of locals more widely in the following months since the succession of bushfires, with SAVEM part of that on-going action.

SAVEM was able to circulate veterinarians and shooters when PIRSA sought extra personnel to respond to the mid-North bushfires in mid January. Many thanks to all of you who volunteered to help PIRSA.

Rockleigh 2

On 15th January Region 3 CFS Command invited SAVEM into the 4500ha fireground once that fire was contained. PIRSA CVO concurred. We had the support at the Murray Bridge CFS station with briefing, maps and food. The survey used the Jeep and Nurse Coordinator Carol Haley's Land Rover, with seven volunteers forming two crews.

We continue to refine our car carry item list as a result of these in-field activities. Since Rockleigh 1, Rachael Yeend has been monitoring wildlife numbers in the area, which will be very useful to document.

Eden Valley fire

On Saturday 18th January the contained southern end of this extensive fireground and the southerly wind permitted a survey team to attend this area, supported by CFS Gumeracha control centre and PIRSA CVO.

Teams were again sent to Eden Valley on 21 and 23 January. On the 21st, two teams with Jeep and an RSPCA vehicle attended the Nuriootpa PIRSA control centre. The CFS Incident Controller at Angaston deemed the fireground too dangerous to enter due to increasing winds and break out of fire, so after negotiating the challenges presented by *Tour Down Under*, we used our time to visit local Emergency Services and Veterinary clinics as an awareness and outreach exercise.

On the 23rd, we made our way through the northern part of the fireground, towards Moculta and Truro. The fire had burned leaving many islands of refuge within the expanse of black, which likely provided a haven for animals, although access to water points was problematic.

The SAVEM Jeep

Using our own clearly signed vehicle greatly improves access and movement around a fireground. Emergency Services are becoming familiar with us at roadblocks. Dynamic risk assessments mean we operate cautiously, as an event requiring our rescue would be less than

Rockleigh 2. The eastern face of the hills looking towards Sedan. 15 January 2014



SAFE—sheep graze between the majestic Eucalypts of Eden Valley, with burned paddock behind them. 18 January 2014



21 January 2014



helpful to the reputation of reliability and responsibility we aim to establish and foster with other Emergency agencies and landholders. The Jeep acquitted itself very well through the very rocky hills of Eden Valley.

Other agencies – longer term landowner support

A number of groups initially contacted SAVEM for assistance, including Lutheran Community Care in the Barossa Valley. These have now come under the coordinating umbrella of Primary Producers SA (PPSA).

HorseSA established an Emergency fund to assist owners of injured horses. Port Augusta vet David Anderson donated his time and resources to treating horses at the Bangor fire, and Dr Hideyasu Nakayama at Port Pirie attended at a Wirrabara property with a distressed Kangaroo.

More outreach

SAVEM's Coordinator spoke on ABC radio, the Emergency broadcaster, a number of times during that week; reinforcing both animal information contact and the importance of entering firegrounds only with consents of emergency services.

Nurse Coordinator Carol Haley attended the Kapunda public meeting on Sunday 19 January to advise on SAVEM's activities. At that meeting CFS Region 2 Commander John Hutchins thanked SAVEM for our work, thereby assisting CFS crews to do their core job.

Crafers West fire (Belair National Park)

This fire ignited early on Saturday 8 February. Very rapid action by the CFS with aviation and ground crews contained the fire to only 15 hectares – a magnificent achievement on an appallingly dangerous day.

Ten SAVEM volunteers attended at the fireground on Sunday 9 February. Four koalas were assessed from the ground, one in particular being of concern, located immediately adjacent to the train line.

Forty-eight hours later, after discussions with the Senior Ranger and Rail Corp, this animal was removed with the assistance of Fauna Rescue volunteers, led by FR's Koala Coordinator and SAVEM volunteer, Merridy Montarello, and after receiving fluids on site, was taken to Dr Anne Fowler for assessment. Prognosis is good.

Again, we extend sincere thanks to CFS Region 1 Onkaparinga Group Officer Peter Wicks, for lending SAVEM a CFS Thermal Imaging Camera, and to Tamarand Cresswell and Nick Brockhoff for managing the camera while in our care.

When things do finally get back to normal, our own TI camera is among other items of hardware are on our shopping list.

