

Two-State Emergency Services and Industry Training: a big success

by Brian O'Connor, Chairman of the Canberra and Regions Oil Industry Emergency

Albury was the scene on March 5-6 for a series of unique joint emergency service and industry training sessions for emergency responders from both Victoria and NSW. Specialists from the oil industry conducted sessions showing how to safely handle tanker rollovers.

When a petroleum product incident occurs, it is essential that correct operating procedures are followed. On rural roads, first responders are often the local bushfire brigade or police. They may have no real knowledge of the working of a road tanker or how to handle the specialised equipment on these vehicles.

The training sessions were conducted using a specially modified 'rollover' tanker that can be laid on its side to simulate an actual incident. This enables emergency responders to be trained in 'real-life' conditions. The tanker unit can

even be made to leak at certain points, adding to the realism of the training.

Participants attended from a number of emergency services, government agencies, local governments, oil industry distributors, tanker drivers and depot staffs. Training included how road tankers are constructed, the various valving configurations, venting, hatches and practical methods to stop leaks.

Product recovery from tanker incidents is another area where specialised knowledge is essential. The sessions demonstrated how to cut into tankers to enable safe and prompt product recovery, the separation distances to be observed from ignition sources and what equipment and protective clothing to use in the product recovery operation. At the end of each session a foam cover was put down, an essential part of the initial emergency response in suppressing product vapours.

Vehicle salvage was also an area in which some points were highlighted. Petroleum product tankers are specialist vehicles and unsafe vehicle salvage methods can create very real hazards.

The fact that 600 people attended was a tremendous response, and was indicative of the interest in learning more from industry experts on how best to respond to tanker incidents. Many compliments were passed about the high standard of the training. Not only have the sessions been very successful in getting people from across borders to train together but also the 'side-by-side' training of industry and emergency services puts in place a platform for future co-operation.

For more information about future cross-State rollover training, contact Brian O'Connor, telephone 02 6226 1752 fax: 02 6226 1643 or e-mail: bjpoc@u030.aone.net.au.

