

Victorian Council of Churches

Emergencies

ministry



▶ 2015 BUSHFIRES



▶ OPERATIONAL RESPONSES, TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT



▶ ESF VOLUNTEER LEADERS FORUM

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SUFFERING IS NOT WHAT DESTROYS PEOPLE, RATHER "SUFFERING WITHOUT MEANING". VICTOR FRANKL

Being a healing and helping presence is an essential part of the work undertaken by VCC Emergencies Ministry volunteers. More and more people are seeing the value of the presence of VCC in the Emergency Management sector.

The Emergencies Ministry program continues to be called to support local communities which have experienced some kind of traumatic event.

Beyond the response, it has been a busy time re negotiating funding with the Department of Health and Human Services, engaging with EMV on the relief and recovery reform measures and visiting local governments to discuss VCC's capability and capacity.

There is some exciting news about the future of the Emergencies Ministry program that we will be able to share in the coming months, so watch this space for that.

The VCC EM Conference is being held again in October, and further details will be coming out soon.



TRAINING

Pass on this newsletter to friends you think would like to join this vital ministry. If you are a current volunteer and have not re trained in the last 2—3 years, you are encouraged to look at the training dates for 2015 on our website and sign up for a refresher course in Personal Support. www.vccem.org.au/training

State Emergency Foundation: Volunteer Leaders Forum

Novotel St Kilda: May 2 and 3rd 2015

Well as I sit and reflect on attending the Volunteer Leaders Forum as one of the VCC Emergency delegates I must start by saying what a privilege it was to firstly represent VCC Emergency Ministries and secondly to listen and learn from a diversity of speakers with such a vast wealth and knowledge concerning Emergency management over a number of organisations.

In all there were some 16 large and small emergency organisations represented which in itself allowed (we were encouraged) to network with others from different organisations. This networking enabled each of us, I believe to gain a clearer understanding and respectful insight into how each organisation, utilising there areas of expertise and skills come together in times of a crisis/ trauma events and work together to help those within our communities in need.

As I reflect over the speakers at the conference for me two sessions have made a marked impact on me personally.

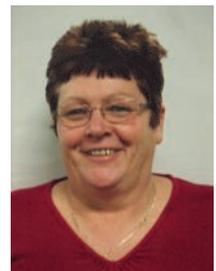
The first was the topic: Rising above Adversity with Mark Croweller AFSM, Director-General Emergency Management Australia.

Mark shared about life as an emergency worker both as a volunteer and in his long professional career capacity. He shared truthfully about what he has learnt along his journey ... the highs and the lows in a very candid and authentic manner which was engaging, insightful and challenging. I really enjoyed the point that thread its way through his session ... that we need to see the bigger picture and not just focus on our own organisations but that each organisation and individual within that organisation have skills and expertise that when brought together in an emergency event compliment each other and enable a holistic service being available to those in need.

The other area of significance for me was the Leadership workshop with Craig Ferguson ... this was a great time of challenge to reflect on our vision and style of leadership that may lead us to tweaking aspects of our style to further enhance our interactions with our team members, organisations and those we come in contact with in a crisis event.

Every aspect of the forum was of a high standard and therefore I would encourage each of you to consider attending the 2016 forum... I know I will be looking at attending the 2016 forum.

Blessings Janet Boyce



Attending the ESF (Emergency Services Foundation) Leaders Forum May 2 & 3 2015

I'm not exactly sure why I applied to go but having been I can understand why many people go again! I think I hoped it would make me connect to VCCEM and also see where we sit in the wider context of emergency services. It certainly met these expectations but also provided much more.

It was an interesting program of speakers and tours and general networking time and involved 150 delegates from 15 emergency organisations, including VCCEM. It was a great venue and good food and the ending was fitting as during an expert panel session there was smoke coming from a ceiling vent so they decided we had our own potential emergency and it was best we evacuate the area. Anyone would think it was a planned practice exercise!

The highlight for me was clearly the opening speaker who was the National Safety commissioner and he gave a powerful talk on Overcoming Adversity. He posed the idea that things happen "for us" rather than "to us" and that if we can see every experience as an opportunity to develop our character and build strength we can build resilience and endurance. Hearing about his own struggles and learnings and knowing he advises our prime minister and national leaders gave me a greater sense of confidence in Australia's ability to manage disasters.

