

BUSHFIRE PREPAREDNESS:

HOW TO BECOME 'FIRE-FIT'

WITHOUT REALLY NOTICING



Photo: Michael Reynolds, Port Lincoln

NARROWING THE AWARENESS-ACTION GAP: CULTIVATING A CULTURE OF ROUTINE ALL-HAZARDS PREPAREDNESS THROUGH PUBLIC POLICY INITIATIVES – a case study from South Australia, the “driest state in the driest continent”

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1. WHAT did we want to know?

- ❖ How can bushfire emergency responders' experiences with animal owners help improve owner safety and survival?
- ❖ What preparedness initiatives can be learnt from emergency responders' perceptions and observation of animal owners, which may also be usefully applied to other groups in a bushfire at-risk community?
- ❖ How can an enhanced understanding of the aetiology of animal owners' decision-making facilitate the saving of human life in a bushfire emergency?

2. HOW did we find out?

- ❖ Qualitative research used interviews and focus groups to gather data from key stakeholders.
- ❖ Data were managed using Nvivo 11 software and analysed using Thematic Analysis.

3. WHO & WHERE were the research participants?

- ❖ SA Police, SA Country Fire Service, Metropolitan Fire Service, State Emergency Service
- ❖ RSPCA, Dept of Environment, Water & Natural Resources
- ❖ Primary Industries & Regions SA, Farmers, Local Government, Small to medium businesses
- ❖ Owners of any type & any number of animals
- ❖ Located on Lower Eyre Peninsula in South Australia

4. WHAT did we find out?

Determined new public health preparedness policy initiatives, to make being 'fire-fit' as routine as buying the groceries. These include 'Catastrophic Day Leave' from the workplace, municipal discounts & rebates and reviewing the use of firebreaks & other farming practices.

Suggested synergy among different social microclimates, ways to make safe choices more appealing than unsafe choices, how to value-add on assets and how resource sharing can teach dynamic risk assessment.

5. END-USER STATEMENTS – SAPOL & CFS

"Prevention and Preparedness is where we as a community have traditionally been poor. Actions to build this will assist the response agencies by reducing the workload at the time and more importantly reduce the amount of recovery that is required within the community after the event. An increase in preparedness activities is a major step in building the resilience of a community and a resilient or prepared community is the outcome that all participants in emergency management aim to support". Senior Sergeant First Class Russell Dippy CSTJ LEM, Emergency Management Coordinator, SA Police, 100 Angus St ADELAIDE.

"A lot of people on Eyre Peninsula own pets & livestock. Animals provide emotional & financial benefits to people, but are also an emotional & moral challenge during an emergency. This research is fundamental in assisting CFS to understand why animal owners do what they do when driven by emotional, moral or financial reasoning. This understanding can then help us to tailor and target our messages and programs accordingly". Community Engagement Officer Therese Pedler, CFS Region 6, Port Lincoln, SA

