MINISTER FOR CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

PRISONERS READY TO ASSIST IN AN EMERGENCY

21 November 2013

Low security prisoners at the Alice Springs Correctional Centre (ASCC) will be deployed to assist Northern Territory Emergency Services (NTES) to fill sand bags if a warning is activated this flood season.

Minister for Correctional Services John Elferink said prisoners will use a sandbagging machine, which was designed and patented by Industrial Officers at the Darwin Correctional Centre in 2012, as well as a locally manufactured NTES sandbagging trailer.

“Both machines are purpose built and designed to be fast and efficient in the event of an emergency, with each machine having the capability to fill more than 480 sandbags per hour.

“Prisoners may be required to assist with a range of projects from sandbagging a back door, which may only require six sand bags, to sandbagging the Alice Springs Hospital which could require more than 8,000 sandbags.

“Sandbagging is not only used for floods, it’s an appropriate response for other events, such as a large accident or spill where chemicals or hazardous materials need to be diverted.

“Prisoners are on standby and ready to be utilised in the event of a flood or emergency warning being issued.

“Engaging prisoners in these activities means they are contributing to community wellbeing and are an active volunteer resource.

“A high level of comradeship and team work has been displayed by inmates in the past when they have had to work together in emergency situations.”

Prisoners have routinely assisted NTES during emergency incidents throughout the Territory, including floods and cyclones, over many years.

Prisoner work parties are also deployed to assist in clean-up efforts after an emergency has passed.

John McMillan, Area Manager Southern from NTES said floods can come at any stage and the community needs to be vigilant and listen to warning messages to know the steps to follow.

“Water levels rise extremely quickly and it is important to always be prepared.

“Make sure you have an emergency kit ready with enough food, water, a radio and spare batteries, medication and anything else you might need for at least three days.”

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