There were also great speakers on a range of topics and we visited the Airservices training centre, the State Police Operations centre and the Equipment warehouse for the Dept of name changes (I can't recall it's new initials but DSE/DPI) and then some demonstrations at MFB.

A leadership workshop stressed to be a great leader you first need to understand yourself and be aware of your weak spots. Good leaders spend most time listening not talking.

Overall an excellent and enjoyable weekend and I'd suggest you grab the opportunity if ever you get a chance to attend.

Lynne Carter
Area Coordinator Warrnambool





Volunteer Leaders Forum

May 2015

Emergency Services Foundation: Volunteer Leaders Forum

Novotel St Kilda: May 2 and 3rd 2015

It was a great privilege to be able to attend the volunteer leaders forum representing VCCEM in May 2015. It provides a great opportunity to be able to network with others in the emergency management space and share the great work that we do and others don't know about.

It was a great weekend away with luxurious accommodation, wonderful food and is free to attend.

On each occasion I have been able to attend I have heard from some wonderful key note speakers that have always engaged us at a deep level. This year it included a speaker from the missing persons advocacy network and another from the attorney general's office who were both wonderful. It is also great to be able to visit different emergency management locations that are off limits to the general public such as the Victoria Police State Operations Centre, Air fire services Australia and the MFB.

Having attended for the last 3 years I strongly recommend this wonderful experience.

Michael Downing
Area Coordinator

Working as one before, during and after emergencies

National Volunteers Week was held in May 2015. As part of the profiling of volunteer emergency service organisations, Emergency Management Victoria chose to highlight the work of VCC Emergencies Ministry.

The Emergencies Ministry program was profiled through EMV and also in the Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria magazine "The Fireman", which goes to almost every CFA brigade in Victoria.

One of our volunteers, Yasmin Sungkar was interviewed by EMV Media Advisor Kayla Maskill.

Quote from EMV: *"The Victorian Council of Churches (VCC) is one of many examples of how Victoria is leading the way in emergency management reform and towards a shared goal as a sector to 'work as one.'"*

[Click on this link:](#)

<http://www.emv.vic.gov.au/our-work/working-in-emergency-management/working-as-one-before-during-and-after-emergencies/>

Rewards for volunteering are two-fold

An earthquake which hit parts of Turkey more than 13 years ago was when the doors to volunteerism first opened for Yasmin Sungkar.

[Click on this link:](#)

<http://www.emv.vic.gov.au/our-work/working-in-emergency-management/rewards-for-volunteering-are-two-fold/>





OPERATIONS

Debbie Laphorne—Operations Manager



The slower pace of VCC EM Operational activities, in the period March to May, has enabled an intentional and measured focus on preparation and development tasks. It has also allowed for annual leave to be scheduled, allowing for personal recreation and rest. I look forward to the next few months of focused preparation.

The three month period saw a small number of deployment needs, all of which were single incident / mid range events, compared to the more traditional flood / fire events. This type of event is now more likely to be the trigger for our activations.

The task of strengthening, equipping and supporting the middle management levels of VCC EM (Area and Regional coordinators) remains a high priority. By supporting these people, who are the critical interface between regional and local government EM teams and our local volunteers, we are able to use our limited time and resources for the maximum impact.



PURCHASE A VCC EM LAPEL PIN

Pictured right is a photo of the VCC EM Lapel Pin available from the State Office.

PRICE: \$5.00

HOW TO ORDER: Contact Stuart on 9650 4511 or email ssstuart@vcc.org.au



OPERATIONS

Debbie Laphorne—Operations Manager

Summary of Activities

Deployment

- Manor Lakes community support (Wyndham)
- Docklands Lacrosse Building residents support (City of Melbourne)
- Geelong Single Incident – standby (City of Greater Geelong)
- Gellibrand Football Club (Colac Otways)
- Hume region fire event (2014) ongoing support

Exercises

Exercise East

Wyndham

Melton

Southern Metro Heatwave

Stonnington (Cancelled)

Scheduled

NW Collaboration





TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Craig Campbell—Assistant State Manager

CAPABILITY AND CAPACITY:
Experience vs. Discipline



Training Statistics for Calendar Year 2015 to Date

Personal Support Training

111

Team Leader Training

10

Coordinator Training

Module A 8

Coordinator Training

Module B 4

(Incident Activity
Coordination)

EOC Training

0

LGA Intro to PST

82

Professional Development
delivered 0

Annual Conference

0

**Total persons to date
2015**

215

This training prepares municipal staff members, who volunteer to come off-line from their customary role, to support emergency management and relief and recovery arrangements with people affected by emergencies.

