

SES provides assistance at forensic searches

FESA State Emergency Service volunteers are becoming increasingly involved in forensic searches at the request of WA Police.

District Manager Training Steve Summerton said at least 15 such searches had been conducted in the past six months.

“Forensic searching involves looking for evidence or clues that can include a multitude of items, from partial human remains through to a tiny earring or a bullet,” Steve said.

“The reason they are conducted is often connected to a serious crime.

“Not all searches produce a result, but if an object is found, SES volunteers are trained not to contaminate the scene. They immediately mark the position, leaving the item in place and then cordon off the area.

“Police are notified and they in turn request their Forensic Unit to take over.”

Steve added that SES volunteers are trained to a national standard in land search techniques.

“The requirements of the course include some practical forensic searching and there is also a training module that deals with protecting and preserving an incident scene,” he said.

“The type of search is determined by the SES Field Search Controller following a

briefing from the Police. The controller allocates segments within the overall search area to team leaders who then arrange for volunteers to begin examining their nominated sector.

“Searches can be undertaken in several ways, for example shoulder to shoulder, crawling on hands and knees, or spaced apart at say five metre intervals.”

Steve said that sometimes nothing is found after many hours of painstaking effort, and occasionally forensic searches discovered items connected to other crimes.

Five SES units were recently presented with certificates of appreciation from WA Police. They were recognised for their assistance to the Major Crime Squad with a particular murder investigation search where SES volunteers spent a total of 410 hours combing through areas of interest.

Acting Senior Sergeant Todd Pender, Officer in Charge of the Emergency Operations Unit, said WA Police wanted to acknowledge the outstanding efforts of SES volunteers in relation to this inquiry.

“SES volunteers all over the state perform searches on a regular basis in support of WA Police and the community



and we want them all to know their contributions are greatly appreciated,” he said.

Todd added that a similar presentation was made by WA Police to the SES Communications Support Unit in mid February. It recognised the assistance provided during a bushfire at Lancelin earlier this summer where the SES was instrumental in resolving technical communications problems between traffic contractors and Police.

SES volunteers deliver WAERN radio training

The SES Communications Support Unit (CSU) took up the challenge of developing a suitable training package following the introduction of the Western Australian Emergency Radio Network (WAERN) in the metropolitan area.

CSU volunteers led by Rob Crawford and Henry Edwards have now conducted two training sessions for metro based SES volunteers on the basics of the WAERN radio.

Topics covered included:

- types of WAERN radios
- basic radio operations

- use of function keys
- zones or groups of radio channels

District Manager Metropolitan SES Steve Summerton praised the efforts of the CSU.

“The level of commitment and expertise shown by Rob, Henry and their fellow volunteers is second to none,” Steve said.

“CSU volunteers are currently developing another training course focusing on the more advanced features of the WAERN radio. This will further enhance the skill and knowledge of all users and the CSU is happy to provide training to any FESA group.”



SES Communications Support Unit volunteer Henry Edwards with the WAERN radio.