

## Samoa to strengthen emergency management capability with qualified fire investigators

Written by Zarin Khan

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Following an audit of the Samoa Fire & Emergency Services Authority this week, the Island nation will take steps to increase its emergency management capability with the introduction of qualified fire investigators. The representative selected to become Samoa's first detailed investigator will travel to Melbourne in April 2018 to train with the highly skilled Melbourne Fire Brigade's (MFB) Fire Investigation & Analysis (FIA) team. The investigator will return to Samoa by June 2018 to support Samoa's Fire and Emergency Services Authority (SFESA) efforts of increasing the investigation skills of colleagues in Samoa. Up to four Fire and Emergency Services personnel are expected to receive training, creating the first qualified fire investigation team in Samoa.

Samoa Fire and Emergency Services (F.E.S.A) Commissioner, Lelevaga Faafouina Mupo said "the country is focused on maintaining a strong emergency services culture which has again been tested after the impact of Tropical Cyclone Gita last week. This audit and the work we are doing here continues our commitment to increasing our emergency services capabilities to ensure we are best equipped into the future."

The audit was carried out by the MFB in partnership with the Pacific Community (SPC) and (SFESA) under the Pacific Islands Emergency Management Alliance (PIEMA), and assessed the country's capacity to investigate the root cause of fires as well as using fire incident data to

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increase investigation skills in the country. In addition to qualified fire investigators, the audit also made recommendations on improving fire response, fire safety and community messaging.

“Supporting and strengthening emergency management in the Pacific is critical to ensure countries in the region are better prepared before disasters strike and when an emergency response is required. This audit work will help bolster the Samoa Fire and Emergency Services Authority and the Pacific Community is privileged to play a key role in helping our partners increase emergency services capacity across the Pacific,” said Dr Andrew Jones, Pacific Community’s Director of the Geoscience, Energy and Maritime Division (GEM).

Melbourne Fire Brigade’s Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Barry Gray, said the completion of this week’s audit will support the long-term capacity of the country to carry out fire investigation and support the implementation of the recently endorsed Fire Reduction Strategy.

“This week’s training has provided FESA with the skills required to better train their operational fire fighters in scene perseverance working towards supporting the elements of the National fire Reduction Strategy and ultimately better community outcomes. This will now be supported by the training of one of the FESA team in the coming months with our team,” he said.

The partnership is possible through the Pacific Community’s Building Safety and Resilience in the Pacific Project funded by the European Union and ACP Group of States and implemented in Samoa by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment through its Disaster Management Office. The project will cover the transport and travel costs of the MFB investigators. The MFB technical team’s training and time is provided in-kind as part of the ongoing partnership between Samoa Government, and the Pacific Islands Emergency Management Alliance.

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