



Paddy Platypus

Statement of intent

To instruct members on the proper care and operational use of Paddy Platypus Mascot.

Approval	
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Document Control

Governance

Owner	Director NT Emergency Service
Authority	Issued pursuant to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">s 49(a) of the <i>Emergency Management Act 2013</i>s 24 of the <i>Public Sector Employment and Management Act 1993</i>
Scope	Applies to all NTES members, including staff and volunteers.
Review date	Every 3 Years
Suitable for public disclosure	Yes
Parent policy	PFES Customer Service Charter

Version History

Date	Version	Author	Summary of changes	Notification
30/05/2023	1.0	Marie Cunnington	First Version	

Definitions

The following are definitions for this Standard Operating Procedure (SOP).

Mascot	Paddy Platypus or NT Emergency Service (NTES) Mascot
Wearer	the person who wears the mascot
Minder	a person who looks after the mascot and the welfare of the wearer
Member	anyone who is trained to wear the mascot, this may be a paid staff or volunteer.
Presenter	the person delivering the content of the Paddy Program to an audience.
Traveller	person/s travelling to communities to deliver the Paddy Program.

Acronyms

ACRONYM	ACRONYM DEFINITION
ID	Identification
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
NTES	Northern Territory Emergency Service
SES	State Emergency Service
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure

Introduction

The NTES Community Engagement Unit focuses on preparing communities of the NT for the impact of storm, flood, cyclone and tsunami through the development and delivery of community engagement and awareness programs, displays and publications.

New South Wales (NSW) State Emergency Service (SES) own the copyright of the Paddy Platypus Mascot and have provided NTES with the approval to use the mascot as required in the NT. Paddy Platypus is the official mascot that used nationally by State Emergency Service (SES) agencies, including NTES, to visit schools and attend community events to teach young children how to prepare for emergencies, particularly flood, severe storm and cyclone. NTES offers schools a free educational presentation with the help of the mascot Paddy Platypus and other members.

The purpose of this SOP is to provide a guide on the use of the NTES Mascot “Paddy Platypus”. The Community Engagement Unit is responsible for the Paddy Platypus mascot and the management of the procedures.

Backstory - How Paddy came to the NT

The platypus is not native to the NT so a backstory had been developed to explain Paddy’s arrival to the NT:

“Paddy was hatched a few years ago in one of the coastal rivers in NSW. By the time, Paddy turned one, he was on his own and doing what platypuses do: foraging for food and digging tunnels and burrows.

Not too long after his first birthday, Paddy was caught in a flood. As his home river continued to rise, and the water ran more swiftly, he managed to fight his way into a billabong. Hungry and exhausted, he sheltered there and waited for the flood to subside.

During this time, Paddy had noticed there were boats being driven by people wearing orange and had serious expressions. He watched the people in orange rescue other people, who like him, were stranded by the flood. He even watched them save someone who had tried to cross a nearby creek in a four-wheel drive. It was then that Paddy decided he wanted to help, so once the floodwaters had gone down, he contacted the SES and asked if he could volunteer too.

Paddy found he was a natural as an SES volunteer. He was keen and reliable. He knew lots about his own river, and about how floods can behave. Soon he found he had another talent: he was great at getting people to learn and remember the things they could do to stay safer in floods and storms. Kids loved him, and so did their parents. Paddy’s career as the SES mascot had begun.

Not too long after this, Paddy realised that there were people in other places in Australia that also experienced dangerous weather conditions. Paddy soon found his way to South Australia and, after hearing

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about the flooding in Alice Springs' Todd River, Paddy boarded The Ghan and travelled to the NTES Headquarters in Darwin.

Hopping off in Darwin, Paddy approached the NTES and asked if he could help spread the message on how to stay safe in storms and floods to the people in the NT. The Director of NTES agreed that Paddy would be the perfect volunteer for the job and gave permission for Paddy to visit schools, community events and shows.

Today Paddy travels around the NT helping NTES to spread the message that there are simple things everyone can do to stay safe in severe weather”.

Training

Members must undertake the following training before performing in the role of minder or wearer of Paddy:

- Read this SOP; and
- Practice being both the minder and the wearer for at least 5 minutes each

Ideally, training should be conducted with a ratio of 1:2 maximum (trainer to trainees). This takes into account the availability of only one mascot. Due to the risks associated with the use of the mascot, where the training requires practice, this should be complied with.

