



OPERATIONAL CAPABILITY FRAMEWORK

The Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES) has not had clearly defined benchmarks to determine the justification for establishing and resourcing of VICSES Units which has hampered funding submissions and effective operational preparedness. The VICSES Operational Capability Framework (OCF) was developed to establish a consistent and logical framework for the creation of strategic resource allocation plans.

OCF is based on a risk assessment process combined with an objective assessment of the physical and human resources required for each Unit, and the Units capacity to support other Units at Regional and State levels. A set of 10 Emergency Response Activity Standards (ERAS) were derived from control and support roles identified in the VICSES Act and the Emergency Management Manual Victoria (EMMV) and then consolidated based on the skilling and physical resources required for each activity.

The application of the OCF (and the ERAS) is providing a way of determining and defining:

- The operational role(s) for each VICSES Unit based on the assessed risks within their community, neighbouring communities and State.
- The minimum number of members for the VICSES Unit to perform their identified roles.
- The training, and physical resources needed for each Unit to perform their identified roles.
- The facilities for training and housing of equipment and vehicles.

Application of the OCF provides a tool that can be used to define the necessary resources and funding for each Unit. In 2006 all Units were profiled against the ERAS, producing a comprehensive dataset used to successfully secure significant additional government funding through the Output Price Review completed in 2007.

With the support of VICSES, Emergency Management Queensland (EMQ) / SES have also now adopted OCF and they are in the process of implementing it.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE ACTIVITY STANDARDS (ERAS)

What is ERAS?

ERAS is a methodology for developing benchmarks for the establishment of a consistent and logical framework for the creation of on going provision of resources and support for VICSES Units, based on a risk assessment process.

The ERAS framework will provide a template for making an objective assessment of the physical and human resource requirements to support the delivery of VICSES services within local communities, and their capacity to support other Units at both the Region and State level.

Emergency Response Activity Standards (ERAS) in a nutshell is “What each Unit needs to effectively respond to emergencies for which it has been tasked.”

Why do we need it?

There has been discussion for many years on some form of accreditation process for all the roles that VICSES Units perform. If, for example, the Service expects Unit X to carry out the role of providing "land search"; what does that mean? What does it mean in terms of membership, training, equipment, activation etc.? How can anyone, the Unit membership included, determine if they are performing a particular role to a satisfactory level if no-one has defined what that level is?

This leads to the question of whether the Service provides the same equipment to all Units, irrespective of their roles? Obviously not, and there are plenty examples of this, such as the issue of boats, but the way of determining the roles and the resources provided needs a more logical approach.

Benefits

The application of the ERAS framework within VICSES will provide a logical and sound basis upon which to justify or substantiate the allocation of resources to Units throughout the State. This provides the basis for supporting the development of business cases for funding our resource requirements.

The application of ERAS provides a way of determining and defining:

- The operational role(s) for each SES Unit based on the assessed risks within their community, neighbouring communities and State.
- The minimum number of members for the SES Unit to perform their identified roles, and
- The training, and physical resources needed for each Unit to perform their identified roles.
- The facilities for training and housing of equipment and vehicles.

WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE VICSES UNITS INVOLVED IN?

The ten activities have been derived from control and support roles identified in the EMMV and consolidated based on skilling and physical resources required for the activity.

- Storm Response
- Flood Response
- Rescue (Road, Air, Industrial, Rail)
- Building Collapse
- Rope Rescue
- Land Search and Rescue
- Assist Fire/Police
- Lighting
- Traffic Management
- Incident Management

For example:

- Lighting has been listed as a separate activity even though lighting is utilised within most VICSES activities, given that different types of lighting equipment is required for various activities.
- Incident Management has been listed as a separately activity because as the nature and/or scale of the incident changes different skills and/or teams of people with skills are required.

HOW ARE EACH OF THE ACTIVITIES DEFINED?

Storm Response

- Building Damage, Trees Down, Flash Flooding (relate to water damage / flash flooding resulting from rain.

