

Executive Summary

Steve Forbes is an emergency manager with a passion for the spatial technologies and their application to emergency services. Since joining ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA) in 2004, Steve has been at the fore front of new and emerging applications of GIS in emergency management. Over a period of more than ten years he has continuously moved the ESA's front line services to work with the latest in spatial information. Through his advocacy and high national profile he has also spread knowledge of spatial technologies far and wide within the Australian emergency services community.

Through his work with EMSINA, Steve has enhanced the spatial profession's ability to service emergencies throughout Australia. His leadership of the MAPS group has forged relationships between the emergency management and spatial professions which will benefit Australian communities for many years to come.

Within the emergency management community the name Steve Forbes is synonymous with GIS and mapping and the spatial professions could not have a better advocate among the professionals who protect our lives and property.

Criteria

1. Outstanding performance in his/her occupation.

Steve is an Emergency Manager. Like many in his profession he started as a volunteer, initially with the NSW RFS, more than 21 years ago, and progressed to full time employment in the industry.

Steve has trained in multiple aspects of fire fighting and all hazards management including studying Emergency Management through the Australian Emergency Management Institute (AEMI). In 2001, Steve chose Aviation as a specialist skill-set and since then he has moved from Aviation Radio Operator to Air Observer, Airborne Systems Operator and now Air Attack Supervisor. He is now recognised as a leading trainer and mentor in the Aviation arm of fire fighting across all Australian jurisdictions.

Importantly for the spatial information industry, in 1994, as an RFS volunteer, Steve participated in a pilot program collecting spatial information on farms for use in Emergency Services. This is where he discovered his passion for all things mapping.

After joining ESA as a field officer in 2004 he was able to develop his technical skills in GIS. Over time, he has completed numerous industry courses in GIS systems and related software.

In 2008 Steve became manager of ESA Spatial Services. He is passionate about how spatial/location technologies have a major role to play in emergency services and, having an operational background, he is perfectly placed to make sure GIS solutions are well matched to the needs of the front line emergency services workforce. Key projects which Steve has led for ESA include:

- The ESA Common Operating Picture, a view of all ESA incidents, vehicle tracking and environmental conditions over dynamic map services;
- Intuitive spatial data viewers plugged into ESA's huge historical data holdings on ACT emergencies. This enables ESA to apply operational history to perform better risk based resource allocation modelling; and
- An ongoing project looking at the ever changing world of mobile spatial applications for iOS and Android devices.

2. Service to the surveying and spatial profession over a year or more

Steve has represented the ACT in the Emergency Management Spatial Information Network Australia (EMSINA) since 2007. Within EMSINA, he has been a key contributor to national standards and guidelines including:

- EMSINA representative to ICSM working groups such as the roads working group and addressing working group;
- National all hazards mapping symbology project;
- A national emergency services mapping assistant, mapping officer and mapping supervisor training package; and
- The working group for the new National Situational Awareness Tool (NSAT) for the National Crisis Coordination Centre.

Like many others, Steve has come to the Spatial Information Industry via a profession which is not a Spatial Science per se. Early in his career at ESA he saw the value in not only bringing spatial technologies to emergency management but also in bringing together the two professions. Steve has worked tirelessly to build relationships between ESA and SSSI. His perseverance led, in 2013, to ESA becoming a SSSI Regional Sustaining Partner.

Just one example of Steve's tireless promotion of spatial information is his role with the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC). The annual AFAC conference is the largest such conference in the Southern hemisphere. Steve has coordinated the spatial awareness activities at the past six AFAC conferences showcasing spatial technology advances to the emergency service industry.

3. Held in highest respect by peers.

Steve Forbes is known and respected throughout the emergency management industry. He is the go to person for any fire fighter who wants to know how to best employ modern, mobile, mapping technology and has spread awareness of spatial technologies way beyond the borders of the ACT.

Steve has represented ESA at international conferences in the USA and India and received personal or group awards from the ACT government (Community Safety) and E.S.R.I. international.

On top of his day job, Steve is also a volunteer in the NSW RFS and was for many years Brigade Captain of the Operational Support Group, Lake George Zone. Brigade Captain is an office decided by ballot and Steve has been elected each and every time he sought this position. He has been awarded long service medals by the NSW RFS.

Within the spatial profession Steve is known for his technical skills but also for his ability to bring together people who may otherwise never have crossed paths. He has delivered several high ranking emergency managers to spatial information events and conversely has introduced many spatial professionals, such as the then President of SSSI, to emergency management arenas.

4. Has made a lasting difference to the surveying and spatial profession by his/her leadership.

In 2005 Steve saw that ESA, and other emergency services, were unable to employ enough permanent GIS staff to maintain their mapping capability at peak load during major emergencies. To solve this problem, he set about tapping into the large pool of GIS expertise which exists in Canberra outside of ESA and other ACT government agencies. From his leadership MAPS was born.

The Mapping and Planning Support Group (MAPS) is now 10 years old and has provided volunteer map makers to many emergencies, large and small, throughout Eastern Australia. Apart from cofounding the organisation, Steve is personally responsible for the management and coordination of MAPS which is Australia's largest team of spatial volunteers in emergency management and a model that's has been seen as best practice and is now applied in other states (ie. WA, TAS).

The history and achievements of MAPS are well documented elsewhere. Without Steve this group would never had been established. As SSSI members have found in other regions, without a key advocate for the employment of volunteer spatial professionals within the local emergency services agency it just doesn't happen.

Steve's leadership in establishing MAPS has had far-reaching impacts on the communities which MAPS has helped and has made a lasting difference to the spatial profession by providing volunteers an opportunity to use their skills to serve their community and their nation.

5. Contribution to continuing professional development.

Steve is a trainer and assessor for many skills in emergency management including the mapping officer roles, AIIMS and national aviation programs. The emergency management industry has a profound understanding of, and commitment to, continuing professional development and Steve has applied these principles both to his own career and to his work with spatial professionals.

His commitment to continual improvement of the MAPS team's abilities through new training opportunities is exceptional. Work with volunteers is almost always out of

hours and Steve has spent dozens of Saturdays and Sundays organising and presenting training for MAPS volunteers. He was also a presenter at the 2013 ACT Regional Conference the theme of which itself demonstrates the bonds which Steve has forged between the spatial and emergency management professions in Canberra and beyond.