



## Principles of Operations

### Acronyms:

<b>ABCD</b>	Attitude, Behaviour, Culture and Discipline
<b>CFS</b>	South Australian Country Fire Service
<b>IMT</b>	Incident Management Team
<b>PPC</b>	Personal Protective Clothing
<b>PPE</b>	Personal Protective Equipment
<b>SAVEM</b>	South Australian Veterinary Emergency Management

### **Purpose**

After reading these notes you will have developed knowledge of:

1. SAVEM's safety standards
2. Expected behaviours from SAVEM personnel
3. The working environment at incidents

## 1. Introduction

Volunteering during emergencies is a tough business, and volunteers need to possess a range of skills and personal characteristics to represent SAVEM. The combined work and conditions place demands on volunteers that are different from day to day work. This creates a long list of traits and behaviours that are necessary for success.

As a SAVEM volunteer you must be aware of these behaviours and standards and work toward them. In these notes we will explore some of these topics including:

- Safety on the Fireground
- Expected Behaviours – ABCD Team
- Chain of Command
- Working environment
- Capability
- SAVEM Ethos

## 2. Safety on the Fireground

### I. The hierarchy of protection

The safety of SAVEM personnel and the community has priority at all times. To achieve this all the factors mentioned throughout these notes must be considered at all times. Operations will be undertaken with the following priority of objectives:

1. Protection of human life
2. Protection of property (this includes animals)
3. Protection of the environment (this can include wildlife)

This means human life takes priority over all other 'things' at all times. In practical terms it means you won't be able to rescue all animals.

### II. Dynamic Risk Assessment

A process called *dynamic risk assessment* is applied to ensure sensible and safe decisions are made to support the hierarchy of protection as listed above. Dynamic risk assessment is a process used by all emergency services.

Dynamic risk assessment is a practical tool for responders that helps apply risk management in a time-limited emergency environment. Dynamic risk assessment involves four simple steps:

1. STOP – before you start a task step back and take a moment to evaluate the hazards and risks
2. Think – Take time to assess what is happening, what are the hazards, what can you control. Observe with your eyes, ears and use observations from other team members.

3. Assess the risks – What are the risks, what can you do to control them, consider consequences and any actions decided.
4. Talk – Talk to your team or others (up or down chain of command) about the possible risks and what you have decided to do. This two-way communication may identify alternate actions or other risks. Once actions are decided they must be communicated so the intent is understood by the whole team.

**This process is continuous** and is designed to assist decision-making during operational activity. Through this process you and your team will be aware of risks to your safety. You have a duty to be constantly aware of risks to your safety as well as the team. You also have a responsibility to communicate this across your team.

### III. Hazards on the fireground

Firegrounds and other emergency areas have many hazards and are inherently dangerous. Some hazards are known, and some will be unknown.

Recognised hazards that limit SAVEM access to firegrounds include:

- Going fire. Until the fireground is considered safe by the CFS, we will not be permitted to enter
- Falling trees – DO NOT enter burnt forest areas. Falling trees kill firefighters regularly in Australia. These areas are extremely dangerous.
- Burnt buildings – DO NOT enter burnt buildings as they contain many hazards. The structure may be unstable and could collapse and there are multiple toxins present from the contents.
- Powerlines – STAY AWAY from fallen power lines. They should all be considered live.
- Terrain – the variable terrain encountered can include slippery slopes and unstable rocks. This creates risks for personnel on foot as well as vehicles
- Re-ignition of fires. Keep a lookout for this. This can be an ongoing threat on some firegrounds.
- Hotspots – trees and roots that are still burning but have no flames present are a risk for serious burns.
- White ash – This is a signal of a hotspot. It can indicate sub-surface roots still burning. Beneath the fragile surface ash may be a hot crater, the void where tree roots previously grew which can still have significant heat in it. Serious injuries can result from stepping into white ash.

**Never place yourself in danger.**

This will result in others putting themselves in danger to rescue you.

There are some simple rules to follow while working on a fireground to keep you and your team safe:

- Do not step out of the vehicle without first checking for danger
- Do not leave your vehicle without the permission of the team leader
- Do not progress across ground without continuously monitoring the environment
- Communicate (i.e. talk to someone) any doubts you have or hazards you see

#### IV. Access to the fireground

Access to any incident area will be limited in the early stages by the control agency (e.g. CFS for bushfire). This must be respected and complied with at all times. They are there to keep us safe. We will be allowed access if we behave responsibly and keep ourselves safe. If we do not comply with their safety standards we will be denied access to the emergency area. Measures that SAVEM takes to maintain safety of personnel on firegrounds includes:

- Having approval from the CFS (Control Agency) to enter the fireground
- Reporting to CFS Sector Commanders
- Communicating regularly with the Sector Commander with scheduled calls

This limitation means that we won't be able to rescue every animal straight away. If you can't accept this limitation you shouldn't participate in SAVEM activities.

