

Debriefs are a vital part of improving and learning in emergency situations. In my opinion, as municipal coordinator for over 7 years, I believe that we are not learning much from debriefs and the same mistakes are continuously being made. Too often everyone is patting each other on the back and too scared to be slightly critical/constructive. The Floods on the 10th & 11th of May was the worst emergency I have ever been involved with, too many mistakes were made and especially by DPAC who had no idea about their role and many staff were not qualified in emergency management or roles that they were given. In fact, the DPAC person provided to our Council had no experience at all in social recovery or emergency management and caused more issues and training by Council than was necessary. However, the 10th and 11th of May floods debrief saw the emergency as being highly successful without many issues. Once again everyone being too nice!

Gell River Fires Debrief:

- The SREMC was stood up at 11:00 Tuesday 29 January. This is after 400 people have been evacuated at Huon Valley and two other major fires in the Central Highlands and Derwent Valley municipality. Why was the SREMC not activated earlier? What does activation trigger, i.e. grants, personnel, command centre etc... that may deter the SREMC being stood-up?
- Southern Regional Emergency Coordination Centre (SRECC) basically was the equivalent of the SREMC being stood-up. This was the first time this body was used and I believe it worked perfectly and is here to stay. It is vital to have emergency services and social recovery working together in the same command centre. This body needs to have a head of power. Only issue was that there was duplication of emails being sent out by emergency services and social recovery. Should just use one email list for both.
- Many DPAC staff were not trained/skilled in emergency management. They were brought in from various government departments like Biosecurity (working on the fruit fly) or State Growth (Finance) or THS (Immunisation). These representatives were at community meetings and some were brought in to give advice and it was their first day on the job and they knew less than I did. They didn't understand the grants being offered and had little knowledge about the fires. They also didn't have cards to give-out identifying who they work for and contact details. There will always be emergency every year in Tasmania and DPAC need to have permanent qualified staff for emergencies and social recovery. Also, they should not bring in staff who are not trained! The May 10th & 11th Floods DPAC was responsible for not activating the Emergency Grant (THS) and the 1800 number, until too late. This emergency grant was activated earlier with the fires and better fact sheets were provided. The public information provided by DPAC, now highlighted the changes in the document and email sent-out which was an improvement learnt from the May Floods. DPAC sent information out to Tasmanian Visitor Information Centres

which was a good move, but this information should also have been provided to Council's. Plus, the Derwent Valley Visitor Information Centre is a voluntary organisation and was not included on DPAC's email list. I have already raised this with DPAC, so hopefully this has been changed. At a bushfire community meeting it was also raised that the Derwent Valley Community Visitor Centre was unaware that there was road closures or that people should avoid the Mount Field National Park, so they were sending visitors there. Council didn't provide any information to the Visitor Centre and now they have been included in our dissemination of information list. DPAC were often communicating with our communications officer or asking him questions which he was unable to answer. As the Municipal Emergency Coordinator for the DVC, I should have been cc into all emails or contacted first.

TFS web page is a joke. I'm that annoyed with TFS web page that I will come and fix it for free myself! The most important information given out is the Alerts but to find this information and then to not use the words next to the symbols is absurd! Please see email that explains in detail the issue of alerts that was sent to Peter Middleton on the 23 January 2019. This was forwarded onto Lesley King, who replied that it will be part of TFS review process of the web information, which she didn't know when this would occur! There was also different definitions of watch and act from TFS web page and their FB page. Another issue was that unless there was a total fire permit day there was no definition provided. It's not even included in the definitions list! Also, TFS (ABC radio) tell the public not to use blades, mowers etc... on a total fire permit day. However, this information is not on TFS web page. I phoned TFS and was told that it was included and I asked where? They checked and got back to me 20 minutes later saying it wasn't on their web page. This may have changed since my enquire, I just found this:

Work practices such as grinding, welding and cutting metal in the open are not permitted. The use of machinery for harvesting etc, may be subject to restrictions or prohibited on the declaration of a total fire ban. All fire permits are automatically suspended.

This raises another issue that was raised at one of the Maydena Community meeting. Norske Skog on a total fire permit day, with the Gell River fire around 12klms from Maydena, were harvesting near Maydena early in the morning. Should Norske Skog been allowed to operate under these circumstances? Also, the Maydena Dirt Bike were also operating on a total fire ban and when asked by myself why, they responded that TFS were fine with it and it only took 25 minutes to clear the hill. Bikes can create sparks and with the closeness of the Gell River Fire should the Dirt Bikes have been operating?

