

COUNTER-DISASTER/EMERGENCY PLANNING IN TASMANIA*

John G. Lunn

State Emergency Service of Tasmania
State Emergency Service
83 Melville Street
Hobart Tasmania 7000 Australia

At the beginning of 1989, the Tasmania State Emergency Service, in collaboration with the Tasmania State Institute of Technology and the Natural Disasters Organization through the Australian Counter Disaster College, commenced the first part of an intended Diploma in Emergency Management. The focus of this first part has been Counter Disaster/Emergency Planning and the results have been outstanding, with the work being produced by the students already having a significant positive impact on the community Statewide. We believe that this has been such a significant development that we should share some of its origins and development with other people who have similar needs.

HISTORY

During the Christmas period of 1974, the City of Darwin was devastated by Cyclone Tracy. Early in the new year in 1975, the bridge across the River Derwent, which linked the two halves of the City of Hobart, was hit by a ship and the bridge collapsed. These

* Editor's note: In the interest of broadening reader awareness of developments in emergency management, from time-to-time the *Journal* includes items submitted by practitioners regarding field and training experiences. These are informational only; inclusion does not constitute endorsement or evaluation.

and other events provided impetus to the changing emphasis of the Emergency Service Organization from a civil defense organization coping with the threat of possible hostilities, to assisting with the management of natural and man-made disasters.

In 1976 the Tasmanian Government's initiatives were formalized when state Parliament passed the Emergency Services Act. The Act established a counter-disaster organization--the State Emergency Service, which has as its overall role, the development and maintenance of total community counter-disaster/emergency preparedness throughout Tasmania. The Act also clearly described the roles and responsibilities of Local Government. The Act specifies that each municipality shall prepare a counter-disaster plan to institute counter-disaster measures within its area. Over the ensuing 12 years, considerable time and effort had been invested in telling people **what** their responsibilities were for planning. For many reasons there had been very limited success in terms of quality and quantity of plans produced.

"Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." This Chinese proverb and the philosophy it espouses were the keys to achieving meaningful counter-disaster/emergency plans throughout the communities in Tasmania. In 1988 it was recognized that there existed a clear need to show people how to plan. For many years community leaders had been reminded of their responsibilities for planning; everyone kept telling them **what** to do but no one was showing them **how** to do it. The Deputy Director of the Tasmanian State Emergency Service directed that showing them **how** be given urgent priority. A course to provide necessary skills and knowledge for the production of counter-disaster/emergency plans was therefore devised.

COURSE RATIONALE

A number of precepts were developed:

- Plans had to be based on a hazard analysis;
- The processes that produce the plans must achieve the commitment of the community/enterprise the plans are designed to serve;
- A plan is a record of the commitment of people and/or organizations to meet their community's or

organization's needs specified in the hazard analysis. This record details the responsibilities and actions taken to meet these needs.

- The course must be designed for the use of and be conducted by the State Emergency Service Regional Officers, so that it was seen by all concerned as a line management activity, not a training intervention;
- The learning be divided into three modules to facilitate on-the-job application of the skills;
- Each module will be separated by three or four months;
- Progression from one module to the next was dependent on the completion to the required standard of the on-the-job assignment;
- The assessment of the assignments is to be done by internationally credible assessors;
- To achieve a pass mark, the student must demonstrate in their assignment that they have applied all the fundamentals of the processes learned;
- There has to be a charge for the course so that the sponsoring organization will value what it is getting and will look for a return on their investment;
- The course will be residential.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE COURSE

At the end of the course the participants will have the skills and knowledge to be able to produce counter-disaster/emergency plans for their locations, which are realistic, practical and have the commitment of the community which they serve. The Federal Government quickly recognized the value of this activity and are meeting all the travel and accommodation costs of the students.

The specific objectives of each module are:

Module One: Hazard Analysis

At the end of this module, the participants will have the skills and knowledge to produce a hazard analysis for the community/enterprise that they serve.

The essential elements of the assignment are:

- list of identified hazards
- perception of risk
- specification of the hazard characteristics
- specification of the community characteristics
- interaction consequences of the hazards and the community
- hazard prioritization
- risk mapping
- recommendations
- indication of the involvement/consultation of appropriate people at all stages.

Module Two: Planning

At the end of this module, the participants will have the skills and knowledge to produce an emergency management plan for their community or enterprise.

The essential elements of the assignment are:

- hazard reporting
- review of the hazard analysis/planning committee
- resource needs described
- available resources specified
- needs/resources variation listed
- ratification of conclusions
- responsibilities defined
- documentation

Module Three: Standard Operating Procedures

At the end of this module the participants will have the skills and knowledge to be able to develop standard operating procedures, define their relationship to counter-disaster/emergency plans, identify the training requirement and appropriate training and write an exercise to test their plan and standard operating procedures.

The essential elements of the assignment are:

- an example of a standard operating procedure for one of the organizations featured in their plan
- an example of a training requirement for an individual/organization in their plan
- an exercise to test an aspect of an organization's responsibilities

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

The course was designed to meet the specific needs of the following positions:

- Local coordinators of the State Emergency Service who are designated Executive Officers of the Local Government Counter-Disaster/Emergency Planning Committees;
- Senior officers of the Emergency Services, police, fire, ambulance;
- Senior managers from the State Service or private enterprise who are considered to need these skills because of their functions.

Priority was therefore given to those applicants who have current responsibilities for the production of counter-disaster/emergency plans.

CONCLUSIONS

There will be much debate about the accuracy of the content of the course, and we are still refining it ourselves. But we are convinced that the processes are correct and this conviction is being vindicated by the results. The 60 places on the course were sought by over 100 people. Fifty-eight people actually took the places for which they had paid. Fifty-one people produced satisfactory results from Module One, 45 from Module Two and we expect that 40 will graduate on 21 December 1989.

As a result of their conclusions, four students alone have caused their organizations to invest \$3 million in hazard management and emergency planning. We believe that again the demand for next

year's course is going to far exceed the number of places that we are making available. The change in the attitudes and behaviour of Tasmania towards counter-disaster/emergency planning is already apparent throughout the State.