#### **People die on firegrounds.**

Individuals self-activating onto the fireground will not be tolerated.

In previous activations it has been obvious that other organisations or individuals have been illegally engaged in animal rescue in active firegrounds whilst SAVEM is still awaiting approval from the Control Agency to enter the area. This has been a cause of frustration for many SAVEM volunteers. When considering these actions, the following should be remembered:

- The Control Agency will only approve access to the area when they consider it **SAFE** to do so. **By entering prior to this people are putting themselves and others in danger**
- Many people are choosing to ignore or bypass road closures and enter a fireground without official approval. This is illegal and the offence is punishable by law
- Many of the people accessing the fireground illegally have no training or proper clothing/equipment. They are unable to properly identify or mitigate risks. They enter without proper communications or plans for rescue if things go wrong
- SAVEM is one of the first agencies granted access to firegrounds when it is deemed safe to do so. This is because of SAVEM's relationship with emergency services and professional attitude to safety and training. It is not possible to legally enter a fireground in an animal rescue role earlier than SAVEM does.

## V. **Fatigue Management**

The nature of working at an emergency incident can leave you fatigued. There are multiple factors that contribute to this including long hours, unfamiliar and emotionally challenging environments and harsh weather. For this reason, SAVEM would expect that all personnel will:

- Return home when their rotation has finished
- Not conduct any SAVEM business while 'off rotation or shift'
- Take time off work when you return home.

## VI. **Operational Communications**

Communication is critical to operations. Good information is essential for sound decision-making and keeping all responders safe. Good communication is essential up, down and across the chain of command. For this reason, you cannot deploy into the field without a communication plan. A communication plan will provide you with contact details.

SAVEM uses radios and mobile phones for communications. Details will be provided in the communication plan. The communication plan is a component of the SAVEM Action Plan.

Do not deploy into the field without a clear communication plan.

If you aren't provided with one, ask for it!

## 3. **Expected Behaviours**

### i. **ABCD**

ABCD = Attitude, Behaviour, Culture and Discipline are critical to our success. They are part of the soft skills you need to work effectively as a team member. SAVEM can train and develop your skills and knowledge but if you have the wrong ABCD your contribution will be limited. Therefore, it is essential that you attend and participate with the right ABCD. This combined with teamwork will result in success.

### ii. **Team**

Success is reliant on individuals working effectively together. It also makes the work easier when we are all working collaboratively towards our goals. SAVEM expects personnel to work as team members and requires the following team behaviors

- Always work as a team
- Never leave the vehicle without the team leaders' permission
- Understand your role
- Maintain communication with your team

“Teamwork divides the task and multiplies the success.”

iii. **Leadership**

Leadership means helping ourselves and others to do the right thing in the best possible way. All of us will be required to show some leadership as a SAVEM member. This can be as simple as stepping up and helping another team member with a difficult task. Leadership does not mean being in charge.

You will need to show leadership by:

- Contributing to the development of a cohesive team
- Communicating effectively
- Recognising your limitations and making others aware of them
- Accepting responsibility
- Setting a good example by being calm, professional and decisive

Showing leadership does not mean being in charge.

Leadership is about the way you behave.

iv. **Hurry up and Wait**

“Hurry up and Wait” is an expression that is used to describe the environment at emergency incidents. This is a result of the fact that you often have to wait for other tasks to be completed before you can start your own task. For example you may rush to a staging point for an incident only to find you must wait. This is because you cannot undertake any activities without:

- a) A Briefing
- b) A Communication Plan
- c) Suitably prepared equipment
- d) Clearance from the control agency
- e) Welfare support – water and food

Any delays in preparing any of the above items will result in a delay in getting you into the field. So be prepared for the fact there will be periods of time where you just have to “Hurry up and Wait”.

v. **Media Interactions**

There will be incidents when you are approached by the media. Unless you have specific permission from the SAVEM Commander you should not discuss anything with them. They should be directed to contact the SAVEM Commander. Under no circumstances

should you be rude to them – that is unprofessional. While the media can be biased in their reporting they are also a potential partner who can help us achieve our objectives.

Similarly, **no images or videos are permitted to be uploaded to any social media platform** without the specific permission of the SAVEM Commander. This is to protect the privacy of the community. Releasing these images can cause significant financial and psychological damage to the impacted community.

Be polite to the media but do not divulge incident information.

**DO NOT** upload any images to social media

vi. **Professionalism**

SAVEM has worked hard to build its reputation with emergency services in South Australia and Australia. Professional behavior is expected by all members at all times. The three components of professional behavior are:

**1. Appearance**

SAVEM has an agreed standard of dress. You are expected to wear appropriate uniform, PPE/C and footwear. Jewelry in the field is a safety hazard therefore SAVEM recommends all jewelry is left at home. (See Training Note 5 Personal Protective Equipment).