Your Audience

The Paddy Platypus is aimed for classroom audiences with information specifically targeted towards students from Transition to Grade 5 with links to the Australian Curriculum, along with appearances in public events (i.e. school fetes/fairs, show circuits) where he is requested to attend. The ideal age for Paddy Platypus is pre-schoolers (approx. four year olds) and kids up to the age of eight as they will adore you. However, if they start to freak out, Paddy should back away (or even act frightened himself, which might win them over). Children from ages 11 through to early teens are also included in the age range but can become unruly, so do not lose your temper and remain calm and firm to keep the situation controlled. The kids who do love Paddy will want to give cuddles, try to get down on their level and hold arms out wide. It is best to keep it brief and keep them moving.

Minder

If the wearer becomes distressed through heat exhaustion or crowd buffeting, the minder should be alert to those needs and escort the wearer to safety, whom should also be aware of troublesome and should keep the kids at bay, (usually 11-14 year olds males). The minder should watch that Paddy doesn't trample little kids and keep an eye on the time and never leave Paddy to fend for itself. The minder will need to act as an interpreter and always refer to Paddy by their name.

Rules and Responsibilities

A minder has a great deal of responsibility, not only for the 'Paddy Platypus' mascot but as ambassadors for the NTES. Minders must be able to:

- Speak for the mascot;
- Make decisions for the mascot; and
- Know about NTES;

The following rules apply to the minder of Paddy Platypus:

- The minder should always confirm safety signals with the wearer prior to entering public sight;
- The minder must accompany Paddy Platypus at all times and never leave them unattended;
- The minder should avoid holding bags or cameras for the public, to remain focused on the welfare of Paddy Platypus and the wearer;

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- The minder must not be intoxicated or smell like alcohol or cigarettes;
- The minder must be aware of the dressing, care and safety procedures associated with this SOP and comply with these procedures at all times and be able to identify if the wearer becomes distressed through heat exhaustion;
- The minder must keep troublesome people away from Paddy Platypus, discourage overly “enthusiastic” treatment of Paddy Platypus by members of the public and ensure that Paddy Platypus does not trample smaller children;
- The minder must act as an interpreter for Paddy Platypus and always refer to the mascot by name;
- The minder must remain polite, courteous, confident and firm;
- The minder must guide Paddy Platypus when walking due to limited vision of the wearer in the mascot; and
- Should any damage or stains occur during an appearance, these must be reported to the Community Engagement Officer as soon as possible and no later than two (2) business days.

In the event that Paddy Platypus is struck or knocked over, the minder must check the welfare of the wearer immediately and follow the principles of first aid. The minder must remain with the mascot until assistance arrives (if necessary).

Mascot/Wearer

Rules and Responsibilities

The wearer must:

- Abide by the rules set for a mascot; and
- Be aware of the dressing, care and safety procedures associated with this SOP and comply with these procedures at all times.

The following rules apply to the wearer:

- The wearer should always confirm safety signals with the minder prior to before entering public sight;
- No part of the mascot may be removed in public, i.e. head or gloves;
- No eating or drinking may occur in the mascot, with the exception of water but outside of public viewing though;
- Paddy Platypus must not be intoxicated or smell like alcohol or cigarettes;
- Paddy Platypus may not kneel, sit or casually lounge in public sight. This wears on the fabric and places Paddy Platypus in a vulnerable position;
- Paddy Platypus must not pick up adults, children, toddlers or babies;
- A set adherence to the time limits set for wearing the mascot;
- Paddy Platypus must be worn with the utmost care; and
- A minimum clothing requirement under the mascot consists of a clean shirt/singlet, clean shorts and clean socks.

Communication

Paddy Platypus must not talk in public and may only communicate by gestures and movement. Communicate using the following body language:

- Throws kisses, wave (whole arm) and small (wiggly fingers);
- If there are loud noises, Paddy can point and place his hands over his ears.

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Even though Paddy can't communicate verbally, Paddy can hear the minder answer, and respond through movement.

Signals

Hand signals should be discussed between the minder and wearer prior to putting the mascot on. Most commonly used signal would be three firm taps on the shoulder of the minder to indicate that the wearer needs to get out of the mascot. The minder will then escort the wearer out of view of the public and assist getting out of the mascot.

Greetings

Discuss and allow sufficient time for the wearer to practice how the mascot:

- Hugs;
- High fives;
- Throws kisses;
- Waves;
- Fist bumps;
- Gives a thumbs up.

Movements

The effect of the mascot is a cartoon coming to life, so be larger than life. Keep everything very broad. Wide arm movements, exaggerated leg movements, high and wide knee lifts, and splayed feet. Take large slow steps and use the arms accordingly. Remember you're a cartoon come to life.

