

Inaugural Regional Meeting of Pacific Islands Disaster Managers, Fire and Emergency Services and Police

Building Strategic Alliance in Disaster and Emergency Preparedness and Response in Pacific Island Countries

*3rd – 5th July, 2013
Tanoa International Hotel, Nadi, Fiji*

The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), Australasian Fire & Emergency Services Authorities Council (AFAC) and Pacific Islands Fire Services Association (PIFSA) are collaborating to conduct an inaugural regional meeting of Pacific Islands Disaster Managers, Fire and Emergency Services and Police. The meeting is to be held from 3rd – 5th July 2013 at the Tanoa International Hotel in Nadi, Fiji.

Background

Significant disasters within our region over the last decade have highlighted a number of weaknesses in disaster and emergency management that have challenged our traditional understanding, structures and methods.

One of the consistent outcomes from these disasters is that no one agency can successfully manage these events by themselves. Critical judicial, coronial and governmental reviews in Australia and New Zealand are demanding a strong, joined up, interoperable approach. The Pacific Disaster Risk Reduction and Disaster Management Framework for Action 2005 – 2015 strongly advocates for improved disaster/emergency preparedness response capacity, particularly at the national level within Pacific island countries.

The drivers for this change of approach are disaster managers, police and fire and emergency services, and in particular those that have experienced the pain and frustration of managing recent major disaster events. Many jurisdictions are now adopting an **all risks – all hazards, all agencies** approach using simple but effective, commonly understood, principles.

Police are key partners in this process. While the primary role of police is enforcing law and order, they also play an essential role in all aspects of disaster and emergency preparedness and response. Many Pacific Island Fire and Emergency services are expanding their roles and capabilities to support this new approach. However, there are still many police jurisdictions that still have a primary fire and emergency responsibility.

Building on the model exemplified by the long-standing relationship between PIFSA and AFAC and their member agencies, a new Strategic Alliance, supported by a dedicated secretariat based with the SPC in Fiji, will be established, bringing together Fire and Emergency Service Managers, National Disaster Managers and key stakeholders.

The objectives of the Strategic Alliance include:

- Common incident management system and protocols
- Standardised competency and qualification framework

- Strengthening agency capability and capacity as well as personal professional development and mentoring
- Developing a surge capacity through volunteers
- Community safety and awareness programs
- Strengthening of intra-regional relationships

Purpose

The purpose of the meeting will be to examine a common ‘doctrine’ to improve the interoperability of emergency services providers (Disaster Managers, Fire and emergency services and Police) to:

- Develop a better understanding of emergency management trends and examine regional and international best practice examples
- Look at strategies, tools and methodologies to improve the interoperability of agencies.
- Identify the key issues hindering an “all risks – all hazards” approach to risk preparedness and response.
- Develop principles for defining a common incident management system.
- Discuss how Pacific island ‘disaster/emergency’ agencies can better help and support each other before, during and after disaster events.
- Identify improved collaboration with internal and external support agencies using the established tools and methodologies, for example UN Damage Assessment & Coordination (UNDAC) and International Search & Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG) systems.
- Establish a Steering Committee of key stakeholders to guide the outcomes and direction identified by the meeting including the need for future actions and fora.

More importantly this meeting will be an opportunity for disaster and emergency service leaders to meet and build relationships to improve their collaboration into the future. This is a unique opportunity for Pacific island countries to strengthen regional and national capacities in relation to integrated disaster preparedness and response.

Format

The meeting will be divided into several different sessions over the course of 2.5 days and will include presentations on various topical issues as well as plenary and group discussions.

Intended Outcomes

- Improved understanding of the challenges and needs for improving inter-operability of fire and emergency services.
- Improved understanding of emergency management trends
- Assessment of regional and international best practice examples including appropriate tools and methodologies to strengthen inter-operability of key emergency/disaster response agencies
- Clarity on the key issues hindering an “all risks – all hazards” approach to risk preparedness and response.
- Consensus on principles for defining a common incident management system.

- Identified potential 'twins' for Pacific Islands Fire and Emergency services and NDMOs with AFAC member agencies.
- Established Steering Committee of key stakeholders to provide leadership and guidance for the Strategic Alliance and to coordinate the development and implementation of twinning arrangements

Meeting Coordinators

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