

5. Tactics: your choice

The list of tactics that can be employed to take your message to the community is almost endless, limited only by your imagination and resources. However, each has positive and negative aspects, and in different situations some are simply more suitable than others.

The right tactic is one that best meets the needs of your target audience, which might be made up of people with specific communication needs (eg non-English speakers, people with disabilities, or people in remote areas). Meeting those needs must be the basis of your decision as to which tactic is most appropriate. Target audience profiles will be derived from your surveys and from ABS population profiles (see Section 3, Step 2, 'Planning a communication campaign').

Emergency management organisations have found many clever and innovative ways to take awareness messages to the community and to reinforce messages through education and active community involvement. The most successful campaigns combine several tactics which best suit their organisation and program objectives, and include:

- print and electronic publications
- give-aways
- face-to-face communication
- special events
- active community participation
- education, and
- co-operation with other community members and organisations.

Practical advice on different tactics

Comprehensive campaigns use many tactics

Public awareness and education is a key component of a coordinated management strategy being undertaken in New South Wales by State and local governments and the local community to ensure the safety and security of people living on the Hawkesbury Nepean floodplain. The 24 agencies involved are managed by the NSW State Emergency Service.

It is an excellent example of a comprehensive communications program that incorporates a combination of various tactics targeted at different audiences with the aim of

- Raising awareness of flood risk and how to become prepared via a social marketing campaign – an approach outlined in a paper A social framework for the development of effective public awareness campaigns, presented at the Australian Disaster Conference 1999 in Canberra. The campaign has identified clear simple messages and follows a commercial approach to encouraging people to 'buy' a product or behaviour.
- Developing 'FloodSmart' communities, through household information kits, flood plans, school and 'FloodSmart' resources, evacuation drills and a mobile display vehicle.
- Promoting the management strategy to residents, staff, community leaders and other stakeholders.
- Building community confidence in the local emergency services by clearly explaining their role and promoting corporate identity.

- Ensuring that systems are in place to communicate flood warnings, through telecommunications and media networks, sirens, door knocking, and the Internet
- Developing an information management strategy, involving an SES media policy, media plans, and strategies for cooperation and coordination across agencies
- Implementing a council/resident/business communication project to explain their specific risk and their local council's policies in relation to flooding
- Developing a recovery communication plan to inform people what services and resources are available to address such issues as welfare, repairs to homes and buildings, and coordination of evacuees to reunite

Print and electronic publications

Brochures, booklets and posters

Brochures come in all shapes, sizes and qualities and allow you to present much information in a small 'handy' size, a cost benefit coming with large print runs. The most important part of any brochure process is distribution. It is important to map distribution so brochures are delivered directly to the target audience. Producing a brochure might mean that an updated mailing list has to be compiled — by someone. Consider your resources.

There is a clear swing away from the wholesale distribution of brochures, booklets and information through the mail. Emergency management agencies are more likely to hand out material at front of building doorsteps, at agricultural shows and field days, and at shopping centre displays.

Pluses for brochures are that they are inexpensive, particularly for large print runs, and

they have a large range of uses. On the minus side, to achieve efficient and effective distribution, brochures can be a headache, and the material can date very quickly (ensure a production date is on all material).

The American Red Cross conducted intensive research into the role of brochures in community education campaigns. It found that while short attention-grabbing brochures and longer information-rich brochures were both effective, they both caused confusion if distributed to the same people at the same time.

The study also found that when fewer than three printed items were distributed at public presentations, it was more likely that people would keep the materials they had been given. When given four or more pieces of printed material, fewer than 12 per cent kept them, compared to the 44 per cent who kept two or three pieces.

A six-month follow-up of 4500 people who attended presentations after receiving printed material showed that only three per cent could recall the follow-up plan outlined in that material. Of the 3480 people who received material after the presentation, 31 per cent could describe it.

Brochures can cost from 10 cents each, to 80 cents each for a full-colour version. Work out how long you want the brochure to stay in circulation. Make sure all the information is current for that period (especially contact names and telephone numbers). Ensure its contents are both clear and able to be understood by the target audience. The language style and design of a brochure for children under 16 will differ markedly from one for those people over 65 years.

