

SEMC COMMUNIQUE

August 2024



The State Emergency Management Committee (SEMC) met on 7 August 2024.

Presentations

National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority

Sue McCarrey, Chief Executive Officer and Andrew Best, Regulatory Coordinator – Spill Risk, National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority (NOPSEMA) outlined NOPSEMA's role regarding environmental management of offshore petroleum activities.

The following matters were discussed:

- Key principles of Oil Spill responsibilities
- *Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006 (Cth)*
- Response in State waters
- Interactions and arrangements with State agencies
- Australian Government Crisis Management Framework
- NOPSEMA's assurance process.

Department of Water and Environmental Regulation Climate Change Update

Emily Briggs, Deputy Director General and Sarah Gill, Director Climate Change, Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) provided an overview of DWER's Climate Portfolio and work program.

The overarching initiative is the *Climate Change Bill 2023* which is currently before Parliament. Once enacted, the legislation will provide the framework for State Government action on climate change. Specifically, the legislation:

- Sets targets for net zero emissions for the government and WA
- Requires the development of Emissions reduction strategy within 3 years and the Climate Adaptation Strategy within 5 years
- Prescribes the development of sector adaptation plans
- Requires annual reporting to Parliament from 2025 on emissions, implementation strategies and target achievements.

Supporting this is the Sector Adaptation Planning Program to identify sector-specific climate impacts and priority adaptation actions. SEMC is the designated lead responsible for development of the Emergency Management Sector Adaptation Plan (EM-SAP) and was acknowledged by DWER as leading in this space through the time-limited Climate Change Subcommittee.

In acknowledgment of the dependencies DWER has in progress to support the development of SAPs, including the SAP Guidelines, Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI) framework and Climate Science Initiative outputs, SEMC approved the extension to the Climate Change Subcommittee and project funding until 30 June 2025.

Discussion Items and Outcomes

SaferWA Digital Strategy

The emergency management (EM) sector is facing a time of unprecedented change driven by complex geopolitical, environmental, social, technological, legal, and economic influences. To leverage contemporary technology for maximum benefit in addressing these challenges, SaferWA, the world's first digital strategy designed for the EM sector has been developed. SaferWA demonstrates a proactive effort to ensure that Hazard Management Agencies (HMAs) technological infrastructure not only protects but also enhances the future direction of Government.

Now that the strategy has been developed, the Public Safety and Communications Subcommittee (PSCS) will consider governance arrangements, including key bodies and committees to support the program. The PSCS will provide SEMC with recommendations by December 2024.

State Hazard Plan – Energy Supply Disruption

Energy Policy WA has completed the periodical review of the State Hazard Plan (SHP) – Energy Supply Disruption. During the review period, between 16 and 17 January 2024, several severe thunderstorm supercells caused significant and extended electricity supply disruption for up to 34,000 customers across the Metropolitan, Wheatbelt and Goldfields EM district. Post-incident reviews and lessons learned from this event were incorporated into the amended SHP. Key amendments include:

- Responsibility for Preparedness (section 3.1). Introduction of the business continuity planning concept for agencies and organisations.
- Capability base line (section 3.2). Electricity Supply Disruption baseline updated to reflect the impacts experienced during the 2024 Wheatbelt and Goldfields storms. Provided clarification that agencies and organisations should consider this baseline as a credible scenario for the provision of required support to the community.
- Planning and Arrangements (section 3.3). Provided clarification of the expectations for energy sector participants regarding the interoperability of their emergency response plans with the State EM arrangements.
- Response Structure (section 4.2.11) Introduction of a Regional Response Structure - This acknowledges HMA resourcing limitations and that Operational Area Support Group's (OASGs) may already be established in regions by other HMAs for other initiating hazards. Multiple OASGs in multiple regions can now be accommodated in the structure, as well as a single State-level response.

The SEMC noted that the Wheatbelt and Goldfields Storms in January 2024 – Post Incident Report actions assigned to SEMC will be referred to the appropriate subcommittee/s for response.

State Hazard Plan – Maritime Environmental Emergencies

The Department of Transport (DoT) has amended the SHP – Maritime Environmental Emergencies (MEE), following the 2023 State MEE Response Exercise Roebuck Challenge. The aim of the exercise was to test and evaluate arrangements for the coordination and control of MEE in WA, which focused on a Port based incident occurring in WA's Kimberley region. Based on the exercise findings and recent reviews of several Maritime Transport Emergencies incidents, DoT has updated the SHP – MEE accordingly.

Project to Incorporate Cyber Security as a Hazard in the EM Arrangements

At the 5 December 2022 meeting, SEMC endorsed that Cyber Security Incident be incorporated as a Hazard into the State's EM arrangements, and the Director General of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC) as the preferred HMA for cyber emergencies. On 6 December 2023, SEMC noted the draft SHP – Cyber Security Incident and supported the progress on a legislative proposal for amendments to the *Emergency Management Regulations 2006* to introduce a Cyber Security Incident as a Hazard.

In collaboration with DFES, DPC has finalised the legislative proposal to progress the prescription of a Cyber Security Incident as a Hazard in the EM arrangements. Formal drafting instructions to the Parliamentary Counsel's Office will now be developed.

2023 Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) EM Survey

WALGA conducts a biennial Local Government EM Survey to gather important feedback from members, informing their EM policy and advocacy agenda. The 2023 survey was delivered in November and December last year with a 75% response rate.

Key issues raised by local government included:

- Community preparedness and resilience
- Capacity to respond to and manage recovery
- The importance of infrastructure betterment funding, management of Bush Fire Brigades and the Local Government Grants Scheme
- The need to reform and improve EM grant funding.

SEMC will consider the findings in conjunction with other key projects underway including the Local Emergency Management Arrangements Improvement Program.

For more details, please contact Rachel Armstrong, Policy Manager, WALGA on (08) 9213 2064 or ramstrong@walga.asn.au.

Strategic Planning Update

The development of a new strategic plan is underway, with consultation occurring with Subcommittees and District Emergency Management Committees to test five priority actions, which emerged from SEMC's strategic planning workshop:

- Explore what a statewide systemic approach to risk would look like in practice, through sector wide and interjurisdictional engagement and research
- Influence the State EM Framework and other policy instruments to elevate prevention and preparedness
- Emphasise the specific role of all government agencies in EM in the new strategic plan and future policy and integrate key agencies into governance
- Lead a whole-of-sector initiative to map the current capabilities and capability needs across the sector, and plan for its development
- Review Local Emergency Management Committees and other multi-agency community development mechanisms to better strengthen local capability and resilience.

It is expected that a draft Strategic Plan will be presented to SEMC for consideration in December 2024.

Upcoming Consultation

The consultation strategy for the comprehensively reviewed State Hazard Plan – Human Biosecurity was released to the EM sector on Friday 16 August 2024. Concurrent work continues in relation to the WA Government Pandemic Plan and recommendations 3 and 4 of the [Review of Western Australia's COVID-19 Management and Response](#)). In addition, the following documents are scheduled to be circulated to the wider EM sector for consultation in the coming period:

- Comprehensively reviewed State Hazard Plan – Fire
- Comprehensively reviewed recovery arrangements within the State Emergency Management Framework.

Next Meeting of the SEMC

The next meeting of SEMC will be held on Wednesday, 2 October 2024.

Contact Us

If you have feedback or questions, get in touch at info@semc.wa.gov.au.