Vision

Be aware when wearing the mascot that the wearer's vision is limited. The vision is through Paddy's mouth with restrictive views that the wearer is unable to see directly in front, below, left or right without moving the head. The movement of the head is also restricted due to the size of the head and the neck fur that is tucked in. The wearer must rely upon on the minder, as they are responsible for the welfare of the wearer and be aware of where Paddy's beak is moving to, to protect the beak and people around including the minder themselves

Components

Paddy Platypus consists of the following components:

- 1x Head piece, fully lined and covered with fabric;
- 1x Shaped body torso, fully lined and covered with fabric;
(Fur has been removed from under the uniform for added wearer comfort and coolness)
- 2x character hands/gloves for easy clean and wearer safety;
- Accessories including:
 - 1x safety hat;
 - 1x replica NTES uniform overalls; and
 - 1x ID badge;
- 2x Outsized mascot character boots fitted with micro cell outdoor soles allowing wearers of up to 27 cm shoe size;
- 1x Water-resistant carry/storage bag; and
- 1x Cooling vest with cooling packs.

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Dressing

The minder and wearer will need to ensure that the mascot dressing is carried out in a change area that is out of site of the public. The wearer will ideally need to wear a clean t-shirt, shorts and socks. The mascot does not have a fly and will require complete removal to be able to use the bathroom, preferably use the bathroom before being dressed into Paddy. Once dressed, the minder must check if the mascot is on correctly right before going out in public. If adjustments are necessary, return to the change area and only adjust the mascot out of public sight. All components of the mascot should be stored in the carry bag before being moved into public sight. Paddy must never be seen or photographed partially dressed. DO NOT remove, for any reason, any part of the mascot in public. The wearer and minder need to preserve the integrity of the character and NTES.

Dressing instructions

Dressing Paddy is a two person job. Read through the following steps before attempting dressing.

- Make sure the NTES uniform is on Paddy Platypus correctly, i.e. the tail is .
- Carefully step into the body pod & outfit. Pull the body up gently into place onto the wearer's shoulders and Velcro into place;
- Zip up the body pod at the back;
- Minder to place shoes in front for wearer to step into. When putting on shoes, make sure the wearer is wearing only their socks;
- Minder to carefully place the head on the wearer;
- Wearer can fasten the clip on the chin strap in so it is secure on the wearer's head. Make sure the chin strap fits comfortably ensuring stability of the head.
- Minder to stuff neck flaps under the outfit.
- Minder to zip up the front of the outfit.
- Minder to assist to put on gloves whilst making a fist to allow for the minder to pull the gloves up tightly.
- Minder to place Paddy's ID Badge over the head so that it sits around the neck comfortably. Make sure that it sits underneath the collar.
- Minder to make sure Paddy is neat and tidy and the wearer feels comfortable before heading out into public view.

Personal Health

The wearer must understand that by wearing the mascot, they are exposing themselves to warm and humid environments, limited vision, limited ventilation and restricted movement. The noted exposures may exacerbate some medical conditions. Wearers should consult their General Practitioner and seek independent medical advice prior to wearing the mascot should they have any concerns. A minimum clothing requirement under the mascot consists of a clean shirt/singlet, clean shorts and clean socks. Members wearing the suit are required to confirm with their minder that they are medically fit. Any wearer declaring a medical condition is to be withdrawn from the activity and advised to seek medical attention. Members rostered to wear the mascot for an event, are to immediately bring to the attention of their supervisor, any health conditions that may increase their risk of participating in the event. Members have a duty of care to themselves and to NTES to take reasonable steps to ensure their own safety. At no stage whatsoever, is the wearing of the mascot a mandatory activity within NTES.

Rest, Hydration and Food

The mascot may be worn, depending on humidity and comfort levels, for approximately:

- 20 to 30 minutes in cool weather (up to 25 °C)

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- 10 to 30 minutes in warm/hot weather (over 25 °C)

The wearer is recommended to eat a balanced meal prior to the event and ensure they are hydrated. The wearer can have something small to eat during rest period while outside of the suit. A break should be sufficient enough time to cool down and hydrate. Members are encouraged to take as many breaks as necessary to ensure comfort and safety. Members who participate in events are recommended to upkeep their intake of water as much as possible. Drinking carbohydrate-based sports drinks as a means of replacing fluids, carbohydrates and electrolytes lost during prolonged activity can be done also. Removing Paddy's head during rest periods is generally enough to cool down.

Heat Stress

Heat stress represents a continuum of disorders from minor syndromes such as heat rash, heat cramps, heat syncope (fainting) and heat exhaustion to the severely life-threatening disorder known as heat stroke.