You must have your SAVEM identification card with you at all times and those with significant roles must be wearing appropriate tabards/labels. Section heads in the IMT will always wear tabards. This is an emergency service standard.

**2. Competence**

You are expected to take personal responsibility for maintaining your competence. This means attending and contributing to training and mentoring those with less experience.

**3. Commitment**

SAVEM personnel are expected to comply with SAVEM policy and SOPs and contribute to their ongoing development.

vii. **Confidentiality**

Any information you have had access to during SAVEM activities must not be divulged to anyone outside of SAVEM without the express permission of the SAVEM Commander.

You will be exposed to information that is sensitive and its accidental release could cause psychological or financial hardship. This sort of disclosure could also damage SAVEM relationships and reputation with other agencies and the community.

All documents and records (such as photos) created during a SAVEM incident remain the property of SAVEM and must not be removed from the incident.

Be careful where you discuss SAVEM activities.

Be aware of who is around you.

#### **4. Chain of Command**

Chain of command is a hierarchy of authority that prescribes who can task you, and who you report to. A chain of command is established so that everyone knows what responsibilities they have. A chain of command determines responsibility and accountability.

A team member should always go to their direct supervisor with issues before reaching out to a person further up the chain. When a team member refuses to follow the proper chain of command, it undermines the team leader and disrupts operations. This can lead to wasted time, confusion and ineffective operations.



## 5. Operating Environment

### I. Rosters and rotation

Roster and rotations can be variable depending on many factors. This can include your availability, the roles that are required and the location of operations. The preferred rotation length is for at least three shifts and up to five. This is not always possible and will vary according to the need and your availability.

Operational shifts are usually limited to daylight hours and will vary depending on the needs. Field operations are usually limited to three hours per session to avoid fatigue and heat stress.

### II. Operational cycle

The operating cycle is sometimes called the “Battle Rhythm” or daily schedule. An example is given at Attachment A. You can see from this there are constant requirements for information so we can keep the rhythm of operations going. Although it may seem at times that the IMT are demanding information there is always a reason for it. On any given day there can never be too much information available to inform plans and make decisions.

You may also notice that the days can be very long for some personnel. Just because you are in from the field it does not mean everyone has stood down for the day. Equipment has to be resupplied, vehicles checked and plans created for the next shift. For the emergency services it is estimated that for every person in the field you require four personnel to make this happen.

### III. Working environment

The emergency response environment can be a difficult one. Often we will be working in hot and remote conditions which can change quickly. The emergency environment is also emotionally charged which can be fatiguing. As a result, you need to be aware of your physical and psychological limitations. You need to take this into consideration with any medical conditions you have when you accept a role. This is especially important for any field work. Emergency Services have had personnel not accept their limitations and place themselves and others at risk in the field. It can also slow and inhibit operations. So be honest with yourself and let others know what your limitations are.

## 6. SAVEM Ethos

SAVEM expects you to practise the following behaviours when you respond as a member of the team:

1. **Safety** comes first in everything we do and say
2. **Situational awareness.** Every individual has a responsibility to be aware of what is happening at all times.
3. Attend training to maintain **competence**
4. **Comply** with reasonable requests from commanding officers
5. Be a **team** player
6. **Lead** by example
7. **Communicate** important information in a timely manner
8. Be **flexible.** Emergency environments are dynamic and things may change quickly. Be prepared to change with the situation.

## 8. Attachment A: Daily Schedule (Battle Rhythm)

TIME	ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBILITY
<b>0600</b>	IMT meeting – review and confirm Incident Action Plan	<b>Incident Manager</b>
<b>0630</b>	Daily briefing of Control Centre personnel	<b>Section Managers</b>
<b>0700</b>	Brief and deploy field teams	<b>Functional Managers</b>
<b>0800</b>	SITREP due	<b>Planning section</b>
<b>1200</b>	IMT meeting – review progress against Incident Action Plan and amend as required, consider objectives for next operational period	<b>Incident Manager</b>
<b>As required</b>	Brief incoming personnel and debrief outgoing personnel	<b>Section Managers</b>
<b>1600</b>	SITREP due	<b>Planning section</b>
<b>1600</b>	IMT meeting – review progress against Incident Action Plan and confirm/review objectives for subsequent operational periods	<b>Incident Manager</b>
<b>As required</b>	Redeploy and/or debrief field teams	<b>Functional Managers</b>
<b>1700</b>	Daily debrief of Control Centre personnel	<b>Section Managers</b>
<b>1800</b>	Planning meeting for next operational period	<b>Planning Manager</b>
<b>2000</b>	<b>Draft Incident Action Plan provided to IMT for next operational period/s prepared</b>	<b>Planning section</b>