Test the text on people outside your organisation to ensure that what they understand is what you are saying. In deciding the size and shape of a brochure to be used, define how you want people

to use it. If you want it put in a brochure rack, a third A4 size that sits vertically may be best. If you want people to file it, an A4 size that fits flat into filing systems may be better. The third A4 size fits better in letterboxes and in DL size envelopes for mailing.

- EMA is an important partner in awareness and education campaigns for every emergency management organisation in Australia and for the education system. Its publications and information sources, including action guides, pamphlets, booklets, posters and a database of disasters and significant hazard events are invaluable resources. They have been developed in consultation with all States and Territories and hazard experts. These form the foundation of disaster awareness campaigns from Darwin to Hobart. While States or Territories still produce localised material, such as brochures on flooding in Katherine, storm surge in Cairns, fires in country Victoria or Western Australia, the EMA material provides generic Australia-wide advice on these hazards.
- In Western Australia, brochures in the hands of local SES organisations is sound distribution policy. While the coordination of the community awareness task is the responsibility of one person, it is a physical impossibility for that person to visit all areas. The focus is on local SES units getting members out into the community to distribute the message. They have the local contacts, and also know where the material should be going. An important point is that local people are more inclined to take notice of other 'locals'.
- In northern Australia, emergency services have formed partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander radio networks that can carry awareness messages strongly and widely to communities. The approach has been to meet with radio program producers and presenters to discuss brochures and other material so that they can interpret the information for their listeners.

- Make use of the Telephone Interpreter Service — information in your brochure could be made available in 22 different languages, just call 131 450 for further information on the translation and interpreter service.

Flyers

Flyers are cheaper than brochures, usually of one sheet and in one or two colours. They can be photocopied on coloured paper to stand out. Because they are cheap to print they are used most often for mass distribution. They can be handed out at shows and exhibitions, used to letterbox an entire town, and given to community organisations to hand to members. They are essentially disposable, and are better suited to publicising events than providing information you want retained for, say, more than a week. One way to encourage people to read and act on a flyer is to include a competition where a tear-off form is completed and returned.

The advantage of flyers is that they are cheap to produce, but they may be perceived as a 'throwaway' item, so they need strong design impact.

- Think imaginatively about places to distribute your flyers depending on your target audience — perhaps on stairs at the local cinema, in lifts in government buildings, or at significant sporting events in your region.

Letterboxing and mailouts

Placing your material, such as a brochure, flyer or letter, directly into a household letterbox is a cost-effective means of communication. Despite the 'junk mail' tag, your material will have an impact as long as it is designed to grab householder attention and not be thrown out. Personalise the material so that it appeals specifically to residents in that suburb, town or area.

Your organisation's letter, for example, might read 'Smithtown (the street, town, suburb or area) needs to ready itself for the cyclone season' Material for each distinct area can be personalised The cost of producing it will depend on size and quality, but it can be distributed at no cost using people in your organisation to walk the area Other community organisations (particularly youth groups such as Scouts and Little Athletics Clubs) may be willing to deliver for you Letterboxing allows for localised information, but distribution on a large scale can be difficult

Mailouts reach people's letterboxes indirectly While it is possible to send letters to 'The Householder', you may achieve better results by personalising your mail

- Either way, there are likely to be quite substantial postage and handling charges There may also be significant resources involved in buying or setting up and maintaining mailing lists

Inserts in newsletters and newspapers

A useful tactic is to use local newspapers, newsletters and even shoppers' catalogues to carry your message as an insert Newspapers charge an insert fee, which is still usually less than the postage and handling costs to send out the material separately by mail The insert has the advantage of picking up an established distribution network and credibility of the host publication A minus is that an insert competes directly with other inserts in same publication.

