

BUSHFIRE COMMUNICATION PRODUCTS – A CASE FOR MANAGING KNOWLEDGE

Keith Toh¹ and Richard Philips¹

¹Centre for Sustainable Organisations and Work, RMIT University, Melbourne

Bushfire Safety Messages and Products

Communication products have been developed across individual States and Territories with collaboration and cross-pollination of ideas.

In collaboration with agencies, communication products have been collected across Australian States and Territories.

Communication products have also been collected during field work.



Development of key bushfire safety messages involves internal and cross-agency collaboration.

How valuable is this knowledge?

“So I did a bit of an environmental scan with all the other fire agencies around their publications and then we chose ours to be modelled around Tasmania’s” (Interview, Tasmania, 2011)

How do agencies find this knowledge?

There are significant costs involved in the production and distribution of Communication Products.

“We ... spent thousands and thousands of dollars sending out the brochure Prepare, Act, Survive..... this year we distributed another 20,000 fridge magnets.....” (Interview, Western Australia)

Which communication products and modes should we focus on?

Communication products contain intensive and complex information.

“....., this is a document that needs to be explained. You need to go through it with someone rather than just hand it to them.” (Interview, NSW Australia)

How are communication products best used?

There is a need for consistency in messages.

“You need to be really mindful of what you're sending Not saying this is the message this year and then the following message next year.” (Interview, Western Australia)

Can consistent version control and consistent messages be achieved?

Can we extend the knowledge “estate” beyond the agency boundaries, to include the public?

“..... bins were overflowing and piles of these brochures together with the normal junk mail....” (Interview, Western Australia)

What lessons may be learnt from about communication pathways?

There are lessons to be learnt from the target audience.

“I'll be honest with you I haven't read that catalogue that came out - the brochure. I sort of thought yes, this is good material to have and I filed it away....” (Interview, Victoria)

What lessons may be learnt about delivery modes?

“We have and we do have a fire plan ... watched the DVDs also. We have watched it twice. In hindsight I probably think that coming up to summer we should all watch it again too.” (Interview, Tasmania)

Can we systematically code this accumulated knowledge?



BUSHFIRE COMMUNICATION PRODUCTS

- WHAT DO PEOPLE READ?
- WHAT DO THEY UNDERSTAND?
- WHAT WILL THEY TALK ABOUT?

Please contact Dr. Keith Toh with your input and thoughts.
Email: keith.toh@rmit.edu.au