

# BUSH FIREbulletin

THE JOURNAL OF THE NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE



## 5,113 fires and counting

The fire season kicks off to an early start

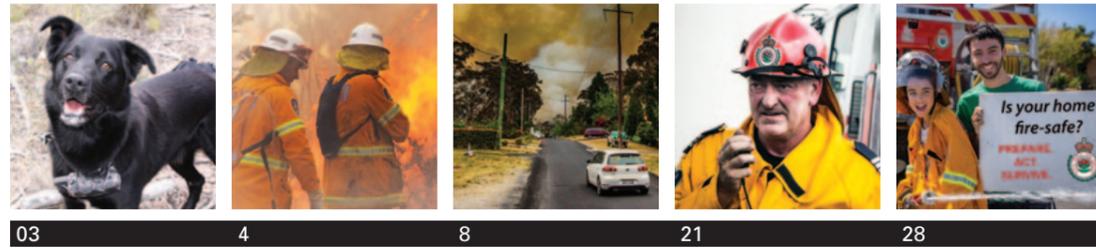
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EARLY START TO FIRE SEASON  
INAUGURAL NORTH WEST ZONE EX

RESEARCH IN FROM JANUARY 2013 FIRES  
RECRUITMENT TOOLKIT



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# Foreword



IN THE NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE  
**WE VALUE**

community and environment  
support, friendship and camaraderie  
knowledge and learning  
integrity and trust  
one team, many players and one purpose  
adaptability and resourcefulness  
mutual respect

It was a hard and fast start to the fire season. July 2013 was one of the hottest on record and predictions from the weather bureau revealed that it would be a lot drier than at first thought. NSW was poised for a very intense and early fire season.

Throughout August in preparation, crews were lighting more than 100 significant hazard reduction burns each week to reduce fuel loads. In the Northern Tablelands and New England Zone, however, the official bush fire danger period was brought forward to 1 August.

While crew were reducing hazard in controlled environments, there was also a spate of escaped private burns. In fact in August alone, crews battled more than 350 blazes started on private property, with farm equipment, fences and even a house in Upper Colo in the Hawkesbury destroyed. I made my concern about this trend public.

In September several very significant fires took off in the north, Mid North Coast and also around Sydney. As early as 10 September fires threatened homes in the Blue Mountains, Cumberland and Hawkesbury area - well before their official fire season began. There are more details about the early part of the season in this issue of the *Bush Fire Bulletin*.

October 2013 will be remembered as one of the most significant fire emergencies our State has experienced for many years. There is a summary of the firefighting effort in this issue, including the huge logistical support and base camps, however further stories and behind-the-scenes anecdotes will be included in the next *Bulletin*.

Sadly, the fire emergency has brought tragedy with the death of David Black, a pilot who was killed while engaged in firefighting activities west of Ulladulla on the south coast in October 2013. David leaves a wife and three young children, who are receiving support from family, friends and the NSW RFS. Our thoughts are also with the family and friends of a man who suffered a heart attack while defending his home at Lake Munmorah.

The 20th anniversary of the 1994 fires occurred in January 2014. Those fires were a milestone for firefighting in NSW and I have marked the occasion in this issue of the *Bulletin*. Research from the January 2013 fires has also now been published and includes important lessons in community engagement. Two new Toolkits, designed to make life in brigades easier have been launched. The Recruitment Toolkit and Communications Toolkit are now available and featured in this issue.

I would like to thank everyone who has played a role this season so far. The season is far from over, and there is much more hard work ahead of us all.

Regards

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons, AFSM



@RFSCommissioner



facebook.com/rfsccommissioner

## Firefighter For A Day



What happens when you put the usually desk-bound IT and administration staff into PPE? Janelle Grimshaw found out when she participated in the Firefighter For A Day program held by FRNSW at their Albion Park training centre in November 2013. Four staff from the NSW RFS SAP Enterprise Asset Management project team participated in the day's activities joined by other project members from FRNSW and NSW SES from the multi agency-wide software and systems project. "We had a ball!" Janelle said, "we learned how to put out gas fires, extricate people from vehicles and even went up in a crane (aerial platform) to fight fires from up above!"

## An online Bush Fire Survival Plan



As part of our ongoing Prepare Act Survive public awareness campaign, a new online version of the Bush Fire Survival Plan has been released. The MyFirePlan app provides general advice on understanding your risk, steps to prepare your property, and the decision on what to do during a fire. Users can complete their Plan including key contacts, email and print it, and share it with family and friends. You can download the MyFirePlan app on iOS and Android. If you have feedback about the new app email the team at [online@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:online@rfs.nsw.gov.au).

## Better late than never



The Blackheath/Mt Victoria Brigade in the Blue Mountains recently won the Highly Commended Resilient Australia Award for their HUFF (Heads Up For Fire) program. "The photo was taken at our Open Day," wrote Mina Howard, "Shane Fitzsimmons came as we had all missed the official presentation at Parliament House - Shane included. It (the ceremony) was held the day after the fire went through. I live in the street in Mt Victoria where eight houses were destroyed. We only lost two cars, the caravan, some of the gardens and fencing but I didn't think I should travel to Sydney and leave the house. My husband, the Captain of the Brigade was in hospital in Penrith! He missed the entire event! The Commissioner and Rosa Sage, the local member, made the presentation on Open Day. I couldn't believe Shane actually came!"

## Bush Fire Survival Plan ebook for Kids



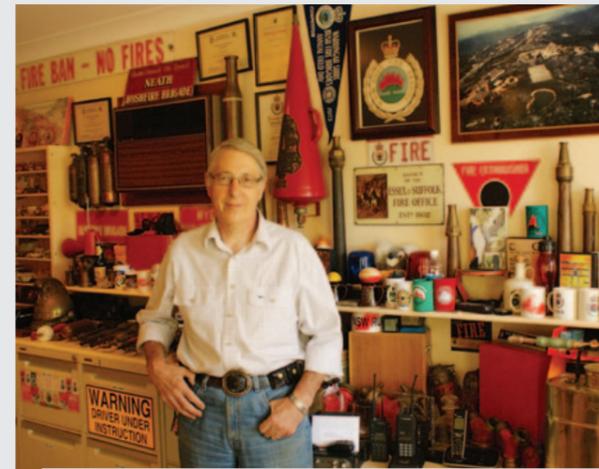
*Involve your Kids* is an ebook published by the Bushfire CRC designed to help parents discuss bush fire preparation and safety with their children. The ebook is interactive and engaging, outlining how the whole family can help prepare for bush fire. It answers the three basic questions of why, what and how parents can engage their children to be part of the bush fire planning process. Based on the PhD research of Dr Briony Towers who investigated children's understanding of bush fires, *Involve your Kids* can be freely downloaded from the Bushfire CRC website.

## Tyranny of Distance



Facebook is helping the NSW RFS overcome the 'tyranny of distance' thanks to the work of Inspector Robyn Favelle and the Barrier Range Brigade. Inspector Favelle was awarded the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Council (AFAC) Motorola Knowledge Innovation award for her work using the social network to gather and share important fire information. Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons congratulated Inspector Favelle at the recent AFAC conference in Melbourne. Dr Simon Heemstra also accepted an award for the Service's fire behaviour modelling, grassland curing and smoke plume modelling tools.

## Proud of the past



The NSW RFS has a long and proud history and now, it has an official historian to capture and record the Service's story. Retired Chief Superintendent Alan Brinkworth has been appointed as the Service's official volunteer historian. Alan has amassed an extensive collection of Service memorabilia, as well as documenting the history of the NSW RFS since he joined the Service in 1972. Alan is working on an online collection of memorabilia and information which shows the progress of the Service, due to be completed this year. If you would like to make a contribution please contact Alan at: [abrinky@bigpond.net.au](mailto:abrinky@bigpond.net.au)

## Oscar dies while at work

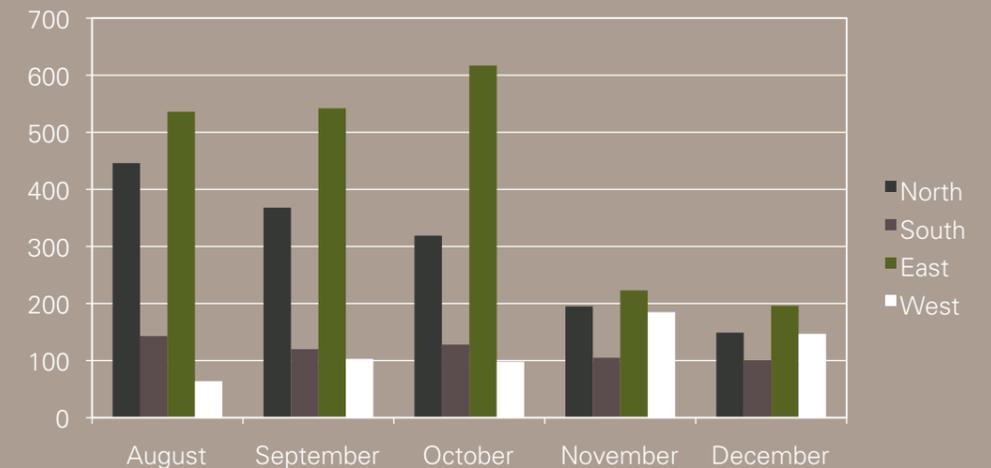


Oscar, the koala-sniffing dog, was featured in the *Bush Fire Bulletin* in 2012 for his work helping firefighters in the Cooma/Monaro District to detect koalas in trees before undertaking hazard reduction burns. To most people Oscar was just another lively black Labrador but to the few people who had seen him at work, he was very special, and truly one of a kind. Oscar was recently killed while saving a koala population in Port Macquarie. Photo by Brydie O'Connor

# An early start to the fire season



Fire Activity: 1 August -31 December 2013



It was an early start to the fire season with bush and grass fires across NSW numbering 5,113 for the period 1 July to 31 December 2013.

October 1, 2013 marked the official start to the bush fire season in NSW, however many areas had already seen significant fire activity when the fire season was launched.

August and September 2013 proved to be unusually busy especially in Region North and Region East (see table on page 5).

In the period from 1 August to 31 December two people lost their lives, over 224 homes were lost and around 170 other homes were damaged.

## August 2013

For some parts of the country, July 2013 had been their

warmest in more than 100 years and weather forecasters were expecting the 2013/14 fire season to be one of the hottest on record.

Fire conditions were such that the New England and Northern Tablelands areas commenced their official bush fire danger period from 1 August 2013. In the period of 1 August to 1 January 2014 Region North experienced 1,477 bush fires including a fire in the Crescent Head area near Kempsey which ran from 19 August to 26 August, threatening properties and burning 445 hectares.

## September 2013

Throughout September 2013 the north coast saw numerous fires, especially in the Lower North Coast and Clarence Valley. In late September, fires threatened communities around Taree and the Great Lakes areas. While there were some losses such as sheds and outbuildings, there were no homes destroyed.

Tuesday 10 September saw Section 44 declarations in the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury and Cumberland areas, for fast moving fires which were threatening homes. Under conditions which were worse

than originally forecast, a fire impacted on homes around the township of Winmalee in the Blue Mountains. An investigation later found this fire was the result of an escaped hazard reduction burn in the area. On the same day in western Sydney, fires at Londonderry and Marsden Park also affected local communities, with one home being destroyed. In just one day, nearly 30,000 Emergency Alert mobile telephone warning messages were delivered, while another 12,000 voice messages were sent to fixed phone lines in the fire affected areas.

In the final days of September, another Total Fire Ban was declared for a number of areas from Sydney to the Queensland border.

On Saturday 28 September, a fast moving fire burnt across the Barrenjoey Headland in Sydney. While the fire was relatively small, it cut access to the iconic lighthouse where people were told to seek shelter. Helicopters and ground crews saved the lighthouse complex from the fire, however one building received minor damage after embers entered the roof area. There are more details on this fire on page 7.

Communities around Taree and the Great Lakes were threatened by the Big Run Creek fire which burned some 1,674 hectares along with several sheds and outbuildings. Fortunately there were no homes destroyed.

October was a busy month for the NSW RFS even before the high profile fires which struck the Blue Mountains area in mid-October. Details about the Salt Ash fire, Barrenjoey headland fire and an overview of the Blue Mountains fires appear in the following pages.

LEFT: Hall Road, Balmoral fire on 19 October 2013. Photo by Janne Sloane.

BELOW LEFT: 10 September 2013: The Marsden Park fire threatened many homes and one was destroyed.

This image was taken at around 1245hrs 10 September 2013. It shows the very moment that the suburb of Bligh Park erupted in flames with gum trees literally exploding in the residential area of Rich Close. Photo by Graham Slingsby.

BELOW RIGHT: Flames approaching Taree Service Station on the Pacific Highway on 26 September 2013. Photo by Sean Berry Channel 7.



# Salt Ash Fire

Photo by Ben Shepherd

# Barrenjoey blackened

By Kyle Parker, Warringah- Pittwater District

Fire burnt out scrub and bushland on Barrenjoey Headland in Sydney's north, known for its use in the television drama series 'Home and Away', in late September 2013. Two buildings at the Barrenjoey lighthouse complex sustained damage but no other property damage or injuries were reported.

Around 1400hrs on Saturday 28 September, fire crews from Fire & Rescue NSW (FRNSW) and NSW RFS were responded to reports of a bush fire below the well-known lighthouse. Images posted on social media showed a small but fierce fire burning with a strong easterly wind blowing. The fire grew rapidly and arriving firefighters were immediately concerned for the safety of bushwalkers and fisherman in the area. An Emergency Warning was issued for the fire.

