

Freedom of Information Document Schedule for FOI: File: 2011/96

Name: _____

Establishment and operations of Energy Services Environmental (ESI), a
 Re: company which provided dechlorination and recycling services from a
 site on Dacre Street in Mitchell.

1	1	Question Time Brief - Investigation Mitchell Fire - ACT Fire Brigade	19/09/2011	Full Release		
2	2	Question Time Brief - Mitchell Fire - Communications - Social Media Websites	19/09/2011	Full Release		
3	3-4	Question Time Brief - Mitchell Fire - Communication Alerts	19/09/2011	Full Release		
4	5-7	Question Time Brief - Chronology of fire at Mitchell - including resourcing and collaboration	16/09/2011	Partial Release	Section 43	Specific Business Details
5	8-10	Question Time Brief - Chronology of fire at Mitchell - including resourcing and collaboration	4/11/2011	Partial Release	Section 43	Specific Business Details
5						

Full = 3
 Partial 43 = 2

less detail needed now. 5/2 10/11

JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

amended

QUESTION TIME BRIEF

Minister: Minister for Police and Emergency Services
Correct and accurate as at: 4 November 2011

ISSUE: Chronology of fire at Mitchell - including resourcing and collaboration

Context

At 11:11pm on 15 September 2011, the ACT Fire Brigade received a request to attend a large fire at Energy Services Invironmental at Dacre Street in Mitchell.

F+R

Talking Points

Incident Details

F+R - throughout

- ~~At 11:11pm on 15 September 2011 the ACT Fire Brigade (ACTFB) responded to a call at Energy Services Invironmental at Dacre Street in Mitchell.~~
- Energy Services Invironmental is a recycling plant for transformer oil. The business operator of the facility advised the ACT Fire Brigade that significant quantities of transformer oil and solid sodium were stored on site. I understand there were some hundreds of thousands of litres invol
 -
- The fire escalated quickly and a 300 metre exclusion zone was established while the ACTFB worked with the business operator to identify potential hazardous materials on site. The 300 metre exclusion zone was established based on the intensity of the fire and the number of explosions at the site. Houses located across the road from Energy Services Invironmental were located outside of the 300 metre exclusion zone and were therefore not evacuated at this time.
- The ACT Fire Brigade conducted atmospheric monitoring throughout the incident. The by-product of the substance being burned – Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCB), formed a smoke plume that potentially contained Phosgene. Phosgene is known to cause irritation to skin and eyes, sore throat, nausea, headaches and dizziness, vomiting, chest pain and difficulty in breathing. Based on results from the atmospheric monitoring, the ACT Fire Brigade believed the risk to the community was low but continued to take all precautions throughout the incident.
- At approximately 1:20am on Friday 16 September 2011 an Emergency Control Centre (ECC) was activated at the ESA Headquarters at Fairbairn to facilitate a Whole of Government response to the fire. The following Government agencies participated in the ECC:
 - ACT ESA – including: ACT Fire Brigade, ACT Ambulance Service, ACT State Emergency Service, ESA Risk and Planning and ESA Media and Community Education;
 - ACT Policing;
 - Security and Emergency Management Branch;
 - TAMS Directorate – including Roads, Action Buses and ACT Government Veterinarian;
 - ACT Health;
 - Environment Protection Authority;
 - Community Services (Recovery);

- o Education and Training Directorate;
- o NSW Fire and Rescue; and
- o Aviation Rescue and Firefighting Services.
- At approximately 3:45am on Friday 16 September 2011, the Public Information Coordination Centre (PICC) was activated. ESA Media and Community Education worked with local and national media to keep the Canberra Community informed and updated regarding the incident and any potential health risks to the public.
- A chronology of operational response to the incident is provided below.