- The Gell River Fires started on the 28th December 2018 and feedback from the Maydena Community meeting was lack of presence of TFS and the Police in Maydena during the early stages and especially the first total fire permit day
- TFS hired 5 electronic notice boards in our Municipality and contacted Council about where to locate these boards. The main issue is a car accident if placed in the wrong position that distracts drivers etc.... It would be beneficial if some of these locations are identified now for future fires. Also, the boards were saying Fire in area monitor TFS web page. A local resident suggested that the signs should also include a message about listening to the ABC too. I

contacted the person responsible for the signs and suggested this change which was not adopted. I believe it should be included in any future fires.

- TFS and Parks & Wildlife held community meetings at Maydena without even contacting Council until 6pm the night before the first meeting! Council was also not included in any promotional information as a partner in these meetings in our municipality. This is not acceptable, if it wasn't for Council being present at every community meeting many questions/concerns would not have been answered. Also, Council is the first contact and usually place that the community will complain too/about or to get information from. There were 5 community meetings for the bushfires and at two of these meetings in a row there was no TFS presence (except local brigade) which the residents didn't appreciate. Also, all the community meetings were rushed and no time was given to inform the public of these meetings. Apart from these issues the community meetings were a very important part of informing the public and diverting many possible issues that could have arisen. I'm a very strong advocate of these regular community meetings. Another issue raised at the community meeting was that in the Community Bushfire Protection Plan for Maydena it says under Nearby Safer Place the following:

Maydena Online Access Centre (old Primary School) 36 Kallista Road Map Grid F5

Some residents would like this changed because the online access centre doesn't exist anymore and because of the many tourist for the dirt bikes they wouldn't know this location either. These residents suggest it be called 'Maydena Bike Park'..... Maybe can still leave in old Primary School 36 Kallista Road Map Grid F5.

- Road Closures – include more information about what level of access, i.e. residents only, emergency services only etc.. This was feedback from the Maydena community meeting.
- The public all know to go TFS web page for information on fires. At the meetings we were trying to educate the community about TasAlerts and how it's a one stop shop, i.e includes not only say fire information but road closures etc... I think it's a good time to start promoting TasAlert through TV, social media etc...
- Parks & Wildlife didn't communicate with Council about Mt Field National Park closing their park to visitors. I have spoken to Brendan Moodie about this and now includes us in the communication of future events.
- WebEoc is starting to be used more by emergency management agencies. A one stop shop is great and I found WebEoc easy to use and informative. I had access to the pre-planned Maydena Evacuation plan which had a mistake in it and was able to create a task /action to get this fixed, which worked efficiently. Many organisations are sending fact sheets out, i.e. air quality, rain water tanks etc... There is a library on WebEoc that I encourage all organisations to use to file this information for others to use.

- Fenton Air Base – Working with a small Council and being an EHO I understand many planning, building, plumbing, food licences etc... that may apply to temporary camps like that at the Fenton Air Base. I visited the Air Base as the Municipal Emergency Management Coordinator but soon realised that there were several problems. i.e the sullage was being released on top of the ground, the main tent didn't have a temporary occupancy permit and the accommodation tents may have needed too. There was no food registration and may have needed a plumbing permit to dispose of the effluent. Some of these issues are required nationally, some specific to Local Government. The most important permits you need, which can be provided for a period of two years, is a temporary occupancy permit for temporary structures. This will determine how many people can occupy a given space.
- The May floods had many issues with the grant process. The grants were better handled during the fires. However, the grants are lacking in many circumstances. They do not cover Council's staff to operate evacuation centres in normal Council hours of operating, but encourage to outsource! Also, they don't take into account specific cases that always arise that are unique. There is a lot of angst from residents in our municipality about the Gell River fires, they call it the forgotten fire (like not have a thankyou day, until we asked for it). I agree that the emergency grant of \$2,000 was not include in our municipality like it was for Huon Valley and Central Highlands. However, individual cases should have been listened too and many people granted access to this money because they were told by DHHS to leave because of air quality and not stay too long in the area. This is no different to being evacuated because of fire! I would like a working group to be formed to look into the grant process because there are too many mistakes being made.
- It was great to see Telstra make all public phones in our fire affected area free. Also, TasWaters rebate and their openness to include/consider other areas.

Due to time and emergency management only being 1% of my job, I would have like to be at both the May Floods and December Fires debrief and contribute a lot more. The main issue, which I continue to complain about is the lack of resources, especially, for smaller Council's that is being provided, considering the increasing legal responsibility and ever complexity of risk assessment, municipal plans and committees that one must attend. It is impossible for nearly any Council to meet the requirements and it will take a coronial inquest, I'm afraid, to see the Federal, State and Local Council's to increase funding and provide appropriate resources for emergency management. I envisage that there should be a full time person employed by Federal or the State Government to provide to all local Council's an emergency management person.