Flood Response

- relates to water rising from the ground as a result of streams, creeks, rivers and water storages
- Monitoring levels, evacuations and/or distribution of community safety information (eg: warnings), sandbagging, marine search and rescue, tsunamis.

Why is marine search and rescue included under Flood Response?

- VICPOL are the control agency for marine search and rescue.
- The primary purpose for which VICSES has boats is for response to Floods.
- Our Flood response capability also provides VICSES with capacity to assist VICPOL from time to time for marine search and rescue activities.
- The resources and training required for operating boats is common to both Flood Response and Marine Search and Rescue.
- They will continue to be reported separately (Post Op Forms) but are within the one activity for ERAS purposes given the alignment of resources and training required.

Rescue (Road, Air, Industrial, Rail)

- Accredited Units for Road, Air, Industrial and Rail Rescue

Building Collapse

- Earthquake, Landslip, Terrorist Attack, Stadium Collapse

Rope Rescue

- General Rope Rescue, Advanced Rope Rescue, Vertical Rescue

Land Search and Rescue

- Ambulance carry-outs, missing persons, evidence search, cave rescue, mass casualty

Assist Fire/Police

- Logistics Support, Transport of equipment and supplies, evacuations, distribution of community safety information

Lighting

- Lighting at Staging Areas, Crime Scene, Large Incidents (Factory Fires, Levy Banks in Flood, etc)

Traffic Management

- Road Closures and Diversions

Incident Management

- Within SES and supporting other agencies
- Incident Management Teams, Staging Area Management, Liaison Officer

HOW IS AN ERAS LEVEL ESTABLISHED FOR A VICSES UNIT?

A level relates to a UNIT and not individual members (eg: a Unit may be at level 0 but have a member or two trained to assist a neighbouring Unit). There are between two to three levels for each Activity.

Level 0

- Unit has no requirement to provide response for an activity (eg: road rescue because they are not accredited providers)
- Unit has no capability or capacity to provide teams for response for a given activity.
- Does not preclude individual members obtaining competencies for Regional capacity.

Levels 1, 2, 3

- A range of considerations are provided to guide the decision making for each level for a given activity.
- Risk Assessment
- History of Operations for a Unit
- Capability
- Capacity

Level with a 'PLUS' (+)

- Ability to provide a Regional/State capacity (ie: more teams) – but this must be considered with the capacity to train more personnel in the required competencies for that activity.
- Special Equipment (eg: Lighting Trailers)
- Extreme Risk identified
- To assign a “+” level to a Unit, one or more of the plus considerations must be met.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Municipal risk

- (Community Emergency Risk Management - CERM) utilises the Australian Standard for Risk Management AS/NZS 4360.
- The process highlights the risks within a municipality and treatment options.
- A municipality should have considered the risk of each type of emergency occurring within the municipality and detail the rationale for how the level of risk (low, medium, high, extreme) has been established.
- The Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP) then summarises these risks in a risk register.

Local risk factors

- Specific risk within a Units response area that may not be covered by the MEMP.

Community Expectations

- Relates to perceptions of community safety.
- Concerns about isolation, etc.

History of Operations for a Unit

- Review of Units operations over last five years.
- The risk identified by the CERM needs to be balanced against an average volume of calls (5 year snapshot) for that activity, as the volume of calls may relate to jobs tasked outside of the normal response area in support of other municipalities / Units.

Capacity

- Ability to maintain a team/multi-teams concurrently: dependant on membership and individual's availability (day and night).
- Ability to provide personnel for intra and inter Region/State response.

Capability

- The capability of a Unit will be dependant on;
- Its membership capacity to provide sufficient numbers of appropriately trained/competent people to enable the core and specialist activities defined for that Unit to be delivered 24/7.
- The available vehicles and equipment for delivery of the defined activities.

DEFINITIONS

What is a 'Team' defined as under ERAS?

Team Definition:

- Each standard has been based on a team of four with one vehicle or boat (where activity needs this).
- All team members will have General Rescue Fundamentals.
- One member will be trained as a Team Leader.
- Competencies for the other team members are dependant on nature of the activity.
- Minimum response requires at least a team of two members.