Date	Time	Action
15 Sept 2011	11:11pm	Initial request for assistance to attend a large fire at Energy Services Invironmental Dacre Street Mitchell
	11:21pm	First ACT Fire Brigade pumper arrives on scene
	11:26pm	Hazardous chemicals identified on site
	11:45pm	A high level of incident command implemented on site
	11:51pm	Owner of Energy Services Invironmental arrives on scene
	11:54pm	ESA Risk and Planning requested to attend site
16 Sept 2011	12:22am	Environment Protection Authority contacted and advised they will attend
	12:24am	ACTFB crews started to retreat due to intensity of fire and explosions
	01:15am	ACT Fire Brigade ordered the evacuation of the suburb of Mitchell including a number of campers and livestock at Exhibition Park
	01:20am	ECC activated at ESA Headquarters at Fairbairn.
	02:02am	Change of strategy in fighting fire due to explosions
	02:23am	Fallback to new command
	02:27am	Incident Control transferred to ESA Headquarters at Fairbairn from unified command post on scene.
	02:30 – 03:00am	Approximately 200 calls received at Triple Zero '000' Communications Centre due to explosions
	02:40am	Fire and Rescue NSW support activated
	02:47am	ACTFB request 10km alert area
	02:49am	Evacuation Centre established at Dickson College and a reception area at Canberra Stadium which could be used as an evacuation centre if required.
	06:25am	Briefing – fire not under control – oil has impacted the bund.
	05:25pm	Second strategic attack utilising all ACT resources of foam supply appears to have been successful.
17 Sept 2011	04:00am	Flare up due to re-ignition of flammable liquid. 400 litres of foam applied, fire subdued.
	10:00am	Fire extinguished.

- In total 250 ACT Firefighters have been involved to date in responding to the Mitchell fire with a maximum of 50 firefighters on scene at any one time.

→ include dot point on outcome of ACTFR investigative process.

Community Impact

- At approximately 1:15am on Friday 16 September 2011, the ACT Fire Brigade ordered the evacuation of the suburb of Mitchell including a number of campers and livestock at Exhibition Park. All roads leading into and out of Mitchell were closed.
- An evacuation centre was established at Dickson College and a reception area at Canberra Stadium which could be used as an evacuation centre if required.

FIR conducted by ACT concludes the fire cause is undetermined.

- The Education and Training Directorate made the decision to close all ACT Public Schools located north of Lake Burley Griffin on Friday 16 September 2011 due to the potential risk of exposure to toxins from the smoke plume and the disruption to ACTION Bus services.
- Action Bus Services were disrupted from the northern suburbs of Canberra throughout Friday. Services to the Mitchell area were reinstated Monday 19 September 2011.
- Roads into and out of Mitchell remained closed throughout the weekend being reopened on Sunday evening following reduction of the exclusion zone in Mitchell.
- This is another example of a proactive Government working collaboratively to ensure the safety of the Canberra community. I would like to thank all personnel and volunteers who worked tirelessly to contain the fire and ensure there was no risk to life or surrounding property.
- Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate including ACT Environment Protection Authority continue to monitor the impact of the incident on the environment and will use the coercive powers under the Environment Protection Act 1997 to ensure that the owner meets their obligation in relation to the restoration and clean up after the incident.

WorkSafe Issues

- The WorkSafe ACT investigation commenced Friday 16 September 2011, with investigators having attended the site several times already since then.
- The purpose of the WorkSafe ACT investigation is to determine whether there are any work health and safety issues that either led to, or arose out of, the incident.
- Investigators will consider whether the fire occurred due to some failure to comply with the Territory's health and safety laws and, if so, what action should be taken, what lessons should be learnt and whether any persons should be held accountable for the event.
- The report being prepared by the Fire Brigade into the incident will be an important piece of evidence for consideration by WorkSafe. WorkSafe will also interview relevant individuals and will closely examine the work practices that were in place in the lead up to this incident.
- WorkSafe will also look at any relevant regulatory processes as they pertain to this issue.
- Outcomes could range from a finding that the fire was not due to any work health and safety failure, or recommendations for improvements to overall or specific business or regulatory processes, through to recommendations for prosecution of individuals or businesses involved.
- WorkSafe ACT Investigators will work with other agencies in assessing factors relevant to the investigation, most notably the ACT Fire Brigade and their report on the fire.
- The duration of the investigation will be determined and guided by the extent of the issues identified by the WorkSafe ACT Investigators. The investigation will also consider obligations under the *Dangerous Substances Act 2004* (the Act) and *Dangerous Substances (General) Regulation 2004* (the Regulation).