Some 80 firefighters were dispatched with boats and helicopters involved in

the incident. Boats were immediately tasked with checking on people who may have been trapped on rocks around the headland, with a small number being taken to safety.

Helicopters undertook water bombing operations on the fire. With only a small walking trail and narrow vehicle track to the top, firefighters travelled on foot and utilised an ATV from the Surf Lifesaving club to move equipment to the top of the hill where the lighthouse and associated buildings were under threat.

Firefighters who had reached the buildings called for immediate assistance, with smoke issuing from one of the building's roof. Firefighters in breathing apparatus worked their way into the roofspace where roofing beams had caught fire. Embers had travelled in through very small gaps between flashing and roof sheets, igniting the roof beams. Fortunately firefighters were able to limit the spread of fire, though repairs will be needed.

Also at the lighthouse buildings, a number of visitors to the headland had gathered for safety. NSW RFS sent

Emergency Alert messages to mobile telephones in the area instructing anyone on the headland to seek refuge there, with paths back to the car park too dangerous to travel on. Those gathered were later transported to safety below. By around 1600hrs, the Emergency Warning advice had been downgraded to Watch and Act.

Dozens of residents of Salt Ash, near Port Stephens spent the night in evacuation centres after fires threatened their homes on 13 October 2013.



At around 1400hrs on 13 October 2013 a fire started at Browns and Lemon Tree Passage Roads, Salt Ash. Fire weather forecasts indicated high temperatures and gusty winds.

Eight NSW RFS tankers were sent to the scene and it was quickly determined that the fire would threaten homes within the next two hours. An Emergency Warning was issued and for residents in the Browns and Lemon Tree Passage road and Emergency Alert telephone warnings were sent to people in the area.

The fire took multiple runs in all directions throughout the afternoon and evening crossing and closing several roads in the

area. It was in this period that four houses were destroyed along with a number of sheds and outbuildings. Crews on scene concentrated on property protection while aviation resources worked on spot fires.

At 1700hrs the fire was downgraded to Watch and Act as houses were no longer under threat. By 1800hrs an Evacuation Centre was established at Williamtown Community Hall to house those residents who had been stranded by the fire.

The fire took another run late in the evening crossing Hookes Rd and threatening property in the area. At 2200hrs the fire was upgraded to an Emergency Warning and an Emergency

Alert was issued warning residents to be aware of ember attacks.

Relief came in the early hours of the morning when a light rain fell on the fireground and crews were able to contain the blaze. In the following days crews worked hard to consolidate containment lines and continued to patrol the fireground for the next nine days until it was declared out on 23 October 2013.

A total of 605ha were burnt. Fire Investigators determined that the fire started as a result of powerlines arcing in the high winds. Four homes were confirmed destroyed in this fire, along with a number of sheds, garages, boats and vehicles.



A bush fire on the beautiful Barrenjoey headland in the north of Sydney created concerns for the safety of bushwalkers and fishermen. Photo by Kane Lambkin

# Red October

Taken in Blackheath looking west on Thursday 17 October 2013 toward the State Mine and Mt York fires.  
Photo by Gary Hayes

“About as bad as it gets” – that’s how the recent fire threat was described by Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons.

After the warmest winter on record, and without any substantial rain for many months, October saw conditions deteriorate further and a number of significant fires start.

The most destructive of these was a fire which destroyed 193 homes and damaged 109 others around Springwood, Winmalee and Yellow Rock in the Blue Mountains. The Linksvie Road fire started on Thursday 17 October and spread under strong and gusty winds.

A fire at Mount Victoria destroyed seven homes that same afternoon.

Further north, the State Mine fire spread quickly from the outskirts of Lithgow towards

the community of Bilpin on the Bells Line of Road. This fire burnt more than 50,000 hectares and destroyed three homes and seven businesses and sheds. It was contained nearly two weeks later.

In the Southern Highlands, a fire threatened the community of Balmoral, destroying two homes and closing roads for several days.

The Central Coast was also affected by fires during October, including the Rutleys

Road fire which impacted on the community of Catherine Hill Bay, destroying historic buildings and part of the town’s iconic jetty.

At Port Stephens, a fire spread from Heatherbrae to Williamtown, closing Newcastle Airport and damaging a number of homes and businesses. Earlier in the month, homes at Fingal Bay and Salt Ash were also threatened.

At the height of the fires, thick smoke filled the skies over Sydney in a sight not seen for many years. NASA even reported seeing the smoke from the fires from space.

In recognition of the threat, and with conditions set to deteriorate, the Premier declared a State of Emergency. A number of Section 44 declarations were also in place.

## Preparations for 23 October

With five large fires running and very hot fire weather due for the 23 October, the Service made a concerted attempt to warn the public of the dangers.

Communities in fire affected areas were asked to leave early, all non-essential travel was kept to a minimum and restrictions on heavy vehicle movements in the Blue Mountains were in place.

All schools in the Blue Mountains LGA were closed for the day of 23 October 2013 as were National Parks across the State. Residents of nursing homes residents in Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury and Southern Highlands were relocated to areas well away from the firegrounds. Numerous Evacuation Centres were also opened including Lithgow, Springwood, Winmalee and Lake Macquarie.

An additional 1,600 firefighters were deployed or placed at staging areas and aircraft were strategically placed across the State.

An overarching Incident Management Team was established, under the control of Deputy Commissioner Rob Rogers, to coordinate the local IMTs across the Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury.

There was a very real potential for fires to quickly impact on communities including the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury, western Sydney and Southern Highlands. The Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons warned people that the safest option was to leave early in the day.

“Whilst we can do everything we can,” he said, “do not wait for a fire truck to get into your driveway; do not rely on a fire truck coming to your home; do not rely on a message; do not rely on a knock on the door.

We will do everything we can, but it would be wrong of me to provide a guarantee that we will deliver on providing a truck to every home, a message to every person. It is simply something we cannot guarantee, but we will do our absolute darnedest.”

### October 23

Overnight rain dampened some of the fire activity but there were still a number of Emergency Warnings issued on October 23 and some communities came under direct threat. Importantly there were no deaths, injuries or property lost on that day as had been feared. The many fires already running did not expand.

The extraordinary efforts of the Remote Area Firefighting Teams (RAFT) working in the fire-affected areas of the Blue Mountains were credited with the success of that day.

“It was really the RAFT crews who made a difference that day,” said Deputy Commissioner Rob Rogers.

### Information flow

Between 13 and 26 October, the NSW RFS website received a staggering 5.7 million views, with 14.1 million page views. The Service’s Facebook community grew from around 120,000 people to 280,000. The Fires Near Me smartphone apps were downloaded nearly 200,000 times.

Commissioner Fitzsimmons praised the work of firefighters from all agencies, as well as other emergency management agencies during the crisis.

“We’ve got the best firefighters in the world... they are second to none,” he said.

A full report of the fires in October 2013 with detailed incident information will be

available in the next issue of the *Bush Fire Bulletin*.

### A team effort

More than 1,300 firefighters from all agencies were deployed each day of that fortnight in addition to 148 NSW RFS Strike Teams. There were over 630 aircraft taskings in the period.

Support from interstate was fast and effective. Victoria provided the most number of personnel (726) followed by South Australia (374) and ACT (133). Support was also received from Queensland, West Australia and New Zealand.

Building Impact Assessment (BIA) teams visited all the firegrounds within days of the fires throughout September and October 2013. The BIA report was issued in mid-November 2013 showing the following figures.



Fires raging close the St Columba’s High School in Winmalee on October 19, 2013. Photo by Laura Tunstall Channel 9.

## Bush Fire Building Impact Assessment: Statistics for August - December 2013

Month	Fire Name (Local Government Area)	House (Habitable Dwelling)	
		Damaged	Destroyed
September	Hawkesbury Road (Winmalee)	1	0
September	Grange Avenue, Marsden Park (Blacktown)	1	1
September	Shallow Bay (Great Lakes)	1	0
September	Barrenjoey Headland (Pittwater)	2	0
September	Tickner Road, Castlereagh (Penrith)	3	0
October	Webbs Creek (Hawkesbury)	1	2
October	Brownes Road, Salt Ash (Port Stephens)	2	4
October	Hank Street (Port Stephens)	6	0
October	Hall Road, Balmoral (Wingecarribee)	2	2
October	Ruttleys Road, (Wyang)	7	4
October	Linksvie Road, Springwood (Blue Mountains)	146	195
October	State Mine Fire (Lithgow)	1	5
October	Mt York Road, Mt Victoria (Blue Mountains)	3	10
December	Boland’s Fire (Cowra)	0	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>224</b>

## Public Information Statistics for 13-26 October

	13-26 October	17 October
Emergency Alert	72 campaigns 418,247 messages sent	39 campaigns, 306,379 messages sent
NSW RFS website	5.7m visitors 14.1m page views	869,544 visitors 2.3m page views
NSW RFS Facebook	108.4m impressions 45.6m people reached 147,704 new likes 1.2m mentions of bush fires	22m impressions 8.3m people reached 74,714 new likes
NSW RFS Twitter	24.2m impressions 18,300 retweets of NSW RFS 470m impressions of #nswfires	3.4m impressions 4,500 retweets of NSW RFS 16,291 tweets with #nswfires 50.3m impressions of #nswfires
Bush Fire Information Line	46,545 calls to BFIL 18,041 of these answered by BFIL operators	13,097 calls to BFIL 4,480 of these answered by BFIL operators
MyRFS volunteer website	18,454 visits 98,266 page views	2,869 visitors 14,349 page views
Fires Near Me smartphone application	188,833 new downloads	28,000 new downloads 219,000 fire searches per hour at peak
Major Fire Updates	1020 updates posted 340 at Emergency Warning status	161 updates posted 124 at Emergency Warning status

# Touching base

By Corey Shackleton and Simon Davis,  
Operational and Mitigation Support Services

The busy start to the 2013/14 fire season has seen Operational and Mitigation Support Services (OMSS) extremely active across the State.

Since the start of the fire activity in mid-October, the Glendenning warehouse was continuously operational for 47 days. During this time OMSS vehicles made over 150 deliveries, covering more than 41,000 kilometres. A vast array of NSW RFS resources and equipment were supplied to Incident Management Teams (IMT) across the State including 198,000 bottles of water, 62,000 litres of foam, nearly 50,000 snack packs and 13,000 hot packs.

During the fire activity in October, OMSS was heavily involved in a variety of field based activities including control line establishment, base camp operation and management, heavy plant supervision, remote area firefighting and coordination,

rapid aerial response, fire trail vegetation works, equipment retrieval, equipment maintenance and preparation and mechanical services.

Additionally OMSS provided specialist IMT assistance with heavy plant management, logistics, fire investigation, incident control, liaison, operations, planning and management support.

## Base camps

With the significant fire activity in the weeks following 17 October 2013, came an influx of regional and interstate assistance. The sheer size of the firefighting assistance led to the decision to create a number of base camps across the Greater

Sydney area. Mittagong, Hawkesbury and Penrith all became accommodation hubs with base camps established in these areas, creating capacity to accommodate over 1,200 people.

These base camps accommodated personnel from the NSW RFS, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Victorian Country Fire Authority, Queensland Fire and Rescue Service, Tasmanian Fire and Rescue and South Australian Country Fire Service.

Penrith Base Camp was the largest of the three, with a capacity to accommodate 850 personnel. It contained a staging area and 24 hour mechanical service centre which operated for seven days and completed

111 mechanical tasks. Additionally, the Penrith base camp contained recreational services, a permanently staged coffee van and First Aid facilities. On Sunday 27 October the NSW RFS Chaplains, arranged for a service to be held on site supported by the Salvation Army chaplains and band.

OMSS is responsible for the establishment, management and deconstruction of base camps. Generally, our crews are onsite from the moment the first piece of infrastructure arrives and continue to operate the camp for 24 hours a day until the camp closes and all equipment is removed. Base camps generally take 72 hours to set up depending on location, resources and capacity. Given the scale of the operations in which

OMSS were committed in October 2013, staff from the Department of Environment and Sustainability in Victoria were brought in to assist with the operation of the Mittagong and Hawkesbury camps once they were established, and undertook five day and night shifts at each camp.

In addition to the base camps established and operated by OMSS, a large quantity of base camp consumable supplies were transported to Singleton, Springwood, Hawkesbury, Swansea and Lithgow for use in other established base camps and evacuation centre facilities.

A big thank you must go out to all those who stayed, or participated in the establishment and management of these base

camps. The dedication and professionalism shown by all involved ensured the meals and accommodation within all our camps was of a very high standard. Additionally, all those in Major Incident Logistics Support (MILS),

the Interstate Liaison Unit (ILU), local IMTs and other agencies must be commended on their input and significant contribution in managing the momentous logistical challenges that these base camps present.

## Base camps established by OMSS August-November 2013

CAMP	CAPACITY	DURATION
Bathurst	150	6 Days
Bulahdelah	100	9 Days
Barrington Tops	60	5 Days
Penrith	850	12 Days
Mittagong	150	6 Days
Hawkesbury	200	10 days



Looking south at the Penrith base camp.  
Photo courtesy of the Penrith Panthers Leagues Club.

# 1994: A watershed moment

In January 2014 Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons marked the anniversaries of two previous fire seasons

## Tuesday 7 January 2014

This month marks two significant anniversaries for the NSW RFS – the tragic January 1994 bush fires which affected large parts of the State and the January 2013 bush fires which are still having long-lasting effects on local communities.