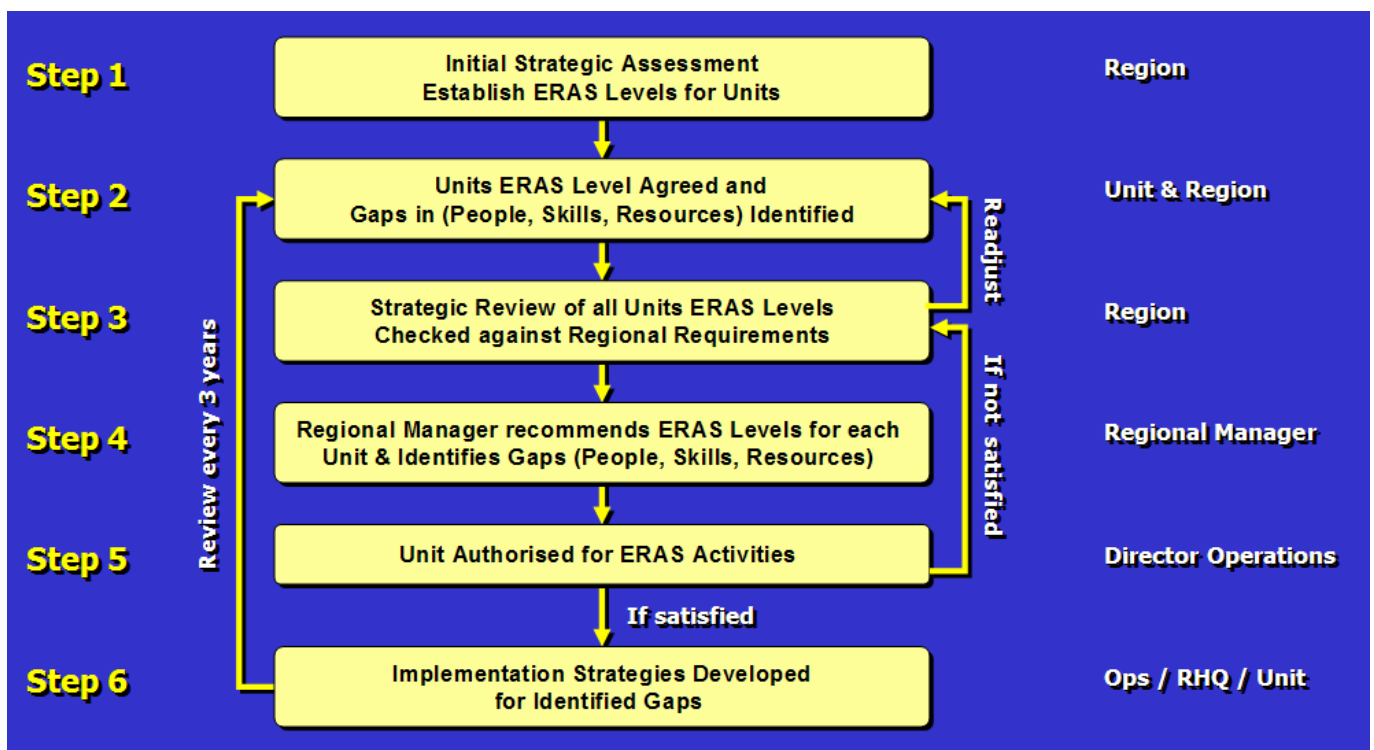
Does that mean we only train 4 people?

The consideration for "Members Trained" should take into account the minimum number of competent people for a Unit in a given activity rather than a scale of maximums. For example: 4 to 10 members trained establishes the minimum number of people required for a level 1 activity, however a Unit may choose to train 12 people but this factor alone does not result in them becoming a level 2 Unit.

Equipment Standards

There is a standard list of equipment that has been identified for each activity. In many standards there is a reference to a general list of equipment, which is detailed in the All Units Standard.

