

Notes from the Field

Online training for volunteers builds leaders in resilience. Australian Emergency Management Volunteer Forum

Every year Australian communities face devastating losses caused by disasters including catastrophic bushfires, floods, and damaging storms. Natural disasters are common in Australia and history has shown that these catastrophic events will continue, with more extreme events predicted. Such events can have a huge impact on individuals and communities taking many years to recover.

Australia's capacity to respond to natural disasters has been built largely on a range of specialised volunteer-based emergency management organisations, each of which relies on a small team of paid staff and a much larger workforce of (unpaid) volunteers. In Australia today, there are approximately 500,000 volunteers who willingly provide their time and services to the emergency management sector.

With such large numbers of emergency management volunteers in Australia, as many volunteers as possible should have the opportunity to access leadership training. The Australian Emergency Management Volunteer Forum (AEMVF) offers the Online Introduction to Leadership Program for emergency management volunteers to help leadership capability within the sector.

In 2013, funding was awarded to the AEMVF under the National Emergency Management Projects to develop the Online Introduction to Leadership Program. The training takes 45-60 minutes and is full of useful learning tools to help students discover and extend their leadership skills. The training covers basic leadership principles and approaches and provides take-away tools to help volunteers put skills into practice.

Emergency management volunteers not only provide emergency response services during natural disasters but are also active in their local communities delivering prevention, preparedness and recovery programs. Appropriately trained emergency management volunteers help communities build resilience, including disaster response and recovery.

The AEMVF is the peak national body representing the interests of the emergency management volunteer sector in Australia. The AEMVF comprises representatives from the emergency management volunteer sector, the Australian Government and Volunteering Australia. The organisation advocates for the continual support and development of the emergency management volunteer sector. The AEMVF recognises that training and leadership is critical in the effective deployment of volunteers.

The Australian Government recognises that emergency management agencies are at the forefront of strengthening disaster resilience in Australia. The Attorney-General's Department appreciates all the dedicated work these agencies and organisations contribute to disaster resilience in the Australian community. These organisations and volunteers are critical to helping communities cope with and recover from disaster.

Introduction to Leadership Program:
www.ag.gov.au/EmergencyManagement/Community/Volunteers/Pages/default.aspx



The AEMVF website is a valuable forum for volunteers.