



WOLLONGONG CITY SES UNIT RESOURCE GUIDE

A Guide to other Emergency Service Organisations on our Resources and Capabilities

February 2012

*The worst in nature
the best in us*

Introduction

The *State Emergency Service (SES) Act 1989* lists one of the functions of the SES as “to assist, at their request, members of the Police Force, Fire Brigades, Rural Fire Service or Ambulance Service in dealing with any incident or emergency”.

This document is a guide to the resources and capabilities of the Wollongong City SES Unit. It is aimed at other Emergency Service Organisations (ESO's) to give them a better understanding of the resources that are available to them through the Wollongong City SES Unit.

It is divided into five sections:

- Section 1 provides some background on the SES as an organisation and the Wollongong City Unit in particular.
- Section 2 describes the training we do and the skills we possess.
- Section 3 provides information on our vehicles and equipment.
- Section 4 describes our training facilities that are available for use by other ESO's.
- Section 5 lists examples of typical support activities we can, and have provided to other ESO's.

Our website (<http://wollongong.ses.nsw.gov.au>) contains more information about the Unit and what we do. A copy of this document can also be found there.



1. About the State Emergency Service

The NSW State Emergency Service (SES) is the lead agency in the response to floods, storms and tsunamis in NSW. The SES also supports other emergency services in times of other natural and man-made disasters and is committed to building safer and more resilient communities.

The NSW SES is recognised as the most versatile and widely used emergency service in NSW. The Service's core roles relate to floods, storms and tsunamis. SES volunteers are highly-skilled and well-trained to provide rescue, first aid and other vital services in emergencies.

The Wollongong City Unit provides immediate assistance during natural and man-made emergencies to the City of Wollongong, which extends from Waterfall in the north to Yallah in the south and is home to just over 200,000 people. Our volunteers are available to respond 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The Unit is well respected for its participation, performance and achievement in various activities and competitions. Our Unit is one of the larger Units in the State, and also one of the busiest, based on the volume and variety of work we perform. This diversity is due to the unique geography of our area and the support we provide our other local emergency services.

Our Core Role

Our core role is defined by the State Emergency Service Act, 1989: to act as the combat agency for floods, storms and tsunamis. Flood and storm threats are the most costly natural hazards the community of New South Wales faces. In response to this, the SES:

- Prepares flood plans for communities at risk.
- Assists the Bureau of Meteorology in developing and disseminating official flood and storm warnings.
- Translates official flood warnings into likely effects and disseminates that information.
- Evacuates people whose properties are threatened or made uninhabitable due to floods or storms.
- Rescues people who are endangered, trapped or injured by floods or storms (Flood Rescue).
- Resupplies communities and individuals who are isolated due to flooding.
- Minimizes damage to properties affected by floods or storms.
- Coordinates immediate welfare requirements for affected communities, in conjunction with the Department of Community Services.
- Undertakes public education to ensure that those at risk know what they should do to protect themselves and their property.



Our Members

Our Unit comprises just over 100 members, drawing on people from all walks of life. The majority of our members belong to one of four response teams containing around 15-20 members. The remaining members provide the management and support infrastructure to enable the smooth and efficient running of a Unit this size. The Unit's Management team, consisting of a Local Controller and three Deputies, between them have over 80 years of experience.



One of the strengths of our Unit is the broad range of skills we possess. Our variety of training means that our members can be called upon to cut up fallen trees during a wind storm, secure a tarp on a leaking roof during heavy rain, assist with evacuations during bushfires, search for missing bushwalkers, assist with first aid and casualty handling during a major incident and provide assistance for things like traffic management and road closures at a large community event. All these could occur within a few months -- or even days; this is one of the reasons that our members enjoy the work that they do and why our organisation is sometimes touted as the “Swiss army knife” of emergency services.

Contacting Us

When we are non-operational calls to our 132 500 number go to the 24x7 staffed Operations and Communications Centre based at our State Headquarters in Wollongong. They can activate us via pager and SMS. During operations we have a *silent* number which is available purely for emergency service use.

At any time two of our teams are rostered on call via pagers and SMS – one covering a day shift of 0600 to 1800 and the other covering the night (1800 – 0600). For larger incidents other teams can be activated via SMS. Our target response time for a callout is 30 minutes.

Email Contacts:

operations@wollongong.ses.nsw.gov.au
admin@wollongong.ses.nsw.gov.au

– Operational related issues
– Administrative or general enquiries



2. Our Training and Skills

The State Emergency Service is endorsed by the NSW Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board (VTAB), giving our members national recognition for their skills. Our members initially focus on training in our core skills before progressing to support-related skills. The Unit has its own nationally recognised workplace trainers and assessors for all the skills our Unit trains in. The skill and experience of some of our trainers are such that they are part of various state-wide Working Groups.

Our training standard is high, as shown by our continued excellent performance in various rescue and navigation competitions. In 2003 a team from our Unit won the National Bi-annual Disaster Rescue Competition held in Tasmania.

The Unit is pro-active in organising & running joint and multi-agency training activities; the past year seeing a number of such activities and exercise for Vertical and Swiftwater Rescue.