STEPS FOR ESTABLISHING ERAS LEVELS FOR A UNIT



Step 1: Initial Strategic Assessment and establishment of ERAS levels for each Unit

The Region will establish an initial ERAS level for each Unit for response activities that need to be provided strategically to meet the needs of communities across their Region of responsibility. This will be based on a regional assessment using guidelines provided by the Director of Operations.

Current Activity Levels

In defining the current activity levels the question should be asked, "Where is the Unit now?" There may be current limitations or gaps in the ability of the Unit to undertake the defined activities.

Preferred Activity Levels

In defining the preferred activity levels the question should be asked, "Where should the Unit level be, given the risk, capability and capacity considerations?"

Note: It is expected that the current activity level and preferred activity level for the majority of Units will be the same, with exceptions based on significant gaps in a Units capacity and/or capability.

Step 2: Each Unit ERAS level confirmed and Gaps identified.

Through a process of consultation between the Unit and the Region, the initial assessment determined by the Region will be confirmed or varied. The assessment will be based on a modified risk management process that is designed to take into account the following elements:-

- A risk assessment - likelihood and consequences of the identified activity occurring.
- The history of the Unit involvement relating to the identified emergency response activity.
- The capability of the Unit to achieve and maintain the relevant Standard of Emergency Response.
- Any other local issues relevant to the particular activity being assessed that may not have been considered by the Region.

Step 3: Review all confirmed ERAS levels against overall regional requirements.

Once all of the Unit assessments have been completed within a region the Regional Manager will conduct a review of the Emergency Response Activities, which have been identified for each Unit to ensure that any response requirements identified in the regional strategic assessment will be addressed.

To complete this review process the Regional Manager may also need to consult with Regional Managers from adjacent regions and have further discussions with Unit(s) with a view to re-adjusting one or more levels to ensure that the most efficient and effective delivery of emergency response is achieved for all identified activities.

Step 4: Regional Manager recommends ERAS for each Unit and identifies gaps (people, skills, resources)

The Regional Manager will provide an ERAS profile covering each of the activities that is proposed for each Unit within their Region and will include a gap analysis.

Step 5: Director of Operations will Authorise the ERAS activities for each Unit

The Director of Operations will review the proposed ERAS levels for each Unit and if satisfied will authorise the Unit for those activities.

The Unit Controller will be notified in writing of the Unit's Emergency Response Activities, and those of adjacent Units and any other Units that may contribute to an activity in their Unit's operational area.

Step 6: Implementation Strategies developed for identified gaps

Once ERAS levels are agreed for a Unit, a plan or series of plans (eg: recruitment program, procurement of equipment) will be put in place to address any gaps that were identified for a Unit to reach an ERAS level.

Where Units fall short of the required number of members to undertake the activities assigned to the Unit, recruitment strategies will need to be developed to lift the Unit's capability to the requirements of the standard

Where Units fall short of the required number of trained members, training strategies will need to be developed to lift the Unit's capability to the requirements of the standard.

Any identified deficiencies of equipment or vehicles required to meet the standard will be documented and submitted to State Operations for incorporation into the VICSES Operational Strategic Resource Plan.

Should a surplus of equipment result from the implementation of a Unit's Emergency Response Activity Standard; the equipment will remain located at the Unit concerned for a period of up to twelve months. Over that period a review of the particular risk relating to the surplus equipment will be conducted to ascertain if the original risk assessment was correct or if there needs to be an additional Emergency Response Activity Standard included in the Unit's capability. A plan will then be developed with the Unit that may see the item remain but not replaced over time or the equipment is re-assigned to another Unit with a defined need.

Establishment of a Unit Profile

In addition to ERAS levels, an ERAS profile will exist for each Unit that identifies key personnel, vehicles, unit location and facilities.

This information will be used to look at a number of location parameters that may affect the suitability of a Unit to undertake an activity. Without quantifying them, they include:

- Proximity to adjoining Units
- Categories and roles of adjoining Units.
- The geography of the area, and hence,
- Response times of home and adjoining Units to particular risk areas.

CONCLUSION

The OCF, incorporating ERAS, provides a logical and simple framework upon which to base resource planning and allocation decisions. The process provides clarity and transparency, both internally and externally.