A further value in delivering this training is partnership building with the municipalities involved, greatly enhancing their awareness of VCC EM and our service delivery with them.

Team Leader Training

Team Leader Training events will be scheduled later in the year.

LGA Introduction to Personal Support Training

The **Introduction to Personal Support** has widened beyond the Metro North West Collaboration and has been delivered in Mitchell Shire.

Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but we rather have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.

Aristotle



RESEARCH

Stuart Stuart—State Manager

SELF CARE IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT CARING

SELF CARE

Trained Chaplains and Personal Support volunteers are skilled and experienced at supporting others in time of great need.

General Principles

Emergency ministry produces stress in responders. It will involve close identification with impacted people – victims and responders and confront chaplains with their own mortality.

- Do not underestimate the impact upon yourself
- Have realistic expectations
- Accept limitations of the situation Take personal essentials — clothing medication etc Familiarise yourself with surroundings and resources
- If you have questions, ask
- Know when to say “No”
- Refer difficult situations
- Avoid over identification
- Talk to others about your experiences
- Eat and drink properly
- Recognise your personal fatigue cues
- Take breaks (away from scene)

- Make contact with your family
- Seek Briefing and Debriefing

Spiritual basis for self care

Most, if not all, sacred literature (the Bible, the Torah, the Qur’an, and others) encourage people of faith to care for themselves. In fact, many texts state that people of faith should indeed care for themselves, bodies, mind, soul - in order to effectively care for someone else.

Sacred texts talk about observation of a day of rest and renewal, looking after our bodies, telling us what food to eat or avoid.

Therefore, it is vitally important that we find ways to care for ourselves before, during and after an emergency in order to remain healthy in mind, body and spirit.

Before

The journey of self care begins long before an event ever takes place. It is the habits and rituals and thinking that we establish prior to the event that will determine our ability to manage the stress associated with helping disaster affected individuals or communities.

Have you established a routine of caring for yourself before you are called to respond to others needs? If not, what can you do to prepare yourself for the future expectations?

- Pre existing prayer and meditation (contemplation)
- Strong trusted family and social networks
- Pre existing exercise regime (eg. walking, riding a bike, golf bowls)
- Positive connection with faith community
- Practising going to your sacred space
- Hobbies / interests
- Know yourself including your limitations

RESEARCH

Stuart Stuart—State Manager

SELF CARE IN EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT CARING

During

Responding to an emergency event can be very stressful, especially to the unprepared. During an event, you will have access to a team leader and colleagues to support you in your role. However there are a range of actions that you can take to reduce the stress on yourself at an emergency, these include:

- Know your task (if you don't know ask)
- Stay in defined role
- Take breaks (away from scene or place of activity) with team leader knowledge and approval
- Seek support and advice if required from your team leader
- Know your own limits

After

- Simplify your life
- Limit your use of stimulants
- Create your own sacred space
- Find a positive means of expressing your experience
- Develop internal support
- Seek external support
- Flow with the process
- Know your limits

Vicarious Trauma / Compassion Fatigue

Compassion fatigue is a secondary form of post traumatic stress, and can occur when a Chaplain or Personal Support volunteer is providing emotional and spiritual care to an affected person.

Compassion fatigue is a result of inadequate self care; the provision of constant care to others at the expense of self.

Charles Figley wrote, compassion fatigue is “a state experienced by those helping people in distress; it is an extreme state of tension and preoccupation with the suffering of those being helped to the degree that it is traumatising for the helper.”

Health and wellbeing for chaplains and personal support volunteers begins with intentional preventative self care, maintained by institutional, professional and peer support.

It is vitally important that if you are suffering from vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, that you STOP and get help.

Compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma can be healed and event prevented when the mechanisms leading to them are identified and made conscious. Once vulnerabilities are assessed, strategies for increasing awareness and control can be instituted.

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