

Awards to recognise disaster heroes



The EMA Safer Communities Awards

If you work for a local government, volunteer or community organisation that has been actively involved in emergency management—before or after a disaster—then Emergency Management Australia (EMA) wants to hear about it.

Organisations or people who have helped to keep Australians and their property safe from disasters or assisted with the response to and the rebuilding after disasters will be recognised under a new annual Award Scheme.

The inaugural EMA Safer Communities Awards is searching for excellence in emergency management—the best practice that has built safer communities across Australia.

EMA's Director General, Alan Hodges, says the Safer Communities Awards will recognise the 'unsung heroes' who work often behind the scenes to make communities safe.

'The Awards could recognise the work of local councils in flood mitigation, bushfire brigades in both fighting and preventing fires through hazard awareness campaigns, and schools and community groups for innovative information and education programs on natural hazards,' Mr Hodges said.

In each State and Territory there will be eight Awards—this will ensure that every organisation, regardless of its size or where it might be located, will have a chance of winning. The winners from across the country will then face the national judges who will be searching to identify the best of the best.

The fact is that disasters can and do strike in every part of Australia. Cyclones hit randomly right across Northern Australia, severe storms strike major cities and remote areas, floods have no boundaries, and earthquakes and landslides hit without warning.

Over the past two years Exmouth in Western Australia was extensively damaged by Cyclone Vance, Sydney was battered by hail stones, Katherine in the Northern Territory was flooded out as were other populated areas in the Eastern States, and bushfires burnt out of control and threatened many communities and the environment.

'Every disaster involves community organisations, local councils and emergency authorities—both in the preparedness and the response phases. So we want to recognise the good work done by all these people,'

*... EMA Director General,
Alan Hodges*

The nomination form and full details on the Safer Community Awards will be available from February 10, 2000 on EMA's internet site www.ema.gov.au.

Alternatively, you can register your interest in the Awards by contacting EMA:

Phone: 02 6266 5402

Fax: 02 6257 7665, or

Email: awards@ema.gov.au

Postal address:

EMA Safer Communities Awards
PO Box 1020 DICKSON ACT 2602

Entries for the inaugural awards covering the period January 1998 to December 1999 will close on March 31 with the National winners being announced in mid-2000.

The Awards cover all areas of emergency management: Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery. There are two categories:

Pre-Disaster: This award will cover activities aimed at preventing or mitigating disasters or their effects. It will also cover preparedness activities.

Post-Disaster: Two areas will be covered by the Post-Disaster category: response and recovery.

The awards will be available in four streams:

- Federal and State Government agencies
- Local Government
- Voluntary organizations, including community organisations; and
- Private sector organisations.

A judging panel at State and Territory level will assess each category. These panels will be organised by the peak Emergency Management Committee and will consist of judges representing each of the four streams.

The State and Territory winning entries in each category and stream will be forwarded to EMA for consideration in the National Awards, again in the same categories and streams.

The judges will assess each entry's contribution to community safety with consideration being given to:

- How the project improved community safety and what future benefits are expected.
- The degree to which the approach represents best practice—that is, how it is leading the field in national or international approaches.
- How the project was innovative. For instance, how the new approach, process or technique was implemented.
- Project implementation—that is, the effectiveness of implementation and the consultative processes.
- Potential use by others. The scope for other organisations to implement a similar approach.