The 1994 bush fires were a watershed moment not only for the people of NSW but for the broader firefighting community. Over a three week period, fire dominated the coast and ranges from the Queensland border in the north down to Batemans Bay in the south, as well as the more heavily populated areas of Greater Sydney, Blue Mountains and Central Coast.

Four lives were lost during these fires, one civilian and three members. A 42 year old mother died as she sought shelter in a swimming pool from fire burning in Como Jannali. Robert Page, a volunteer from Wingecarribee, died when a tree fell on the cabin of his tanker whilst patrolling and mopping up a fire in the Double Duke Forest near Grafton. Norman Anthes, a volunteer from Lithgow, died whilst felling a tree as part of mopping up the Mount Horrible fire near Lithgow. Clinton Westwood, a 17 year old volunteer with Wollondilly, died when his tanker crashed whilst responding to a fire call. Norm and Bob were killed on the same day, 4 January 1994 and Clinton on 29 January 1994. The fires also destroyed 225 homes and 800,000 hectares of bushland.

These fires, and a lengthy Coronial inquest following them, were the catalyst for forming today's modern Rural Fire Service.

It is true to say we've come a long way in the last 20 years, and we have learned a lot from these experiences. Legislation and policy improvements along with modern, purpose built appliances and equipment, training and PPE, as well as technological advancements, investments in infrastructure and the integration of specialised resources such as aircraft into fire management and response practices are all examples of such.

This was evidenced during January 2013, one of the first major fire emergencies for NSW since the recent introduction of measures such as new Fire Danger Ratings, Alerts Levels, telephone warnings and so on.

It was on this day, 7 January 2013, that we saw Catastrophic fire danger ratings across forested areas with large population centres, for the first time. More than a million telephone warnings were sent out to warn the community of the conditions, and about fires in areas such as the Shoalhaven, Yass, Cooma and days later, a large and destructive fire which destroyed more than 50 homes near Coonabarabran. Most pleasingly of course, is that there was no loss of life despite the weather and fire conditions.

While times and technology have changed, there's been

a constant – that is the work of our members, investing in prevention and mitigation programs and of course, pitching in during a time of crisis to protect not only their own community, but also those further afield.

Far too many members have paid the ultimate sacrifice whilst simply seeking to serve and protect their community. Unfortunately, 67 names of NSW RFS members appear on the Volunteer Services Memorial in the Domain in recognition of those that have lost their life in the line of duty, 21 of which have been added since the devastating fires of January 1994.

This month (in January 2014), Channel Seven aired an interesting look back at the fires of 1994, which you can find online ([youtube.com/nswrfs](http://youtube.com/nswrfs)). You may see some familiar faces from 20 years ago in this story which shows how far we've come.

We need to acknowledge and thank all members, both past and present, for their ongoing dedication and commitment to learning from events of the past in order to provide a safer and more professional service to the community.

Regards,



Shane

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons, AFSM

We need to acknowledge and thank all members, both past and present, for their ongoing dedication and commitment to learning from events of the past in order to provide a safer and more professional service to the community.



ABOVE: Looking south from Sydney North Shore and across the city skyline, January 1994. Photo by News Ltd. INSET: It was under Phil Koperberg's leadership of the Department of Bush Fire Services in 1994 that the most protracted and largest firefighting effort in Australian history was undertaken. Here Mr Koperberg attends a ticker tape parade in the Blue Mountains in honour of the 18,300 volunteer firefighters who were deployed at over 800 fires throughout NSW.

# Tanker overturned

By Sean McLoughlin, Deputy Group Captain, Warringah-Pittwater District

*It's about 3.40pm, Tuesday 1 October 2013. First day of the Bush Fire Danger Period. A Total Fire Ban is in force and a Severe Fire Danger is current with a strong northerly wind pushing along the coast. A number of Warringah-Pittwater Brigades are 'on air' at their stations to respond and protect the community from any bush fires that could start.*

It was around this time that a large column of black smoke was seen on a monitor from the Terrey Hills Fire Tower camera in the vicinity of the Ingleside area. Initially it was thought to be an out of control bush fire. Immediately four RFS Tankers and a Group Officer were responded to the scene. Ingleside Brigade responded first and within a minute reported that a 'large black column of smoke' was coming from the Mona Vale area.

FireComm reported to the responding vehicles that they had received information that a 'truck was off the roadway'. The crew of Ingleside 1A headed down the steep descent of Mona Vale Road and saw the large smoke column. As they neared Warriewood Valley and the road flattened out they saw what everybody was dreading - a semi trailer on its side with flames exploding more than 50 metres into the air; cars and bystanders lining the roadway and three passenger vehicles in the line of running fuel.

*It is a scene of devastation - large fireballs exploding into the air, a truck on its side, running fuel fires, bush and grass fires, radiant heat damaging the nearby Blackmore's industrial building, burning cars, powerlines and poles down and severely injured and deceased persons. The crews are faced with a mammoth task to restore normality.*

NSW RFS arrived quickly on scene and began work to assess the situation, provide first aid and commence fire fighting operations. As the incident occurred within Fire & Rescue NSW (FRNSW) area, Warringah/Pittwater Group 4 assumed the role of RFS Commander and took control

of NSW RFS resources at the incident. NSW RFS crews initially ran a line of water, although assessment was made quickly, that this fire would only be extinguished through the use of Class B foam. Using a 38mm foam branch and 60 litres of foam from the first two NSW RFS trucks an initial attack was made on the running fuel fire using NSW RFS firefighters in Breathing Apparatus (BA). Further foam supplies were taken from the third and fourth NSW RFS tankers with those crews immediately providing First Aid to some severely burnt civilians.

FRNSW pumpers arrived and using their hose lines were able to keep the cabin of the truck cool with water, while the NSW RFS in BA continued using the foam firefighting hose line. They also were able to provide First Aid assistance to those involved in the incident.

Further NSW RFS appliances from Duffys Forest, Davidson, Beacon Hill, Terrey Hills and Ingleside responded to support fire fighting operations. The District On Call Officer and an additional Group Officer also responded to the scene to establish effective communications and liaison

with the other agencies operating on scene.

Behind the scenes, the Fire Control Centre was also extremely busy with the Warringah/Pittwater Communications Unit operating at full strength, coordinating another bush fire incident, taking radio messages, answering phone calls and assisting in co-ordinating the multi agency response to this incident.

Assistance was also sought from outside of the Warringah/Pittwater District with additional foam being sent from The Hills District and State Mitigation Support Services, as well as additional Officers from Hornsby/Ku-Ring-Gai District attending the Fire Control Centre and the scene to assist with ongoing co-ordination.

After more than an hour and 25 drums (500 litres) of foam later, firefighters from FRNSW and NSW RFS were able to extinguish the flames. Sadly the accident claimed the lives of two people and injured many others.

NSW RFS crews worked closely with crews from FRNSW as well as a multitude of other agencies including NSW Ambulance and NSW

Police who all worked under extremely difficult and conditions to minimise the loss of life and property. Together the emergency services undertook an incredible task and should be applauded for their efforts.

Together they faced an overturned fuel tanker containing nearly 40,000 litres of petrol (75 percent) and diesel (25 percent), running fuel fires pouring down the roadway, multiple casualties, ongoing explosions of fuel and flames. There was a seriously high risk of danger to everyone involved, particularly the first arriving fire crews. It is a credit to the training that the NSW RFS provides and more importantly, to the skills, courage and bravery that every firefighter displayed that day.

A special mention must also be made of the fantastic members of the CISS team who firstly attended the scene as the incident was unfolding, and later arranged a debrief for all involved at the Fire Control Centre. The magnitude of the incident and the significant role NSW RFS members played, made this an essential step in the AAR process.



Photo by Andrew Johnston

## BUSHFIRE CRC FIRENOTE



Photo by Brydie O'Connor

## How three communities reacted to bush fire



Dr Jim McLennan, Adjunct Professor, School of Psychological Science, La Trobe University, Lyndsey Wright, Research Manager, Bushfire CRC, and Brenda Mackie, Bushfire CRC PhD student, University of Canterbury

January 2013 saw the areas around Yass, Shoalhaven and Coonabarabran impacted by large fires. At the request of the NSW RFS, the Bushfire CRC coordinated a field research task force to interview a sample of respondents in each of the three communities affected by the fires, complemented by an online survey of residents.

This research was conducted for the NSW RFS and investigated five community bush fire safety issues:

- (1) bush fire knowledge, planning and preparation;
- (2) understanding of existing official bush fire information
- (3) understanding of, responses to and perceived usefulness of the bush fire warnings immediately prior to and on the day of the fire;
- (4) experiences and behaviours of people affected by the fires; and
- (5) why relatively few dwellings (and no lives) were lost.

The following is an excerpt from the Bushfire CRC Fire Note Issue 119 November 2013 and the full report, Community understanding and awareness of bushfire safety: January 2013 bushfires (Mackie, McLennan and Wright, 2013) can be found at: [www.bushfirecrc.com/projects/rc-17/nsw-bushfire-task-force-2013](http://www.bushfirecrc.com/projects/rc-17/nsw-bushfire-task-force-2013).

**SUMMARY**

This Fire Note explores the experiences and survival decisions of residents who came under threat from bush fires around Yass, Shoalhaven and Coonabarabran during January 2013. To maximise the lessons learnt from these fires, the NSW RFS engaged the Bushfire CRC to undertake a community-focused householder interview research project, aiming to provide an understanding of community bush fire preparedness and responses to warning messages.

A total of 238 interviews were conducted. Findings showed that many people had a basic plan for what to do when threatened by a bush fire, but few had documented it. Most believed that they had prepared their family to be safe by leaving rather than by mitigating the risk to home and property, although over half had cleared space around their home.

As the fires spread, the naming of fires based on their starting point did not reflect their current location, leading to some misperceptions of fire position for some people. Few residents understood the implications of the different fire danger levels on their safety, and actions to take at each, apart from Catastrophic.

Yass, 80 interviews around Shoalhaven and 83 interviews around Coonabarabran.

**Research outcomes**

Based on the chronology and research, the Yass, Shoalhaven and Coonabarabran areas experienced very different fire events, which impacted them in quite different ways. One of the key differences was the geographic environment in which the fires occurred and how this appeared to influence short and long-term preparedness, intentions and final actions.

Both Shoalhaven and Coonabarabran are in close proximity to national parks with dense bushland, while the Yass area was mostly open farmland, with some woodland areas.

Across the three study areas, the major findings were:

- Many people had a basic plan for what to do when threatened by a bush fire, but few had documented it or used the NSW RFS Bush Fire Survival Plan kit to document their response.
- Most interviewees felt well prepared and had prepared their family much more than their home and property, although over half had cleared space around their home
- Interviewees, once they received information or warnings, often sought more detailed, localised or updated information, such as from local NSW RFS sources, friends and neighbours and from media
- As the fires spread, the naming of fires based on their starting point did not reflect their current location, leading to some

misperceptions of fire position for some people

While telephone alerts are now the preferred method of warning for many in the community, many interviewees were unable to receive messages due to a pre-existing lack of mobile phone coverage in the affected areas and this contributed to their delayed decision-making

- Few residents understood the implications of the different fire danger levels on their safety, and actions to take at each, apart from Catastrophic.

**Preparedness**

While only 28 percent of respondents reported receiving a copy of the NSW RFS Bush Fire Survival Plan kit, most (68 percent) of the respondents said that they had formulated a plan for what to do during a fire, but only eight percent had rehearsed it.

Few (nine percent) had written it down. This is despite more than half mentioning a written bush fire plan as an aspect of bush fire preparation.

Approximately 20 percent of respondents said they had a back-up plan, and a similar number (17 percent) said they had a different plan from their partners.

For each community, there were different influences upon preparation. For Yass respondents, more than half reported NSW RFS were influential in them preparing for the fire season; however, only one-third of Shoalhaven and Coonabarabran respondents indicated this influence.

Respondents felt quite well prepared overall, with three-quarters (75 percent) of Yass,

Shoalhaven and Coonabarabran respondents reporting they were 'well' or 'adequately' prepared, with more than half clearing space around their homes.

Of those who did not think they were well prepared, nearly two-thirds (64 percent) said that they had not believed that preparation was necessary, and 29 percent reported that they had expected NSW RFS to tell them personally what they need do to be prepared for a future bush fire.

Previous experience with bush fires and involvement of family members with NSW RFS were associated with better planning and preparation. The presence of dependents (children, elderly) and pet ownership made planning and preparation more difficult.

**Usefulness of warnings**

Despite repeated prompting, less than a quarter of respondents elaborated on their views on the clarity and relevance or otherwise of the warnings they recalled. Where respondents addressed this question, those from Shoalhaven thought the official warnings were sufficient, clear and relevant. The findings were similar for Yass, but in Coonabarabran over half the respondents (55 percent) felt that the warnings were not sufficient to help them prepare and make decisions about the approaching fire.

**Receiving Warnings**

The majority of the Yass and Shoalhaven respondents (65 percent) recalled receiving some official bush fire warning message immediately prior to the fire. In Coonabarabran, less than half of respondents (49

percent) recalled receiving an official warning of any kind.

