

## Case Study

# How to Promote Mental Health Services to Emergency Volunteers

### Background

The Country Fire Authority (CFA) is one of the world's largest volunteer-based emergency service organisations. Around 50,000 volunteers help to prevent and suppress fires, with an additional 10,000 paid staff.

Around 35,000 incidents are responded to by the CFA Brigade each year. Some of these incidents include long exposure to difficult fires.

CFA is one of those great companies that cares deeply about their staff and volunteers. They have put together an extensive support system to help members with mental health and personal difficulties.

CFA wanted to let members know that the likelihood of exposure to a traumatic incident is high and that the sooner they get help the better off they will be.

A training video with trainer's manual was agreed to be the best method to raise awareness among volunteers and paid personnel about the need to seek help and the services available.

### Here's how we solved the problem

A 23 minute training video was created that contained the following elements:

1. To grab the attention of viewers and to make them realise the importance of mental health, various stories were written about CFA volunteers and how various emergency or personal events had affected their mental health or close family members. Actors were used to play out the various scenarios which also included peers, chaplains and psychologists discussing their role in helping members.
2. A brain animation was developed to show how the brain is affected during a stressful event. A stray dog was coaxed into chasing a ball in front of a car to show a stressful situation (no animal was harmed in this production).
3. Senior CFA leaders also spoke to camera to discuss the importance of mental health with all CFA members and their desire to make sure all members were properly looked after.



*"Our stakeholders are happy with the result"*



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### And here's what happened

The DVD's and trainer's manuals are gradually being rolled out across Victoria.

As of writing, three facilitators training sessions had been undertaken with around 100 attendees.

*"This product now provides current information that is presented in an engaging way helping us to choose the appropriate delivery method. Getting to know our business were important things that Digicast did, they were also available to answer our questions as we went through the process. Our stakeholders are happy with the result".*

Michele Konheiser  
Project Coordinator - Diversity Unit  
People & Culture Division  
Country Fire Authority



*"This product now provides current information that is presented in an engaging way"*