- Many local councils use inserts in other mailouts, such as rates notices, to disseminate important community information

Advertising

Advertising is sometimes the only way to guarantee getting your message in front of a large

number of people Before you advertise, look for sponsorship and/or subsidies Radio, television and print media outlets may consider a reduced 'community service' rate or may offer you free airtime or space as a community service announcement

Sponsors are often interested in a role in advertising campaigns because they are guaranteed exposure in the advertisements, *along the lines of 'this community service announcement has been brought to you by Bill Brown Motors'*

Advertising guarantees the delivery of your message, but can be expensive Costs can be minimised by asking media and local organisations to print, broadcast or display your messages as a form of in-kind sponsorship

- Community Service Announcements have been used very effectively by emergency management organisations and have the potential to reach a very wide audience. More information about working effectively with the media is included in the next chapter
- Use commercial products to advertise your message, such as milk cartons, beer coasters at the local licensed club, or mudflaps of local trucks and trailers.

Using the Internet, CDs and other new technology

The World Wide Web provides a great opportunity to disseminate information on conditions and hazards in your area With expert help (perhaps from a team volunteer), establishing a web site and linking it to sites operated by EMA and State and Territory emergency management organisations is simple Before launching information on the Web, check that your organisation has the authority to disseminate that information You must ensure that the information is kept up to date A return E-mail function can provide feedback

A definite plus is that this approach is free to access, although it will take some expertise and effort to establish and maintain the site. A minus is that it is almost impossible to tell whether your target audience is making use of the information you have made available (not just visiting the site) unless you have a return E-mail function.

- Many emergency management organisations are providing prevention and preparedness information via the Internet. There are also local and global initiatives to provide real-time information on disasters occurring around the world. Most of these link to each other to make it easier for people to find. The EMA Homepage has an extensive links page <http://www.ema.gov.au>

Awareness material and education resources can be placed on an interactive CD that allows people and organisations to tailor material for their needs

- The Federal Emergency Management Agency in USA produces a CD as a Disaster Preparedness and Mitigation Library. It is both a 'how to' for campaigns and sponsorships, and a collection of brochures, fact sheets and education material relating to hazards
- The Newcastle City Council used a CD to store the vast amount of newspaper articles, technical reports, songs, photographs and other information sources they collected after the earthquake in 1989.
- A number of educational CDs are now available that explore aspects of disaster preparedness and include interactive sections where students can test their knowledge and decision-making and problem-solving skills
- Computer simulation techniques can be used to present past or predicted disasters visually on screen or paper, making them seem more 'real'. The application of visual technology can turn the data into compelling viewing and can be used to model and demonstrate the benefits of implementing mitigation strategies

- Many research institutions, such as the CSIRO and Macquarie University, have data that allows the prediction and re-creation of the effects of natural hazards, including earthquakes and bushfires
- Televised animation of the Thredbo landslide disaster in 1997 and coverage of the Papua New Guinea tsunami in July 1988 were excellent examples of the media's ability to portray graphically the effects of hazards on communities

Give-aways

Fridge magnets, caps, T-shirts, coffee cups, stickers and other promotional products are used successfully in the corporate sector to reinforce messages, such as services provided, contact names and phone numbers, and to reward clients and customers

Although cost may inhibit the use of give-aways in the community service sector, some items, such as a 50 cent flat fridge magnet with an emergency service number and a sponsor's name, may represent good value. Pluses are that the items have a long life-span and provide prominent identity. On the minus side, give-aways are often costly to produce.

Competitions work well if they are well targeted, relevant to the audience, and heavily promoted. Prizes can often be sourced as a form of in-kind sponsorship from public and private sector organisations.

- The Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) developed a scheme to provide Torres Strait Islanders with a small-boat survival kit that has become the focus of an awareness campaign about safety at sea. Many islanders who island-hopped in small aluminium dinghies were known to run out of fuel. Their small boats carried no locating devices, and AMSA often faced the task of finding a small boat in a large expanse of sea. The AMSA kits, containing an EPIRB beacon, signals, rations and a V-sheet

(a groundsheet with a black V on an orange background to be used as a distress signal), are available on loan from local police stations

Face-to-face communication

Doorknocking and Street Meetings

Face-to-face communication is the most effective means of reaching people, particularly with preparedness information. Doorknocking a suburb, talking to people about hazard awareness and giving them preparedness information is the most effective way to influence them. You are able to discuss what they can do in their own home, in their street, in their suburb—a personalised message. Unfortunately, doorknocking is resource-intensive and requires a large number of people.