The reasons that respondents gave for not receiving a warning are varied: in Yass and Coonabarabran, almost all respondents who lived on rural properties commented on pre-existing poor mobile phone reception. There was also a perception that if the Emergency Alert telephone warning system called their landline and they were not home, the system would not leave a message on an answering service. Consistently across the three regions, 13 percent of respondents expected to be warned personally by an emergency service agency of imminent bush fire threat.

**Initial intentions**

Respondents described a variety of intentions when they first became aware that a fire was imminent (see figure 1 below).

In Coonabarabran, the highest proportion (33 percent) reported their initial intention was to leave, while a large proportion (28 percent) said they would wait and see. In Shoalhaven, 41 percent reported their initial intention was to wait and see what developed before choosing a final action. In Yass, 37 percent described their initial intention was to stay and defend.

Analysis was also undertaken to determine if property type (holiday home, residential

block or house on small/large acreage) had any impact on the initial intentions. This showed that those from large acreages were most likely to stay and defend, while those from houses on residential blocks were most likely to leave early.

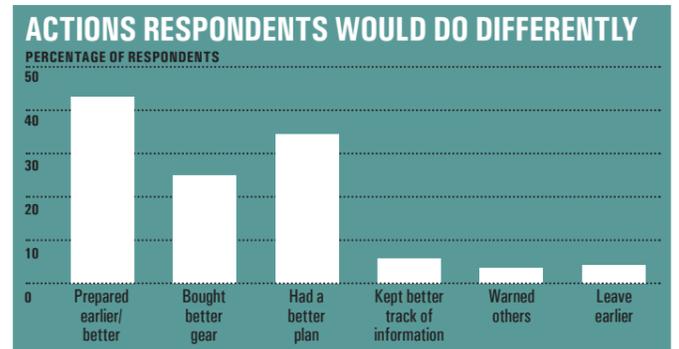


Figure 2: Actions respondents said they would do differently next time they were threatened by bush fire.

**Naming of fires**

The official names of the fires seemed to cause some confusion and uncertainty for some residents. As the fires spread, the names of fires, which were based on their starting point, did not reflect their current location, leading to some misperceptions of fire position for some people.

**Knowledge of warnings and messages**

Most respondents (93 percent) showed some knowledge of official bush fire warnings or messages; however, across the communities, the specifics of their knowledge differed.

A little more than half of the respondents (53 percent) made reference to bush fire alerts, fire danger ratings and radio warnings as ways of knowing about a bush fire threat. However, few residents understood the implications of the different fire danger levels on their safety (apart from Catastrophic).

**How is the research being used?**

The research conducted by the Bushfire CRC allows the NSW RFS to improve the Service's understanding of how the public uses and responds to information and warnings, and the barriers which may prevent people responding.

The research identifies a number of areas of focus for the NSW RFS, including the terminology and naming conventions used during fires, the methods for delivering information and warnings, preparedness messages and materials developed for the community, and ultimately how to motivate people into taking decisive action during a fire event. This research will ultimately help influence the NSW RFS's approach to community engagement, and during operations, the delivery of information and warnings to the community.

**Background**

January 2013 saw NSW experience record temperatures, with some of the worst fire danger conditions ever recorded in many locations. By the end of the fire season, more than 6,000 bush and grass fires had been reported, burning 1.4 million hectares, with 62 homes, 50,000 head of livestock and 10,170 km of fencing destroyed.

Areas around Yass, Shoalhaven and Coonabarabran were impacted by large fires.

Communities around Yass and Shoalhaven were impacted on 8 January, while the Coonabarabran fire threatened communities on 13 January. All three fires had the potential to have done more damage than they did if extensive suppression activities – such as the use of aircraft – had not

been undertaken, if weather conditions had not abated, and the communities had not responded appropriately.

The research task force aimed to provide NSW RFS with an understanding of:

- (a) Community preparedness.
- (b) How residents in the three affected locations responded to bush fire threat warnings.

**Bushfire CRC research**

During February, March and April 2013, the task force of Bushfire CRC researchers and NSW RFS Community Engagement, Corporate Communications and Public Liaison staff visited the communities of Yass, Shoalhaven and Coonabarabran to conduct interviews. The task force conducted 238 semi-structured interviews across the three areas, with 75 interviews completed around

While there were more than 50 properties destroyed in the two week period, not a single human life was lost.

The fires presented the NSW RFS and the Bushfire CRC the opportunity to learn from this major event and better understand the community's response, and why relatively few homes were lost.

The research will not only allow the NSW RFS to

refine messaging and its approach to engaging with the community before and after these types of events, but will also contribute to the national research agenda and ensure ongoing improvement for all fire agencies."

Shane Fitzsimmons, Commissioner NSW Rural Fire Service

**Message from Commissioner**

"Major fire events in recent years have led to significant changes in the way fire agencies and the broader emergency management sector communicate and engage with the community. These changes, including new Fire Danger Ratings, Alert Levels and the development of the Bush

Fire Survival Plan, have now become a routine part of our messaging before and during major incidents. The 2013 January bush fires were one of the first major tests of these recent changes in NSW. During this period, NSW experienced some of the worst conditions imaginable in terms of fire weather, the number of fires, the increased fire danger and destruction of property.

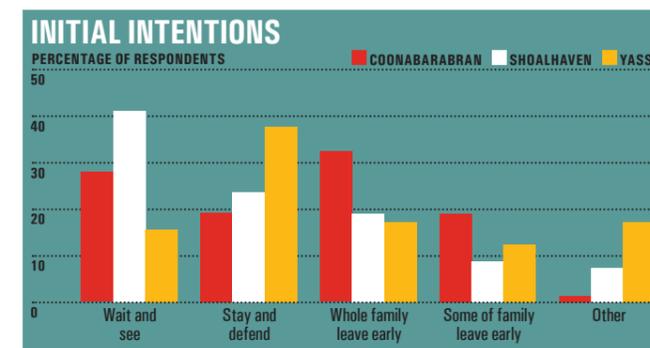


Figure 1: The initial intentions of respondents once learning of a bush fire threat.

**October 2013 bush fires research**

A new research project, covering the October bush fires, commenced in late November 2013. This is being managed by the NSW RFS, Bushfire CRC and the new Bushfire & Natural Hazards CRC. Following consultation with the CRC, the research started in Port Stephens in November, followed by the Blue Mountains and Southern Highlands in December 2013. The research is being coordinated by the Corporate Planning, Research and Knowledge Management and Corporate Communications Sections.

# Graduation day

By Graham Scofield, Deputy Captain, Sutton Volunteer Rural Fire Brigade and Superintendent Peter Dyce, Community Safety Officer, Yass Fire Control Centre

The Southern Tablelands Zone was one area most affected by severe bush fire conditions in January 2013. Among those hard at work fighting fires around Goulburn, Yass and Crookwell were many past graduates of the Zone's Secondary School Cadet Program, who are now full members of their local brigades.

The Secondary School Cadet Program has been running in the Southern Tablelands Zone since 2008, starting at Yass High School and then adding Crookwell and Mulwaree High Schools.

"Many of the cadets have gone on to join their local brigades, and a number from the earlier courses were actually out working at the fires this year," said Norm Fountain, Deputy Captain with Crookwell Brigade who coordinates the program at Crookwell and Mulwaree High Schools.

In 2013 alone six programs have been conducted across the three schools, and the recent fire activity has only increased the level of interest amongst students. In fact some of the cadets attending the rural high schools had experienced bush fires firsthand last season, and for them this was partly a motivation for joining the program. For others it was the opportunity to learn new skills and to learn about the NSW RFS.

Sandra Hiscock, the Principal of Yass High School said: "The NSW RFS Secondary School Cadet Program continues to be a major success at Yass High School in 2013, not only because of the extensive local fires fresh in memories from last summer, but more significantly because the program really taps into the interests and needs of our students."

Of these regional centres the Southern Tablelands Zone, Crookwell and Yass are predominantly rural areas whereas Goulburn is considered more of an urban interface area. Therefore, the demographics of the students at the three high schools are slightly different, with more pupils at Crookwell and Yass coming from properties and

families on the land. Despite their more urban background, the pupils at Mulwaree High School are as equally interested in the course as their peers at the two rural high schools.

The Secondary School Cadet Program is exceptionally relevant and engaging for both rural students, with their firsthand experience, as well as those from the town as it challenges them all to establish team work skills, build fire containment knowledge and develop community awareness and a sense of responsibility. Teachers and principals at all the three schools are positive about the program and have reported improvements in the cadets' school work as well as an increased interest in their community and in volunteering.

"We have also observed that the cadets start looking out for one another, encouraging each other and developing teamwork as each program progresses," said Sandra Hiscock.

By far, the cadets favourite part of the program is the practical sessions, but we have found that they participate well in the classroom sessions too.

Some students have shown such a keen interest that they have asked to do the program a second time. Rather than have them repeat the course, we invite them to act as mentors for the newer cadets. It is a role with added responsibilities, but they have willingly taken it on.

Principal Sandra Hiscock added: "It is particularly encouraging to see those students previously perceived as potentially unruly adolescents, taking on the mantle of adulthood, especially those repeating the course to mentor other students."

The students themselves are enthusiastic giving consistently

good feedback in the post-course questionnaire. The feedback from the students helps us to evaluate and improve the course. In fact the response from students has been so good that the Zone is considering running a Mini Field Day to bring the cadets from all three schools together.

NSW RFS volunteers and staff are also enthusiastic about the program, with many volunteers from local brigades bringing in tankers and helping out with the practical sessions. Personnel from other emergency services, including Fire and Rescue NSW, NSW Police, NSW Ambulance and the SES, have also been keen to participate in our cadet

programs. Their involvement helps to emphasise the teamwork that exists between the different emergency services in serving the broader Tablelands community. Widespread support from all involved has been the key to the program's success.

BELOW: Cadets from Yass High School practice their fire blanket and fire extinguisher drills in a home fire safety session under the supervision of Norm Fountain, an instructor and co-ordinator in the Southern Tablelands Cadets Program. Photo by Graham Scofield



Photo by Sharon Quandt

## It's your call

By Superintendent Peter McKechnie, State Operations Manager

The information from the fireground is critical to the Service's ability to successfully protect life and property from bush fires. Firefighters and officers hold so much more than the situation at that specific location in their hands.

While you and your crew/s hold hoses or equipment that will potentially save a life or property, you also hold the information that could save the lives and properties of many more people. All this can be contained in a SitRep (Situational Report).

The information in your SitRep about the fire and how it's behaving, where it is going, who it will threaten and what support you need to protect life and property enables the type and scale of support you need to be quickly worked out based on the information you have at hand.

On the following pages you will see a chart visually indicating how the information flows, how your radio call affects decision making by senior incident managers and how your report impacts residents under threat and their safety.

SitRep should be sent by the officer in charge to FIRECOM shortly after arrival at an incident. They should also be sent when any significant objectives have been achieved, when the situation changes and if it is a dynamic environment, about every 30 minutes. If you are a unit working

under another officer in the chain of command (e.g. working under a Sector or Division Commander), you give the SitRep for your patch to them.

The initial SitRep should be combined with (or shortly follow) the 'at scene' or 'approaching scene' call. It should give or confirm the present size, type and location of the incident. It should briefly describe what you think the incident is going to do. It should advise if any people or property is under threat. It should include what action you are taking and what support you

need. It should be noted that when advising that there is a threat it should be as accurate as possible. For example is the threat that the fire will impact and be likely to destroy something? Or alternatively is the fire likely to burn close to properties but crews can deal with the fire as it approaches.

Most fires are small and routine. You get a call, you turn out, size it up and you deal with it and head back to the station. At key times you give radio calls and situation reports (SitRep) to FIRECOM to let them know what's going on.

# It's your call

that makes a difference



Within minutes, the information in your SitRep may be the very words used by the Commissioner as he addresses the public through the media.



Major Fire Updates on NSW RFS website



Facebook



Twitter



Emergency Alerts



RSS Feeds



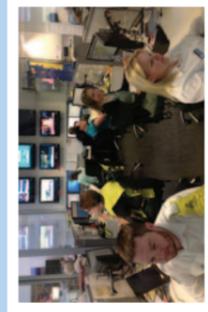
Television



Print and online media



Radio



Public Liaison Unit



Community Meetings

**A best practice SitRep follows the F.T.A.S.C formula - Fire, Threat, Action, Support, C3.**  
(see over for more details)

## The Decision to issue an Emergency Warning



When the SitRep from the field indicates the fire is burning out of control and is threatening life and property, the local Fire Control Centre may decide to issue an Emergency Warning according to the Alerts and Warnings Matrix. The decision is based on the accuracy of the SitRep as well as the forecast Fire Danger Rating that day, forecast weather conditions, time to impact and fire behaviour. Once the decision to issue an Emergency Warning is made the Incident Controller calls the 'red phone' at NSW RFS State Operations Centre.

## 'Red Phone' Conference Call

When the Incident Controller at the local Fire Control Centre calls the 'red phone' a conference call takes place with fire managers, NSW RFS senior leadership and several key units. The situation in the field is clarified to identify what support is required and when. Extra resources and warnings to the community may be triggered by this conference call.

BUSH FIRE INFORMATION LINE  
**1800 NSW RFS**  
1 8 0 0 6 7 9 7 3 7

Bush Fire Information Line



Emergency alerts often have to be sent out within minutes and their accuracy and usefulness depends heavily on the information coming back through your SitReps

#### When the SitRep really counts

On bad fire days it can be a very different story. By the time you get to the scene the fire can already be going. It may be threatening people and property, some of whom you can help but some you can't. You may quickly need many more units sent to the right spots to deal with the whole incident, not just where you are. In these situations, it's your SitReps in the early stages that are critical in saving lives and preventing large losses.

