

SUPER VEST EQUIPS FIELD STAFF FOR SURVIVAL

A state-of-the-art safety vest has been acquired for OSPRI's Field Supervisors to ensure they are fully equipped to survive an emergency.

Field supervisors work with contractors on pest control and survey operations that can be as rugged as a backcountry expedition - steep terrain in thick forest a long way from a safe base. When things go wrong out there, having the right gear available and accessible can make all the difference in a life-threatening situation.

Q: Where did this vest come from and what does it contain?

A: OSPRI looked at vests from two sources for something that field staff would use to carry what they needed in a remote environment. Four field staff trialled the vests in the field and decided the G2 model vest from On Duty Equipment of Canada offered the best solution. This same base vest is used by the Royal New Zealand Air Force.

The vest is a variation on a military MOLLE (Modular Lightweight Load-carrying Equipment) design. The name comes from the webbing straps that form the chassis of the vest. Straps allow variously sized and shaped utility pouches to be added or removed as needed and can be used as a harness in an emergency.



EQUIPPED TO SURVIVE: OSPRI Field Supervisors use a safety vest that carries life-support essentials to keep field workers safe in remote situations.

Q: Why do our field supervisors need such a piece of personal protective equipment?

A: In one recent incident in challenging terrain, a contractor fell down a bank and broke his leg. But he was separated from his radio, which was in a pack lost in the fall.

Another contractor lost her kit off the back of her side-by-side when the vehicle rolled over.

In both instances, the contractors were separated from essential first aid and communications equipment which would have been on hand if the new vests were in use.

All OSPRI staff and contractors who work remotely need to have the best PPE on hand in case of an accident, wherever they are. There is a growing list of safety equipment and other key items (PPE, first aid, survival kit are deemed essential gear) that OSPRI field supervisors are now required to carry, on their person, for their individual safety.

These have normally been carried in backpacks, on belts, in jacket pockets, on a motorcycle (box) or in a LUV. So not all the gear was on the person, everywhere and all the time. The vest and utility pouch arrangement means that all essential gear is available and accessible when it's needed.

The vest, configured appropriately, also allows the wearer to move through bush and undergrowth with relative ease. That means other bulky stuff – a water bladder, wet weather gear, tent or hammock, for example – can be stowed in a backpack.

Q: How much do they cost?

A: Top quality is essential, but it doesn't come cheap, and OSPRI is not prepared to equip staff with inferior gear. The vests, with utility pouches and communications equipment, cost about \$2000.

Q: What are the five most important risks that a field worker faces in the course of TBfree control and surveillance activity?

1. Remote and sometimes solitary work in remote locations – without cell coverage.
2. Driving – both on and off-road, to and from isolated locations.
3. Environment (weather/terrain/altitude/water courses/other land users/poachers/hunters/wild and farmed animals).
4. Working on unfamiliar steep ground with the risk of falling off cliffs or down holes.
5. Working in or accessing areas where 'simultaneous operations' are also taking place (forestry, farming, aircraft).



ESSENTIAL KIT: Having your survival gear within reach might save your life if things go wrong out in the field.

Find out more about the Critical Risks that primary industry workers face in their work by watching the short animated video at ospri.co.nz/health-and-safety.