Kind regards,



David Bradford
Derwent Valley Council

Date: 12/4/2019

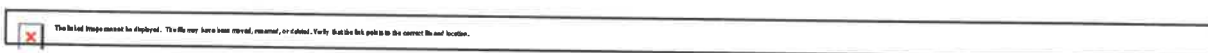
David Bradford

From: David Bradford
Sent: Wednesday, 23 January 2019 9:27 AM
To: 'Peter.Middleton@fire.tas.gov.au'
Cc: Cerritelli, Anthony (DPEM)
Subject: TFS Web Page

Hi Peter,





I know you are busy but I have several issues that I have informed TFS about before, with no action taken or have arisen because of the current fires. They are:

- For several years I have suggested that TFS use a definitions page with hyperlinks to relevant information. This should be on the home page (and other pages) on the left hand side. Instead it is hidden at the bottom of the page on the alerts list (very hard to find)! Then there are no hyperlinks to relevant information and at best the definition page is wanting in content. It doesn't even have definitions of Total Fire Ban or any of the Alert Level warnings, like watch and act etc.....
- We are trying to standardize terminology used so everyone is on the same page. We constantly refer to the alert levels – Emergency Warning; Watch and Act; Advice and No Alert Level. There is no obvious definition of these terms, once you stumble across where these terms are defined, above the definitions page, you will see various different coloured diamond symbols (red, yellow, blue and white) that are in fact the definitions for these terms. The Words Emergency Warning, Watch and Act, Advice and No Alert Level should be placed before these symbols (what about people who are coloured blind?) These words should be in the definitions page with hyperlinks to relevant information. I see this as the most critical issue that needs to be addressed immediately. I understand that the TFS web page is under review but this needs to be changed now. Also, when you go to the Alert List you see the Alert Level, these should also be hyperlinks to definitions and relevant information. Instead you have to hit details then half way down the page you will see the alert level with a hyperlink that will take you to those symbols I just mentioned. I was at the TFS ground base at Fenton yesterday and there were NSW fire personnel studying the maps on TFS webpage and they had no idea what the white diamond was, they thought they were watch and act, so I showed them what I have just explained. Can you imagine the public panicking and in a hurry trying to look for this information?



NB: Clicking on the heading name will sort the incidents into ascending or descending order of that column. The current sort order is in words at the end of the incident list.

Alert Level – shows the current Alert level information for an incident.

-  You may be in danger and need to take action immediately. Any delay now puts your life at risk.
-  A heightened level of threat. Conditions are changing; you need to start taking action now to protect you and your family.
-  An incident has started. People in the area should keep up to date with developments.
-  An incident has occurred. There is no immediate danger to the general public.

- There is no definition of Total Fire Ban in the definitions page and if you go to Fire Bans & Permits there is no definition of Total Fire Ban unless there is a Total Fire Ban occurring at that moment. As an Environmental Health Officer, I was asked yesterday could someone mow lawns during a period of a Total Fire Ban? I checked TFS webpage and found no information on the usage of mowing or other devices that may cause sparks being used during a period of a Total Fire Ban. I explained that common-sense would say no you shouldn't, however, I didn't want to give misleading /potentially dangerous incorrect information out, so I explained that I would contact TFS and get back to the person who asked the question. I contacted TFS and they explained that you were not allowed to use mowers and other devices that could create sparks during a period of Total Fire Ban. I asked where was this information on the TFS web page and they said they would check and get back to me. They did get back to me and discovered that this information wasn't on the TFS web page. Also, yesterday there was logging activities in an area that a community could be threatened by current fires (won't mention names) during a period of Total Fire Ban. Our tip is closed during periods of a Total Fire Ban, it does raise the question that should logging/harvesting occur during periods of a Total Fire Ban?
- I heard you on the radio yesterday and you were well spoken and smart in the use of the words you used. However, just before your interview they were saying that 3 evacuation centres were opened (Bothwell Hall, Geeveston Hall and Deloraine RSL). They asked you the same question about which evacuation centres were opened and you replied only Bothwell. This contrary information didn't come across well. Was Geeveston Hall opened as an evacuation centre by TFS or was it opened without their permission?

I know you are busy but if you could pass these issues onto the relevant people , it would be greatly appreciated. Some of these issue should be raised in a debrief, especially about the opening of evacuation centres.

Kind regards,
David Bradford

David Bradford
Municipal Emergency Management Coordinator



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