Symptoms may include:

- Heavy sweating, tired and thirsty
- Moist cool skin
- Irritability
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea/vomiting
- Prickly heat rash
- Muscle spasms/twitching
- Painful muscle cramps (abdomen, arms and legs)

Treatment includes:

- Move to a cool place (e.g. cool shady area, air conditioned environment)
- Lie down with legs supported and slightly elevated
- Have a cool shower or bath
- Drink more water
- Massage muscles gently to ease spasms, or firmly if cramped, then apply ice packs and drink glucose (e.g. diluted cordial)

Heat Exhaustion

Heat Exhaustion is a serious health illness, which may progress to heat stroke if not properly treated. It is most common in non-acclimatised individuals. Symptoms may include:

- Profuse sweating
- Cold, clammy, pale skin
- Fatigue, weakness and restlessness
- Headache
- Dizziness
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Weak, but rapid pulse
- Normal temperature
- Faintness

Treatment may include:

- Move person to a cool place (e.g. shady area, air conditioned environment)

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- Lay person down with legs supported and slightly elevated
- Loosen clothing
- Cool person e.g. apply cool wet cloths to person's head and body, fan them
- Give sips of cool water
- If vomiting, seek medical assistance immediately

For further information on heat stress, visit <https://nt.gov.au/wellbeing/health-conditions-treatments/heat-stress>

Mascot Care, Cleaning and Storage

Mascot care and maintenance is vital to ensure access and availability to a clean and sanitised mascot, to prolong the life of the mascot. Dry cleaning must be avoided as the chemicals used in the dry cleaning process may damage certain components of the mascot and potentially trigger allergies in the wearer/minders. Paddy Platypus may be cleaned by an industrial laundry using washing or steam cleaning methods, alternatively a reputable carpet steam cleaner may do steam cleaning on premise, which should be done after each use. The mascot should also be sprayed on the inside and outside with a quality anti-bacterial spray disinfectant and left to dry overnight after each use. An annual/bi annual clean and service by Animal & Odd-Bod Creators is recommended.

Paddy Platypus is fully washable and may be laundered in a lukewarm bath with the mascot left to drain overnight to remove excess water. When the mascot is wet and heavy, careful handling is required. The foam on the inside can be torn if roughly handled and is expensive to replace. The mascot may also be placed in a gentle warm machine wash cycle using cold rinse with little fabric softener and normal spin cycle. Never use chlorine bleach, never tumble dry and never iron. Once dried, a gentle brush over Paddy Platypus' fur after each wash will make him look like new.

DO NOT store the mascot if wet or damp as this may cause mould and irreparable damage. Paddy Platypus must be stored in a clean and well-ventilated room.

Paddy Platypus must be hung and not stored in his carry bag for prolonged periods. Paddy Platypus' head should be placed in a position that places the least amount of stress on his shape (i.e. neck opening) and may be stuffed with paper to retain shape if stored for long periods. Paddy Platypus' feet should sit on their soles and be separated from the other components of the mascot.

The Paddy Program

Prior to the commencement of presenting a Paddy Program session, the NTES presenter (Community Engagement Officer or minder) will brief the person in charge on site, most likely to be the person who had booked the session.

This briefing will contain;

- A reminder of the approximate length of the presentation (anywhere from 20 to 30 minutes dependant of weather and WH&S considerations) ;
- Confirm where Paddy Platypus will be getting changed (making sure it is private and out of site of the audience), where the location of the presentation will be held and what the kids can do with Paddy Platypus like photos, touch, etc.
- Confirm the key safety messaging to be delivered to the audience, and identifying any potential sensitivities relating to the safety messaging that may exist within the audience:
 - Stay Inside during storms
 - Have a home emergency kit
 - Have a family emergency plan
 - Never walk, ride, swim or play in flood water or drains
 - Check on your neighbours
 - Take care of your pets

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- Do not shelter under trees during storms

At the commencement of the session, the presenter/minder will deliver the program while Paddy Platypus is interacting with the audience. Paddy Platypus is to acknowledge audience participation by using engagement tactics such as waves, high fives, thumbs up and fist bumps while the presenter/minder talks.

Upon completion of the session, the wearer can provide a one on one personalised farewell to each member of the audience, while the presenter says goodbye on behalf of Paddy.

Community Engagement Officers must refer to the Community Engagement Unit Handbook for Paddy Program instructions. When travelling to remote communities to deliver a Paddy Program, traveller(s) must also refer to the Remote Community Engagement Standard Operating Procedure.

Forms

The following form/s apply to this standard operating procedure:

Online request form: [NTES Engagement Request Form | NT Police, Fire & Emergency Services](#)

Related references

The following references apply to this standard operating procedure:

Emergency Management Act 2013

Public Sector Employment and Management Act 1993

Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011

PFES Customer Service Charter.