A brief description of our training courses and the National competencies they align to under the Public Safety Industry Training Package appears below.



General Rescue

- PUASAR001A – Participate in a rescue operation
- PUAQU001A – Prepare, maintain and test response equipment
- 46 qualified members

Our core rescue skills course exceeds the USAR Category 1 standard. It covers topics such as:



- Stretchers and casualty handling
- Rescue from heights and depths
- Lifting equipment
- Hauling systems
- Anchors and holdfasts
- Damage to buildings, tunnelling and debris clearance
- Temporary shoring and elementary demolition
- Lighting and power equipment
- Cutting Equipment

First Aid

- PUAEME001A – Provide emergency care
- PUAEME002B – Manage injuries at emergency incident
- 92 qualified members

The SES has its own First Aid course, which is WorkCover approved, and contains some additional material to that in a standard senior First Aid course.



Storm and Water Damage Operations

- PUASES001A – Undertake storm and water damage operations
- 58 qualified members



This provides the core skills for our combat role and covers:

- Building construction
- Safety, including rooftop fall-prevention systems
- Temporary repair methods
- Tree operations
- Local flooding and sandbagging
- Shoring

Map Reading and Navigation

- PUAOPE003A – Navigate in urban and rural environments
- 34 qualified members

- Map border information and symbols
- Scale and distance
- Grid references, latitude and longitude
- Ground shape, gradients and intervisibility
- Direction and compasses
- Map orientation and position fixing
- Cross-country navigation
- GPS usage



In addition to these theory topics, members participate in a number of practical exercises.



Land Search Team Member

- PUASAR008B – Search as a member of a land search team
- PUALAW001A – Protect and preserve an incident scene
- 56 qualified members

This course covers both urban and rural techniques.

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| • Search organisation | • Search techniques |
| • Information gathering | • Resources |
| • Search appreciation | • Safety |
| • Planning and assessment | • Crime-scene preservation |
| • Briefings and debriefings | • Urban & building search |
| • Search communications | |

Flood Rescue

Level 1

- SROWWR001B - Apply self-rescue skills in white water
- 31 qualified members

Level 2

- PUASES003A – Undertake flood and inland waterways rescue boat operations
- 20 qualified members

Level 3

- SROWWR002B - Perform white water rescues and recoveries
- SROWWR003B - Perform a comprehensive range of white water rescues and recoveries
- 7 qualified members

Our Unit is accredited for all three levels of Flood Rescue. All our Flood Rescue operators undertake swift water rescue awareness training and undergo an annual swim test.

Our Level 3 operators undertake the 3-day internationally recognised Swift Water Rescue Technician course.



Chainsaw Operations

- FPIFGM069A – Trim and Cross-cut felled trees
- FPIFGM111A – Fall trees manually intermediate
- 33 qualified members



This is an important course for our storm-damage role as much our work in these incidents involves trees either down on properties or posing a threat to safety or property. This comprehensive course covers:

- Safety
- The cutting attachment
- Maintenance procedures
- Cross-cutting
- Principles of tree-felling
- Problem tree-felling
- Emergency tree operations

Vertical Rescue

- PUASAR004A – Undertake vertical rescue
- 21 qualified members

The SES Vertical Rescue package is based on the old V3 standard as specified by the State Rescue Board (SRB). It contains some additional modules including the use of highline systems and cableways. Members regularly use the on-rope mobility skills during searches along our rugged escarpment.



3. Our Equipment

While trained personnel can be a useful resource, so too can equipment. Our Unit has a significant amount of equipment on hand to deal with both our core role and a variety of support roles.

Vehicles

Our Unit has seven vehicles:

- A Mitsubishi Canter 4WD light truck set up as a heavy storm response vehicle.
- Three Holden Rodeo Dual-cab 4WD Utilities set up as light storm response vehicles.
- One Holden Rodeo Dual-cab 4WD Utility for transport, reconnaissance and general use.
- One Mitsubishi Triton Dual-cab 4WD Utility set up for flood rescue work.
- One Toyota Hiace 14-seat Mini-bus for transport.



Flood Rescue Boats

We have two V-Hull Flood Rescue Boats that can be used for transporting equipment or personnel or for conducting searches on inland waterways. We also have one IRB for flood rescue work in shallow water.

Field Operations Caravan

Our new Field Operations caravan is air-conditioned and contains plenty of whiteboard and pin-board space. It comes equipped with a long running generator, laptop computer, Colour printer/fax/scanner and ceiling mounted data projector and wireless Internet access.

At the rear is a small self-contained catering area for providing tea/coffee and food for extended events.



Vertical Rescue Trailer

This trailer contains a full complement of VR equipment including a Larkin Frame, Industrial rescue tripod, Basket and wrap-style stretchers as well as support equipment such as lighting and rock drilling/anchoring equipment.

The trailer itself has high ground clearance for use in remote bush areas which larger rescue trucks may have difficulty in accessing.

