

EMERGENCY SERVICES — STORM SEASON RESPONSE

366. Mr F.A. ALBAN to the Minister for Emergency Services:

Last week Perth was hit with severe weather that damaged homes and left around 13 000 without power. What was the emergency services response and what can homeowners do to protect themselves and their properties during the upcoming storm season?

The SPEAKER: The “minister for storms”.

Mr J.M. FRANCIS replied:

Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am sure my dog appreciates having that named after her.

I thank the member for his question. This is a timely reminder. Last week there was a significant storm event in Perth. The State Emergency Service responded to 92 calls for assistance across the metropolitan area. In our part of the world, from May to October is storm season. This week is obviously the start of the storm season and we mark it with Storm Awareness Week. Of course, we cannot control the weather, but we can control our response and our preparation to make ourselves as ready as possible for the coming storm season. It is about sending a message to the people of Western Australia that they need to do their bit, similar to what they have to do for the bushfire season, to make sure that there is no junk around their house that could damage both their house and their neighbour’s house. They must make sure that they clean out their gutters and get rid of the overhanging trees that might come down on their house in a severe storm event. They must make sure that they also have a communication plan for their family and their pets so that they can get ready in case a significant storm event happens, as it happened, obviously, as I said, last week in the metropolitan area.

We all know that the SES does a wonderful job. There are about 2 300 volunteers across the state of Western Australia. We are committed to increasing their resources and their level of training. In fact, between now and the middle of 2015, 22 brand-new vehicles will be rolled out to the SES from Augusta all the way up to Port Hedland; so the SES is ready. People in Western Australia have to do their bit to get ready for the storm season as well. Every year during our storm season, the SES responds to about 1 000 calls to help people when there is damage to their house or they cannot get in or out of their property. The SES does a wonderful job and we should be very appreciative of the work it does. Of course, as I said, it is not all about what the government is doing. People have to take some responsibility for getting their property ready as well.

Lastly, I reiterate that if people need the help of the SES—I am sure we all know the phone number—they should call 132 500. I will say it again in case anyone has forgotten: 132 500. People should give the SES a call if there is damage to their house. Members should send the message out to the voters in their electorates. When members get the opportunity when they bump into SES volunteers doing their job, they should make sure that they thank the SES volunteers in Western Australia.