It takes much time and many volunteers to be effective across a community. A team of 10 might take a day to knock on 600 doors and talk to around 300 households. One solution is to be very selective in doorknock campaigns, perhaps choosing only those areas with specific and predictable hazard risk (ie fires or floods) or, say, two houses in every street, asking each household contacted to share the information with the neighbours.

- The Tasmanian Fire Service focused efforts on preparing people to defend their houses in bushfire. In fire-prone areas, fire service officers visited houses, handed out brochures, and discussed the choices people need to make in the event of bushfire. In severe fires in 1997–98 seven houses only were lost, mainly because well-prepared householders defended their homes. A post-fire evaluation showed that a prime reason people stayed to protect their houses was that they felt they finally had the information to do it—they felt secure in their knowledge, and capable of defending their houses.
- In Victoria, in what is generally regarded as one of the most successful community awareness campaigns, the Country Fire Authority (CFA)

took bushfire awareness to the streets in a campaign called Bushfire Blitz. About 80 community consultants and 250 local CFA brigades convened 1400 street meetings in high-risk suburbs and towns over two months during the 1997–98 summer. Approximately 32 000 people attended to hear CFA officers and community consultants talk about the real risks to their streets, and what they, the residents, could do to protect themselves.

Bushfire Blitz was a milestone in the movement of responsibility to protect homes from the CFA to residents. Community consultants provided information on how people could develop survival plans in the event of major fires. They explained that while CFA would be there to fight fires, the community could take action now to reduce the impact of fire and improve people's chances of survival. Bushfire Blitz aimed to mobilise communities to reduce that summer's bushfire risk, and save lives and property. One Mt Martha resident commented that he had learnt more in two hours about bushfires than he had in living in what he now regarded as a high-risk area.

While the campaign cost \$400 000, large by Australia's emergency management budget standards, it is considered that many millions of dollars may have been saved in lost property and in the quick response to fires. In house-by-house comparisons, the CFA was able to show that the campaign had directly influenced residents to prepare for fires. In a particularly high-risk season, losses were minimal and residents were 'calm and self-assured' about their ability to cope with fires—a dramatic change from the disastrous fires of previous years.

One factor that sets *Bushfire Blitz* apart from other campaigns was that it was built on market research in the at-risk suburbs after the 1997 bushfires. Research showed, not unexpectedly, that people wanted information delivered face-to-face.

Formal Community Meetings

Calling people together to talk about hazard awareness is a conventional and traditional means of communication. There are four keys to holding a successful and well-attended meeting. Pluses associated with meetings provide the opportunity to talk directly to people, to explain the situation, and to answer questions. On the minus side, unless a meeting is planned to be a 'not to be missed' event, it may not attract enough people to warrant the cost and effort involved.

1. Ensure that the meeting is based on community needs and preferences. An afternoon meeting at which children are welcome and childcare provided might be a better proposal than an evening meeting. A series of small meetings in the homes of committee members might be preferable to a large meeting.

2. Promote the meeting. Use every promotional device at your disposal — posters and flyers, advertisements, word of mouth and media coverage — to ensure that everyone in the community knows about the meeting. Just placing a small advertisement in the local newspaper may not do the job, unless the issue is extremely topical.

3. Make the meeting active. Provide equipment, maps, photographs of past disasters, samples, artefacts that people can look at, touch, and use. Make the subject real by acting it out — have people play roles such as rescuers, media spokespersons, older people facing a violent storm. Role-playing and re-enactments help people understand the problems and the solutions.

4. Make the meeting interactive. Ask people to participate in discussion, break-up the participants into small groups to talk about different aspects of the problem. Give them a role in the meeting, rather than talking at them.

Many local organisations hold regular meetings, and it may make sense to take your message to

another organisation's meeting rather than stage your own. This approach may require representation at many meetings, but may be more effective in reaching a wider range of people.

- The South Australian Fire Service has used a community group approach to community awareness, inviting 40 community representatives to informal meetings to discuss disaster preparedness. Those representatives take the information to their respective constituencies.