Good SitReps enable FIRECOM and Incident Management Teams (IMTs) to know what's going on and develop situational awareness. Having this enables them to quickly plan who needs to be warned, know what you are doing, what help you need and where it's most needed. Without good informative SitReps it's not possible for them to know what's going on and how best to support you and warn the community during a dangerous and rapidly escalating incident.

The information you supply doesn't just go to FIRECOM or an IMT. It also goes to State Operations who when necessary will use it to arrange out-of-area strike teams, air support, heavy plant, Rapid Aerial Response Teams (RARTs), logistical support and telephone / SMS emergency alerts to people threatened by the fire and provide advice via / to the media.

#### Make it a habit

Giving a detailed, informative and accurate SitRep takes time. It needs to be detailed enough to get the right information across, such as where the fire is and who it is threatening, but not so long that it unnecessarily distracts you from firefighting. Giving a concise yet informative SitRep involves a skill that needs to be practiced and learned.

Training is valuable, but it can only do so much. Getting into the habit of giving good SitReps at routine incidents is the best way of being prepared to give them well at 'the big one'.

When you give a SitRep, the information is used to mark up a map to show where the fire is located and which way it's headed. That enables others in the IMT to establish which communities are in the path of the fire and who needs to be warned, and for units to be sent to where they can do the most good. If information from you is missing, vague or inaccurate, however, that can't happen.

The acronym FTASC has been coined as an aid to remembering all the things you might need to include in a SitRep (or any communication of information up the chain of command, for that matter). It is complemented by the well known SMEACS acronym (Situation, Mission, Execution, Admin / Logistics, Command / Control / Comms, Safety) which outlines information passed down the chain of command).

FTASC stands for:

**Fire** - Type, location, direction of spread, effects (casualties / losses).

**Threats** - People and property in the path of the fire or exposed to the fire

**Actions** - Offensive (direct, parallel, indirect attack), defensive (line, ember or backstop defence), safeguarding (warning, moving or protecting people)

**Support** - Additional units needed, air support, heavy plant, senior officer, etc

**C3** - Command, control and communications arrangements

Here are some typical initial SitReps.

"Firecom, Dargo 1A, on scene Jones Street Dargo, confirmed grass fire with

three metre high flames heading south east, the heel is 500 metres south east of the Johnson Highway with a 100 metre wide head centred at approximate grid 379 428, minor threat to fencing only, making a direct attack with hose-reels off two tankers, no further support needed, we're assuming 'Johnsons Control'"

"Firecom, Calista Pumper, on scene at the intersection of Sydney and Albany Roads, confirmed motor vehicle accident, no fire, two persons trapped, intersection closed, Police, rescue and ambulance on scene, we're providing fire protection with a charged 38mm line, assuming RFS Command at Calista MVA, reporting to Police at scene."

"Firecom, Kindred 1A, on scene, Kindred National Park, confirmed bush fire, heading south east, crowning through tree-tops and approximately 1km from houses with embers currently threatening four properties at western end of Melba Road. This fire is likely to threaten the western outskirts of Kindred Village in approximately 30 minutes, setting up defensive operations in Melba Road, request a total of four tankers to level 1 staging on Melba Road and six tankers to Bornholm Crescent west of Kindred Village, I am assuming 'Melba Control' and request a channel for coordinating units at scene."

Later SitReps can confine themselves to what has changed. Here are some examples:

"Firecom, Johnsons Control, the fire is now under control, no fencing or other property damaged, mopping up for about 30 minutes."

"Firecom, Calista MVA Commander, persons removed from vehicles and transported by ambulance, remaining on standby until vehicle towed, east bound lane now open."

"Firecom, Melba Control, fire front now impacting houses in Melba Road, four tankers on scene doing ember defence, one small shed alight, confident of protecting other property."

#### Alerting those under threat

Emergency alerts often have to be sent out within minutes and their accuracy and usefulness depends heavily on the information coming back through your SitReps. The software used to transmit emergency alerts has a map onto which the area for the alert is drawn. The more exact that area, the more exact the warning that can be given.

On a bad fire day, when it is clear that an area is under threat, the better you can describe where the fire is located and where it's headed, the better it is for informing people. Better still, if you can outline the area under threat or is likely to be threatened using easy to identify points (like intersections, or bridges or obvious landmarks) the greater is the likelihood that the exactly right people will get exactly the right emergency message.

Here's an example:

"The area likely to be impacted in the next hour or so is bounded by Riverdale Bridge to the transmission tower on Reno Hill, to the corner of the A34 and B132, to the corner of the B132 and B85, and back to Riverdale Bridge."

As you can see the SitRep you give up through the chain of command has great influence on the level of support you receive as well as on the information that is conveyed to the public so that they can make informed decisions that may just save their lives.

TELL US YOUR STORY



# October 2013 fires have you got a story to tell?

EARLY IN 2014 THE BUSH FIRE BULLETIN WILL PUBLISH A COMMEMORATIVE ISSUE FEATURING THE 2013/14 FIRE SEASON.

The large fires on the Central Coast, the Southern Highlands and the Blue Mountains as well as the huge efforts in lesser known areas will be included in this edition.

How did your brigade respond? What is the one image that you will never forget?

The stories, photos and videos of your community, your brigade, your business unit are all part of the tapestry of the October fires.

Send your ideas, proposals, submissions or questions to [Bush.Fire.Bulletin@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Bush.Fire.Bulletin@rfs.nsw.gov.au).

ABOVE: Ku-ring-gai Brigade at the Howes Swamp, Putty Rd fire in October 2013. Photo by Anthony Macvean

# Honours for NSW RFS members

In 2013, a total of 13 NSW RFS members were honoured with the Australian Fire Service Medal.



On Australia Day seven NSW Rural Fire Service members received the Australian Fire Services Medal (these were featured in the Bush Fire Bulletin Vol 35 No 1) and on the Queen's Birthday in June 2013 a further six outstanding individuals were given the medal.

"These long-serving members have dedicated much of their lives to helping to protect the community," Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said, "They have worked tirelessly to help to fight fires, prepare the community every bush fire season and ensure a new generation of volunteers were trained, mentored and encouraged. They represent the very best of the RFS and I'm proud their service has been formally recognised with this national honour."

The Queen's Birthday recipients of the Australian Fire Service Medal in 2013 were:

## Superintendent Arthur Sharp

Superintendent Sharp joined the NSW RFS in 1981 and has provided over 30 years of dedicated service as both a volunteer and salaried member of staff. He was instrumental in improvements to the Cowra District's assets through tanker replacement and construction of new brigade stations and in the roll out of specialist training across the District. He also drove an extensive program to enhance the protection of communities in the Blayney, Cowra, Cabonne and Orange City Local Government Areas from fire. Superintendent Sharp is currently the Superintendent of the Canobolas Zone in western NSW.

## Superintendent Christopher Favelle

Superintendent Favelle joined the NSW RFS in 1974 and has provided almost 40 years of dedicated service as both a volunteer and salaried member of staff. Superintendent Favelle has spent much of his career in western NSW and is currently Manager, Far West

Team and Manager of the Barwon Darling Zone, an area of 250,000 square kilometres covering some of the most remote areas of the State. Throughout his long career his commitment to strengthening the infrastructure, training, equipment and relationships with other agencies and local councils, for the NSW RFS in the Far West has been outstanding.

## Deputy Captain Keith Robinson

Deputy Captain Robinson joined the Bulli Brigade in 1958 at just 16 years of age. Throughout his 54 years of dedicated service, Deputy Captain Robinson made significant contributions to the design and construction of brigade tankers, a rapid response vehicle which could get up the steep and rugged terrain of Bulli Mountain as well as the District's first bulk water tanker (which he built from the ground up). His dedication and leadership has seen him work tirelessly to recruit and motivate members. Deputy Captain Robinson stood down as Deputy Captain of the Illawarra Zone in 2012.

## Group Captain Garry Kadwell

Group Captain Kadwell joined the NSW RFS in 1989. He is Group Captain in the Upper Lachlan District and has been heavily involved in his local Crookwell Brigade. Group Captain Kadwell gives freely of his time and as a qualified Rural Fire Instructor, regularly assists with training of volunteers. He has shown great leadership across NSW and on out-of-are deployments such as leading a task force from the Southern Tablelands Zone to the Victorian firegrounds following the Black Saturday fires. He is a qualified Aircraft Officer which sees him deployed across NSW.

## Group Captain Elizabeth Ferris

Group Captain Ferris joined the NSW RFS in 1990. Group Captain Ferris has been an extremely active firefighter having been involved in the majority of significant bush fire campaigns in the New England area. Her service has included serving as an interstate Strike Team Leader during the 2009 Black Saturday fires in Victoria. Group Captain Ferris was among the first female field officers in the District and is a strong advocate for women being more actively involved in the Service.

## Captain Ronald Headon

Captain Headon joined the NSW RFS in 1970. He is the Captain at the Hay Headquarters Brigade and is in the unique position of being the Brigade's only Captain for the past 21 years. He has developed design of a number of tankers and is regularly at the station attending to equipment maintenance and making or adapting equipment to improve brigade efficiency. He is also part of the local community education team. He has led numerous Hay Strike Teams to provide out-of-area assistance in locations such as Glen Innes, Nowra, Victoria, and South Australia.

LEFT: An Investiture ceremony was held at Government House in September 2013 for the recipients of the Queen's Birthday Australian Fire Service Medals. (L-R) Superintendent Ian Stewart (Australia Day Awards), Superintendent Arthur Sharp, Superintendent Christopher Favelle, Group Captain Elizabeth Ferris, Assistant Commissioner Steve Yorke (representing the Commissioner), Deputy Captain Keith Robinson, Captain Ronald Headon. Group Captain Garry Kadwell was unable to be at the Investiture Ceremony. Photo By Adam Hollingworth



**WINNER**

Brett Atkins, Menangle Park, Macarthur



**SECOND PRIZE**

Michael Cook, Woronora, Sutherland

# Open Day 2013

Hundreds of brigades across NSW put out the welcome mat and invited their local communities in for NSW RFS Open Day in late September and early October 2013.

In fact 358 brigades offered a whole range of fun and interactive activities such as fire truck and hose demonstrations, sausage sizzles, jumping castles and rides, trash and treasure stalls, live fire demonstrations, children's games and colouring competitions, 'firefighter dress ups' and joint emergency service displays.

Brigades used Open Day to promote what they do on and off the fireground as well as to educate the community on how to prepare for bush fire and the importance of completing a Bush Fire Survival Plan. It is also an excellent opportunity to recruit new members.

**Maximum exposure in Bland Temora Zone**

Bland Temora Zone maximised exposure for Open Day by

combining the event with two local shows – Temora Show and West Wyalong Show. The Bland Temora Community Engagement Group was inundated with locals visiting their display at both events.

The West Wyalong Show was held ahead of Open Day in early September while at the Temora Show over 300 show bags were handed out.

At both events the Group set up a display including fire trucks, a community education trailer, hose demonstrations and a range of firefighting gear for children to try and 'Little Ed' for them to climb on. The display at Temora Show also included local Police who also stressed the importance of completing a Bush Fire Survival Plan. Several locals applied for membership to join the Zone.

**First timers**

Further north it was with great anticipation that the Urbenville Brigade opened its doors to hold their very first official Open Day event, and rightly so as the day was a smashing success bringing the local farmers and townfolk together for a day of community engagement, education and fun.

Members were at the station early, organising tables of goods donated by the community for a White Elephant Sale, organising Open Day resources, and setting up a barbeque lunch.

The support from the local community was overwhelming, with many locals arriving early to nab a bargain and talk to members about hazard reduction and prevention planning for the upcoming fire season. Local children were



**THIRD PRIZE**

Mellony Burke, Byron Bay, Far North Coast

given a tour of the station and fire trucks, enthusiastically dressing up in yellows and taking turns at using the hoses. Much fun was also had 'testing' the siren of the truck enough times that anyone living in town who wasn't already aware of the Open Day, soon was.

Members handed out several new member applications to interested community members as well as fact sheets on hazard reduction. Much discussion was had on the importance of Bush Fire Survival Plans.

Urbenville Brigade achieved their goal of engaging with and educating the community, promoting the valuable service they provide, as well as raising funds for the small yet active brigade.

**Photo Competition**

The Community Engagement Team held an Open Day photo competition, open to all NSW RFS members participating in Open Day to capture their Brigade engaging with the community. With over

130 entries to review, the Community Engagement Team had a difficult task in selecting only three winners. Thank you to everyone who entered, the quality of submissions this year is really outstanding.

Congratulations to the winners. We hope you enjoy your Bunnings vouchers.

A video of the Open Day 2013 activities can be found at [youtube.com/nswrfs](http://youtube.com/nswrfs).

OPPOSITE PAGE Menangle Park held their Open Day in the Glen Alpine Shopping Centre car park. Menangle Park members gave education talks on preparing your home and allowed members to use some of the equipment and hoses on their Cat 1 tanker.

TOP: Children of parents who attended the Woronora Brigade Open Day held at the brigade station, got a bit of a feel for the equipment we use!

LEFT: Open Day 2013 at the Byron Bay Brigade saw 450 people come through the station! An 'all street' garage sale in Alcorn Street where the station is located helped boost the numbers. The brigade provided a sausage sizzle, drinks and ice blocks which also attracted people.