Equipment

Each of our response vehicles is normally equipped for responding to storm-related events, although our Mitsubishi Canter contains a variety of general rescue equipment. Below is a list of equipment that we have either on one of our vehicles or VR Trailer or stored at our headquarters:

- Numerous field First Aid kits and blankets.
- Stretchers (Folding, Basket/Stokes, Wrap-style – Evac body splint/Sked, Paraguard) & Spinal boards.
- Pickets and anchor plates.
- Assorted hand tools.
- Approximately 2km of synthetic static rescue lifeline in 11mm, 13mm and 16mm.
- Chains, slings, pulleys, winches and associated hauling, lifting and rigging equipment.
- Vertical Rescue equipment including a Larkin Frame & Industrial rescue tripod.
- Chainsaws and pole-saws.
- Cutquick power saws.
- Hand-operated hydraulic equipment.
- Airbag lifting equipment.
- Acrow props and timber for shoring, packing and stabilising.
- Battery-operated power tools (drills and circular and reciprocating saws) and nail guns.
- Dewalt Sliding mitre/compound saw
- Numerous tarps, PVC plastic and Monarflex covering material.
- Ladders of various lengths.
- Generators of various capacity, power leads and distribution boards.
- Petrol and electric pumps.
- Lighting – rugged fluorescent, halogen flood lights and two mobile lighting plants.
- Maps, compasses and GPS units.
- Local and remote-area search kits including rucksack, tents, sleeping bags and cooking equipment.
- Evacuation and bushfire support kits.
- Communication equipment – 20 intrinsically safe, ruggedized, waterproof Handheld GRN radios, Cellular and Satellite phones.
- Dry Suits and Personal Flotation Devices (PFD).
- Swiftwater/Flood Rescue response equipment.



4. Our Facilities

Our headquarters in Montague Street, North Wollongong is available to for use by other Emergency Services for both indoor and outdoor training activities. We can also arrange catering to support these training activities if required.

Our headquarter's building offers the following facilities:

- Air-conditioned throughout
- An auditorium suitable for up to 50 people with a ceiling mounted data projector and screen
- A smaller training room suitable for 12-15 people
- Wireless Internet access
- A kitchen and dining room
- Telephones, printers, faxes & photocopiers

Within our grounds we have:

- A 30m training tower
- A purpose built training area containing tunnels, shafts, confined areas for use in rescue from depths, confined space and USAR training
- Open-space grassed areas.



5. Our Capabilities

This section provides some examples of how we can help you, and includes the types of tasks our Unit has previously assisted with.

Search for Missing Persons and Physical Evidence



This is by far the most common form of support we provide to another organisation, in this case the Police. The Unit regularly provides volunteers trained in search techniques, first aid and crime-scene preservation to assist the Police in searches for missing persons and/or evidence. As stated earlier, all of our vehicles are four wheel drive. Depending on the search, we can provide anything from a fit, experienced team for reconnaissance or “hasty” searches in any terrain day or night, to a larger mobilization of members for a general or urban search.

The Unit is not limited to land-based searches either, as we have used our Flood Rescue Boats on a number of occasions for searching creeks and dams. Our land-search training applies as much to missing objects as it does to missing persons, so the Unit can be of assistance when searching for evidence. Again, our organisation’s discipline and training in crime-scene preservation help too.



Remote-Area Search and Rescue

The Unit has a number of highly qualified members with bush skills that have led to us being called to assist in extended searches in remote rugged areas of the Shoalhaven, South Coast and Southern Highlands.



These members have enabled the Unit to be the highest placed SES team in the NSW Wilderness Navigation shield for nine continuous years, and we consistently rank among the top few emergency service teams.

In addition to specialist skills such as vertical mobility and rescue and remote-area first aid, members in this category have the experience and equipment to operate in any terrain in all weather conditions.

Vertical Rescue

Vertical Rescue operations are often labour-intensive and time-consuming, and typically occur in difficult locations – urban and remote.



Providing Emergency Lighting

Each of our response vehicles carries a generator and lighting equipment. We have a range of different-sized generators (including lightweight generators) and weatherproof fluorescent floodlights for providing lighting in remote locations. We also have two light towers (as per the picture) which can light up a large area without the blinding effect of regular flood lights.

Temporary Repairs and Shoring to Damaged Buildings

Our shoring and temporary repair skills have been used when vehicles have collided with houses. The Unit can assist with both the vehicle recovery and making emergency repairs to the premises involved.



First Aid Support for Major Incidents

All our field members have a current WorkCover-approved first aid certificate. We have a number of members who are qualified to a more advanced level such as occupational and remote-area first aid as well as a number of registered and enrolled nurses.

Casualty handling and stretcher work is a fundamental component of our general rescue training and we make extensive use of casualty simulation in both training and exercises.

We have undergone triage training with the Ambulance Service and have had a number of exercises with the local hospital Disaster Medical team.

Animal Rescue

Our Unit has assisted in the rescue of a variety of animals ranging from birds caught in trees, dogs down cliffs and cows stuck in dams and creeks.



Bushfire Support

Our Unit is able to provide assistance during bushfires in the areas of evacuation, logistics, transport and felling fire damaged trees and assisting with road closures. Over half of our members have undertaken the RFS Bushfire Awareness training course (BFA).