

Emergency Management Liaison Officer training

By Ian Carlton, Regional Officer Emergency Management, Victoria State Emergency Service

Since 2013, the Barwon South West Regional Emergency Management Training and Exercising Committee have been conducting a one-day Emergency Management Liaison Officer Training (EMLO training) for agency staff and volunteers. To date, over 165 personnel from 30 different emergency management agencies have undertaken this vital training.

The original EMLO training package was developed and piloted by the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner in 2009. In 2012, a need was identified and a request for EMLO training was raised by a number of agencies. Courses were being conducted by three different regions within Victoria, each with slight variations. In collaboration with various Victorian regions, presenters consolidated and improved the course. The content was the same for each region with regional adjustments incorporated within a consolidated exercise. Examples are Ballarat for Grampians Region, Colac for Barwon South West Region and Melbourne for Central Region.

Emergency Management Victoria recognised the importance of the training and refined it, releasing it as a consistent EMLO training package for all Victorian emergency services agencies. This has given rise to partnerships and relationships that has led to expanded networks within the regions. When the need arises, staff are trained and confident in the role they will be undertaking.

The training is focussed on the role of the EMLO, with the emphasis on the requirements from the Emergency Management Manual Victoria (see extract following).

Support agencies may provide or may be requested by an emergency response coordinator or controller to provide an emergency management liaison officer(s) to the State Control Centre, Regional Control Centre or Incident Control Centre.

An EMLO:

- represents the agency in the relevant control centre
- may represent the agency at the IEMT or REMT, if the relevant agency commander is unable to attend (not the SEMT, where a senior agency representative is required to attend)

- should be empowered to commit, or to arrange to commit, the resources of the agency to respond to an emergency
- provides advice in relation to the role and activities of the agency
- should maintain communications with the agency.

Where an EMLO cannot be deployed to a particular location, the EMLO may perform the role from a remote location, for example through a teleconference or video conferencing link.

Source: Emergency Management Manual Victoria

Training is conducted by a multi-agency training team comprising representatives from Victoria Police, Country Fire Authority, Ambulance Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services, local government and the Victoria State Emergency Service.

Training is conducted within the Incident Control Centre in the Barwon South West Region. Here, attendees become familiar with an incident control centre where they will most likely be deployed. Participants put their new skills into practice by attending exercises at the incident control centre or by attending actual incidents. This helps them gain confidence in the role.

The benefits of being familiar with the Barwon Incident Control Centre and the people they will work with, is the networking opportunities this brings. Operational deployments have identified the importance of this ongoing professional development. New relationships form and people become familiar with other EMLOs. The benefit is a greater awareness of different agency roles and responsibilities. This knowledge comes into its own in times when EMLOs are required to work under difficult and stressful circumstances within an incident control centre.