Cleared as accurate and complete as at 4 November 2011

By:

Ext:

Action officer:

Ext:

JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY



QUESTION TIME BRIEF

Minister: Minister for Police and Emergency Services
Correct and accurate as at: 16 September 2011

ISSUE: Chronology of fire at Mitchell - including resourcing and collaboration

Context

At 11:11pm on 15 September 2011, the ACT Fire Brigade received a request to attend a large fire at Energy Services International at Dacre Street in Mitchell.

Talking Points

Incident Details

- At 11:11pm on 15 September 2011 the ACT Fire Brigade (ACTFB) responded to a call at Energy Services Invironmental at Dacre Street in Mitchell.
- Energy Services Invironmental is a recycling plant for transformer oil.

- The fire escalated quickly and a 300 metre exclusion zone was established while the ACTFB worked with the business operator to identify potential hazardous materials on site.
- The ACT Fire Brigade conducted atmospheric monitoring throughout the incident. The by-product of the substance being burned – Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCB), formed a smoke plume that potentially contained Phosgene. Phosgene is known to cause irritation to skin and eyes, sore throat, nausea, headaches and dizziness, vomiting, chest pain and difficulty breathing. Based on results from the atmospheric monitoring, the ACT Fire Brigade believed the risk to the community was low but continued to take all precautions throughout the incident.
- At approximately 1:20am on Friday 16 September 2011 an Emergency Control Centre (ECC) ¹⁰ was activated at the ESA Headquarters at Fairbairn to facilitate a Whole of Government response to the fire. The following Government agencies participated in the ECC:
 - ACT ESA – including: ACT Fire Brigade, ACT Ambulance Service, ACT State Emergency Service, ESA Risk and Planning and ESA Media and Community Education;
 - ACT Policing;
 - Security and Emergency Management Branch;
 - TAMS Directorate – including Roads, Action Buses and ACT Government Veterinarian;
 - ACT Health;
 - Environment Protection Authority;
 - Community Services (Recovery);
 - Education and Training Directorate;
 - NSW Fire and Rescue; and
 - Aviation Rescue and Firefighting Services.

- At approximately 3:45am on Friday 16 September 2011, the PICC was activated. ESA Media and Community Education worked with local and national media to keep the Canberra Community informed and updated regarding the incident and any potential health risks to the public.
- A chronology of operational response to the incident is provided below.

Date	Time	Action
15 Sept 2011	11:11pm	Initial request for assistance to attend a large fire at Energy Services Invironmental Dacre Street Mitchell
	11:21pm	First ACT Fire Brigade pumper arrives on scene
	11:26pm	Hazardous chemicals identified on site
	11:45pm	A high level of incident command implemented on site
	11:51pm	Owner of Energy Services Invironmental arrives on scene
	11:54pm	ESA Risk and Planning requested to attend site
16 Sept 2011	12:22am	Environment Protection Authority contacted and advised they will attend
	12:24am	ACTFB crews started to retreat due to intensity of fire and explosions
	01:15am	ACT Fire Brigade ordered the evacuation of the suburb of Mitchell including a number of campers and livestock at Exhibition Park
	01:20am	ECC activated at ESA Headquarters at Fairbairn.
	02:02am	Change of strategy in fighting fire due to explosions
	02:23am	Fallback to new command
	02:27am	Incident Control transferred to ESA Headquarters at Fairbairn from unified command post on scene.
	02:30 – 03:00am	Approximately 200 calls received at Triple Zero '000' Communications Centre due to explosions
	02:40am	Fire and Rescue NSW support activated
	02:47am	ACTFB request 10km alert area
	02:49am	Evacuation Centre established at Dickson College and a reception area at Canberra Stadium which could be used as an evacuation centre if required.
	06:25am	Briefing – fire not under control – oil has impacted the bund.
	05:25pm	Second strategic attack utilising all ACT resources of foam supply appears to have been successful.
17 Sept 2011	04:00am	Flare up due to re-ignition of flammable liquid. 400 litres of foam applied, fire subdued.
	10:00am	Fire extinguished.

