



Media Release

Victoria State Emergency Service

Hero volunteer John Hooper welcomed back from Greece

Friday 24 June 2018

Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES) would like to welcome home Stawell Unit volunteer John Hooper from his recent two week deployment to Greece.

John was sent to Greece as part of a national multi-agency response team, providing emergency assistance following the devastating fires near Athens, that had killed at least 90 people. He was one of 10 Australians that formed the National Disaster Assistance Response Team.

The highly skilled team was sent over to assist the Greek Fire Brigade in conducting Rapid Damage Assessments (RDA) to the fire damaged buildings, where they tirelessly worked 12-hour days in hot weather conditions.

John's qualification and extensive training in Urban Search and Rescue, where he is a category two operator (USAR CAT 2), was what allowed him to be part of the response team which only deployed USAR CAT 2 qualified Australian emergency personnel.

USAR technicians are trained in advanced rescue operations and search equipment, tunnelling and shoring.

This extensive training is required to be completed every two years and includes locating and removing trapped and often injured live casualties from partially or totally collapsed structures or environments and providing emergency medical care, where required.

John was the first VICSES volunteer to be trained in this qualification and is the first VICSES USAR CAT 2 trained member to be deployed overseas. He is a highly skilled trainer and has been a part of Victorian State Emergency Service for almost 40 years (since 1978), based mainly in the Mid West region of Victoria.

The Disaster Assistance Response Team was made up of members from Fire and Rescue NSW and Victoria Fire and Emergency Services and was supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Emergency Management Australia.

Quotes attributable to Stephen Warren, VICSES Assistant Chief Officer

"It is fantastic to see this extremely specialised multi-agency trained skill put to use, John is one of our more highly skilled rescue operators and has made VICSES very proud."

"There is so much opportunity here at VICSES, and so it is always gratifying to see VICSES volunteers involved in some of the more diverse aspects of the job, and see their skillset grow".

Quotes attributable to John Hooper, VICSES Stawell Unit Volunteer

"It was an absolutely wonderful experience to be there helping the grief stricken communities of Greece. It was very heart-warming to see their relief and appreciation for us when we arrived".

"I'm very fortunate to have this USAR CAT 2 qualification, I've always been very passionate about urban search and rescue and so this very well compliments my skills and interest".

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