The mural on the back wall of the brigade station has been a big hit - all the children shown here are locals who love their Rural Fire Brigade in Byron Bay. Being adjacent to a public park the back wall of the station is often targeted by graffiti artists. In 2013 brigade members decided to clean up the graffiti and replace it with a mural. A local woman painted the mural based on drawings in the NSW RFS activity book and features Fireman Gregg and a smiley truck. The new mural became a feature of this year's Open Day activities.

# Back to basics



The Greater Taree Community Safety Team have gone back to basics to engage their local community.



Photo by Sharon Quandt

In a huge effort by a core group of five members of the Community Safety team, every street and road of the Greater Taree area was visited over 17 months.

“Our approach is unique only in the oldest way,” said Community Safety Officer Terry Kitching, “in this modern age of electronic communications, we make contact with people and talk to them face to face.”

The Greater Taree area is around 3,752 square kilometres and includes such towns of Taree, Wingham, Old Bar, Harrington, Nabic and Hallidays Point and includes a population of about 50,000 many of whom live in bush fire prone areas.

Over the past 12 months the local Community Safety team have focussed on encouraging residents to fill out a Bush Fire Survival Plan (BFSP).

The BFSP is the key tool for all Community Safety teams in the NSW RFS. It helps residents develop a plan of management for any event of a major bush fire attack on themselves and their families. It provides a skeleton for a successful Plan and a wealth of information on bush fire safety.

“We thought long and hard,” said Terry Kitching, “and realised that the old fashioned way of meet and greet and discuss the Plan whilst handing it to the people would work the best.”

The Greater Taree Community Safety Team consists of 22 members from 12 brigades from across the Greater Taree area. In a huge effort by a core group of five members of the Community Safety team, every street and road of the Greater Taree area was visited over 17 months.

“Those five retirees were the crux of it and visited all 5,222 homes,” Terry said.

The project started in earnest in March 2012, but planning and consideration of the best Community Safety plan for the area had been in progress for nearly two years.

The starting point was the Greater Taree Bush Fire Risk Management Plan generated by the local Bush Fire Management Committee.

The Bush Fire Risk Management Plan identified those areas and properties within the Greater Taree Local Government Area that were at risk from bush fire attack. It also identified the treatments that should be applied to those properties. These include Strategic Fire Advantage Zones for mass property protection, Asset Protection Zones implemented to affected homes, Land Management Zones for whole villages/human habitat areas and evacuation plans for hospitals, retirement villages and medical facilities. For most private property, the Risk Management Plan also indicated the ways that residents can prepare and protect themselves including and primarily recommending the Bush Fire Survival Plan.

This is where the Community Safety stepped in to create the best strategy.

“We actually went into each area first with the local brigade members and visually identified every house which we rated either ‘high’ or above on a risk rating scale,” Terry said, “This then enabled us to know which homes we were going to treat in the first round.”

After identification of all properties in that area, a letter drop was done to each ‘rated’ home. The drop included a letter introducing the residents to the need for a BFSP and a discussion with their local fireies. The Team added a schedule of days when the NSW RFS team would return with a request that the residents make themselves available for a chat.

During the second round the Team revisited the ‘rated’

homes with a copy of the BFSP in hand and the intention to speak to the occupants. The conversations focussed on the bush fire risk identified by the brigade, how to fill out the BFSP and, of course, how to implement it. Other advice might also be offered regarding making the home safe against bush fire. Where appropriate, the residents were also made aware of the AIDER program – Assist Infirm, Disabled and Elderly Residents which offers a free one-off clean up of their properties to make the home safer from the attack of fire. This has been very successful with a considerable uptake of the offer.

If the occupants were not at home, a copy of the Plan was left with an invitation to call the Community Safety Team to make an appointment.

#### Numbers so far

Since application of the program commenced in March 2012, the Community Safety Team surveyed 436 roads, lanes and streets. They have visited 5,222 homes and personally interviewed around 60 percent of those.

“We have had a considerable number of recalls to people who were not at home initially and required further advice,” said Terry Kitching.

In this first year the team have offered a total of 1,294 team hours – that is 36.97 working weeks! This is not counting the staff time for production of letters and printing, vehicle provision and support.

“We estimated that this project has benefitted 23,500 individuals in the Greater Taree area,” Terry said,

“We believe,” said Terry Kitching, “we have done the appropriate thing by hand delivering the BFSP to their very doors and where

possible have spoken to the occupants about the Plan. With the program ongoing, we believe we have met the recommendations of the Risk Management Plan.

#### Next steps

The huge effort put forward by the Greater Taree Community Safety team is paying off but they plan to survey the ‘rated’ homes within the next year to find out just how successful the project has been.

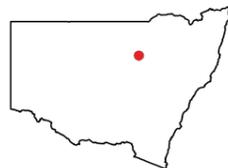
Having completed the first round, the Community Safety team are now launching into round two where they will visit tourist activities, guest houses, caravan parks and resorts where evacuation plans will be strongly suggested. These meetings will focus on The RFS Evacuation Plan being presented to the owner/managers.

#### Thanks

Special thanks on this project must go to Mr Bert Bennett (Convenor of the Risk Management Committee/team), Mr Willis Summers, Mr Bruce Annetts, Mr John Dorrington, Mrs Robyn King, Mr Jim Wootten, Mr Leo Fransen and all other members of the Greater Taree Community Safety Team as well as the Brigade Officers who assisted these members in getting the job done.

#### Nominated for Resilient Australia Award

The Bush Fire Risk Management Plan Community Engagement Treatment Implementation Project in Greater Taree has been nominated for a Resilient Australia Award.



# It's a big country

## The inaugural North West Zone Exercise helps bridge the distance

By District Services Officer Angus McDowall, North West Zone and Bogan District

Spanning 60,000 square kilometres the North West Zone and Bogan District is the second largest NSW RFS area in NSW. Some brigades are as much as five hours drive from each other, so it's no wonder that many of the volunteers in the Team Area rarely meet or get the chance to work together.

"Given the sheer size of North West Team Area," North West Zone and Bogan District Manager, Inspector Greg Sim said, "often brigades such as Burren Junction may not see Nyngan HQ unless it's during a Section 44."

The need for greater teamwork and familiarity between these brigades was highlighted during the January 2013 fires in Wambelong (Castlereagh Zone) and Collarenebri (North West Zone) when quite a number of volunteers from the North West Zone had to operate outside of their brigade areas.

To bridge some of the distance the inaugural North West Zone and Bogan District Exercise was held on Saturday 20 April 2013 at the Coonamble Showground. One hundred firefighters from a broad range of brigades jumped at the chance to practice and learn new skills including the far flung brigades of Bourbah, Burren Junction, Combara, Coonamble, Cumborah Village, Gulargambone, Lightning Ridge, Nyngan HQ, Pinegrove, Warren and Willow Downs. They brought with them 12 tankers and five support vehicles.

The Exercise was a single day, scenario-based training allowing volunteers to develop skills and get to know each other in order to work as an effective crew. For this reason the crews attending each of the scenarios were deliberately mixed up, providing a forum for the interchange of ideas and knowledge. Peter Hurst,



Coonamble Headquarters 1B completing the RFD track

Captain, Gulargambone Rural Fire Brigade was glad he made the effort to attend.

"I think the biggest thing that I got out of it was experience in leading and working with crews who I've never worked with before," he said.

The scenarios included:

- Open Relay and Closed Relay Pumping Event
- Gas Cylinder Fire
- Defensive Structural Firefighting for fires involving multiple structures
- Simulated Motor Vehicle Accident

- GPS/Topographic Map Navigation
- Rural Fire Driving Course

The Exercise ran as a round robin with scenarios were spread out between the Coonamble Showground and a number of areas around the township. All the crews refreshed their driving skills in the Rural Fire Driver (RFD) component. The only trouble was the landscape in Coonamble is almost entirely flat! Exercise organisers ended up using levy banks and dam walls to provide volunteers with

steep terrain to practice their driving skills.

"This type of exercise is essential in ensuring volunteer firefighters can learn the best practices and procedures for dealing with incidents they may be asked to attend," Inspector Greg Sim said, "By having crews work with other volunteers from different brigades it enhances the ability of the Service to deal with large scale emergencies and builds on an already strong team environment and camaraderie that exists in the RFS."

## BRIGADE IN PROFILE

### In memory of our late president John Gabriel

In May of 2013, our dear President, last founding member and recipient of the Commissioner's Commendation for Service in 2012, John Gabriel, passed away suddenly. This Brigade in Profile piece has been put together as a salute to John and his dedication over the last 56 years to Wenty and all who passed through its doors.

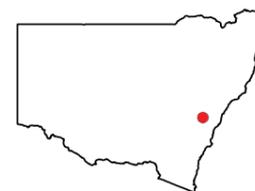
*We are like dwarfs sitting on the shoulders of giants. We see more, and things that are more distant, than they did, not because our sight is superior or because we are taller than they, but because they raise us up, and by their great stature add to ours.*

12th century theologian and author John of Salisbury



ABOVE: Official cake cutting at the Brigade's 50th anniversary(L-R) From left to right: Ray Elliott (Captain 1998 to now), Terry Boyd (ex. Captain), The late John Gabriel and Rod Woodhouse (ex. Captain). Photo by Tim Parsley

**Name of Brigade:** Wentworth Falls  
**Year brigade formed:** 1959  
**Current Captain:** Raymond Elliott  
**Current President:** Tim Parsley  
**D/T/Z:** Blue Mountains, Region East



### Can you give us a brief history of the brigade?

The brigade was officially formed in 1959 in response to the 1957 fires which saw parts of Leura and Wentworth Falls razed to the ground. This formation replaced another existing group known at the time as the 'Wentworth Falls Volunteer Reserves' made up of local men with a trailer of firefighting equipment donated by local businesses.

Initial meetings were held in the still standing Wentworth Falls School of Arts with fundraising activities being focussed on the purchase of an ex-RAAF Chevrolet Blitz with a 350 gallon water tank for £900.00 which was initially garaged in The Grosvenor Private Hospital in Wentworth Falls. It wasn't until March 1961 the brigade finally moved into its single bay brick shed in Falls Road.

In 1969, the brigade took delivery of a new Bedford Tanker and passed the old Chevrolet Blitz onto the Mt Riverview Brigade. As has been the case over and over for countless brigades, the station had to be extended with a new tanker bay in order to house the larger Bedford because the existing structure was too small. Over the years the brigade made various extensions to the station, including a meeting room, toilets and a shower (which was used as an office).

In 1987/1988 the brigade took delivery of a new JCS Isuzu

at a cost of \$99,999.99, to replace the old Bedford. For the first time the crew would be housed in an enclosed cabin with a cabin protection spray - a significant step up in safety. With the roller doors fully up, the spinners would just squeeze under the doors by about 1cm. Needless to say, we replaced a few spinners on that truck!

In 2003, we got a new Isuzu Cat 1 and this time, there was no way we could fit it in the station. Consequently the Cat 1 was housed at the FRNSW station around the corner in the yard out the back under a tarp. If nothing else, this helped us foster a great long term relationship with the local 'townies' which continues to this day.

In late 2003 after years of fundraising, the brigade entered into an agreement with the Blue Mountains Council to build the station we have today in the same location on Falls Rd where it all began. We moved in in November 2004.

### What are some unique parts of your brigade's history?

As the Great Western Highway climbs into Wentworth Falls you ascend up a hill called Boddington Hill ('Boddo' to the locals). A long dragging hill, Boddo took no prisoners when it came to overheating vehicles. The Blitz was no different. At the bottom of the hill the crew would stop the truck, start the pump and bring the live reel into the cab, open the engine

cover and open the fog nozzle onto the engine, then set off on their merry way up the hill.

In the early 1960s, it was a common fundraising activity for the brigade to spray blackberries for the community. Unfortunately the brigade became so inundated with requests it was only able to complete a limited amount.

In the 1980s the brigade had a LandCruiser ute donated to which we added a lazy axle to the rear to enable the load of a water tank and firefighting equipment to be added. This unit became known as our striker and was eventually replaced by our Mazda Cat 7 and finally the Crew Cab cat 7 that we have today.

### What are some recent milestones the brigade has achieved?

In 2009 the brigade celebrated 50 years of service to the community of Wentworth Falls. Our video '50 Years Plus' is available in the RFS Library. We are also exceptionally proud that our founding Captain, the late Don Woodhouse, receiving the AFSM medal in 1991.

### What type of area do you cover? (e.g. farm/urban/bushland)

Put simply, lots of bush and lots of steep terrain and a heck of a lot of urban interface - over 220 square kilometres of area.

So much of the bush firefighting effort in the Blue Mountains is about urban

One of the most unique features would be the amount of vertical escarpment we have to deal with which makes firefighting so much more complicated

interface and Wentworth Falls (one of the more populated towns in the Blue Mountains) is no exception. In fact most of the Blue Mountains is ridge top urban area, making for some interesting times over the years.

The fuel types we deal with vary significantly. In our area alone we have heath, hanging swamp, forest/scrub and even some grassland in Kedumba Valley. Then of course there are the fuel layers. In most places in our area there is a significant amount of surface and elevated fuels meaning that laddering is always a complication to be dealt with. Hanging swamp fires are always a mind bender, particularly when out-of-area crews come to assist. They can be soaking wet and leech infested, and they will still burn with great vigour!