- In total 250 ACT Firefighters have been involved to date in responding to the Mitchell fire with a maximum of 50 firefighters on scene at any one time.

Community Impact

- At approximately 1:15am on Friday 16 September 2011, the ACT Fire Brigade ordered the evacuation of the suburb of Mitchell including a number of campers and livestock at Exhibition Park. All roads leading into and out of Mitchell were closed.
- An evacuation centre was established at Dickson College and a reception area at Canberra Stadium which could be used as an evacuation centre if required.
- All ACT Public Schools located north of Lake Burley Griffin were closed on Friday 16 September 2011 due to the potential risk of exposure to toxins from the smoke plume and the disruption to Action Bus services.
- Action Bus Services were disrupted from the northern suburbs of Canberra throughout Friday. Services to the Mitchell area were reinstated Monday 19 September 2011.
- Roads into and out of Mitchell remained closed throughout the weekend being reopened on Sunday evening following reduction of the exclusion zone in Mitchell.

- This is another example of a proactive Government working collaboratively to ensure the safety of the Canberra community. I would like to thank all personnel and volunteers who worked tirelessly to contain the fire and ensure there was no risk to life or surrounding property.

Cleared as accurate and complete as at 16 September

By:

Ext:

Action officer:

Ext:

1



JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

QUESTION TIME BRIEF

Minister: Minister for Police and Emergency Services
Correct and accurate as at: 19 September 2011

ISSUE: Mitchell Fire - Communications - Alerts

Context

The Emergency Alert System was used to issue warnings to residents who were impacted by the recent fire at Mitchell.

Talking Points

- Two Emergency Alert messages were issued as a result of the chemical incident/fire at Mitchell.
- The first Emergency Alert was issued at approximately 1:40am on Friday 16 September 2011. It was issued to people with registered billing addresses for mobile and landline telephones within the suburb of Mitchell including EPIC and the Canberra Racecourse.

- The first voice message advised:

Emergency. Emergency. The ACT Fire Brigade is responding to a Chemical incident in Mitchell. Residents are advised to evacuate the suburb immediately including the racecourse and EPIC. Further information is available via Canberra Connect, or go to www.esa.act.gov.au.

- The first text message advised

Emergency. Emergency. The ACT Fire Brigade is responding to a Chemical incident in Mitchell. Residents are advised to evacuate the suburb immediately.

- A second Emergency Alert was issued at approximately 3:20am to people with registered billing addresses for mobile and landline telephones with thin the suburbs of Franklin, Crace, Harrison, Watson, Downer, Kaleen, Lyneham and Hackett.

- The second voice message advised:

The ACT Fire Brigade is responding to a chemical incident in Mitchell. Residents of Franklin, Crace, Harrison, Watson, Downer, Kaleen, Lyneham, Hackett are advised to shelter indoors, immediately. If you are indoors, close all windows, doors, vents and turn off, air conditioning. Further information is available via Canberra Connect, or go www.esa.act.gov.au.

- The second text message advised

The ACT Fire Brigade responding to chemical incident in Mitchell. Residents of Franklin, Crace, Harrison, Watson, Downer, Kaleen, Lyneham, Hackett stay indoors.

