

Meeting 98 – 10 September 2015

COMMUNIQUÉ

The State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) held a Pre-Season Briefing combined with Emergency Management Australia on 10 September 2015.

Combined SEMC & Emergency Management Australia Pre-Season Briefing

Emergency Management Australia (EMA) has held an annual pre-season briefing with each jurisdiction to discuss State-based emergency preparedness activities. In NSW, briefings were provided by the NSW State Emergency Service, NSW Rural Fire Service and Fire and Rescue NSW. Commonwealth agencies who provided briefings were the Australian Defence Force, Geoscience Australia, Bureau of Meteorology and EMA.

Bureau of Meteorology

The NSW Regional Director, Mr Barry Hanstrum from the Bureau of Meteorology provided a presentation. An overview of recent conditions and future outlook was provided. It was noted that there is a change in global weather patterns and a shift to El Nino conditions was declared earlier this year. Agencies were advised that a possible later start to the bushfire season could occur around November, December or January.

NSW Rural Fire Service

The Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service, Shane Fitzsimmons provided a presentation. Some of the operations the NSW Rural Fire Service has been involved in so far over the 2014/15 period, includes:

- 12,262 bush and grass fires
- 19 days of Total Fire Bans
- four Emergency Warnings and five Section 44 Declarations
- 745 personnel deployed interstate

The NSW Government has announced funding as part of the 2015/16 State Budget to allow the NSW Rural Fire Service to undertake a trial of a Large Air Tanker (LAT) and Very Large Air Tanker (VLAT). The LAT arrived in Sydney on Monday 31 August 2015 and will be available for deployment in NSW from 1 September to 9 December 2015. The VLAT arrived in Sydney on 28 September 2015 and will be available for deployment in NSW from 1 October 2015 to late January 2016.

NSW State Emergency Service

The Deputy Commissioner of the NSW State Emergency Service provided a presentation. The April 2015 storm event that caused significant damage and extremely high rainfall was officially the biggest response operation in the history of the Service. The coming season outlook is predicted to bring wetter periods throughout the summer and potential rainfall across the coast. The NSW State Emergency Service has been preparing the community for the upcoming season with over 700 community engagement programs being delivered.

Emergency Management Australia

The Director General of Emergency Management Australia, Mr Mark Crossweller provided a presentation. The 2014/15 season was especially busy with emergency management agencies responding to a number of domestic and international events. Emergency Management Australia deployed experienced emergency management personnel, through the Emergency Management Assistance Team (EMAT) capability to assist with contingency planning regarding the impacts of both Tropical Cyclone Nathan and Tropical Cyclone Lam.

Australian Defence Force

The Australian Defence Force provided a presentation. The briefing provided an update on how Defence provides assistance, some of the considerations that need to be taken into account and the actual capabilities available to Defence for the upcoming disaster season. Where immediate responses are required, Local Defence Commanders are authorised to respond to requests from local emergency support agencies. In prolonged response periods requests must be facilitated through Emergency Management Australia.

Geoscience Australia

The Emergency Management Coordinator, Ms Monica Osuchowski provided a presentation. The presentation provided an overview of Geoscience Australia's capabilities for supporting emergency management including spatial support to the Crisis Co-ordination Centre. This includes mapping of national events, which increases the availability and accessibility of information to people.

Fire and Rescue NSW

Chief Superintendent John Denny, Assistant Director Specialised Operations, Fire and Rescue NSW provided a presentation. The presentation related to the Fire and Rescue NSW Rapid Impact Assessment Capability, which included a brief overview of the process Fire and Rescue NSW undertook in the recent Hunter Storms.

During the Hunter Storms, Fire and Rescue NSW completed 2,094 assessments and provided Rapid Disaster Assistance teams to the Hunter Valley that included 10 teams for two days and 20 teams for three days.

The State Emergency Management Committee is scheduled to next meet on 3 December 2015.

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