To the south we cover Kings Tableland and parts of Kedumba/Jamison Valley. One of the very interesting phenomena associated with Kings Tableland is the wind. As it funnels down and rises up from the Jamison Valley and over the tableland, it accelerates. Consequently it quite often feels like its blowing a gale. It's not uncommon to find the odd house out there with guy wires holding down the roof.

To the north we cover up to Mount Hay and into parts of the Grose Valley. The Grose is synonymous with its fire runs over the years, with the most

memorable in my 20 years probably being the 1994 Bell Range Fire, which ran from Mt Wilson to the Nepean River destroying houses in Hawkesbury Heights, although with the recent October 2013 fires, the 1994 memory has some competition. Whenever we hear of fire anywhere in the Grose, we know to clear our calendars for a week or two, with October 2013 proving the point once again.

#### What types of incidents does your brigade attend?

Primarily we attend bush fires, search and rescue and storm damage incidents. We do have a very good working relationship with the town's FRNSW brigade and as a consequence we get called to assist from time to time.

We are also very active with out-of-area deployments with the brigade deployed to Canberra 2003, Victoria 2003, Victoria 2009 to name the larger ones.

Then of course there are the campaign fires. Every few years we will get a fire that refuses to be tamed and it will drag on for two or three weeks. In 1997 my wife fought fires in the Blue Mountains and the Wollemi for three months!

#### What vehicles do you have?

2002 Cat 1, 2006 Dual Cab Cat 7 and Land Rover Discovery PC.



2009: 50th Anniversary celebrations. Photo by Tim Parsley

#### What type training do you conduct and how do you go about doing this?

We train every Wednesday night and we try to train on Saturday afternoons if a field officer is available.

In the months leading up to fire season we get back to basics because it is the basic skills that can make firefighting that bit easier if done correctly. Additionally much of our training is pegged at the AF (Advanced Firefighter) level as it seems to draw the best audience. The BF (Basic Firefighter) members like the challenge and the AF members get to continually refresh their skills. We also have an experienced Ambulance Officer in our brigade as well as SES officers which means we can get an extraordinary range of training delivered based on what we need.

When we are stuck for ideas we practice pumping at the

Wentworth Falls Lake - which luckily for us has a hard stand capable of placing two Cat 1s next to each other. Fortunately, over the years the ducks have learned to swim away when the red trucks arrive.

This year we have handed training coordination to two new Deputies so we are very excited to see their fresh ideas.

#### What are some unique skills and features of your brigade?

Our brigade takes an active role in AF district training with the course coordinator being a member. In particular, the brigade has a number of talented individuals with respect to AF-Wildfire Behaviour with two Fire Behaviour Analysts (awaiting endorsement) and the Blue Mountains Council Program Leader for Bush Fire and Emergency Management. Combining these with that the AF-Navigation and AF-Crew Safety instructor team, and you

have a formidable instructional force within the brigade.

In the mid-1990s, our then captain Terry Boyd accepted a position at Glenn Innes as Fire Control Officer where he served for a number of years. In 2006 one of our Deputy Captains managed to secure a full-time role in the SES and is currently in the position of Deputy Region Controller in the Sydney Southern Region. We are all very proud of what she has achieved and continues to achieve.

Surprisingly we have also been very fortunate over the years to retain most of our field officers and as a consequence we are now viewed as one of the brigades in the district with a good depth of fireground leadership experience. Most of our 10 field officers have 10-15 years of continuous experience as a ranked officer. This in itself pays dividends when large complex fires arrive - as they did this year.

#### What are some unique features of your community?

Being surrounded by World Heritage National Park for one.

Secondly, it would probably have to be the whopping great lake right in the middle. Located in the headwaters of Jamison Creek and dammed as water storage for steam locomotives making their way up the mountains, the lake is a focal point for the community, tourists and many brigades around the mountains. It's also pretty popular with the Air-Crane when they come to town as well.

Finally one of the most unique features would be the amount of vertical escarpment we have to deal with which makes firefighting so much more complicated.

Even though they look like solid vertical cliffs of sandstone, they are spotted with vegetation, often forming just enough of a vertical path to carry fire from

the valley floor. During the Olympian Parade fire in Leura in 2011, we had a heck of a time at night trying to work out the direction of the fire both up and across the escarpment. In desperation, South Katoomba Brigade set up a flood light from a well-known lookout. It was safely away from the fire yet they were able to shine light into the valley's darkness. The Wenty (Wentworth Falls) and Woodford crews were able to use the flood light as a reference and map out the fire, identifying where it was laddering and which terrace it was running across. The plan worked despite the 100kph winds continually trying to wrestle our helmets from our heads!

#### Any final thoughts or comments you would like to add?

The late John Gabriel and his predecessor the late John Isherwood have been immortalised in a perpetual trophy to be presented each

year to the firefighter who the Captain believes has made the biggest contribution to the brigade in the previous 12 months. Known as the 'Double Johnny', it will be hotly contested I'm sure.

Not to be outdone, the junior members have their own trophy to contest annually for the same reason but presented by the Senior Deputy Captain, known as the 'Jordan Banner' Memorial Trophy.

I would like to thank the Captain Ray Elliott, the Senior Deputy Captain Terry Cameron, Vice-Presidents Helen Belshav and Chris Zito and the District Manager David Jones for facilitating this surprise article for a brigade that has stood up to more than its fair share of challenges over the past nine months.

This is my gift to you as the current President. Be proud of what you have achieved.

Written by Tim Parsley, President Wentworth Falls Brigade



NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE



# AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND FIRE AWARENESS CONFERENCE 2014

22-24 May 2014 - Novotel Northbeach Wollongong

REGISTRATION NOW OPEN

The Australian Community Engagement and Fire Awareness Conference will be returning to Wollongong in 2014.

The theme for the 2014 conference is **MISSION POSSIBLE.**

The National Strategy for Disaster Resilience reflects that disaster resilience is a shared responsibility.

This conference will be focused on sharing, adopting, adapting and applying good practice to build resilience to bush fires now and into the future.

Along the road to resilience, everything is possible.

**REGISTRATION:**  
To register, please visit <https://members.asnevents.com.au/login/>. Registrations close Friday 21st March 2014.

For more information, visit the Community Engagement section on MyRFS.

**QUESTIONS?**  
Contact Community Engagement Conference Organising Team  
T 02 8741 5416 E [acefa.conference@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:acefa.conference@rfs.nsw.gov.au)

facebook.com/nswrfscommunityengagers  
twitter.com/rfscommengage

# When it comes to recruiting volunteers local is best

By Kevin White, Volunteer Relations and Workforce Planning Project Officer

Recruiting volunteers is a challenge for many brigades. The new Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Kit can help you find new members - and support the ones you've already got.

The NSW RFS has been working on the Volunteer Recruitment and Retention Kit since December 2012, with funding provided by the National Disaster Resilience Program.

To develop the Kit we talked to NSW RFS members across the State to find out what brigades are doing now to attract and retain members, what is working and what resources would help. The Kit brings together these ideas in a format that allows a variety of options for brigades depending on their circumstances. The Kit reflects the wide range of issues that can affect recruitment and retention of volunteers in different parts of NSW.

No matter where you are or what type of brigade you have, the recruitment messages are simple:

1. Ask your local residents to be a part of the safety of their community in a way that works for them
2. Consider making all brigade activities into recruitment activities. Plan your brigade calendar to deliver messages to the community around peak times
3. Think ahead: the recruitment process continues until your new members finish probation

**What's in the Kit?**  
Inside the Kit you will find a range of practical information and resources including:

- Case studies and stories from brigades who have successfully recruited using different techniques;
- Tips and tools for interviewing, inducting new members and setting up mentors;
- Multimedia presentations - a photo slide show and brief promotional video;
- Descriptions of the recruitment posters, brochures, postcards and other resources available to order;
- Templates to make things easier, such as:
  - Recruitment letters and invitations;
  - Thank you letters;
  - Induction and mentoring checklists;
  - Sample interview questions;
  - Sample role guidelines;
- And a set of planning tools to tie it all together.

The Kit is available in hard copy (ask your District office for a copy) and on MyRFS. As this Kit is primarily based on what brigades are doing right now, we welcome any feedback, tips and tools, please forward them to: [volunteer@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:volunteer@rfs.nsw.gov.au).



Across the State brigades have taken widely different approaches to the issues of recruitment. The following case studies have all been successful in their own way and show that the magic button for recruitment and retention is: Local is best!

The brigade activities show a sense of community and togetherness that helps keep Hides Creek Brigade relevant in the community.

### CASE STUDY ONE Tamworth HQ

Brigade Open Days are a great opportunity for potential members to find out more about joining. A few years ago the members of Tamworth HQ Brigade noticed that participation in their annual Open Day was low. When they spoke to other brigades in the District they found the same problem, so they decided to try a District-wide approach.

"We really weren't promoting Open Day to our local people," Tamworth HQ Brigade member Belinda Estens said, "So we started a 'pre-Open Day' event at the local shopping centre."

"We put together a display in the shopping centre. It gave the community something to look at and also something to take away including Firewise messages and recruitment pamphlets. The highlight of the display is the promotion of the upcoming Open Day throughout the District. The names, locations and times of the brigades who are participating in Open Day festivities are listed on brightly coloured A5 flyers.

"At the same time as the shopping centre display, we also placed posters in businesses and brigade members did do letterbox drops. People saw our members in their uniform and stopped to say g'day. This was another great opportunity to invite them along to our Open Day and to encourage them to consider joining the Service."

"Lucky for us, one year the local Bunning's Warehouse allowed us to run our Open Day in their car park. We were able to capture a much greater audience. The brigade station is just down the road, so if someone was interested a member simply walked them down the road and showed them through our shed. It worked very well!

"We have also invited the local NSW Fire and Rescue brigade to join us. We have a great relationship and we work with them at emergencies, so why not have more to do with them at social and community events like this?"

"Ultimately, we try and keep the Open Day activities mixed to show the varied roles we have."

"In the lead up to the Open Day, we work with the District staff to ensure that the media releases are all released at around the same time and close to the actual event."

"The approach has worked very well, and we really have seen a huge difference. Not only do we see greater numbers of new recruits, but previous members also come back."

### CASE STUDY TWO Matcham Holgate Brigade

Matcham Holgate Brigade on the Central Coast has developed a 'whole community' approach to recruiting, relying on a number of approaches to deliver an outcome. During his time as Captain, George Slennett learned a great deal about recruitment.

"Matcham Holgate Brigade is located in a rural residential area on the outskirts of an urban area," George said, "It is comprised of small acreages ranging from 1 to 20 hectares with most development on the valley floors and native vegetation on the ridges which in places are quite steep. Most of the residents work in businesses and professions outside the area and, although very supportive of the brigade, it is very hard to convert them to members."

The Matcham Brigade developed a strategy that includes both active and passive forms of promotion:

- **Community engagement activities** – regular Street Meetings provide a useful contact point for residents and attract an occasional new member.
- **Recruitment sign** – a professionally-made, double-sided sandwich board with the message "volunteers needed" is used at all brigade activities and is also placed outside the fire station when it's open.
- **Fire Danger Rating sign** – The "Volunteers needed" message is also attached to the FDR sign outside the fire station. The fire station is located on a significant local road and the sign has proved to be successful in attracting enquiries on membership
- **Posters and leaflets on recruitment** are distributed at all community activities
- **Advertising in the local newsletter** - The brigade contributes to the local Matcham Hall Newsletter informing the community about fire activity and fire safety as well as inviting new members.

Matcham's new Captain Robert James, Matcham Holgate Brigade is continuing to maximise their visibility in the area, using both passive advertising (sandwich board, FDR sign) and active advertising (community engagement activities) to recruit.



Matcham Holgate's Sandwich Board and Fire Danger Rating sign – great passive recruitment tools to support recruitment efforts.



### CASE STUDY THREE Avoca Beach Brigade

Not far from Matcham Holgate Brigade is the Avoca Beach Brigade. Being a Village 2 Brigade Captain Leigh Pilkington says they have a different audience and therefore use different recruitment methods including:

- **Community Engagement events:** "We get to know local residents and help them with fire preparedness," Leigh said, "and at the same time we use our own recruitment business cards and ask for their help."
- **Maintaining a good relationship with other Emergency Service organisations:** "We work hard to maintain a great relationship with the local NSW Fire and Rescue crews," Leigh said, "and this definitely pays off for us with our cooperation and community first approach."
- **Business cards:** "They are a perfect size to have in your pocket and hand out when at events and activities," said Leigh, "having our details on the cards, coupled with having our members hand them out and ask for the community members to consider joining, has shown excellent results."
- **Brigade Facebook page:** "Avoca Beach Brigade set up our own Facebook page with local information and events on it, and we also set up a paid advertisement on our Facebook page asking for help," he said, "If you click on the advertisement it opens into our website where information about joining is located. It has been a great low cost option for bringing in new members."
- **Brigade website:** "Avoca Beach Brigade work hard to raise funds and some of the money has been used to hire a professional web designer to build and maintain our website," he said, "Facebook and Website pages must be current and remain active to have an impact. If they stagnate, there is no point having them," Leigh noted.

Above: Recruitment Card available through the NSW RFS – contact your District Office to get a copy of the recruitment resources order form, or download from MyRFS.

### CASE STUDY FOUR Hides Creek Brigade

The Hides Creek Brigade is a rural remote brigade located in farming land on the Mid-North Coast NSW. Captain Graeme Stockton said: "By making the brigade shed the hub of the community for the different community groups meetings, and by running four social events per year including having one sit down meal with all members and their family using local produce, we highlight the commitment we have to each other."