An American Red Cross study found that best results in terms of behaviour change came from matching images and messages in public presentations. For example, if you are explaining the importance of covering windows before a cyclone, the images used should include those of people taping windows.

Shopping centre displays

Shopping centres are great places to reach a cross-section of the community. Not all the people in your target audience will visit shopping centres, but many will — say those who shop at least once a week. However, you need to put together a display that will stop people in their tracks — one to attract attention and encourage people to stop, look at it, listen to your representative, and prompt questions.

Use bright, colourful and simple posters and signage, large-scale photographs and drawings (preferably of local scenes and events that people recognise), plenty of equipment and items of interest such as corrugated iron sheets bent and twisted in the last storm, bottles of wine that survived two weeks under floodwater — these become talking points of the display, which must be staffed at all times and have information material available for people to take away.

Shopping centres are competitive environments, the retailers all competing for shopper attention. Your display must be up to their standards — you

are doing precisely the same thing – trying to sell a message or behaviour change. Promote the display through the media and in the shopping centre itself. Plan three or four different locations for the display – other shopping centres, schools and colleges, the staff canteen at a local factory, etc. The plus in this environment is that it provides face-to-face interaction with the community. The minus is that the display must be done well – unless it is interesting, informative and attractive, people may ignore your efforts.

- In Queensland, a storm surge awareness campaign used a combination of tactics featuring a pelican, *Stormin' Norman*. The campaign targeted the 'influencers' in families, the mothers, carers and children, as better able to retain information and take action at home. A display was taken to shopping centres with a videotape featuring *Stormin' Norman*, brochures, and stickers and balloons for kids, and emergency service representatives available to talk with the community face-to-face. The information was based on scientific research by the Bureau of Meteorology and others into storm surges.

Displays at agricultural field days, trade shows

Like retailers in shopping malls, exhibitors at all other shows and exhibitions are competing for visitor attention. If you are planning an exhibit, make sure you mount a high-quality display of interest to the people attending that exhibition. Be clear on what you want to achieve from exhibiting, such as more volunteers for the organisation, donations or information distribution. Be certain the display is 'talking' to its target audience. Organisers of trade shows and exhibitions usually have an accurate profile of people who will attend (or have attended) their events. A holiday and travel exhibition, for example, might be aimed at travellers aged over 40, while a car show might be aimed at car-owners under 35.

Once again, the plus is that this method provides face-to-face interaction with the community. The minus side of such events is a competitive environment. The display must be of quality and interest to match other exhibits, and the overall target audience for the exhibition or trade fair should match yours.

- The Northern Territory Emergency Service (NTES) locks into the country show circuit and mounts displays at Alice Springs, Darwin and Katherine. Localised material on floods and cyclones is handed out with EMA *Action Guides*. The NTES also uses the visits to deliver information material to police stations in the area, calling also on local media with copies of cyclone and flood awareness material which the media then promote.

Special events

Develop community campaigns to coincide with anniversaries of significant disasters. Anniversaries, in particular, provide a focus for a campaign and an opportunity to reflect on the previous event while reminding the community and newcomers of the likelihood that a similar or worse event could happen in the future. These are well-suited to floods, where there is a very good chance of repeat events.

- The Hunter Catchment Management Trust saw the 40th anniversary of the 1955 Hunter River floods as an opportunity to increase community appreciation of current flood risk and emergency management procedures. Anniversary events included a procession, an exhibition of flood photographs and memorabilia, street theatre, bus tours of the floodplains, talks on how to reduce damage from floods, an explanation of legal aspects associated with insurance claims, and how mitigation systems benefit the community. Publicity extended across radio, television and print media and included a television documentary. The *Maitland Mercury* newspaper published a 12-page flood

supplement, and for the first time in its history sold out. More than 15 000 people attended exhibitions at Maitland, while several thousand turned out at Singleton and Morpeth.¹ A video of the anniversary has been produced.

You can also ride on the back of another event, such as the International Year of the Volunteer 2001, World Environment Day or Senior Citizens' Week. This helps to attract the attention of both the media and the target audience you have identified.

