

# SAVEM

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN VETERINARY  
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT Inc.



## NEWSLETTER

### MAY 2014

Vol 3 No 2, Autumn 2014

Welcome to SAVEM's Autumn 2014 newsletter, written on the first anniversary of the "Cherryville" fire of May 2013.

In this edition we record the diverse activities and initiatives SAVEM embodies, as we build this emergent young body of knowledge into a long term mature capability. In this way, our volunteers who aren't in touch with SAVEM's day-to-day actions are kept informed, and assisted and encouraged to find the aspect of the organisation which can best utilise individual skill sets and interests.

Existing volunteers will be familiar with the FIVE functional areas in which Emergency agencies volunteers can be deployed, (Remember— Control, Planning, Logistics, Operations, Public Information) as part of the Australasian Interservice Incident Management System (AIIMS).

This Newsletter, we'll look at the "PPRR" model of Emergency Management (EM), which is described in the AIIMS manual.

#### Thinking PPRR

(Prevention, Preparedness, Response, Recovery)

All SAVEM's activities fall into one of these categories.

#### PREVENTION

We thank our volunteers who ask for and then distribute our information brochure. This is an on-going and regular means for us all to raise awareness amongst people generally and widely about the responsibility for their own animals to be part of their own family emergency plan.

It equally reminds people of SAVEM's role, what we can, and importantly – can't, do.

You are welcome at any time to

ring us (0477 055 233),

email ([info@savem.org.au](mailto:info@savem.org.au)),

snail mail (PO Box 1 Bridgewater SA 5155)

for such support material.

Several of our senior volunteers regularly present on the subject of animals in disasters to community groups.

If you have a local group to whom this topic is of interest, pass our contact details on to them.

Media interest in SAVEM continues. The difficulty is to match our focus and actions on animal welfare with the assumed 'cuddly animal' emphasis by media.

One of our on-going tasks is to help educate the public about complications and potential adverse effects on wild animals from being taken into care. We explain the difference between best practice animal welfare outcomes, and the "save every animal" mindset, which is by no means the same thing.

#### PREPAREDNESS

The collaboration between SAVEM & the Wireless Institute Civil Emergency Network (WICEN) has lead to installation of a UHF radio hard wired into SAVEM's Jeep. The vehicle also carries some hand helds for the response crew.

WICEN's President, Nic McLean, ran a training tutorial at our After Action Review for Team Leaders on 16 March. WICEN will also source and install a satellite phone for SAVEM..

WICEN's support includes the erection of temporary transmission towers in the field to assist SAVEM's communications within an operational area, and mapping comms reliability in difficult terrain as was found this season such as the Eden Valley area. A SOP is in draft between our two agencies. The SAVEM Coordinator was guest speaker at the WICEN AGM.



SAVEM owns two sets of official AIIMS tabards. Pictured above, they are a good visual reminder of the five Functional Areas to which volunteers are assigned. Team Leaders are provided with green & gold shirts and jackets.



#### At Eden Valley, January 2014



WICEN are assisting SAVEM with radio and phone communications.



## Volunteer Training Notes (VTN's)

In recent months we have been preparing & uploading to our website a package of Volunteer Training Notes, which conclude with a self paced quiz.

The purpose of this initiative is to give new volunteers something with which to begin their training. Face-to-face Level 1 training during winter is not always "coming to a town near you", but the online notes are a pre-requisite for Level 1. New volunteers, many of whom register during an event, cannot safely be deployed into the field without training, and even in non-operational roles, need to understand how SAVEM works as an Emergency Management organisation.

We encourage existing trained volunteers to study the notes as an easily accessed refresher course, essential when activation is mostly likely to occur during summer months. As with other EM volunteers groups, such as CFS & SES, training can, and should, take place all year round.

Face-to-face (F2F) training and Exercises are valuable because they overcome the limitations of learning on-line. Exercises teach practical lessons in controlled circumstances which can be applied effectively in the field.

## National Planning Principles

In 2012 WSPA and DAFF began a national conversation on national controls for animals in disasters. The committee participants appear to be all positions funded by each incumbent's Employer (i.e. they are paid to be there).

SAVEM was approached to have input. As a fully volunteer organization where everyone has a day job and other obligations, we don't have the ability to send a delegate interstate to such a committee. We were happy to make ourselves available for the national committee to have someone come and talk to us. They chose not to enact that option. Their view was that we should travel to Melbourne at our own expense, foregoing our day job. Not surprisingly, the conversation didn't occur. Which seems strange to us, as SAVEM is the most advanced active-in-the-field agency of this kind anywhere in Australia.

In 2014 the national committee's brief was a list of dot points toward preparing National Planning Principles. The dot points note the existence of State based emergency jurisdictions, the existence of national emergency processes (ie AIMS - although not named). But they don't cover a range of limitation protocols. The SAVEM Board has reviewed that brief, assembled elements not present, and passed these on via our State authorities to that national process.

Funding for the NPP now appears doubtful, but it is puzzling how it could be effective without personnel with in-field expertise and practical animal EM experience.

## **RESPONSE**

The "nutshell" procedure is:

- The SAVEM Coordinator will monitor an event and liaise with the Chief Veterinary Officer and the PIRSA State Controller
- A First Response Team (FRT) will go to "Standby"
- Coordinator liaises with the Control Agency, eg CFS
- Vet Surgeons' Board may be asked to activate the global SMS messaging protocol
- **When cleared by the Control Agency**, the 5 person FRT will go out as a surveillance and assessment team
- The response will be scaled up or down as necessary

During last Summer's responses, it was clear that the CFS had enough understanding of, and trust in SAVEM's role to allow us early access to firegrounds. It is imperative that we show our respect & understanding, and adhere to correct procedures and chain of command. We make no apology for the militaristic nature of the system. It works, and it's SAFE.

