



Not every conference features people being cut out of crushed cars, or the opportunity to virtually fly helicopters. The AFAC18 Conference powered by INTERSCHUTZ did just that and much more.

Held at the Perth Conference and Exhibition Centre (PCEC), the conference connected almost 3,000 delegates from a range of fire, emergency and land management services with volunteers, researchers and policymakers.

Over four days the conference explored the theme Changing Lives in a Changing World. Amongst the key topics was how to manage fire in a future of climate change and keep communities safer from natural hazards. Indeed, the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre showcased their latest findings in a four-stream Research Forum on the first day.

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The following two days featured a six-stream conference program, as well as a trade exhibition including live demonstrations, awards presentations over cocktails and a gala dinner, fully utilising the wide variety of rooms and exhibition spaces at PCEC.

For the first time, the Australian Disaster Resilience Conference ran concurrently with AFAC18, offering delegates the opportunity to learn more about the work to build more disaster resilient communities across Australia.

As Mark Croweller AFSM, of the National Resilience Taskforce in the Department of Home Affairs said, "this is where the learning happens for the sector, more than any other time of year – these events get better and better."

Whilst the content and professional development opportunities were valued by all, the trade exhibition and demonstrations really brought the conference to life, featuring vehicle manufacturers, supporting equipment suppliers, emergency services teams, robots and radio-controlled devices, fire suppression, emergency and hazard reduction equipment.



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Organiser Ana Moreno, of Hannover Fairs Australia, was initially concerned this year’s live demonstration space was indoors, rather than outdoors as is customary, and that this might limit engagement. However, the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre has a lot of flexible space to work with. The demonstrations not only featured at regular intervals to large crowds, they were permanently staged alongside the industry exhibition space throughout the event.

Even between live demonstrations, people could get up close to view the equipment and ask each representative about their products. There were also a range of vintage vehicles on display to draw people to the area.

The exhibition and conference ran very smoothly but Ana also expressed how proud she was of the Gala Dinner. In line with the conference’s focus on ‘change’, the Gala Dinner boasted a colourful Kaleidoscope theme which was brilliantly executed through the choice of entertainment, decorations, staging and lighting.

“It was a fun and vibrant evening which became the highlight of many people’s overall AFAC18 experience”, said Ana.

And what of Perth as a location? “The teams at the Perth Convention Bureau and the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre were fantastic to work with and AFAC18’s success is a credit to their professionalism and continuous support. Hosting this event in Perth exceeded our expectations.”

