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SSAA (Vic) welcomes model hunter



The Sporting Shooters Association of Australia (Victoria) is pleased that deer hunter Neil Marriott, who exemplifies responsible hunting, has accepted a complimentary annual membership to the Association.

The Traralgon father-of-three was hunting in the Victorian High Country last month, when he rolled his ankle and broke it, along with his fibula.

Alone and 30km from the nearest town, the situation could have been dire, but Acting Air Ambulance Team Manager and MICA flight paramedic Steve Grove said Mr Marriott's responsible planning and preparation meant a swift rescue.

"Neil had a registered EPIRB, which he set off," he said. "That triggered a ping to Australian Search and Rescue, who contacted us and his partner, who was listed as the emergency contact. She had details of where Neil was going and what equipment he had with him."

When the helicopter approached, Mr Marriott – who was reachable on his UHF radio – told paramedics he had made it to higher ground and was wearing his blaze orange hat to make him visible from the air.

SSAA (Vic) Chief Executive Officer Jack Wegman said Mr Marriott was exactly the sort of hunter the Association wanted to represent – responsible, prepared and safety conscious.

"SSAA (Vic) works hard to educate its members, and the wider public, on the safe handling of firearms, ethical hunting and being responsible citizens," he said. "Neil has shown, through this dramatic experience, that being responsible and planning ahead can mean the difference between getting home to your family and spending a lonely night in the bush, or worse."

Mr Wegman encouraged all hunters to follow Mr Marriott's example by buying an EPIRB and registering it with Australian Search and Rescue; telling someone where they are going; packing a charged mobile phone and UHF radio and wearing a blaze orange hat, backpack or top during their next hunting trip.

Mr Marriott said he was "excited" to join SSAA (Vic) and was looking forward to heading down to the East Gippsland SSAA branch.

"It's great to be offered something like this," he said. "I buy the *Australian Shooter* magazine regularly so it will be good to get it sent to me as part of the membership."

"I'd just encourage all other hunters to buy an EPIRB. They're \$300 for 10 years, they're small and lightweight so they're easy to carry in your pack. Mine has paid for itself already."

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