- The fire services of Western Australia have successfully used this tactic to promote smoke alarms and home fire evacuations to senior citizens within the community.
- Many States and Territories concentrate awareness-raising activities during a particular week, such as Fire Awareness Week and SES Week.

Active community participation

In a comprehensive examination of community response, the Victorian SES Management Community Awareness Committee's Sunbury Project concluded that the community must be involved if the levels of individual and corporate awareness are to increase to a productive level where awareness leads to change.

- *Community Fireguard* is a Victorian community education program (CFA) designed to reduce loss of life and property to bushfire. Launched in February 1993, 10 years after the disastrous Ash Wednesday fires, the program has hundreds of registered groups across the State — most in bushfire-prone areas. CFA rationale for the program is that many people may have to face a fire without the support of CFA, which cannot provide every person and home with individual protection during a major fire. The program recognises and reinforces that bushfires are survivable as long as communities take responsibility for their own fire safety.

Community Fireguard is made up of small groups, existing resident groups, small groups of neighbours in high fire-threat areas, and conservation groups such as Landcare that are interested in reducing fire threat and effects. Working together, with the support of the CFA and facilitators, the groups develop simple and inexpensive strategies, effective in saving lives and homes. The program is based on the exchange of information on fire-preparedness — everything from evacuation and ember-proofing a house, to what to do with family pets, including fish, frogs and ferrets.

- *The NSW Rural Fire Service* uses a similar approach, and badges all its educational and awareness material Fireguard. The rationale for establishing Fireguard and the message to householders is: *'The NSW Rural Fire Service may not always be able to provide you and your home with protection from major fires. Major fires are survivable, however, provided you develop and implement survival strategies. This is best achieved by working with your neighbours in a local Community Fireguard Group.'*
- Disaster awareness murals use public space, provide large eye-catching displays and an outlet for local artists and schools, and may help prevent vandalism and graffiti.
- Try community theatre groups and low-budget videos using local talent to carry awareness messages. Those involved in writing the scripts and acting in the production are likely to be much better informed about the hazard than before they started. They can then spread the word to others. Presentations can often be made at school assemblies, clubs, parents and teacher and other community meetings to save on venue hire and promotion costs.
- Develop school-based or organisation-based risk assessments of your local area. This could involve a historical assessment based on newspaper searches and interviews with long-

¹ The campaign strategy is outlined in Flood '95 by Glenn Evans, CEO Hunter Trust, which was presented at the 36th Floodplain Management Conference at Grafton on 14 May 1996.

time residents and an examination of the current level of preparedness of both the emergency services and the community itself. A public assessment of this nature can increase understanding of those involved in the process, encourages ownership of the results and may provide maximum exposure to other residents and to the media.

- At Charleville in Queensland, a combined SES and Department of Emergency Services effort had the community negotiate the level of acceptable risk for natural disasters, and then prepare for that level of risk.

Education

Targeting schools for long-term change

Community organisations have the opportunity to add to local interpretation to curriculum-based teaching resources already being used in schools. Emergencies and disasters are popular topics with students and can be readily adapted to meet teaching requirements in subjects such as geography, science, health and physical education, English and maths. Targeting school students can encourage long-term shifts in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour in relation to hazards and can transfer over time to the adult population. Emergency management content can be used to teach generic life-long skills such as risk management, decision-making and problem-solving.

Talk to schools about how your organisation can encourage students to think about preparedness for emergencies. It could be a classroom talk, perhaps a member of your organisation talking about disaster experience, a display, or a flyer or brochure distributed to the children and their parents. There is a demand for school visits by emergency management organisations as long as the information imparted and the arranged visit fit the curriculum.

The school information network can also be used by your organisations to distribute messages to the community. Through classroom assignment and newsletters, students take home the information to their families.

While targeting schools can be an effective way to disseminate information to parents and children in a receptive learning environment and may promote long-term risk reduction, such work takes time, effort and acceptance of the school community.

