



Media Release

Victoria State Emergency Service

North East Region Office – Benalla
64 Sydney Rd, Benalla Victoria, 3672

All sorts of characters support VICSES' FloodSafe Week

From: VICSES NE Region Office Benalla

Date: 22 May 2015

Time: 12pm

Victoria State Emergency Service's (VICSES) FloodSafe Week is running from 25 May through until 31 May 2015.

This year, not only is VICSES mascot Paddy the Platypus helping to spread the flood safety message, but VICSES' newest recruit, Wangaratta's Yogi....(or some would call him Huckleberry) is also proudly supporting FloodSafe Week by participating in the launch. (refer Yogi and Paddy photos attached)

Many Victorian towns and localities like Wangaratta that lie close to rivers or creeks, have a long history of flooding. However, many people are unaware of where exactly floods can happen and just how dangerous, disgusting and dirty floodwater can be.

What's so dangerous about floodwater?

Driving through floodwater is the biggest killer of adults in Australian floods – and it's completely avoidable. Even shallow floodwater can sweep away a vehicle, or leave you dangerously stranded. Floodwater can wash away roads, bridges and create sinkholes. Even seemingly shallow water across a familiar road can pose danger.

Never enter floodwater: you don't know what you are getting into. As in most emergency situations, leaving early is always the safest option.

It isn't just drowning that kills. By the time floodwater has reached your area, it may have absorbed toxic chemicals, sewage, decaying animals, rubbish, broken glass and barbed wire. Anyone who comes into contact with floodwater may be exposed to E.Coli infection, diarrhoea, hepatitis, infections and dermatitis.

FloodSafe Week is an annual initiative of VICSES, aimed at raising awareness of every Victorian about where floods can happen, how to get prepared, knowing what to do and the dangers floods bring.

VICSES Chief Executive Officer Stephen Griffin said this year's focus was on shining a light into the murky contents of floodwater. "Staying out of floodwater is an important part of keeping you and your family safe. Luckily, there are other ways you can prepare yourself, such as having a home emergency kit, knowing what to do and where to find information in an emergency. A little preparation goes a long way and we all need to take responsibility for our safety and learn the local flood risks."

During FloodSafe Week, VICSES North East (Hume) Region have organised several events including:

- **Apex Park Wangaratta**, on Monday 25 May, the launch of FloodSafe Week will be held from 1pm-2pm in addition to the formal speeches, the Wangaratta Local Flood Guide will be, the feature activity will be the sandbagging of a local VIP, Yogi, Wangaratta's unofficial flood marker.
- **Online survey:** "Who am I?", for the communities across the North East to vote on the actual name of the friendly character that sits in Apex Park Wangaratta. Locals have long disagreed on the name of this little character....is it Yogi or is it Huckleberry? To cast your vote go to: <http://www.ses.vic.gov.au/prepare/your-local-flood-information/rural-city-of-wangaratta#whatsmyname>.

For more information, contact:

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Name: Sue Sheldrick

Position: Community Resilience Co Ordinator

Phone: 0400877731 / 03 9256 9650

Email: northeast@ses.vic.gov.au



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- **Riverside Plaza Shepparton:** a flood safety display and flood guide expo (featuring 6 local flood information guides) from Saturday 23 May to Sunday 31 May.
- **The Savoy Club Myrtleford:** a Myrtleford Local Flood Guide information session and an update on Myrtleford's new flood levee and mitigation works. Wednesday 27 May from 7-8.30pm.
- **Border Mail:** region-wide Kids Page children's competition, in Tuesday 26 May edition.

For more information about FloodSafe Week including instructions on how to put together an emergency kit or to check out one of the more than 50 local flood guides now available for communities across Victoria, visit: ses.vic.gov.au/prepare or facebook.com/vicses.

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