

Conclusions

The 1991 eruption of Mt Pinatubo was the world's largest eruption in more than 50 years. Although many lives were lost, thousands of casualties were averted by timely warnings and subsequent evacuation. Such effective warning of a volcanic crisis is a direct consequence of experience acquired in volcano monitoring and volcano hazard assessment. The eruption highlighted the importance of a rapid, energetic response to volcanic unrest and the significance of effective communication of hazard information to public officials. The eruption exemplifies the ways volcanoes can wreak sudden widespread destruction and havoc on the lives of populations who live near them.

However, unlike some other kinds of natural hazards, volcanoes commonly give significant advance warning. With sufficient volcano monitoring and emergency preparation, the loss of life and property can be minimised and sometimes prevented.

The ADF responses to the Rabaul volcanic eruptions and the tsunami at Aitape illustrate the potential for such natural disasters and the range of responses the ADF may be called upon to provide in the future.

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1800-467425 (1800-IMSICK): a new health service for ADF personnel within Australia

A toll-free after-hours nationwide 1800 telephone health advisory service is now available to all permanent Australian Defence Force members within Australia.

The service, managed by the Joint Health Support Agency, will allow ADF personnel to discuss health concerns with trained health staff over the phone and receive immediate advice about where to go for appropriate investigations and treatment. The advice will focus on the type of health care needed, the urgency of that need, and what to do until face-to-face medical care is provided. The service will also allow the local Area Health Service to issue reference numbers to authorise treatment and track expenditure.

Aims of 1800-IMSICK

1800-IMSICK aims to make ADF health services more accessible, bringing them closer to where people live or are on holiday, and to ensure that members receive appropriate treatment. It will also enable the member's parent unit to properly follow up treatment regimens and to verify accounts. The new service will streamline the authorisation process for ADF members seeking out-of-hours health care, making it a worry-free and simple procedure at what may be a stressful time.

How will 1800-IMSICK operate?

When an ADF member is sick or injured away from the workplace and out of office hours, he or she simply calls 1800-467425. The call will be automatically diverted to the nearest ADF health facility, where it will be answered by duty health personnel.

The duty health personnel will note the member's personal details, unit and relevant clinical details, then decide on a plan that is best for you. This may include:

- taking your contact phone number so that an on-call Medical or Dental Officer can contact you directly, or
- advising you on accessible treatment facilities in your immediate area (you may have a suggestion of your own based on your local knowledge), and
- issuing a referral number (if required) that will be used to authorise treatment and track expenditure.

Often advice and reassurance is all that is needed. If a member needs to attend a local civilian health provider or a military health provider, the duty personnel will ask the patient to call 1800-IMSICK on the completion of treatment to advise them of the outcome of treatment.