The brigade activities show a sense of community and togetherness that helps keep Hides Creek Brigade relevant in the community.

"I always remind everyone in the community that the brigade is our brigade. We may have been given equipment, resources and access to training by the Service, but in the end it's about us supporting each other," Graeme said.

"I ensure I thank them (the members and their families) personally for their contributions across the year and always look for ways to make things better. We introduce mentors in the brigade to help our new members get up to speed and feel a part of the brigade quicker. By making the brigade station a focal point in the community, we can remain relevant and an important part of people's lives."

"My members are the reason we are so successful – they are dedicated, wonderful people who make the effort of being a part of the brigade that much easier."



ABOVE: Hides Creek Brigade uses active methods to recruit and retain their members, and the response locally shows it matches them perfectly.

It was at a Community Residents Group Meeting that we discussed Community Fire Unit membership with local residents...this has been a great result all round...

## CASE STUDY FIVE

### Duffy's Forest Brigade

Duffy's Forest Brigade worked hard over the years to keep a strong relationship with their community to increase their membership and increase retention:

Rick Jones, Duffy's Forest Brigade's Captain, explains: "Duffy's Forest is located in a semi-rural area, with most blocks approximately seven-acre hobby farms. Most of the brigade members are living in surrounding suburbs, and we work hard to maintain a community presence – the brigade station is opened to house the Community Residents Group meetings, and a member of the brigade attends these meetings and provides a fire report – this gives the residents the opportunity to know what's coming up, and helps remind residents to prepare their properties for the fire season.

The Duffy's Forest Brigade (because it's a small and involved community) even send out a Christmas Card to all of their residents each year – and in return, the community run a barbeque and fund raising event to support them.

Rick went on: "It was at a Community Residents Group Meeting that we discussed Community Fire Unit (CFU) membership with local residents. Many of these residents wanted to join the brigade but felt they weren't able to because of other commitments and a lack of time. At the next BBQ, we brought along a CFU trailer and gave demonstrations to the local residents. After that, some joined up."

"Because Duffy's Forest Brigade was heavily involved in the training, and we made sure that they felt they were an important part of the brigade, the new CFU members got to see the benefits of membership, and we are now seeing an increase in ordinary membership. The CFU members want to continue their training and respond to incidents with the brigade."

This is a great result all round, as there is:

- a higher level of community awareness and training around fire and fire preparedness
- an increased brigade membership
- the varied role for current members (different training and shared activities) has helped keep members interested.

RIGHT: These posters and postcards are available to download or order via MyRFS.



make a difference  
volunteer with the nsw rfs

For more information about  
volunteering in your area contact:

visit: [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au) | email: [volunteer@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:volunteer@rfs.nsw.gov.au)



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# One Service and One message

Improving the way we communicate and engage

The Service's Corporate Communications Group has recently released *One NSW RFS Communication and Engagement Strategy* to improve and clarify communication within the Service.

*One NSW RFS Communication and Engagement Strategy* has been a priority project for the NSW RFS over the past year, and aims to improve consistency in our communications at all levels of the Service. The Strategy was heavily informed by member's views from around NSW through consultation workshops, surveys, interviews and email feedback.

The three objectives of the Strategy are:

1. Consistent, accessible and effective communications
2. Improved use of technology to meet communication needs and expectations
3. Empowering stakeholders.

Some of the main areas of the Strategy include:

- Key messages (useful for members in all roles)
- How we engage and communicate (snapshot of what we do)
- Roles and responsibilities (your role in communicating and engaging)
- Communication and engagement framework (how we plan to meet our objectives).

### One NSW RFS Tool Kit

The One NSW RFS Tool Kit has been developed alongside the Strategy. It provides members with the tools to carry out communication and engagement activities and includes templates, fact sheets, videos and presentations for daily use.

The Tool Kit is available both on MyRFS and on the NSW RFS Intranet.

### How can the Strategy and Tool Kit help me?

The Strategy and Tool Kit have been developed to save members time and encourage consistency in our communication and engagement activities. On the following pages are some of the ways that the Tool Kit can help you.

If there are further templates, resources or tools that you would like to see included in the Tool Kit email organisational.  
[communications@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:communications@rfs.nsw.gov.au).



# How can the Communication Tool Kit help you?

## YOUR QUESTION

## ONE NEW RFS TOOL KIT

“I need to give a presentation to a community group/local council.”

Use the easy-to-use NSW RFS PowerPoint template and create your own presentation or use one of the prepared generic presentations.



“I want to create a flyer for an upcoming community workshop.”

Use the generic community workshop flyer and just add in your brigade details, dates, times etc.



“I’ve got a meeting with a group of residents seeking information about bush fire safety at home.”

Have a look through the community fact sheets available on the public website.



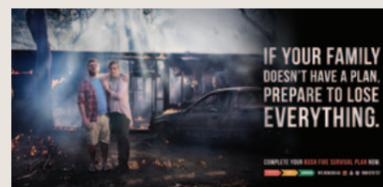
“I want to make my presentation more engaging.”

Insert some of our multimedia resources such as NSW RFS YouTube video clips or photos.



“I want to use approved NSW RFS content on our District website/Facebook page.”

You can share posts from the NSW RFS Facebook page to your page and use other Tool Kit resources such as *Bush Fire Bulletin* inserts/stories, fact sheets, videos etc. Make sure you direct any community-facing sites or pages to the NSW RFS public website for updated emergency information.



“I want a standard agenda/meeting minutes for my brigade/project meeting.”

Easy-to-use NSW RFS branded templates are available to download and use.



## How does MyRFS assist in operational periods?



MyRFS has several tools that are particularly useful in preparation for and during operational periods. We caught up with two NSW RFS members to find out how they use MyRFS during major incidents.

### Common Operating Picture

One of the most popular features of MyRFS is the Common Operating Picture (COP) which allows members to see a range of mapping information for any part of NSW.

Deputy Captains Zac Taylor from Luke Munmorah and Justin Savidge from Raglan use the COP regularly.

“Having access to the COP is really useful and it is quite easy to use,” said Deputy Captain Taylor, “Being able to see current incidents, including ICON data, provides my brigade with the ability to obtain situational awareness before a deployment.”

MyRFS users are able to access the COP from the home page of MyRFS by clicking on the ‘Map’ link on the right hand side of the page under “Current Incidents”.

Members are able to move around the map and zoom in or out to pinpoint a specific area either by using their mouse or the navigation controls

in the top left corner of the map. There is also a mini map displayed in the top left corner of the COP which shows where you are looking at on the main map in relation to the rest of the State.

Users are able to switch between a number of map views to suit their needs including vector based, topographical and visual imagery. To further help pinpoint the location of specific features there is a set of spatial coordinates displayed at the bottom of the screen which shows both the grid reference and latitude/longitude for the location of the user’s mouse.

Deputy Captain Savidge finds this feature particularly useful.

“Being able to put my mouse over a dam or a lightning strike and quickly get its exact grid reference helps us with our pre-incident planning, and is a great training tool that can be used as an interactive ‘table-top’ mapping exercise,” he said.

### A whole new level of detail

The COP allows users to view a range of highly customisable data for a specific area. By default incident information is displayed, as well as aircraft movements and, where available, linescans. Users are able to further customise the information which is displayed in the COP by selecting the ‘Additional Data’ tab at the top of the COP to turn on or off extra layers. The following layers are currently available:

**Lightning:** Displays lightning strikes across NSW over the past 48 hours

**Wildfire History:** Provides information previous fires in the area including dates and the extent of the burnt area.

**Weather (Rain Radar):** Shows the current rain radar information provided by the Bureau of Meteorology.

**Linescan:** Displays the latest linescan maps taken of incidents across NSW

**Icon Fire Features:** Displays

### What is MyRFS?

MyRFS is a website built especially for volunteers, providing access to Service information and news, brigade management tools and incident information. MyRFS was originally launched on 1 July 2005, in 2012 it had a major upgrade, providing access to more tools and information. A further upgrade occurred in late 2013.

### Need help logging in?

There is no need to register - every NSW RFS member has a login. Members can obtain their login details from their District Office, or if they have their Firezone or volunteer number, reset their password on the site. For more information or to register, visit [www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au).

# Bush Fire Bulletin Survey



Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons using COP to brief Premier Barry O'Farrell on the fire threat to NSW on 13 January 2013. Photo by Anthony Clark

detailed fire map information for the incident, as stored in ICON

#### Neighbourhood Safer Places

Displays the location of Neighbourhood Safer Places

**Education Facilities:** Shows the location of schools, colleges and a variety of educational facilities

#### Emergency Facilities:

Displays the location of NSW RFS Brigade Stations and Fire Control Centres, Police Stations as well as other Fire, Ambulance, SES and rescue unit facilities.

#### Hazard Reduction Burns:

Shows the location and year a hazard reduction burn was completed.

**TOBAN:** Displays current and forecast Total Fire Bans.

#### Weather Wind (Observation):

Provides wind observations from the Bureau of Meteorology

**RTA Incidents:** Adds current RTA traffic incident information to the COP

**RFS Incidents:** Displays the location and alert level of NSW RFS incidents.

**Tracplus Appliances:** Shows the location of Aircraft and supporting resources currently deployed by the NSW RFS State Air Desk.

**VIC Incidents:** Shows incidents occurring in Victoria

**ESA ACT Incidents:** Shows Incidents occurring in the ACT.

Deputy Captain Taylor uses these customised layers not only during incidents but also to assist with operational planning. "One of the information layers that we use heavily is the wildfire history, which allows us to identify areas where the fire history indicates high fuel loadings and target these areas for fuel assessments."

"The inclusion of the lightning layer allows us to monitor lightning activity in the area and make educated guesses on which area to monitor for potential fires," Justin said, "The linescan layer allows us to get an actual picture of fire activity and a sense for how intense various parts are burning; it adds a whole new level of detail."

#### Incident Whiteboard

Another feature Justin uses is the Incident Whiteboard.

"It's a brilliant tool for situational awareness in our local area as well as around the State," he said.

MyRFS members can access the Incident Whiteboard for specific region or the entire State by clicking either the region name or 'All' in the 'Current Incidents' section on the right hand side of the screen.

This displays a list of all notifiable incidents within the selected area and provides a range of information about incidents currently occurring including the size, location and type of a fire, as well as how many and what types of resources are in attendance.

In addition, where available, users are able to access a detailed map of the incident in printable format. Deputy Captain Savidge has found this to be quite valuable.

"The ability to view, save and print incident maps available offers great flexibility in getting a reasonable picture of the incident, where access to a mobile device or access to the internet is limited. It is also beneficial in that it's accessible by everyone, including those who are not technologically savvy."

#### About you

##### Are you a:

- Volunteer
- Volunteer and staff
- Staff
- Member of the general public

##### What is your primary location?

- Regional NSW - North
- Regional NSW - South
- Regional NSW - West
- Regional NSW - East
- Sydney

##### For NSW RFS volunteers:

Are you a:

- Junior member
- Bush Firefighter?
- Officebearer in the Brigade?
- Group Captain?
- Community Safety Officer?
- Other:

##### How often do you attend NSW RFS events, meetings or training sessions?

- More than once a week
- Once a week
- Once a month
- Several times a year
- Once a year

#### Communications from the NSW RFS

##### How do you currently source news about the NSW RFS? (Please select all that apply)

- Your local brigade
- Your local Fire Control Centre
- Bush Fire Bulletin
- MyRFS
- Ebulletin
- NSW RFS Intranet
- Facebook
- The general media

##### How would you prefer to receive communication about the NSW RFS?

- Email
- Website
- MyRFS
- Social media
- Post

##### Would you prefer to receive more or less information from the NSW RFS?

- More
- Less
- Same

##### How do you rate the quality of information from the NSW RFS?

- Excellent
- Good
- Could be improved

##### Do you consider online communication more effective than printed material?

- Yes
- No

##### Would you read the Bush Fire Bulletin if it were presented as an online magazine or website?

- Yes
- No

##### For the Bush Fire Bulletin, what kind of information interests you?

Choose all those that apply.

- Incidents
- Operational Liftouts with 'how to' information
- Messages from the Commissioner
- Good news – successful programs
- Profiles of specific brigades and volunteers
- History
- Awards and Events
- Training information
- Community Engagement tips for volunteers
- Fire Safety messages for the general public
- Information suitable for children
- Innovations and research in firefighting
- Other – please indicate or make suggestions:

.....

.....

.....

## BUSH FIRE BULLETIN

SIGN UP TO RECEIVE BUSH FIRE BULLETIN DIRECT TO YOUR HOME OR UPDATE YOUR DETAILS



#### Cut out and mail to:

**Bush Fire Bulletin  
NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE**  
Reply Paid 67059 Locked Bag 17  
Granville NSW 2142  
(No stamp required)

#### or email your details to:

Bush.Fire.Bulletin@rfs.nsw.gov.au

Name: .....

(Please include any post-nominals)

Address: .....

Postcode: ..... Phone: Home and/or mobile: .....

Email address: .....

Update

New Subscription

eBulletin (email required)

NSW RFS Member



[www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au)



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ISSN: 1033-7598

Publisher NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE Produced Corporate Communications Editor Jacqueline Murphy

Graphic Design & Art/Production Coordinator Letra Printed on Monza Gloss; FSC (CoC), ISO 14001, IPPC, ECF environmental accreditation

Cover Photo Grays Point Brigade at the Cecil Park fire in November 2013. Photo by Sharon Quandt.