Paul Holman ASM
Operations Manager- Specialist Emergency Response Department
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Paul Holman, has a broad and diverse operational background and management experience within the Ambulance industry over 30 years. Operational experience as Paramedic in Mobile Intensive Care Ambulance, Air Ambulance, Helicopter, Communications and Field Management. Paul is currently the Operations Manager Specialist Emergency Response Department , Ambulance Victoria and is responsible for all Emergency Management and Planning encompassing CBR response, major incident management, the AV emergency response plan and the development and running of the AV Emergency Operations Centre. The department also is responsible for Mobile Intensive Care services (MICA) CBR, USAR and Emergency Management Training. Paul is a member of the Australian College of Ambulance Professionals – Victoria and holds a Graduate Diploma in Administration (Health) and was Awarded the Ambulance Service Medal (ASM) in 2007 Recently the department was awarded the Australian American Association (AAA) Curtin and Macarthur leadership award for the management of the last summers incidents.

PAPER TITLE: THE SUMMER OF 2009: HEAT AND FIRE – AMBULANCE VICTORIA'S RESPONSE

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Organisation: Ambulance Victoria, Australia

Abstract format:

In February 2009 an unprecedented heat wave struck the Australian State of Victoria. With temperatures in the range of 46 degrees C for multiple days the effects were crippling on the community, with EMS providers and hospitals stretched to the breaking point. Then, all across the State, wild fires began breaking out, ultimately resulting in almost 6,000 fire fighters being called into service. As the fires grew in intensity multiple factors came together to create a "perfect storm" that eventually took the lives of over 170 victims. Since 2003, Ambulance Victoria (AV) has had a well developed Emergency Response Plan (ERP) which has

been under constant review. The plan has three key principles: protection of normal ‘000’ business, appropriate response to the incident, and utilizing the resources of the whole organization. Key features of the plan include: defined levels of response, triggers for escalation, notification of key internal stakeholders and specifications for every key role throughout the organization in response to a major incident.

Ambulance Victoria implemented its Emergency Response Plan in preparation for the Victorian Heat Wave in January 2009. As a result, a range of special measures were put in place including extensive additional resources, changes to call taking and dispatch, increased staff welfare and media messages to the community. The organization experienced a significant increase in workload and an increased rate of cardiac arrest calls. Of note was the poor outcomes reported for cardiac arrest patients, and the impact on the chronically ill.

The Emergency Response Plan was also implemented in response to the catastrophic “Black Saturday” bushfire event of February 2009. While a range of special measure were put in place, the long duration of the incident impacted heavily on resources, particularly management. Despite this impact, the organisation’s response performance was not impacted. Of note in bushfire event, was the low number of time critical patients compared to the large number of low acuity, “primary care” style patients and the need for specialist primary care plan.

This presentation will outline the principles and key features of the Ambulance Victoria Emergency Response Plan in addition to its application for these two sentinel events. We will present the pre-event information that was available, how Ambulance Victoria prepared for each utilizing its plan along with the outcomes of each event and the lessons learnt.

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