We don't rush in like the "freelancers" putting ourselves and other ES at risk. We don't deploy untrained volunteers, and we consider the ambient conditions before becoming operational.

REMEMBER THE MANTRA, **HURRY UP AND WAIT!**

The on-line Volunteer Training Notes will be a prerequisite for attending a Level 1 course. In December 2013, Monarto Hall was a popular venue, adjacent to the local CFS shed.



We were aware of some "freelancers" out on firegrounds during January 2014, and we alerted CFS Controllers that these people were not SAVEM volunteers. The hierarchy is "Life, Property, Environment". We play by the same rules as the other Emergency Services: that way we can do as much environmental good as possible.

The CFS Regions 2 & 3 Commanders personally thanked SAVEM for our work last summer, noting that our presence enabled CFS volunteers to focus on their core business. SAFECOM also noted our contribution positively, and reported back to State Recovery Office.

With intensification of climate, weather events become both more erratic and intense. In 2013 the season ended with the May Cheryville fire, the next began in September with Blue Mountains fires in New South Wales.

Get used to it.

## **RECOVERY**

This phase continues for weeks, months or years, depending on the scale and impact of an incident.

## Debrief

After each activation "hot debrief" occurs before we leave the area. This is then backed in with a comprehensive "After Action Review" at the season's end. This year's After Action Review was held on 16 March, involving Team Leaders activated during the season. Discussions help decide priorities and resourcing issues to target during "peace time", and training focus at our exercise. SAVEM also took part in PIRSA's Participating Agency debrief.

## It's about training.....and communication!

A winter training program will be announced as soon as the Board and Leadership team have an opportunity to meet.

Veterinarians who registered during 2011/12, but who have not attended a Response will be asked to update their registration forms on-line.

A general volunteer coordinator is to be created to manage the influx of "spontaneous" volunteers during an incident.

The current data base is to be refined to make it more user friendly (thankyou Melissa, Kathleen and Jan).



## All of the above, and them some...

Everyone is aware of the central position of our Coordinator, Dr. Rachel Westcott, in SAVEM's formation and evolution.

In mid March at an Adelaide meeting, she was confirmed as the recipient of a three year PhD scholarship from the University of Western Sydney for a Bushfire & Natural Hazard CRC funded project researching animal Emergency Management.

The PhD project will have a focus on community/responder interface, and will have a South Australian context, due to SAVEM. Rachel was chosen from a strong field of applicants both from academia and animal welfare backgrounds.

There is inevitably a strong correlation between the coming academic processes and the existing field work. The two will cross inform one another.

The hope is that bringing academic rigour to the subject will strengthen the credibility and capability of animal welfare in the Emergency Services field.

It will inevitably also have impacts on the volunteer time available to SAVEM's on-going evolution, and the Team Leaders, and others, will be asked to share the workload.

Overall the hope is that this will be another positive step forward.

## PPC and PPE

A recent grant from the Office for Volunteers enabled SAVEM to purchase a 5 person PPC/PPE kit to stow in the Jeep for the FRT. This comprises red overalls, white helmet, gloves, goggles and masks. "SAVEM" will be embroidered on the overalls in white.

SAVEM volunteers who ordered their own overalls can now contact the Coordinator to pay and pick up, or arrange delivery, for their overalls. We are making enquiries regarding the option of embroidering our given names on the front pocket.

**A few fluoro vests** embroidered with SAVEM's name and logo are still missing after the Winter Exercise. Should you find one in your kit, please let the Coordinator know.

By the start of the 2014/15 bushfire season we will have purchased our own Thermal Imaging Camera. Use of an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV, or "drone") is also being explored.

## GRANT APPLICATIONS

We have three applications currently up for consideration, two of which should be announced this month.

There are a number of grants offered by Government, including Local Councils, and other companies, and the Board very much appreciates SAVEM volunteers acting as "grant spotters". Please email any details you may encounter.

## VOLUNTEERS "TO DO" LIST

- Use "peacetime" to revise your knowledge
- Work through the Training Notes online
- Revisit information in the Newsletters
- Purchase an AIIMS manual: email the Coordinator
- Update your personal "To Go" Kit
- Remember, Emergency Management training is 100% translatable into everyday work and life skills
- Tell a colleague about SAVEM



The SAVEM Jeep is equipped with PPC/PPE for a 5 person FRT.

Red overalls, white helmet, gloves, goggles and masks are all provided, as are SAVEM's hi-viz fluoro vests.

Retailers with supplies of recommended boots are listed in an earlier newsletter, and available on request. Boots require careful individual fit, and volunteers are asked to make sure they have suitable boots going in to a response. Of course, you can wear them for other work too!

Thanks to Fire & Rescue Australia, Jamie Fry from the Scouts Outdoor Centre, and Nurse Coordinator Carol Haley for bringing the PPE project together.



**IT'S GOOD WHEN THINGS JUST WORK....**At a small event such as the 15 hectare Crafers West Fire of February 2014, one crew is all that is required.

**Close liaison with DEWNR rangers and Rail Corp lead to a successful rescue and a much happier rehydrated koala after veterinary assessment by Dr Anne Fowler, and a brief stay in care. Fauna Rescue's Koala Coordinator, Merridy Montarello, with a young male koala with minor burns (below).**