- Many quality teaching resources have been produced by EMA, AGSO and other government agencies, State/Territory emergency management organisations and teacher associations as well as commercial publishers. Information about many of these is available via the EMA Homepage www.ema.gov.au and in the EMA brochure: Free and Low-Cost Disaster Education Resources for Schools.

- A survey of South Australian schools of the effectiveness of Project Fireguard found that more than half the teachers interviewed said they would be interested in a school visit by the local fire service. The Project Fireguard kit, which teaches fire, burn and scald safety, was described as being well-presented, appropriate and of good value, and was used in a range of subjects and school years. Only 46 per cent of those interviewed believed they were getting all the information needed on fire safety, burns and scalds, and that a visit by the local fire service was important in motivating them to use the kit.

- The Western Australian Fire and Rescue Service and other State and Territory fire services have developed school education programs that are delivered by firefighters to primary school students as part of their fire prevention activities.

Life-long learning

The NSW Rural Fire Service found a smart way to inform new arrivals from overseas about fire risk. They negotiated the inclusion of fire awareness material in the content of English language classes. As a result, English students practised their language skills on fire-related topics.

- The NSW Rural Fire Service also provides staff and volunteers with a public education resources folder that contains a copy of available awareness and education material - including 32 fact sheets on fires.

Cooperation with other community members and organisations

State and Territory fire and emergency management organisations rely on the services of many thousands of volunteers for both their response capability and to take awareness messages to the community, a job they do exceptionally well. A whole range of programs, from distributing brochures and staffing displays at the local shopping mall to active community participation programs such as Community Fireguard, depends on this alliance.

- Make use of retired or semi-retired over-55 people in the community as activists in community awareness campaigns. They could take on schools visits, liaison with community organisations, and the distribution of print material. Indicators in several States and Territories are that the increasing and active over-55s are enthusiastic about involvement in community education programs. Some services use retired members for school visits, but in the main these are voluntary individual programs, not a concerted effort to marshal seniors' efforts.
- Make greater use of the ability of scientists and researchers to write articles, provide local information and to present to groups on the likely effects of natural hazards. Topics should

be current, relevant and of interest to the target audience, such as the impacts of changing weather patterns, the effects of El Niño, ancient flood heights in inland rivers or estimation of potential losses to households, businesses, industry and the community in general.

- Initiate partnerships with industry-based organisations (eg saw millers, miners, farmers, lawyers and engineers) that can provide advice and may be willing to take relevant awareness messages to their members. Off the Queensland coast, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) used fishermen's cooperatives to distribute copies of a videotape on sea safety. The cooperatives had told AMSA that fishing trawler helmsmen spent hours watching videotapes in the trawler wheelhouses — so AMSA made a tape specifically for them.
- A group of Rotarians in Queensland with strong emergency management connections via the Centre for Earthquake Research in Australia decided to put disaster awareness on the Rotary agenda of interests. They formed a Disaster Awareness Advisory Team (DAAT), and put together a roadshow comprising a speaker, slides, flyers, posters and brochures customised for local audiences. It included a list of natural disasters that had occurred in the Rotary region the team was visiting. Funding was obtained to print the disaster list using statistics from EMA's database. In a Rotary District stretching from the Brisbane River north to Gympie and west to Kingaroy, the three-year program has had direct effects on the way Rotarians think about and act in natural disasters. The DAAT team is now working with the Queensland Police Service to prepare guidelines for Rotarians to follow in responding in natural disasters.
- State and Territory Ministers, local Mayors and Shire Presidents have at times been used with great success to promote campaigns and to spread awareness messages.

- In the Australian Capital Territory, the relevant Minister joined emergency service personnel to doorknock suburbs and hand out material on fire threat. They covered 3000 homes in a week. Not that the Minister visited them all, but his involvement increased the impact of the message on householders and produced strong media coverage. The NSW SES has provided country mayors with flood and storm awareness material, including recently completed flood plans, to use in regular radio broadcasts. In Queensland, storm surge programs have featured local Mayors and prominent council spokespersons to launch regional campaigns.

Radio, television and print media networks can also be powerful allies, especially if you are able to gain their interest and can negotiate their in-kind support. Specific examples and tips are outlined in the next chapter.