Bangor fire

As of Thursday 13 February, SAVEM is in communication with: CFS, PIRSA, DEWNR, Local Government and Local vet practices . PIRSA are managing all livestock matters very effectively.

All other animal issues are being managed by the above groups at a local level.

All the relevant Emergency Services are aware of SAVEM's presence and role. They will contact us if local resources require our supplementation.

PIRSA's Functional Service Liaison Officer will contact SAVEM if help is required.

HURRY UP AND WAIT!

There is a saying in Emergency Management, "*Hurry up and wait!*" In essence this means: be ready, be prepared, be trained, be organised, be able to take on your assigned role in a timely manner, safely and calmly. It means being part of a team, and respecting all others involved.

It means we do not race in with "all guns blazing" the second something happens. SAVEM has a very strong culture of safety and discipline, and while we can be very well prepared to act as soon as we are given the green light from the Control Agency, we will never put our volunteers at risk, or enter an Emergency incident area until it is safe to do so. Any tendency by any SAVEM volunteers to do this will not be tolerated, because of the risk to self, others who may come to your aid, and the risk to SAVEM's reputation as a Participating Agency in the State Emergency Management Plan (SEMP). The hierarchy of preservation is life, property and *then* the environment (i.e. animals). That's how it is.

The Minister responsible for Emergency Management is the Premier. This direct line to the very top of Government is a privilege and a serious responsibility. The State Coordinator in an Emergency is the Commissioner of Police. This is not a game for the faint-hearted, or those seeking a warm and fuzzy experience. It is hard, demanding work that is not for everyone, but brings with it countless positive life experiences, and a skill set which corporate team bonding exercises are unlikely to provide.

The **key point of difference** between SAVEM and other solely animal welfare organisations is that SAVEM is Emergency Management trained. It is critical that volunteers understand this when first attending training. And it is the responsibility of all volunteers to attend training and remain current with SAVEM procedures and protocols.

Which brings me to TRAINING.

I was asked by a new volunteer recently in an email, "is there any special training involved?" The answer is YES. A LOT.

SAVEM has a policy not to deploy new volunteers into the field without Level One training, except in exceptional circumstances.

Because the fires of summer 2013/14 have prompted many new volunteer registrations, and because the fires of summer 2013/14 have caused a delay in deciding the training program for the year, the Logistics Manager, Emilis Preлгаuskas, has put together a series of Introductory Training Notes. The Notes completed to date are the first of a series which will eventually include most of the Level One training.

It is expected that new volunteers will complete the modules as they are uploaded, as well as a self assessed quiz, which will be emailed to the Coordinator.

Social Media

A word about social media.

The SAVEM Board has made a conscious decision not to have a social media presence.

The SAVEM Board has no intention of engaging in social media in its present form, in the foreseeable future.

While it is acknowledged that social media has a role in Emergency Management, it seems that much of the aimless general social media traffic is uninformed, disruptive and wastes precious time and resources. If the worth of social media is represented as a triangle, the valuable portion may be allocated to the top 25% at best. The remainder is on a sliding scale from harmless, through rapidly degenerating rubbish, ending in a base of lowest common denominator bottom-dwelling trash. We have recent experience of just this, and my advice to anyone in a similar position is simply not to engage at any level.

Communication, communication, communication

Improvement in communication is an open-ended journey in an upward direction, but progress is not always linear. Even email can be fraught. Recently after a long day in 44° C heat, I misinterpreted an email from a senior volunteer. Not wanting to leave responding until the next day I replied hastily, when I should have waited until morning with fresh eyes. The misunderstanding was easily rectified, but it was a timely reminder that sometimes even careful email cannot convey tone and expression. Another example of "*hurry up and wait!*"

And finally, I am pleased to announce that the SAVEM Jeep has been fitted with its own UHF CB radio, with a Satellite phone soon to follow, thanks to the skills and enthusiastic support of WICEN, the Wireless Institute Civil Emergency Network. WICEN President Nic McLean, and Secretary Andrew Macmichael, have arranged everything for us, and were also readily available to offer advice on communications during the Eden Valley fires.



Beware the white ash! Burned out tree roots on the Eden Valley Fireground. An example of how untrained volunteers can find themselves in serious danger.

A little further down the road a huge tree seemed intact from one side, but inside the thin veneer was a red hot glowing core. We did not stop to take a photograph.