- There has been criticism levelled at the ACT Government regarding the ambiguity of the messages issued. I am aware there were spelling errors in both messages issued via SMS and it is regrettable that this led to uncertainty regarding the origin and authenticity of the messages. Please note any spelling errors have been corrected in the above advisories.
- The Emergency Alert System issues warnings via voice recording and SMS, based on predefined templates for particular emergency. The template of the voice message spells words phonetically to ensure that words will be pronounced correctly when converting text to voice. However this is not a requirement for warnings issued via SMS and, these two different requirements were not taken into consideration at the time the Emergency Alerts were issued.

- On preliminary analysis it also appears there were a large number of fixed landline services identified in the target area of the second warning that were not contacted due to the time that the system was allowed to dial all of the numbers in the target area. Operational issues associated with this will be investigated further.
- These factors should not detract from the initial success of Emergency Alert. The wording and issue of any future alerts using the Emergency Alert System will be critically examined as part of the After Action Review for this incident.

Background

Emergency Alert is a nationally coordinated telephony based warning system designed to send messages to the landline and mobile telephones of residents in a defined geographic area. The ACT is a partner in Emergency Alert and has established a capacity to use the system operationally in the ACT.

Phase One of Emergency Alert is operational, allowing messages to be sent to landline and mobile telephones in a defined geographic area based on billing address.

Phase Two of Emergency Alert is not yet operational, but aims to provide a location-based mobile telephone emergency warning capability with the capability to provide messages to all mobile phones in a defined area, not just those with a billing address in the area, which is the existing operational capability.

Cleared as accurate and complete as at 19 September 2011

By:

Ext: 1100

Action officer:

Ext: 1100



JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

QUESTION TIME BRIEF

Minister: Minister for Police and Emergency Services
Correct and accurate as at: 19 September 2011

ISSUE: Mitchell Fire - Communications - Social media/Websites

Context

ESA Media and Communications through the use of social media, websites, local radio, television and print media kept the Canberra Community informed throughout the fire at Energy Services Environmental at Mitchell.

Talking Points

- Communication with the public throughout this incident saw operational responders draw on advances in communications technology not previously used in response to emergencies in the ACT.
- Local radio, television and newspapers were engaged to partner the emergency services to provide accurate and timely messages to the community.
- The ACT Emergency Services Agency (ESA) issued the following community information and advice during the course of the Mitchell fire incident:
 - 37 alerts and updates via media and the ESA website (11:52pm Thurs 15 September 2011 to 8:40pm Sun 18 September 2011);
 - 107 tweets on the ESA Twitter account @ACT_ESA; and
 - Numerous live radio updates on local radio stations.
- The ESA Twitter account went from having 15 followers on Thursday night to around 1800 on Sunday night.
- The ESA website recorded 64,963 visits between Friday and Sunday with a total of 127,285 page views.
- The ESA is preparing to go live with a brand new website in the coming days.
- The new ESA website will provide the community with access to more emergency information and advice than the current site.

Cleared as accurate and complete as at 19 September 2011

By: _____

Ext: _____

Action officer: _____

Ext: _____



JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY

QUESTION TIME BRIEF

Minister: Minister for Police and Emergency Services
Correct and accurate as at: 19 September 2011

ISSUE: Investigation Mitchell Fire - ACT Fire Brigade

Context

At 11:11pm on 15 September 2011, the ACT Fire Brigade received a request to attend a large fire at Energy Services Invironmental at Dacre Street in Mitchell.

Talking Points

- Following the fire at Energy Services Invironmental, the ACT Fire Brigade will conduct an investigation into the cause and origin of the fire.
- The investigation will be undertaken in concert with ACT Worksafe and will involve:
 - interviews with staff and the management of Energy Services Invironmental;
 - Visual inspection of the premises;
 - Physical examination; and
 - Scientific testing.
- On completion of the investigation a final report will be provided to the ACT Coroner.

Cleared as accurate and complete as at 19 September 2011

By:

Action officer

Ext:

Ext: