

BUSH FIREbulletin

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//// THE JOURNAL OF THE NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

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The views expressed in articles in the Bush Fire Bulletin do not necessarily reflect the views or the policies of the NSW Rural Fire Service.

FOREWORD



Recently, many parts of NSW have received some much needed rain. However, as we are tending to see more often, other regions have missed out on these good falls. The weeks and months ahead will tell how beneficial this has been for rural land holders and the longer term fire weather outlook.

The Service has continued to build on its successes in the area of hazard reduction and mitigation in recent months. Time remains to complete further work, weather permitting. Part of this season's success is due to new initiatives and procedures, such as seasonal mitigation works crews. These crews can move into an area and prepare it for a burn, making the job easier for volunteers. You will find out more details about these crews in this edition of the Bush Fire Bulletin. Increasing the amount of effective hazard reduction across the State is one of the biggest challenges facing the Service in the coming years. With your continued support and participation in this important work, we can provide improved protection for our communities.

During my travels across the State, I have found many examples of the good work and achievements of our volunteers and staff. This includes the ongoing success of the Volunteer to Career programme, which aims to provide volunteers with a path into paid employment. Currently, more than two-thirds of staff employed by the RFS come from a volunteer background and I encourage other volunteers to consider a career with the Service.

During June, I had the pleasure of marking a major milestone for the Service alongside the Minister for Emergency Services, Nathan Rees. During the annual RFSA Conference in Mudgee, we celebrated the formal handover of Tanker 3000 - the 3000th vehicle to be delivered under our ongoing Tanker Programme.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the more than 300 members who helped make July's World Youth Day festivities a success. This includes those who assisted the NSW Police Force with security checks at venues, the crews which provided fire protection during the Pope's stay at Kenthurst and the GIS staff based at the Police Operations Centre. I also thank the RFS organising committee, which oversaw this project and ensured its success.

Looking ahead, and based on latest predictions, the odds of good rain in the lead up to this fire season are mixed. There is a 50 percent chance that the eastern part of the State will receive higher than median rainfall in the next few months, while further west the chances are narrower. Inside this edition, you will find articles on severe weather and hazard reduction, including examples of the mitigation work being completed by crews in all regions. I trust you enjoy reading this edition of the Bush Fire Bulletin.

Shane Fitzsimmons, AFSM
Commissioner

**OUR
VALUES
UNDERPIN
ALL OUR
ACTIONS**

THE SERVICE IN FOCUS



2008 NSW VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARD

DOES SOMEONE IN YOUR BRIGADE INSPIRE YOU?

Do you have a volunteer in your brigade who is outstanding in their generosity and skill?

Well perhaps you can nominate them for the NSW Volunteer of the Year Award?

The Award recognises those who give up their valuable time each week to help others. It could be a brigade member who mentors new members or someone who offers their time generously and with great humour. It could be someone who just provides the glue to hold the whole brigade together.

Each week across NSW around 1.6 million people donate their time to a non-profit organisation.

"The opportunities for volunteers are endless," says Lynne Dalton, CEO of The Centre for Volunteering. "I am constantly amazed at the creative and selfless ways that volunteers put themselves out to aid others."

Nominations for the Award close on 30 September 2008 and can be made at www.volunteering.com.au.



HATS OFF

A tribute from Australian firefighters has been included in an exhibition titled *After 9/11: Messages from the World and Images of Ground Zero*.

The RFS firefighter's helmet was chosen amongst thousands of items left at US embassies and consulates around the world in support of US emergency workers in the wake of September 11 attacks.

One message reads: "Stand tall. The US firies are doing the rest of the world's firies proud."

The signed helmet was sent from the Terrey Hills Brigade and features signatures and messages of support including the Terrey Hills Brigade motto: Raw Strength and Courage.

US Consul General in Australia, Judith R. Fergin was so moved by the gift from the RFS that she met with Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons in April to officially convey the appreciation from her country.

The exhibit compiled by the United States Diplomacy Center has already travelled across the US to eight venues and will be displayed in New York City this September 2008.

Photo courtesy of the United States Diplomacy Center.

IN APPRECIATION ~ Maroota

"Four RFS Brigades came together this year as one to thank two great Australians, tireless workers and golf fans, John and Judy Davis of St Albans.

For the past twelve years this husband and wife team have raised over \$120,000 for four brigades north west of Sydney on the Hawkesbury River - Maroota, St Albans, Lower MacDonald and Wiseman's Ferry.

After seeing the devastations of the 1994 fires, John and Judy decided to take action to support the brigades in their area. In 1996 the first Charity Golf Day and Auction was held. It raised \$900 for the Wiseman's Ferry Brigade. Every second year since then the Charity Golf Day and Auction has gotten bigger and better. In 2007 John and Judy had raised just over \$120,000 for the four brigades - \$66,000 in the last three years alone.

John and Judy have now handed the running the golf day over to no less than eight representatives from each of the four brigades. (Eight of us to do the jobs of John and Judy. How hard did they work?)

In February this year we got together to thank them. The highlight of the day was presenting them with the John and Judy Davis Perpetual Trophy - a golf tournament to be played for by the brigades. They have brought together four better equipped brigades and four brigades who are now firm friends. The inscription on their trophy says it all: In the spirit of volunteers and friendship."

Peter Kazzi, Maroota Brigade





The NSW Rural Fire Service State Championships 2008

Tweed Heads NSW - 13-14 September 2008

ISUZU
MULTI TERRAIN



The State Championships is the primary event on the RFS volunteer calendar and they are on again this September on the far north coast. Teams will come together for the challenge to take home the winner's trophy and the title of State Champion.

The 17th NSW RFS State Championships will be held at the Cudgen Leagues Club, Kingscliff near Tweed Heads, northern NSW and is hosted by the Far North Coast Zone. Over 250 volunteer members from across NSW and other States and Territories will compete.

The event will comprise of a testing (although very enjoyable) range of simulated emergency events that will require high levels of skill, training and dedication.

The event starts on Friday night. Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons will officially open the State Championships and the March Past on Saturday morning.

The official presentation to individual event winners and the overall event champions will be announced and presented with their awards on Sunday afternoon.

For more information please contact Paul McGrath: paul.mcgrath@rfs.nsw.gov.au.

Mark your calendar now to ensure you don't miss out on this tremendous opportunity to be part of this exciting event.



IN APPRECIATION ~ Yarramalong

"This is the first time we have had a Volunteer Appreciation Day and we are going to make it an annual event every third Sunday of May.

The RFS in the Lakes Team decided to put on the day to demonstrate appreciation, not only for the hard working volunteers, but their partners and families as well. The commitment of the families is really important.

National Medals and Long Service Awards were presented to members of the Lake Macquarie and Wyong communities. These volunteers have been active members for 20 years plus - and I think deserve some recognition.

The Blessing of the Fleet was also part of the day. Chaplain, Ian Spall said he conducts this service in response to the gifts of commitment, time and energy, given by members of NSW Rural Fire Service, who spread a "mantle of safety over us and our community."

Left: Lincoln Briffa and Sam at the Volunteer Appreciation Day. Photo by Mel Mumford. Fiona Davis, Yarramalong Brigade

COFFEE FOR KIDS UPDATE

The Volunteers Strategy for Coffee For Kids (C4K) has been a success already.

In the first six months, 29 brigades and 17 Fire Control Centres have joined the Volunteers Strategy for C4K - making a total of 46!

C4K is a simple idea: Just give up one cup of coffee per week to help sick kids. One hundred percent of funds raised by C4K is given to children's charities. The Children's Hospital at Westmead is currently the major recipient.

It's easy for your brigade to get involved. Simply register your interest at C4K@coffee4kids.org.au or call 8741 555 and ask to speak to a C4K advisory committee member.



INCIDENTS



HELICOPTER CRASHES BIRTHDAY PARTY IN ARCADIA

A joy flight hired for a 30th birthday party in March this year ended in chaos when the helicopter crashed right before the eyes of the partygoers.

The pilot and four passengers were thrown from the helicopter before the aircraft crashed into a large tree and disintegrated. All those in the helicopter survived but were badly hurt.

Most of the 50 people attending the party watched the incident unfold and when RFS crews arrived many partygoers were out on the road trying to help their injured friends.

The helicopter had flown over the house where the party was being held and in preparation for landing, banked to the left to avoid some trees. At this point it apparently lost power. The helicopter rotor blades hit a tall gum tree and the aircraft broke apart.

As the aircraft fell the passengers and pilot were thrown out about 5-10 metres in all directions. The falling aircraft narrowly missed hitting a house where two young people were inside.

At 1240hr Arcadia Brigade received the call and responded to the scene with a crew of four on Arcadia 1 Bravo. For two of the crew this would be their first ever fire call. What an introduction this would prove to be!

After a short drive the crew entered Perry Rd, Arcadia to absolute chaos.

"Initially we could not see the aircraft itself, only the rotor blades which were still hanging from the top of a tree," said Arcadia Deputy Captain, Jason Newnes.

"The chopper was hidden from view behind a shipping container in amongst a large gum tree and some thick bamboo. Debris from the helicopter was spread up to 60 metres away and fuel had started spreading around the crash site."

Extra resources were immediately called for. Galston and Dural Brigades responded as well as NSW Fire Brigades Rescue, Police and Ambulance.

The first of the injured was already being helped by another member of the Arcadia Brigade who had heard the crash and responded in his own vehicle.

"Two other patients were on the other side of the road," said Arcadia Deputy Captain Ian Waddell. "The pilot was walking, the fourth was on the other side of the incident in an open area near the house. The fifth passenger was right next to the chopper against the shipping container. He was not visible when the crew first looked as he was amongst the fallen tree branches."

Within two minutes of arriving the RFS Arcadia crew had started attending to the patients with first aid kits and oxy viva and the other crew members were manning the hose line.

The RFS Arcadia crews deployed a 38mm hose line for fire suppression and to cover the large amount of fuel that was running from the aircraft with foam. Two Group Captains arrived and made an assessment of the scene.

At this time Galston 1 Bravo arrived and assisted in both administering first aid and helping with the hose line in breathing apparatus. Arcadia 1 Alpha arrived and was tasked to water supply and providing further first aid assistance.

Around 10 minutes after Arcadia 1 Alpha's arrival, the first rapid response ambulance arrived. They called for the rescue helicopters and began to attend to those injured. The NSW Police also arrived and set up an exclusion zone.

Dural 1 Alpha arrived and was initially tasked to cut out a fence to allow access for inbound rescue helicopters.

Rescue helicopters landed shortly after. One of the choppers had been on the way



to hospital with a patient from another incident. They dropped off a doctor and continued to the hospital.

Around 45 minutes after arrival of the RFS, all the patients had been stabilised and were ready for transport to hospitals. They had suffered very serious injuries.

Meanwhile the fuel spill that was running toward nearby bush, was still being attended to. The spill was about 25 metres in length and four metres wide. Crews used earth dams, a foam blanket and absorbent material to soak up fuel before it flowed in to a nearby water course. Six tonnes of sand was delivered from a local soil yard to help with the task.

“Initially we could not see the aircraft itself, only the rotor blades which were still hanging from the top of a tree.”

RFS crews joined police in conducting an emu search for any parts of the helicopter in the surrounding area. These were to be marked for the crash investigation team from Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) who were on their way from interstate.

At 1600hr a press conference was held to update the large crowd of media who had gathered at the end of the road. Some of the RFS teams were stood down soon after. Catering was called on for dinner for the numerous personnel still on hand. After dinner, Arcadia 1 Bravo remained to continue fire suppression. Baukham Hills were asked to supply a lighting tower for the evening work.

CASA arrived at 2200hr and gave RFS the all clear. The RFS crews finally left the scene at 2300hr.

TOP: RFS crews arrived at the scene early, and after attending to the victims, focussed on fire suppression.

CENTRE: RFS crews used earth dams, a foam blanket and absorbent material to soak up fuel from the chopper.

LOWER LEFT: The helicopter pilot’s earphones landed in a nearby gum.

LOWER RIGHT: The helicopter rotor blades hit a tall gum tree and the aircraft broke apart.



REDUCING THE HAZARD FOR NEXT SUMMER



Hazard reduction is a core role of the RFS. Months of planning goes into their preparation. Very often HRs are low intensity fires which are designed to reduce the fuel loading in areas that may be at risk of fire in the hotter seasons.

Executive Director Community Safety, Assistant Commissioner Rob Rogers said he was pleased with the efforts of brigades and staff this season.

“The RFS can be proud of its performance in completing essential hazard reduction for high risk assets,” he said, “Given the number of days available for burning, the RFS’s performance has been outstanding.”

An additional \$10 million has been allocated by the State Government to be used to enhance works programs for councils, other agencies and most importantly on RFS burn preparation. An amount of \$3 million has been allocated to preparing HRs so that volunteers need spend less time on preparation work.

Volunteers are also being supported by two seasonal mitigation crews which have been trialled in Hornsby and the Blue Mountains. Their role is to carry out preparation work ahead of the brigades. The crews have so far cleared 60kms of firebreaks through difficult terrain which has led to 650 properties being directly protected from bush fire.

The funds have also been used to introduce Mitigation Compliance Officers in each region plus one officer to provide a Statewide overview. The role of the five Mitigation Compliance Officers is to help local crews overcome any obstacles in completing hazard reduction and to ensure there is a sufficient amount of work carried out each year.

“I encourage every brigade to get involved in hazard reduction,” Assistant Commissioner Rogers said, “because at the end of the day it makes our job easier in summer.”

Hazards Reductions have been held throughout the NSW this winter.

Despite fairly heavy rain in the north of the State and some extra dry conditions in the south, brigades have remained on target for protecting the community through mechanical and fire hazard reduction.



A SNAPSHOT OF HAZARD REDUCTIONS AROUND THE STATE



COBAR



WYANGALA DAM, COWRA



REGION WEST | WYANGALA DAM

The Wyangala dam, east of Cowra, is a water reservoir on Lachlan River and forms a water supply for the region. Brigades from the Cowra region performed hazard reduction on the foreshores of the lake in March this year.

About 100,000 people visit the dam every year and there were concerns to remove the fuel loading of the camping areas on the foreshore.

This hazard reduction was marked out with bulldozers and later set alight using a helicopter. This fire burned over the following two weeks.

REGION WEST | COBAR

The Nicholson HR burn was held in early April in mallee vegetation on a property near Nymagee, approximately 80kms from Cobar. This burn was part of the overall strategic planning for fuel reduction in the area and was also a perfect training opportunity for both staff and volunteers.

Operations Officer for the Far West Team, Robyn Martin said the day was a huge success.

"It was a great day! Besides volunteers and staff, we also had the Nymagee CWA catering unit and the local police in attendance. The burn was run as a fully operational fire, complete with DivComs and Sector Leaders, a staging area, chainsaw crews, communications officer, first aid and safety officer. As a result of this hazard reduction, 29 volunteers were assessed as being competent in areas ranging from Group Leader and Crew Leader to Basic Firefighter. A very productive day, enjoyed by all who participated."

REGION WEST | COWRA

A mountain range on the eastern side of the Conimbla National Park has been the focus of hazard reductions for the past four years to protect the town of Cowra.

This year's burn, of about 6-700ha, took place about 14 kms west of Cowra on private land. It is due to the prevailing winds, that a fire on the range, or within the

National Park, would threaten the town of Cowra where about 10,000 people live.

REGION EAST | HORNSBY

The RFS helped out the National Parks and Wildlife Service with a burn in March 2008 in the Berowra Valley Regional Park. Four out-of-area trucks, from Macarthur Zone and Warringah District, assisted with the hazard reduction.

On the same day Hornsby District Office also undertook two other burns, one in Galston on private property and one in South Turramurra. The Galston burn was undertaken with Hornsby resources while the South Turramurra burn utilised out-of-area crews to assist local crews – The Lakes Team and Macarthur Zone.

A big thanks from the Hornsby District Office to the out-of-area crews as this allowed the Hornsby & Ku-ring-gai Districts to undertake HRs throughout the week.

The following weekend the Hornsby District Office completed an additional three HRs. Although the burns were relatively small



HORNSBY



WEST WYALONG



MORUYA

in size they provided direct protection for approximately 280 properties.

Most of these burns were supported by the new seasonal mitigation crew which is being trialled in Hornsby and is headed up by Mark Sugden.

“It’s a high risk area. The fuel type is such that there is the potential for a major fire to run into the village.”

“With the exception of the NPWS burn, the mitigation work crew created handtool lines for all these burns,” Mark said, “Without the handtool lines we would not have being able to undertake the HRs.”

“The five person mitigation work crew consists of volunteers from various districts,” he said, “They are equipped with chainsaws, brushcutters, blowers, mowers and various other hand tools and are steadily undertaking the construction of handtool lines as requested by the various District Offices.”

Along with the Blue Mountains crew they have constructed 60kms of firebreak.

REGION NORTH | PREMER (NEAR GUNNEDAH)

“From our point of view this is a really important burn to get done,” said Inspector Andrew Luke, Community Safety Officer at the Liverpool Range Zone.

Premier is the small and isolated township around 70kms east of Coonabarabran. Not only is it isolated but the 40 or so houses are surrounded entirely by Pilliga scrub dominated by cypress pines.

“It’s a high risk area,” Andrew said, “It’s pretty isolated. The fuel type is such that there is the potential for a major fire to run into the village.”

Containment lines were constructed several years ago by the Department of Lands so the hazard reduction completed in March involved lighting a low intensity fire. Fifteen crews from six brigades worked across the three days of the burn. Two volunteers from Scone even came up to help out.

After three days of careful lighting and monitoring throughout the night, the edges were secured by the end of 29 March. The

Premier Brigade continued to patrol the area for the next few days.

“We had a lucky break in the weather,” Andrew said, “The burn was followed by cool temperatures and high humidity which really settled the area down.”

Overall 160ha were hazard reduced with volunteers and staff contributing close to 400 work hours into protecting Premier.

REGION SOUTH | MORUYA

The Moruya Brigade have helped out with many hazard reduction burns over the last year assisting private land holders, National Parks, Forest NSW and the Department of Lands. The effort has included prescribed burns ranging from less than 1ha to 4000ha. Laura Wilson (above) from Moruya Brigade was part of a burn in November where 15 members performed a hazard reduction of about 10ha to help protect the small coastal village of Congo.

A SNAPSHOT OF HAZARD REDUCTIONS AROUND THE STATE



REGION WEST | WEST WYALONG

A hazard reduction burn was held in early April at the Buddigower Nature Reserve, near West Wyalong. It was organised by the National Parks and Wildlife Service with assistance from Alleena RFB, Superintendent Arthur Sharp from Region West, Group Captain and A/Operations Support Officer David Curry and Melissa Messenger Community Safety Officer from the Bland Temora Zone.

REGION WEST | GARLICKS (NEAR COWRA)

A heavily timbered regenerated black pine forest near Cowra hadn't had a fire through it in 80 years when Regional Mitigation Compliance Officer Arthur Sharp and the local Cowra brigades conducted the preparation and burn earlier this year.

The area south of Goolagong and not far from Cowra covers about 900ha of private land. Containment lines took about eight days to prepare.

"It's really really tough country," Superintendent Sharp said, "We can clear about one or 1.2kms per day."

This burn created a safe buffer at the north end of a small range of mountains that lead into the Conimbla National Park.

REGION NORTH | DUNGOWAN DAM (NEAR TAMWORTH)

It was during a small grass fire in 2006 that firefighters noticed a rarely visited 'area of concern' in the Dungowan Dam Catchment area, near Tamworth.

Crews saw the heavy fuel loads and lack of accessible tracks through an area of

about 13,000ha that makes up the water catchment for the main dam that supplies water to Tamworth. The area was surrounded by private property, the Nundle State Forest Soft Wood Plantations and Hardwood Native Forests.

District Fire Control Officer in Tamworth, Inspector Geordie Akeroyd, said they began work on the area in 2007 and were ready to complete the job this year.

"This year we had a very small window of opportunity," he said, "An inspection of the area led us to believe that it would be ready to burn in a week's time. With rain on the horizon we knew we had to be quick."

Friday dawned with perfect weather and the crews started to light up around 1100am. The NSW Forests helicopter arrived at around 1430pm and was able to commence bombing to tie in the edge burn that was already well in place. Crews worked until 1730pm until the fire was deemed safe enough to leave until the following day.

"A phone call at 0615am the next morning gave us the dreaded news," Inspector Akeroyd said, "it had rained overnight. It was too wet to continue."

A subsequent flight over the fireground, however, showed that the burn had been a great success. The following weekend crews tidied up the edges of the burn. All in all, over the two weekends about 400ha was burnt at low intensity.

REGION NORTH | TAMWORTH

Tamworth, country music capital of Australia and the place where one can experience true country hospitality.

Such was the case at a recent hazard reduction that the Tamworth City RFB

attended at a property not far from the Tamworth.

The land holder had a 16 hectare paddock that had been recently cut and required to be burned off. He approached the RFS and arrangements were put into place to conduct the burn. A prescribed burning plan was submitted and the burn was given approval and a very suitable Saturday morning was tagged as zero hour.

The crew members arrived at the station, where a detailed briefing was conducted. Members were reminded that the landholders, in appreciation of our help, were supplying a BBQ lunch.

The trucks went out to the site, where we were met by the landholders – a husband and wife team - to discuss the plans, ensure that all parties were on the same wave length, stock was suitably moved away from the paddock and that smoke warning hazard signs were in place.

The paddock had been slashed, there were neat windrow-type piles of vegetation, ploughed perimeters and the assets within the paddock were suitably prepared and protected by the Tamworth RFB members.

Then the burn commenced in what could only be described as perfect conditions.

The burn was going to plan and newer members were gaining experience. In the back of everybody's mind there was the thought of a supplied lunch. At the suitable hour our hosts shepherded us to dining area replete with a table laden with country fair - sausages, fresh buttered bread, ice cold drinks, home-made chilli sauce, fruit scones and plain scones all lavished with jam and cream.

Funnily enough, every one of those present volunteered to return to do property protection whenever required in the future!



RED BARON TRAGEDY

In the late morning of the 18 March 2008, the Rural Fire Service, Macarthur Zone, received a call for a plane down on the Northern Road just north of Oran Park in Sydney's south west.

Crews from Cobbitty, Narellan, Bringelly and Catherine Field responded to the incident. They arrived to find a small stunt plane, a Red Baron, had crashed just metres from the side of The Northern Road.

A bevy of emergency services arrived at the scene including the NSW Fire Brigades, Police, Ambulance, Careflight, Polair and later in the day RTA took over traffic control.

Two pilots had been in the aircraft – one an instructor and the other an experienced pilot who was having an annual assessment for stunt flying. One of the pilots was attended to by Careflight and then taken to Nepean Hospital by ambulance. He was released with minor abrasions the following day. Sadly, the other pilot died on impact.

The Red Baron was a Pitt Special and was often seen by residents while performing aerobatics in the area. While the stunt planes operate out of Bankstown Airport, the area around Cobbitty is designated especially for stunt flying.

The crash was so close to the road that The Northern Road was blocked for about three hours while crews waited for a full investigation to be completed.



Police allowed a single lane of traffic through the area after the RFS crews hooked up a curtain to obscure the scene of the crash from the view of passing traffic. RTA staff managed traffic with RFS crews remaining at the scene for fire protection until the body of the deceased pilot was released by the Coroner in the early evening. It was then that both lanes of traffic were opened.

Investigators from Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) arrived later in the evening

to identify the cause of the crash. Security guards remained at the site for several days until the wreckage was taken away.

TOP: The Red Baron stunt plane tragically crashed a few metres from The Northern Road.

ABOVE: Captain Edgar Gaunt, firefighter Graeme Fickel and Senior Deputy Captain Peter Rabbidge from the Cobbitty Brigade. Crews from Cobbitty, Narellan, Bringelly and Catherine Field responded quickly to the crash.

SEVERE WEATHER AND THE RFS

WORKING HAND IN GLOVE THE ROLE OF THE BUREAU OF METEOROLOGY

By Michael Logan, Manager, Severe Weather Section, NSW Bureau of Meteorology

No matter how you look at it the weather plays a fundamental role in determining the extent, severity and longevity of fires in any given fire season.

Weather patterns in the months leading into a season are crucial, controlling rainfall patterns, temperatures, frost occurrences and snow falls. These factors help govern how susceptible areas are to fire.

During the fire season itself, the weather is of key importance in determining the short term risks. Cold spells and heat waves, for example, can have a dramatic impact on the risk of fire. But even more important is the role of weather when a fire is actually burning. Information about the weather at each specific fireground is needed due to its impact on fire behaviour and ultimately the safety of the firefighters who are actively fighting each fire.

It would be nearly impossible to plan strategies to fight fires without at least some appreciation of how the weather will change in the short term future, and this is where the Bureau of Meteorology has a vital role to play.

So what exactly is the role of the Bureau when it comes to fire forecasting and how does the close relationship with the RFS work? The answer is more complex than just the provision of a weather forecast. The complete service involves a variety of weather related products, supported by good communication, meetings, training, liaison, outposts and media work.

The Severe Weather Section

The majority of the fire weather forecasting service is carried out by the Severe Weather Section at the Bureau of Meteorology whose main office in NSW is located in Surry Hills, Sydney.



Photo courtesy of Chris Arndt and the Bureau of Meteorology.

The Severe Weather Section comprises five specialised forecasters whose two main areas of concern are Fire Weather and Thunderstorm Forecasting. The role of this section falls under the umbrella of Disaster Mitigation and the key clientele include all of the emergency response agencies including the RFS. Forecasters in this team are continually developing their skills in order to better understand the needs of fire agencies and firefighters in the field. Our aim is to provide a tailored and responsive service.

When the Severe Weather Section receives fire forecast requests from the field via RFS State Operations, they apply their meteorological experience to produce detailed weather forecasts for the short term future for each individual fireground.

Many factors are taken into account including location, topography, aspect, observations and computer guidance to try and gain an understanding of the possible

local weather effects and how these need to be factored into the forecast. This is only one in a suite of products (ie services) offered by this section.

During the fire and thunderstorm season the Severe Weather Section work operational shift work hours, seven days a week. Shifts are split into a morning shift, 7am-4:30pm, and an afternoon shift, 11:30am-8pm. Outside of these hours any enquiries are handled by the Senior Forecaster/Shift Supervisor supported by other public or aviation forecasters on duty.

Other routine and non-routine products offered by the Severe Weather Section include the following:



Michael Logan in the office of the Severe Weather Section at the Bureau of Meteorology.



Figure 1: Radar imagery from November in 2006 about midday showing a developing smoke plume coming off a fire fireground west of Putty in the Hunter Valley. As the smoke rises it is being blown towards the coast by westerly winds. The radar echoes over the ocean are sea clutter and not representative of rainfall activity.

Figure 2: By mid-afternoon the smoke plume is much larger and its leading edge has been blown down to the coast. This was a very interesting case as the intense smoke plume later interacted with some instability in the atmosphere to spawn a thunderstorm that moved towards Newcastle. Reports were received of it 'raining mud' as raindrops collected ash and soot from the smoke plume as they fell to the ground.

Fire Weather Products & Services

Routine products

- Daily Fire Danger Ratings for each fire district
- Assessment of the need for and the issuing of Fire Weather Warnings
- Daily issue of a Four-Day Fire Weather Outlook graphically depicting parts of NSW where the fire danger is expected to be very high or greater (*see over*)
- Weekly inter-agency phone briefings detailing expected weather across the State
- Fuel State data, (Drought factor and Keetch-Byram Drought Index, (KBDI)), in both graphical and tabular formats (*see over*)
- Climate outlooks for the next three months issued monthly by the Climate Section.

Non-routine products

- Fire forecasts for individual firegrounds relating to Hazard Reduction burns, Wildfires and Section 44 fires
- Frontal position charts, issued on any day when significant wind changes are moving across the State and the fire danger in these areas is very high or extreme
- Extreme Fire Danger Advices: an informal product used up to four days in advance when future weather is expected to pose widespread extreme fire danger. This is only disseminated to emergency services agencies.
- Verbal phone briefings. Given as required and always available to any member of the NSW fire agencies
- Outposting of staff to RFS State Operations on days of extreme fire risk
- Outposting of forecasters to firegrounds

to work within the Incident Management Team on long lived fires of significant concern

- Conducting off season fire weather training courses to develop weather knowledge within the fire agencies
- Post and pre-season meeting with all fire agencies

Communication is the key

Such a variety of different products and roles means that the communication and liaison between the Bureau and the RFS is of fundamental importance to the quality of the overall service. Good communication is especially important during high impact fire situations where the media are involved. At these times a unified message from both organisations can help to keep the public clearly informed. This assists everyone to understand the risk their local community faces and the actions they may need to take.

There is ongoing operational communication between the Bureau and RFS State Operations. Both organisations contact each other every time they send any non-routine product, including fire forecast requests. This ensures both organisations are always aware of what the other requires, allowing prompt appropriate action to be taken. The current relationship between the Bureau and RFS is strong and the Bureau is committed to maintaining and wherever possible, further enhancing, this relationship.

Proactive early communication allows for increased situational awareness, preparedness and forward planning, putting all agencies in a much stronger position to meet unfolding challenges. In many instances unforeseen circumstances arise, sometimes with the weather, at other times with fire behaviour or the location of outbreak. At these tough moments, the long established relationships and clear lines of communication between both organisations are at their most crucial.

The increased stress that is felt by forecasters is a direct reflection of how serious the situation faced by the fire agencies and firefighters in the field is and their critical need for timely and accurate information.

The recent fire season was generally quiet and fire forecasting was dominated by the preparation of routine products. The Severe Weather Section was kept busy with plenty of thunderstorm activity. The upcoming season could be different and ongoing work will continue in the off season to ensure the relationship between the Bureau and RFS remains strong. This is essential, for as we all know, it is only a matter of time before NSW faces its next dangerous fire weather situation.

The following scenario, although hypothetical, is a direct representation of realistic situations. Every such fire outbreak and weather scenario evolves differently, and both the Bureau and fire agencies have to adapt to respond to each situation.

See next page

HYPOTHETICAL

The hypothetical scenario outlined below illustrates how the Service operates inside the Bureau of Meteorology and how a close relationship with the RFS is essential and benefits the service provided by both organisations.

It's Monday and most of eastern NSW is dry and ready to burn. The weather patterns look ominous. Temperatures are set to rise, turning up the heat across NSW. Towards the end of the week hot winds are expected to increase as a strong front crosses the State. The risk of serious fire activity is set to increase.



Photo courtesy of Adam Wright, South Coast Register

Monday

In the NSW Bureau of Meteorology forecasting centre, forecasters are aware that as the weather deteriorates, the already high fire risk will become extreme. Friday looks like the worst day. The specialist fire weather forecasters associated with the Severe Weather Section discuss the fire weather threat with the Senior Forecaster. They agree that the escalating level of fire risk leading into Friday needs to be communicated to fire agencies and in turn, to the media and the general public.

The Severe Weather Section prepare and send out the Extreme Fire Danger Advice detailing the expected weather scenario and the threat it poses. The product goes to the NSW and ACT fire agencies. In the middle of the afternoon key personnel at the RFS call for a verbal briefing to elaborate on the expected weather scenario later in the week. This initial proactive step allows for greater planning and awareness within both organisations. Forecasters continue to prepare routine products.

Tuesday and Wednesday

Routine fire forecasting continues. Afternoon district fire dangers prepared for

the following day begin to show extreme ratings in parts of the west of the State. Areas of concern are discussed with the RFS in the afternoon and ongoing communication continues with fire agencies about the expected deterioration in weather later in the week. After joint consultation Fire Weather Warnings for the south-western and Riverina fire districts are issued by the Bureau and the RFS decides to also issue Total Fire Bans (TOBANS). All fire agencies are notified about the issued Fire Weather Warnings and TOBANS.

Thursday

High temperatures have gripped the State and isolated fire activity has broken out across eastern NSW. The media has become interested in the developing situation. Heightened liaison between the Bureau and the fire agencies ensure the media receive a consistent story. Any changes to the expected forecast are clearly communicated to key stakeholders.

The Severe Weather Section are busy responding to incoming individual fire requests, providing detailed phone briefings and continuing to provide routine services. Luckily there is no thunderstorm activity to monitor, allowing for a direct focus on fire weather issues.

By the afternoon many fire forecast requests have arrived, five of which are Section 44's. Each forecast will take about 30 minutes to prepare. Forecasters use a login to the RFS's ICON program to better understand each fireground and scenario.

“The most stressful time for forecasters is the hours just ahead of a strong front when heavy workloads and the pressure to maintain the best possible forecast accuracy are at their highest.”

The routine district fire danger ratings prepared for Friday return numerous extreme dangers for central and eastern parts of the State. The severity of the ratings is discussed between the Bureau and the RFS. Widespread fire weather warnings are issued by the Bureau and TOBANS are issued by the RFS. All relevant public weather forecasts mention the heightened fire danger and all fire agencies are notified about the issued warnings.

After consultation between the RFS and the Bureau, it is decided that a dedicated forecaster will be positioned at RFS State Operations on Friday. This role is vital in

Four-Day Fire Weather Outlook

Every morning the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) generates a four day fire weather outlook for the RFS. The product is generated automatically using forecast temperature, humidity and wind information from two "numerical weather prediction" (computer) models. This information may then be used for discussions in relation to future operational decisions. The above example shows conditions in October 2007 when extreme conditions were forecast to impact across the State into the coastal fringe.

See right for an example of a Four-Day Fire Weather Outlook from October 2007.

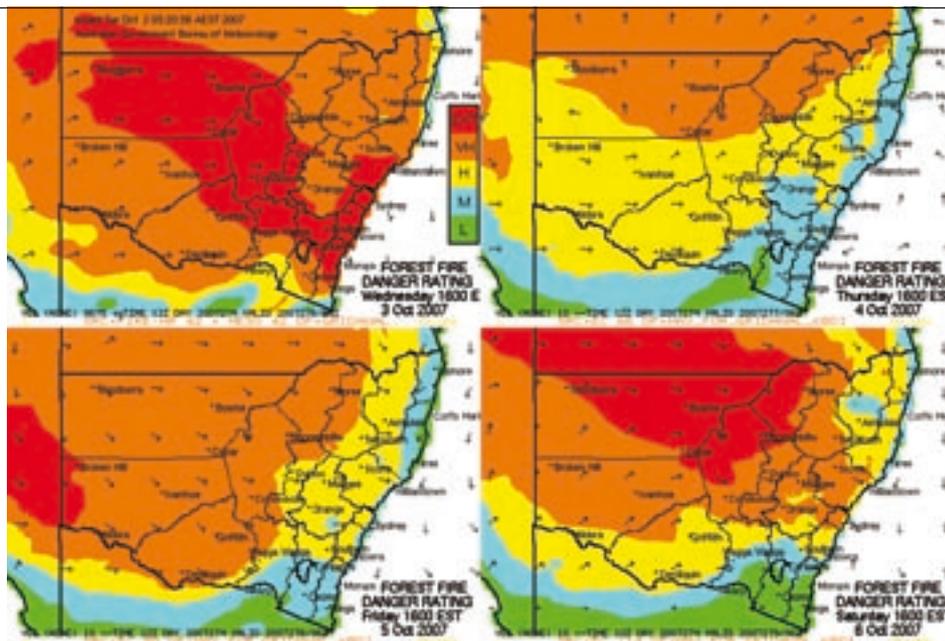
Drought Index

The Keetch Byram Drought Index (KBDI or BKDI) is automatically generated by the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) every day.

"It highlights areas where conditions are significantly wetter or drier than average."

The KBDI measures the amount of moisture in the soil. This map shows how the day's KBDI compares with the average for this time of year. It highlights areas where conditions are significantly wetter or drier than average.

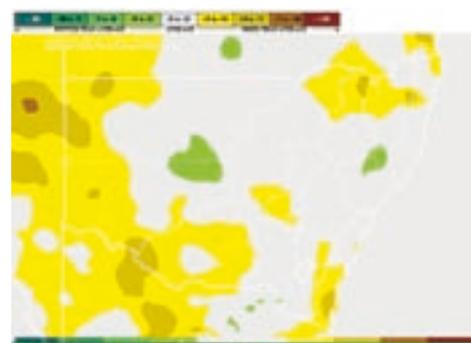
Average values for each day of the year have been calculated using gridded data for the 30



year period from 1971 to 2000. While other agencies may utilise this information, the RFS uses the information to gain insight into which areas are starting to dry out and may pose a fire threat.

Alternatively the map may also illustrate grass land areas that have received little or no rain and may therefore, have restricted or little growth and therefore pose very little threat.

See right for an example of the KBDI index from early 2008.



ensuring the latest and most accurate weather information is used in key decision making processes by the fire agencies.

Friday

It's 4am and an early start in the Forecasting Centre for one of the members of the Severe Weather Section who has just arrived. They need to review and resend all Section 44 fire forecasts prior to 7am and make sure that the forecast story has remained on track. The fire danger ratings are reviewed and any key changes are discussed with the RFS.

By mid-morning temperatures have climbed dramatically and the hot northwest winds have begun to blow. A graphical wind chart showing the expected movement of the front across the State is issued to the fire agencies. The accuracy of this chart and all other forecasts will be closely monitored throughout the day and updates issued as soon as required.

The relieving southerly change is not expected to reach central parts of the NSW coast until later in the evening and by early afternoon the increasing winds have caused many fires to burn out of control. The liaison officer situated at the RFS keeps near constant contact with the Severe Weather

Section. This ensures the latest and most accurate information is being fed to the agencies. They also assist in controlling a consistent message to the active media who are following the unfolding scenario.

Extra forecasters have been made available to assist with the high number of individual fire requests and by mid-afternoon many have been completed.

"The relieving southerly change is not expected ... until later in the evening."

The passage of the front crossing the State and associated southerly change moving up the coast, are closely monitored using satellite, radar and surface observation data. Forecasters work hard to ensure the timing of any approaching wind shifts is as accurate as possible for all firegrounds. Some key firegrounds are notified directly of the wind change and its effect on them.

Subtle changes to the movement and timing of any wind changes are of utmost importance to planning teams at the RFS and firegrounds. The most stressful time for forecasters is the hours just ahead of a strong front when heavy workloads and the pressure to maintain the best possible

forecast accuracy are at their highest.

Many media interviews are given about the evolving weather situation and the location of the relieving southerly change. By late evening, the front and southerly change have pushed through most firegrounds. The danger posed by a sudden wind shift has lessened. The cooler winds also bring relief from the extreme daytime heat.

The media hype that surrounded the story leading into the evening news has quietened down. Further enquiries are handled by other forecasters on shift and both the liaison officer at the RFS and the Severe Weather Section call it a night.

Although the extreme fire threat has eased for the moment, the large number of ongoing uncontained fires, including Section 44's, ensures a high volume of spot fire forecast requests will continue over the coming days.

A member from the Severe Weather Section will return at 4am to ensure the information in each forecast remains as up to date as possible. This gives firefighters the best chance of planning the containment of each fire. Ongoing routine fire forecasting and liaison with the RFS will continue as normal.

DUST DEVILS AND REED BEDS MAKE A DANGEROUS MIX

By Russell Perry, Group Officer, Murray District
Photo by Russell Perry, Rhys Glenn and Angie Staples

On Saturday 16 February at 0840hr a local call was received by Mathoura Brigade that there was smoke rising from the forest south east of Mathoura, a small township located north of Echuca-Moama near the Victorian border.

A team from Murray District responded to the call including the Mathoura's captain Rick Ireland, Senior Deputy Captain Chris Roberts and two Group Officers from Murray District, Russell Perry and Bill Berryman. The team determined that the fire was burning in reed beds, south of the Gulpa Creek, five kms west of the Murray River and three kms south east of Mathoura. It was burning on private property which adjoined the Moira Red Gum State Forest, this is one of a number of forests which forms part of the Barmah-Millewa group of forests.

It came to be known as the Duck's Lagoon fire and required at least three days of intense firefighting activity before it was contained. The intensity of the fire can be explained by the unique nature of the landscape and vegetation in the Mathoura area.

Forests of ecological significance

The Barmah-Millewa Forest contains the world's largest single stand of River Redgums. Frequent flooding over time has created a vast mosaic of swamps and lagoons, these reed beds form part of the Barmah-Millewa Wetlands.

"The strength of the winds associated with this huge whirlwind pushed the fire over the containment lines."

The area has been recognised under the Ramsar Convention as "wetlands of international significance." It is also one of the sites of "ecological significance" under the living Murray program. In February 2008, however, after such a long drought and 40 years since the last fire, these wetlands made perfect fuel for a bush fire. (See photos far right)

Massive fuel loading

On Saturday morning, the Murray District team drove the eastern edge of the fire and were able to establish that the fire's edge was west of Warrick Creek. Now the Warrick Creek sounds like a potential control line - however the Warrick Creek hasn't had any water in it for some time. Not only that, the creek's bed is full of Cumbungi, a tall reed plant which burns readily. Some of the reed beds were over two metres tall, 100 percent



cured and at approximately 100 tonnes per hectare fuel loading.

On returning to the staging area, the Murray District team had a quick brief with our Forest NSW colleagues and started to formulate some possible control options. Heavy plant arrived over the next few hours along with additional RFS and Forest NSW resources and aircraft commenced bombing operations.

Dust devils hamper efforts

At around 1500hr all was going well, crews were holding the fire at approximately 200 hectares. At 1530hr, however, Mathoura's Captain Rick Ireland, reported that he was experiencing some unusual fire behaviour on the fireground.

"I could see from a distance that there were a number of dust devils starting to form on the fireground," he said, "they seemed to combine to create one large dust devil, which got larger by the minute. I found out later that crews were keeping count with 22 being the highest count."

The dust devils, or whirlwinds, are created by surface heating and atmospheric instability. The largest dust devil was about 300 metres across at the base and could be seen from Deniliquin, 30 kms away (see photo far right).

Unfortunately the strength of the winds associated with this huge whirlwind pushed the fire over the containment lines in a number of locations.

Crews worked hard to again contain the fire before night fall.

Early morning winds pick up

The fire behaved itself for most of the night, then at around 0430hr on Sunday, winds picked up considerably and again the fire was pushed over containment lines. The fire now was heading towards a farm house and sheds less than one kilometre away. A number of tankers were assigned to property protection and extra tankers were called in.

At mid-morning on Sunday, fire crews commenced a six kilometre back burn, which was designed to tie into and consolidate the main containment line. This back burn went in perfectly. Additional fall-back containment lines were constructed over the next few days but weren't required. Overall, during the fire 14 kms of back burning was completed.

By the night shift on Sunday the fire was contained after 868 ha had been burned - 139 ha of that was private land and 729 ha was part of the Moira Red Gum State Forest.

RFS crews were stood down after three days, while Forest NSW crews continued to black out and patrol the containment line over the following week.

Thanks to all involved

During the first three days every brigade within the Murray District assisted with the fire along with tankers from Wakool, Deniliquin, Conargo and Jerilderie districts. Group Officers from Wakool and Jerilderie assisted Murray's Group Officers in covering night shift. Forest NSW was very well represented, the CFA sent a strike team and the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment provided tankers and firefighters.

All up, around 180 firefighters contributed to the firefighting effort. There were 32 tankers, eight strikers, four bulk water carriers, seven heavy plant engines – including three bulldozers, a grader, a front end loader and two log skidders – and six aircraft and aviation support personal involved in the effort. A good effort by all.

TOP LEFT: The Murray District team who first inspected the fire: Captain Rick Ireland, Senior Deputy captain Chris Roberts and Group Officers from Murray District, Russell Perry and Bill Berryman.

CENTRE LEFT: The smoke generated by the fire was unusually dark and could be clearly seen from Mathoura.

TOP RIGHT: Dust devils numbered about 22 and the largest was 300 metres across at the base.

CENTRE RIGHT: The Barmah-Millewa Forest contain the world's largest single stand of River Redgums. The firefighting in the forest was intense for the first three days.

LOWER RIGHT: Due to the drought, the fuel loading inside the reed beds was very high.





Photo by Lucy Hassett

BLAZE ENGULFS BOAT

Late one Sunday afternoon in March, a boat owner was tinkering on his 40-foot cruiser, when he noticed smoke rising from the engine.

The boat was moored at Dolphin's Mariner near Brooklyn on the Hawkesbury River, north of Sydney.

The owner tried to extinguish the fire himself but before long he had a full blown blaze on his hands. He rang Triple Zero (000) and stayed on the boat to wait for help. Another boat nearby helped out by towing the burning boat out into the main river channel near Kangaroo Point to prevent the surrounding moored boats from catching fire.

By now a flotilla of tinnies had gathered around to watch the blaze. The boat owner was offered a lift off his boat numerous times but he declined, preferring to stay with the boat until the very last moment. Finally he did take refuge on a nearby wharf.

The RFS Brooklyn Brigade received the call for help at 1745hr. They were on scene within 11 minutes. Despite the quick response time, the Officer in Charge, Captain Viki Campbell, said the fibreglass cruiser had already burned to the deck line prior to their arrival.

The crew of five on the Brooklyn fire boat used water to extinguish the flames.

"The hull and the deck were burning on our arrival," Captain Campbell said. The crew of five on the Brooklyn fire boat used water to extinguish the flames.

"One of the difficulties of fighting fires from a boat," Captain Campbell said, "is that the pressure of water from the hoses pushes the fire boat away from the burning vessel.

"The boat driver has to be constantly manoeuvring the boat to counteract the force of the water from the hoses as well as ensuring that the crew remains safe and away from the toxic smoke."

With the amount of water being sprayed into the hull of the burning boat it was likely to sink, so the Brooklyn crew towed the vessel onto a nearby mud flat into about a metre of water. They were then able to fully extinguish the fire.

After the fire was extinguished, boom was deployed around the boat to prevent any fuel, oil or debris polluting the Hawkesbury River.

Assistance was received from Berowra Waters Brigade who brought in additional boom and the district operational support unit from Cherrybrook Brigade who provided portable flood lighting for the night work.

RFS Brooklyn Brigade crews were back in station at 2048hr and had spent a total of three hours at the incident. NSW Police recovered the boat from the mud flat by crane the following day.

ABOVE: The Brooklyn Brigade's fire boat put out the burning boat while keeping the firefighters away from the toxic smoke.

BALLINA HOUSE FIRE

Wardell and Alstonville Brigades were called to a structure fire near Ballina in April this year. On arrival a two-storey weatherboard house was fully engulfed. The building had been unoccupied for several years and there was no other property damage or injuries. All services had been disconnected for some time. Crews remained on scene to extinguish the remains of the structure.



TRACTOR USED TO GAIN ENTRY

Brigades from Taree and Old Bar were paged to a report of a shed alight at Taree West in May.

Upon arrival crews found a shed well alight with a combination of furniture, a small boat and hay bales inside. As there were no hydrants nearby, additional crews from Wallaby Joe, Tinonee and the NSWFB, were called in to provide water.

Country Energy arrived and was able to disconnect power from the shed and also re-route power to a large pump located on the farm to enable brigades to draft water from a nearby water trough.

Access to the inside of the shed was also difficult. Two large roller doors at either end of the shed were locked from the inside. Although a single door was left unlocked, crews needed greater access so they forcibly opened the locked doors. A farm tractor was also used to assist with access and to remove the hay bales.

Mop up took a further three hours until all the smouldering bales were removed from the shed and extinguished.



GENERAL NEWS

ONE OF THE LARGEST RESEARCH EXERCISES IN AUSTRALIA

By David Bruce, Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre (CRC)

Photos by Sam Crothers

The mallee and heath landscape of Ngarkat Conservation Park in south-eastern South Australia was deliberately set alight in March this year in one of the largest and most comprehensive fire research exercises undertaken in Australia.

More than 100 bush fire researchers and fire agency personnel from around Australia converged on the park for a series of controlled burns under several separate research projects designed to improve fire management in South Australia and nationally. The RFS sent Inspector Sam Crothers to assist with the experiments in aerial suppression.

A total of 18 experimental fires were completed. They ranged from one to 80 hectares in size and were burnt under very high fire danger weather conditions.

According to lead researcher Jim Gould, from the Bushfire CRC, the fires provided high quality data on fire behaviour, fire weather, aerial fire bombing, the effects of smoke on firefighters and the fitness and health of the firefighters.

The project is aiming to describe fuel dynamics and fire behaviour in two major fuel types – mallee and heath. The major part of the exercise was Project FuSE, a research collaboration between the South Australian Department for Environment and Heritage (DEH) and CSIRO Forest Biosciences through the national Bushfire CRC. The final output of this study will be a prescribed burning guide for areas of similar vegetation type around Australia.

Aerial suppression

Two fixed-wing aircraft dropped a range of chemical suppressants (retardant, foam



The retardant stopped the high intensity fire in its tracks.



Fire bombing aircraft dropping retardant over the Ngarkat Conservation Park

and gel) and the results will be compared. A third aircraft coordinated the suppression drops while a helicopter took video and infrared observations.

Matt Plucinski, from CSIRO Forest Biosciences, who lead the research with Jim Gould, said the Ngarkat study provided a unique opportunity to test suppressants

under controlled conditions. "Up to now we have only been able to do this sort of work in small experiments or in real bush fire situations, which limits the amount of data we can gather. At Ngarkat we could monitor the aerial drops from both the ground and from the air and compare the performance of different suppressants in several high intensity fires."



AERIAL DROPS GET A CLOSER LOOK

The RFS's Inspector Sam Crothers, enjoyed the project and the opportunity to closely observe the positive impact of aerial suppression.

"My main role for Project FuSE was as a forward ground observer for the aerial suppression trials," he said, "I had to radio aircraft drop information back to the Air Attack Supervisor. This included monitoring and evaluation of drop heights, patterns and coverage levels.

"Project FuSE gave me valuable experience to witness the different characteristics of suppressants under extreme fire conditions. This also gave me the freedom to experiment with different drop heights, air speed and coverage levels."

Firefighter health

As part of the research, crews working on the fires were monitored for the amount of physical effort they expended to see how this affects factors such as heart rate, body temperature and energy and hydration levels.

Air toxics exposure

Researchers analysed the composition of bush fire smoke by placing monitors on individual firefighters as well on the back of fire trucks to better understand exactly what firefighters were exposed to on the fire ground.

Researchers on the ground were supported by staff and volunteers from the Department for Environment and Heritage and the SA Country Fire Service. Other agencies involved include the Country Fire Authority of Victoria, the Department of Sustainability and Environment, Victoria, the Department of Environment and Conservation Western Australia. Research organisations include CSIRO, Deakin University, the University of Melbourne and the Bureau of Meteorology.

Video footage of the Ngarkat research on the Bushfire CRC You Tube channel: <http://www.youtube.com/bushfirecrc>. More information is also available at: <http://www.bushfirecrc.com/news/ngarkat08.html>.

TOP: Two lines of retardant halt the fire.

CENTRE: Despite the high intensity and heat the retardant was extremely effective.

LOWER LEFT: Inspector Sam Crothers represented the RFS at the research exercises.

LOWER RIGHT: The research project also examined the effectiveness of foam drops





BIKIES HELP BRING IN THE BUCKS

By Ana Mijatovic, RFS Media Intern
Photos courtesy of The Lithgow Mercury.

Sunday 9 March marked the seventh annual Bikebiz Bush Fire Brigade Bash and it was the most successful one to date with over \$8,000 raised for the Rural Fire Service in Lithgow.

Around 200 motorcycles made the ride from Parramatta, in Sydney's west, to Lithgow. The event's success prompted organisers to aim even higher for next year with the goal of raising \$10,000.

After the ride from Parramatta, the bikers arrived at the Lithgow showground to be greeted by different RFS teams who had organised live music, firefighting displays as well as a raffle with a first prize of a motor scooter worth \$3,500. The event was fully catered by RFS and brigades involved in the fundraising included Portland, South Bowenfels, Catering and Communication.

Ian Jackson, Community and Safety Officer from the Lithgow District, said that this year's event was marked by great weather, especially when compared to last year's wet and windy conditions. He was very happy about the overall turnout of the day.

"Brigades from all over attended and all in all it was a most enjoyable event. This day has grown into such a large success because it is well organised and everybody has a good time. The riders also have a strong sense of brotherhood and they like supporting a good cause. We are grateful that they see the RFS as a good cause and we are proud that the outcomes of this event are so positive."



The local motorcycle group launched the Bikebiz Bush Fire Brigade Bash back in 2002 when they noticed the huge efforts made by local firefighters to protect the community.

"The idea for the event was born when a couple of guys had a 'conscience attack'," said Portland Brigade Captain, Alan Gerke. "They felt bad just standing by while firefighters risked their lives for the safety of the community. So they decided to do something to help the RFS out."

The major organisers of the event include Bikebiz Motorcycles from Parramatta, Lithgow Fire Brigade, Alan Gerke from



Portland and BOAB motorcycle group. The major sponsor is Bikebiz, who this year were also joined by Yamaha Australia.

Captain Alan Gerke said funds are allocated so that all 19 brigades in and around Lithgow will benefit.

"This year we have given the money to the training brigade. The money will be spent on equipment such as a laptop computer, resuscitation mannequins, weather stations, GPS system, bandages, chainsaw chaps and helmets. All the equipment will be given to the district trainers."

TOP: Once at Lithgow hundreds of bikers and spectators were treated to barbeque lunch and entertainment provided by the local brigades.

CENTRE: Captain Alan Gerke, Portland Brigade who is one of the organisers of the Bikebiz Bush Fire Brigade Bash, thanking everyone for their support.

RIGHT: Portland's Les Case won the \$3000 Yamaha scooter donated by Yamaha and Bikebiz. The three brothers from Bikebiz Lawrence, Peter and Mark Condon handed over the prize with Yamaha Superbike team rider Jeremy Crow.



Don't
invite us in
THIS WINTER

LAUNCH OF THE WINTER FIRE SAFETY CAMPAIGN

The Minister for Emergency Services, Nathan Rees, launched the 2008 Winter Fire Safety Campaign on 1 June, urging the general public to be vigilant in protecting their families and homes from fire. He revealed statistics from the winter of 2007 which showed it was the deadliest time for residential fires.

Minister Rees joined the Minister for Fair Trading, Linda Burney, NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons and NSW Fire Brigades (NSWFB) Commissioner Greg Mullins to launch the campaign.

Both Ministers and the Commissioners were also joined by Davidson Rural Fire Brigade and Crows Nest Station firefighters to urge the community to be safe this winter.

"More people died in fatal home fires in NSW between June and August than any other period during 2007," Minister Rees said.

Last winter there were 1,403 home fires which claimed a total of 10 lives and left 188 people injured. Kitchen fires accounted for almost half of these fires, often as a result of cooking being left unattended on the stove.



Minister Rees said fire experts had identified a number of trends in winter house fires that were of real concern. Research shows nearly one in three winter house fires occur between 4pm and 8pm and the number of fires caused by household objects such as curtains and blankets, being placed too close to heat sources has also steadily increased in recent years.

“More people died in fatal home fires in NSW between June and August than any other period during 2007.”

“It highlights that this winter, complacency is our greatest threat,” the Minister said, “Many people believe once summer is over, fire no longer poses a serious risk, but this is certainly not the case.

“Today marks the arrival of winter and the colder weather will force more people indoors and increase everyone’s reliance on heating, lighting and electrical appliances.

“Working smoke alarms and home escape plans are very important in giving households an early warning and can help people quickly and safely escape a fire this winter.”

A joint RFS and NSWFB print and television community safety awareness campaign was also launched highlighting the dangers around the home.

Speaking about the Winter Fire Safety launch, Commissioner Fitzsimmons said that not only is it the law to have smoke alarms in every home it is vital for residents’ safety, especially in rural areas.

“The long distances in the rural areas mean that in many cases a house cannot be saved, so we encourage everyone to ensure the safety of themselves and their families by leaving the premises as quickly as possible in the case of a fire.”

The Commissioner recalled a house fire in 2007 which had been attended by the RFS.

At just past 0100hr on 15 August last year, RFS firefighters were called to a house alight at South Tacoma, north of Gosford. Upon arrival the house was well involved and although three people had managed to escape the fire, a young man was unable to escape and died in an upstairs bedroom.

TOP LEFT: A joint RFS and NSWFB print and television community safety awareness campaign was launched.

LOWER LEFT: Minister Nathan Rees launching the Winter Safety campaign

TOP RIGHT: RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons and NSW Fire Brigades Commissioner Greg Mullins at the launch.

CENTRE RIGHT: Davidson Rural Fire Brigade attended the launch with their truck.

LOWER RIGHT: Minister Nathan Rees chatting with RFS volunteers.



ST FLORIAN'S DAY AWARDS

Each year on 4 May the NSW Rural Fire Service holds Commissioner's Awards Ceremony to honour members of the Service who have displayed valour or bravery and distinguished service and achieved excellence or distinction.

This year's St Florian's Day awards, presented by Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons, AFSM, included citations for bravery for Superintendent Roy Ferguson from Canobolas Zone and Firefighter Robert Pinter from Bredbo Rural Fire Brigade.

"Your efforts and dedication reflect on the entire Service and we are proud of you."

Three Commissioner's Unit Citations for Outstanding Service were presented to Buxton, Crookwell and Dural Rural Fire Brigades.

Three Commissioner's Certificates of Commendation for Individuals were presented for service or outstanding actions in relation to fire service duties, administrative leadership or exemplary performance to David Miller and Vivienne Miller from Hornsby/ Ku-ring-gai and Captain Ronald Jollow of Wendoree Park.

There were also three Commissioner's Certificates of Commendation for Units presented to the Glenugie, Halfway Creek and Ulmarra Brigades from the Clarence Valley Zone, the Illawarra Community Safety Brigade and the Warringah Pittwater District Course Coordinators.

The Commissioner urged all the recipients to be proud of what they had achieved: "Your efforts and dedication reflect on the entire Service and we are proud of you."

All members of the Rural Fire Service are reminded that nominations close on 1 October 2008 for Internal Bravery and Service Awards for St Florian's Day 2009.

FAR RIGHT FROM TOP:

Recipient of The Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Individual), David Miller, Hornsby/ Ku-ring-gai

Recipient of The Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Individual) Vivienne Miller, Hornsby/ Ku-ring-gai

Recipient of The Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Individual) Captain Ronald Jollow, Wendoree Park

Members of the Glenugie Brigade, Halfway Creek Brigade, Ulmarra Brigade receiving The Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Unit).

Members of the Illawarra Community Safety Brigade receiving The Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Unit).

Warringah Pittwater District Course Coordinators receiving The Commissioner's Certificate of Commendation (Unit).



Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons with the recipients of the St Florian's Day awards held at the RFS Headquarters in Homebush Bay, Sydney on 4 May.



Recipient of The Commissioner's Commendation for Bravery, Roy Norman Ferguson, Canobolas Zone



Recipient of The Commissioner's Commendation for Bravery, Robert Karl Pinter, Monaro Team, Bredbo Brigade.



Graham Whitely, Russell Hill and Jacqueline Gibson receiving the Commissioner's Unit Citation for Service for the Buxton Brigade

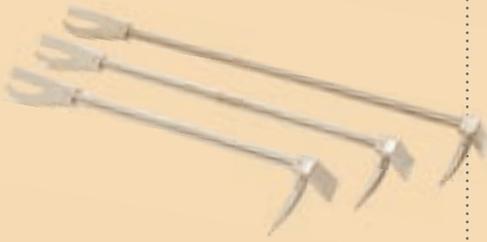


George Shepherd, Garry Kadwell, Damon Allport, Mark Owen, Norman Fountain and Kevin Clarke receiving the Commissioner's Unit Citation for Service for the Crookwell RFB.



Arnold Teuben, Erico Kusnander, Jarryd Barton and John Fallon receiving the Commissioner's Unit Citation for Service for the Dural Brigade.





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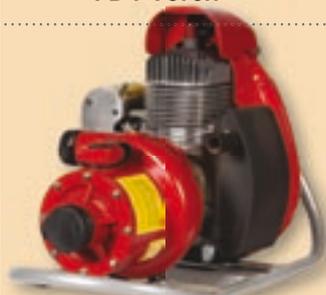
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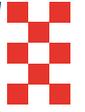
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HAZARDOUS TREES

By Chief Superintendent Alan Brinkworth, AFSM,
Manager Operational Readiness



Photo by Alan Brinkworth

Hazardous trees are a very significant aspect of safety at any incident, fire, prescribed burn or hazard reduction, storm damage or flood, when working around heavy plant, at an exercise or during an inspection. The statistics show that injuries and fatalities on a fireground are not only associated with chainsaw operations. A large percentage of accidents are caused by the unforeseen fall of trees.

The injury statistics which were reported to State Operations for the 2001-2003 fire seasons - our worst fire seasons on record - show that there were 868 injuries over the two seasons. Most of these were caused by dehydration, smoke inhalation and exhaustion. It must be noted, however, that 34 of the injuries were associated with trees. Injuries caused by

- a falling tree or limb: 21
- during storm damage work: 2
- during chainsaw operations: 11

During these two fire seasons trees also fell on eight firefighting vehicles. The vehicles sustained very substantial damage or were "written-off". Unfortunately, our statistics do not identify any injury caused by rolling logs. It is suspected that there would also have been many near misses which were never reported to State Operations.

The Service's records of fatalities indicate that since 1951 a total of 13 people have died in NSW in accidents associated with trees.

- limb falling: 1
- tree falling: 2
- tree falling on a dozer killing 4 (injuring 3 others)
- tree falling on a car: 1
- tree falling on a tanker: 3
- during chainsaw operations: 2

Learn to identify hazardous trees and assess their potential to cause an injury

Hazardous trees are generally weakened by age, environmental conditions including drought or mechanical damage, lightning, rot, insect or fungi attack. Always look up, be

STAY SAFE

Fireground safety not only rests with the incident controller but right down the line to the crew leader and to every individual member. It should be uppermost in all firefighters' minds. In the first instance we use the acronym I'M SAFE to determine whether we should even be on the incident ground.

Once it has been established that we are fit and competent to undertake the strategies and tasks on the incident ground, we rely on our mates and LACES as our second line of defence.

aware of your surroundings, learn to look for the "tell tale" signs and then communicate the hazard or danger to your immediate crew and others who may follow. Hazards may be in dead, dying or green trees, trees with dead or broken tops, cracks, splits, fractures or damaged forks. Some may have indications of rot, they may be leaning, they may have a root bowl lifting or may have thinning crowns, leaf discolouration or leaf loss (other than deciduous trees). Fallen trees or branches on the ground may indicate that others may fall. Smoking inside trunks, flaming chimneys or flaming limbs may signal an impending fall. Burning or smoking stumps also present a hazardous trap. Be aware that some trees such as the Coral Tree, which may appear to be sound but which have a reputation for heavy limbs just breaking off. Rolling logs, which can also spin, slide or shift, have also caused injuries.

Some conditions increase the hazard

The causes or conditions that may increase the potential hazard are rain, hail or snow, frost cracks, storms, lightning, high wind, increases in wind strength or changes in direction. Aspects such as soil erosion, unstable ground or mechanical damage from excavation may also indicate a potential hazard. Other factors such as helicopters hovering or landing and rotary or

fixed wing aircraft dropping water, foam or retardant also impact the safety of the area.

Incident ground safety

Be aware of changing weather conditions and ensure extra vigilance after dark. If the area is not safe, raise your concerns and communicate with your colleagues. Brief everyone concerned about the hazard and identify and point out the safety distance - ie twice the length of the tree.

Ensure that falling trees have "settled" before approaching them, be aware that fallen trees may damage adjacent trees or may trigger a cascade of falling trees - at the time or later.

Watch a tree all the way down - don't turn your back on it, keep looking up and check all surroundings.

Ensure that any parking area, rest area, refuge area or escape route is "safe". If you are conducting a static exercise ensure that a site risk assessment is carried out and that all potential hazards are mitigated.

Avoid complacency and wear PPE, including helmet, at all times. Statistics indicate that firefighters are more alert during extreme conditions. When conditions are less than extreme it's even more important to practice awareness and increase your powers of observation whenever in the bush.

Measuring the height of a tree

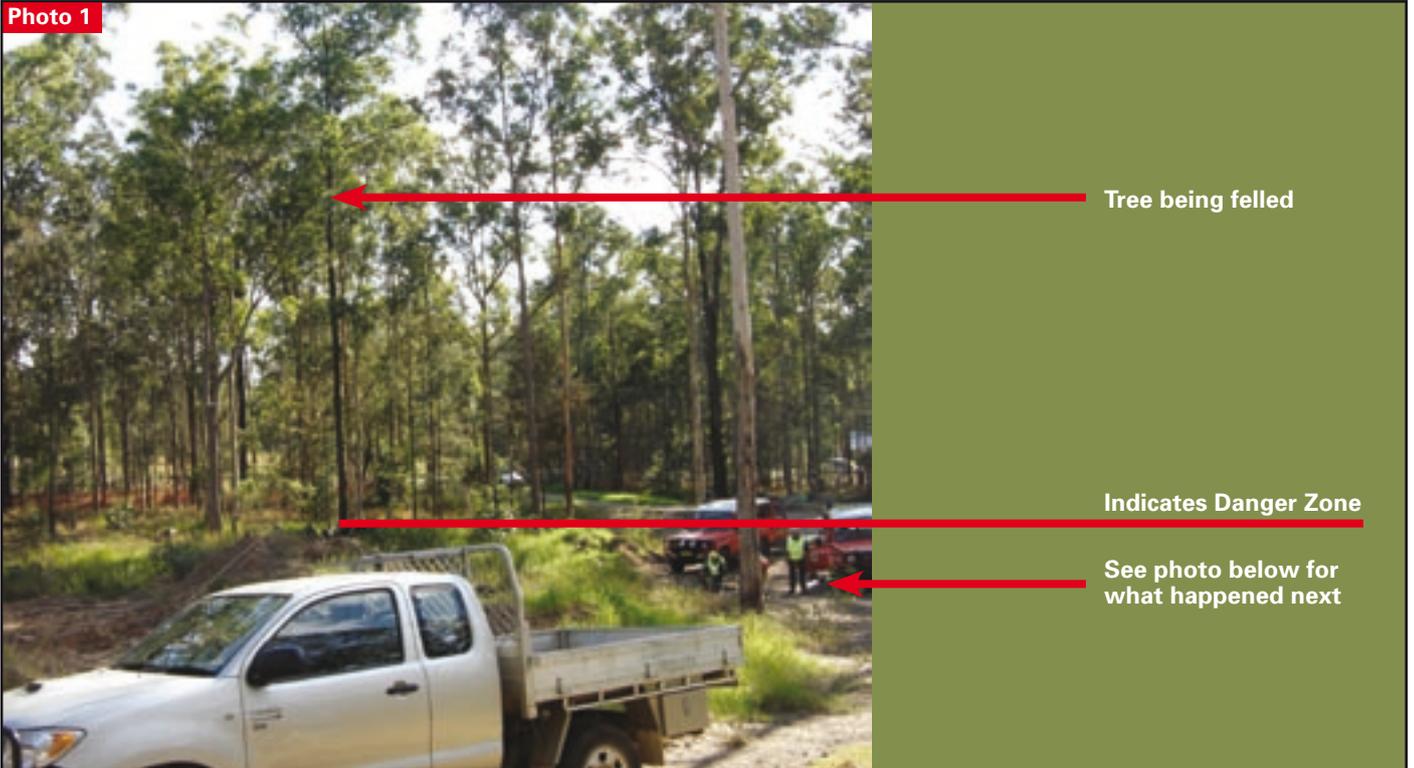
To roughly measure the height of a tree, find a straight stick, stand back a distance, hold the stick out in front of you, line up the top of the stick with the top of the tree and move your thumb up to mark the base of the tree at ground level. Then holding your thumb, mark at the base of the tree, rotate the stick to the horizontal position. Note where the top of the stick intersects on the ground as the distance between this point and the base is the height of the tree. Measure the same distance again to give you twice the height as the danger zone.



HAZARDOUS

Photos by Andrew Spence and Phil Deale, Round Corner Brigade, Geoff Phillips, Davidson Brigade, Sean Greenwood, Sandy Point Brigade and Alan Brinkworth, Terrey Hills Brigade.

Photo 1



Tree being felled

Indicates Danger Zone

See photo below for what happened next

How to measure the height of a tree and establish a danger area. This picture taken during a Chainsaw course and demonstrates how easily things can go wrong. You will note that the two personnel carriers are well within the danger zone.

Photo 2



The danger had not been properly identified and resulted in the tree falling on an RFS vehicle.

A brigade responded to a lightning strike and a fire in a large limb. This limb subsequently fell on the parked tanker, which was inside the danger zone.

Smoking or flaming tree (chimney or roman candle). If not near the edge of the containment line is best left to burn through.



Smoking or flaming limb which could potentially fall at any time.

Fallen trees or branches on the ground may indicate that others may fall at any time without warning.

US TREES

<p>Burning or smoking inside stumps or trunks which may not be visible from your side. Always check if smoke visible.</p>	<p>Crack or split, in this case caused by a lightning strike.</p>	<p>Hang-ups may occur naturally and may appear to be stable but could be dangerous. Avoid traversing underneath.</p>	<p>Hang ups may occur during chainsaw operations by being caught in the head/s of other trees or by vines causing the tree to twist. This must not be left.</p>

<p>Defective trees must be felled by a Fireline Tree Feller.</p>	<p>A Fireline Tree Feller with the appropriate skills can safely mitigate this hazard.</p>	<p>A double leader: must be felled by a Fireline Tree Feller.</p>	<p>Problem resolved.</p>

<p>Tree with scarf cut, slabbed during backcut with the end of the trunk landing approximately two metres behind the stump – potentially very dangerous for the operator.</p>	<p>A very dangerous attempt at felling a simple tree. Where will this land? An overcut scarf in both the horizontal and downward cuts and a very poor backcut.</p>	<p>Simple tree showing scarf, backcut and holding wood with wedge in place to ease tree over.</p>

<p>Problem tree where diameter is more than twice the bar length.</p>	<p>A root ball which lifted right out of the ground at Annangrove Road in the December 2007 storm was "righted" by a Fireline Tree Feller without incident.</p>	<p>Our role in storm damage (with the safe working on roofs competency) is to secure the building against further damage and leave the tree removal to the "experts".</p>

Pull out this section to display in your station or Fire Control Centre

Chainsaw use in the RFS

Chainsaws have been used by bush fire brigades since they were invented and available. It is interesting to read that the findings of Senior Deputy State Coroner John Hiatt on the NSW Bush Fire Inquiry into the 1994 Bush Fires, which were handed down on 28 February 1996, included mention of Occupational Health and Safety issues associated with tree felling and fatigue.

Does this tree need to be felled?

Prior to launching into chainsaw operations, ask the question "Does this tree have to be felled"? Is the tree or limb likely to fall? Is there spotting potential on the edge of the containment line? Is the chimney or burning limb well inside the containment line? What are the alternatives? Can it or should it be extinguished? Can it be left to burn out and fall?

Who should make the final decision?

The chainsaw operator, who understands his/her own competency, current conditions and the inherent dangers must make the decision. Never overlook the benefit of clearing back around the base of a dead and defective tree prior to the fire or prescribed burn reaching it, as this may save later remedial action.

Chainsaw Qualifications

Chainsaw Qualifications for the RFS have formally been in place since 1990 and the three levels, which have had various names, are:

- Cross-cutting or Trim and Cross-cut

- Fallen (Felled) Trees (TFT)
- Simple Tree Felling or Tree Falling (Felling) Intermediate (TFI)
- Problem Tree Felling or Tree Falling (Felling) Fireline (TFF)

Note that the Officer in Charge (OIC) is responsible and must check the current competency of an operator prior to commencement of any chainsaw operation.

Avoid dangerous practices such as cutting above shoulder height or cutting while on steps or ladders. Ensure that danger zones are established and secured with a lookout. Ensure that escape routes and alternatives are created and that the feller is confident and able to declare the area safe.

Chainsaw Equipment must include all correct PPE including chaps or chain saw trousers and helmet with hearing and eye protection, a properly serviced chainsaw, appropriately sized for the purpose, axe, wedges, tool kit, fuel and chain oil and possibly a spare chain.



Coreflute Field Kit signs are available through your Fire Control Centre. The field kit also contains blank signs that can be written on with a broad felt tipped pen to provide additional information if required. **Dangerous tree** sign to be displayed at least two tree lengths from both directions. Ensure that escape routes and **refuge** areas are clear of hazards. This also applies equally to parking, rest and camping areas.



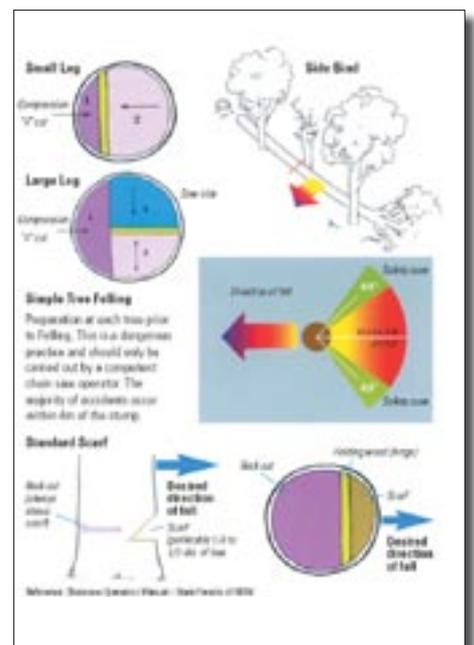
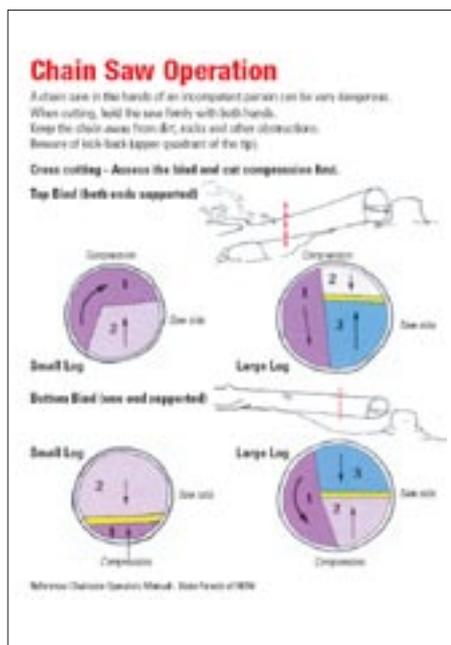
Correct personal protective equipment (PPE).



Phil Deale, Baulkham Hills shows the benefit of religiously wearing all the correct PPE when using a chainsaw. In 2003, the chainsaw kicked back and cut across his leg. It destroyed a pair of chainsaw trousers but Phil himself escaped serious injury.

Don't forget Fireground SOP No 18: Use of Chainsaws (during firefighting or related operations)

- Unless otherwise approved by the FCO, chainsaw operations are only to be carried out by certified chainsaw operators
- The use of a chainsaw is at the discretion of the chainsaw operator and no other person shall direct them to undertake an operation
- Falling of trees on the fireline shall only be conducted by a certified Fireline Tree Felling operator or an Intermediate Tree Felling operator under the supervision of a Fireline Tree Felling operator
- If tree falling operations are required, the IC shall request a Fireline Tree Felling team
- One operator is to act as a safety advisor during operations
- Tree falling is only to be carried out when there is no safer means of resolving the threat
- Daylight operations only, unless there is an urgent safety need in which case adequate lighting to the tree, canopy and surrounds must be provided
- The falling of hung up trees is not to be done without machinery or mechanical assistance



June 2008 Edition 3 of the Firefighters' Pocket Book , pages 73 and 74

How to Mitigate Hazardous Tree

- Identify hazardous tree, hazardous limb or unstable ground
- Consider wind and weather conditions, current and forecast
- Secure, eliminate, avoid or withdraw
- Communicate hazard



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REGION NORTH EXERCISE PHOTO GALLERY

NEAR RECORD NUMBERS IN GLEN INNES

By Bryan Daly, Regional Operations Manager, Region North
Photos by Matt Gould, OnLine Communications

The Region North Annual Operational Exercise this past March, hosted a near record number of firefighters with around 460 personnel and 60 fire appliances involved in the exercise.

The good attendance at the exercises was attributed to the reputation the exercises have gained over the last few years. The quality of training and the benefit to each firefighter has been spreading word of mouth. Many volunteers reported that they hold the exercises in high regard and know that they will learn more skills, as well as have a good time.

"The quality of training has been spreading word of mouth."

The Glen Innes Showground was once again the base for the exercise held from 14 to 16 March. A number of scenarios were also held north west of the township of Glen Innes, on the Strathbogie and Emmaville Roads, approximately 15 minutes travel time from the Showgrounds. Twelve scenarios were the basis for the exercise. Some of the scenarios were:

• Country Energy

This was an interactive scenario that taught crews what to expect when entering an area where electricity wires are down.

• Structural fire

An old farmhouse provided a realistic opportunity for crews to practice their structural firefighting techniques, including ventilation and open and closed relays.

• IMX

A new scenario this year that brought an understanding to the fireground crews of what it is like to be in an incident management team in the middle of a large scale incident.

• Team Challenge

A challenge where each crew had to construct a raft out of 20 litre drums, float

across a 10 metre waterway and retrieve some items from the other side. Some crews found out that their construction skills were lacking, when their raft fell apart mid-crossing!

Other scenarios included appliance pumping, using foam, vehicle maintenance, car fires, tanker roll-over and LPG gas cylinder fire.

The Basic Skills event was the only competitive event and it determined Region North's teams for the 2008 State Championships.

The winners for 2008 were:

- | | | |
|-----|--------------|---------------------|
| 1st | Southampton | Clarence Valley |
| 2nd | Glen Innes | Northern Tablelands |
| 3rd | Devils Pinch | New England |

Two teams, Southampton and Glen Innes, will represent Region North at the 2008 State Championships in September.

This year improvements were made to ensure that crews spent more time at the scenarios. Safety issues were so well practised that there were very few injuries. It was noted that appliance maintenance had improved and that crews demonstrated a higher awareness of how to maintain and field service their trucks.





REGION SOUTH EXERCISE PHOTO GALLERY

BLUE SKIES AND HELICOPTERS

By Matthew Schroder, Media Services and Ken Hall, Regional Ops Manager
Photos by Matthew Schroder

What a difference a year makes. If you had looked to the sky last year at the Region South Exercise, all you saw was grey cloud and rain, lots of rain. This year it was blue sky as far as the eye could see with the occasional helicopter buzzing overhead.

Come Saturday morning the air was full of excitement. A new set of challenges lay ahead for 300 firefighters and support crews. With live waterbombing, pumping, tanker familiarisation, electrical safety, critical incident management and a RFSA sponsored staff crew and RAFT navigation on the agenda. Everyone from the Incident Management Team and Divisional Commanders right down to the frontline firefighters and support crews were put to the test.

This year we again had a fully volunteer IMT running the exercise from the Friday evening with Group Captain Dave Hubbard from Lake George Zone taking on the role of Incident Controller. He had a very competent and experienced team assisting him.

As with any firefighting operation there were the occasional issues to manage - scenarios running over time, crews spending too long catching up on old friendships, even the temporary suspension of the activity while a search and rescue helicopter scoured the area. These, however, are all part of the learning process and there is no doubt crews left the showground once again better armed to protect their communities.

The farewell briefing saw crews given awards for a number of categories, from Best Crew to Most Improved. This year with the State Championships coming up in September, a competition lane was held to find the crews who will represent Region South.

The Championship Lane winners were:

1st	Walleroo	Southern Tablelands
2nd	Hanwood	Murray Irrigation Area
3rd	Surf Beach	Far South Coast

Initially, the second prize was awarded to the RFSA sponsored staff crew. This team was later disqualified because they wore purple shirts - which was a definite safety issue for the Regional Ops Manager as it hurt his eyes to look at them! Other prizes were awarded to Finlay Brigade from the Southern Border Team for the firefighter challenge.

As the tankers departed Gundagai everyone agreed it had been a great success, and this year dry. The only people disappointed were the locals who had come to believe that the Region South Exercise was an excellent rain attracter!

The Region South Exercise in 2009 will be split between various districts and zones so that more crews will have a chance to attend. The exercise will return to Gundagai in 2010.

Many thanks to all those who helped create a successful exercise including volunteer helpers and staff from around the region, our sponsors GAAM, Isuzu, Country Energy, SES, RFSA, Gundagai Showground Trust, Gundagai Council and Eurobodalla Catering Brigade.







Alex Chesser, Operations Support Officer at Warringah/Pittwater District, Keith Davies, District Fleet Support Officer at Warringah/Pittwater District and Todd Wildman, Captain of the Terrey Hills Brigade.

TRAUMA TEDDIES EASE THE PAIN

By Alex Chesser, Operations Support Officer, Warringah/Pittwater Zone

At 1323hr on Tuesday 9 April, 2008, Warringah/Pittwater Zone Fire Control Centre took receipt of a Triple Zero (000) call reporting a motor vehicle accident with multiple persons trapped on Mona Vale Rd, Terrey Hills.

The 'Flyer' (Zone Cat 11 First Response appliance) was responding within 45 seconds with a crew of five and the Terrey Hills Brigade pagers were activated.

The 'Flyer' arrived on scene at 1326hr to find a three-vehicle accident. Two young children were trapped in the back seat of one vehicle and two adults were in the front seat of a second vehicle. No other emergency services were yet on the scene.

The crew of the 'Flyer' immediately got to work setting up fire protection for the trapped casualties, dealing with leaking fluids coming from one of the vehicles and checking the condition of the other parties involved who had removed themselves from the vehicles.

RFS were quickly joined by NSW Police and the NSW Ambulance Service Rescue Unit from St Ives who took over patient care and removed the two young children. Fortunately the children were not injured.

A simple gesture

Crews used the opportunity to give the children involved in the accident an RFS



The Warringah/ Pittwater Flyer responded to a three-vehicle accident where four people were trapped including two children.

Trauma Teddy, which they both quickly embraced. It was quite obvious to everyone that such a simple gesture alleviated the confusion and stress that the children were going through. They even saw one of the kids break into a smile!

The ambulance officers then turned their attention to the remaining adults in the second vehicle. They were treated in the vehicle for sometime before being removed and conveyed to hospital in a stable condition.

Throughout this period RFS maintained fire and spill protection at the scene as well as assisted police with traffic control, as the accident occurred at a major intersection and traffic control was proving a challenge.

The 'Flyer' was joined by a RFS crew on Terrey Hills Pumper who assisted in rendering the area safe after the removal of the vehicles.

Crews completed clean up of the scene and returned to station at approximately 1430hr, safe in the knowledge that the children were amazingly uninjured and that the use of the teddies had helped the children involved through such a traumatic situation.

Crews have commented on the success of the teddies and urged other brigades who have access to the products to use them whenever required.

AUSTRALIA: WELL PREPARED AND EQUAL TO THE TASK

The International Volunteer Fire Conference in Japan

By Anthony Clark, Media Services

Despite the long distances between them, volunteer fire services from around the world are confronted by similar issues.

In May, Sutherland Shire group officer Peter Evans represented RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons at the Inaugural International Volunteer Fire Service Conference in Japan – the first time a volunteer has been given such a role.

While many of the 400 attendees at the conference were Japanese, countries from around the world were represented including Austria, Canada, China, Finland, Germany, Japan, Netherland, UK, USA, Switzerland and Australia. Peter was largely sponsored by the RFS and supported by the RFSA to make the trip.

At the conference Peter noticed that despite the long distances between them, volunteer fire services from around the world are confronted by similar issues.

“I feel very honoured to have had the opportunity to represent the Commissioner, RFS, RFSA and volunteer firefighters of Australia at the inaugural conference,” Peter said.

“There were two main topics,” he said, “Firstly, the issues relating to volunteer firefighters and secondly, what we could learn from major disasters and incidents and how they’re managed.”

Peter learned that Japan has a massive 900,000 volunteer firefighters. In the past eight years they have witnessed a sharp decline in volunteering – a loss of 300,000 volunteers since 2000. So there was great interest in Peter’s presentation titled Issues Relating to Volunteer Firefighters.

“The issues around the world are the same as here,” Peter said, “It is all about attracting, retaining and training members.

“Some of the ideas put forward at the conference included memberships of dual brigades, because people are travelling longer to and from work. Partnering with employers is important too.

“Basically, there’s very little difference around the world.”

The conference also included presentations about major incident response.

“The United States delegates presented on Hurricane Katrina and the problems associated with stepping up the response,” Peter said, “the presentation from the UK centred on the London bombings and the problems they experienced.



“We were also told about the 1995 Japanese earthquake and the Tokyo Sarin gas attacks.

After learning about those incidents, Peter believes Australian authorities are well-placed to deal with major disasters.

“We learned about the need to coordinate interagency and related services like hospitals, under the one ICS program.

“I think Australia is very well advanced in that area. Incidents like the Kangaroo Island fires where there’s so much cooperation, show we can handle these incidents very well.”



It’s this kind of knowledge and experience that Peter believes can assist other agencies around the world.

“We can help them out as well.”

TOP: The opening ceremony of the inaugural International Volunteer Fire Service Conference in Japan.

CENTRE: Sutherland Shire group officer Peter Evans, addressed the conference on the topic of Issues Relating to Volunteer Firefighters.

LOWER LEFT: Equipment for urban firefighting in Kobe.

LOWER RIGHT: Peter Evans, represented the RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons at the conference in Japan.

AWARD FOR OUR LIBRARIAN

RFS Senior Librarian, Barbara Glass, has won an award for outstanding service to libraries in the emergency management sector.

For the last two years Barbara has represented Australasian Libraries in the Emergency Sector (ALIES) at national information management forums. Her role included coordinating the contribution of ALIES librarians to a national information management initiative called AusDIN (Australian Disasters Information Network).

The AusDIN portal is an important access point or gateway to the plethora of emergency management information that exists on government websites throughout Australia. The portal can be accessed at <http://www.ausdin.gov.au>.

At the ALIES conference held in April this year Barbara received an award for her excellent and diligent service. She was awarded a "Highly Commended OUTSTANDING SERVICE AWARD 2008" trophy and certificate.

Forty-three organisations participate in the ALIES network. Two individuals and two libraries were given awards at the conference.

Barbara was acknowledged for her contribution to the significant advancement, development, progression and professionalisation of the ALIES network. Her contributions have had a wide-reaching effect and she was given the award for the significant amount of time and effort she has contributed to ALIES.

This is a great achievement for Barb and is also an indication of how well she is



Troy Watson, library manager at Emergency Management, Australia, presenting Barbara Glass with her award for outstanding service to ALIES.

supported by the Rural Fire Service in being able to attend meetings and actively participate in the relevant working groups.

Barbara said of her experience: "I very much appreciated this opportunity to move beyond the library sphere and take part in discussions about broader national policy and strategic issues in emergency management information. It was a great

learning experience to meet representatives from such a diverse range of Australian government agencies.

"I also saw that this was an opportunity to promote the role that ALIES librarians, with our strong networking culture and research and technical talents, can play in national information management initiatives."

THE FIREFIGHTERS' POCKET BOOK HAS BEEN UPDATED

By Chief Superintendent Alan Brinkworth, AFSM
Manager Operational Readiness

A major review of the second edition of the Firefighters' Pocket Book, October 2005 has now been completed. The new third edition published in June 2008 incorporates minor changes, a few significant changes and also introduces a few new topics.

Volunteers who have been issued with either the 2004 or the 2005 pocket book can obtain the amendments and new topics by downloading the relevant pages from the RFS Intranet or 'My RFS' websites. Downloaded pages can be then inserted into your existing issue to bring your pocket book up to date, however, please be aware that page numbers will differ.

The more significant changes and new topics include the following:

- HazChem Action Code
- Dangerous Goods
- HazMat/Terrorism 1,2 & 3
- Electricity
- First Aid 1 - 6
- Compressed Air Breathing Apparatus
- Class A Foam for Aviation
- Aircraft Recognition 1 - 4
- Foam Application 1 & 2
- Chainsaw 1 & 2
- Map Referencing
- Incident Control System 2
- Communications Network 1 & 2 (new & old)
- Agency Liaison Channels 1 & 2
- XTL 5000 Series Radio
- Organisation Chart
- Operations Chart

A further 10,000 Firefighters' Pocket Books June 2008 edition have been ordered, these will be distributed to the Fire Control Centres around the State and will soon be available for new volunteer members.





RFS WINS SILVER

By Shane Culbert, A/Fire Awareness & Promotions Officer

The new look stand at the 2008 Sydney Royal Easter Show won the hearts of kids, youth and families in the Coca Cola Zone. The Royal Agricultural Society (RAS) also provided positive comments of appreciation by recognising the Service with the Silver Commercial Exhibits Award.

Moving the RFS stand from an outdoor site to a smaller indoor site inside a pavilion proved an overwhelming success with significantly more people visiting the stand to learn about fire safety. Comprising interactive computer games, a fire extinguisher simulator and various DVD's and brochures, the stand communicated a range of community education messages.

More than 120 volunteers contributed to the success of the fourteen day event. A big thank you must go out to all crews who assisted on the RFS stand including Macarthur, Hornsby, Liverpool Range, Riverina Highlands, Northern Rivers, Lower North Coast, Shoalhaven, Mid Lachlan Valley, Baulkham Hills, Illawarra, Monaro, Hunter Valley, Wollondilly and Wingecarribee.

The Community Education team conducted a survey at the RFS stand this year to capture the public's perception of the NSW Rural Fire Service. Approximately 5,000 survey responses were collected and the

results provided some interesting statistics. For example, 30 percent of respondents thought that RFS was the only firefighting agency in NSW.

“Thirty percent of respondents thought that RFS was the only firefighting agency in NSW.”

The RFS also participated in an exciting 20-minute fire safety demonstration in the main arena. Volunteers from Cumberland, Blue Mountains, Macarthur and Hawkesbury entertained and educated the audience by displaying their firefighting skills on four separate evenings during the show.

‘Emergency Response’ was a series of scenarios located on a farm which demonstrated how easy it is for fire to ignite and the impact it can have on life, property and the environment.

Special thanks goes to all volunteers and staff who worked for several months to organise and conduct the demonstration including Tony Longa, Paul McGrath, Kristine Wendtmann, Effie Chin, Glenn McCartney, Brendan Roberts, Rebel Talbert, Ben Shepherd, Gillian Katz, Matt Schroder, Mick Beltran and Peter McKechnie.



TOP: The Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons with the volunteers at the RFS Easter Show stand.

CENTRE & LOWER RIGHT: The RFS presented a 20-minute fire safety demonstration in the main arena at this year's Sydney Royal Easter Show.



ARCADIA GETS A NEW STATION

By Anthony Clark, Media Services

For the past 14 years, members of the Arcadia Brigade have been shaking collection buckets at shopping centres, holding fund-raisers and cooking barbeques.

Their hard work has paid off, after they raised a massive \$114,000 for a new station, which was officially opened in late 2007 by RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons, Federal Member for Berowra Philip Ruddock, Hawkesbury MP Ray Williams and Mayor Nick Berman.

Around 1200 people gathered for the station opening with members of the public from the local area, past and present members of the brigade and their families all joining the guests of honour.

"I know our firefighters here in Arcadia have been planning and fundraising for a long time for this day to come and I am extremely pleased to be able to officially open their brand new station," said Commissioner Fitzsimmons.

The new station uses the latest technology including audio visual equipment and electronic whiteboards, so it can double as a training facility.

It can also be used for operations, using its large office area which features plug-in facilities for communications and its own weather station.

Nearby is a large oval which can be used for vehicle staging and aviation support.

"Besides providing room to house the brigade's fire trucks, this station also has breathing apparatus storage, a decontamination room and other much needed facilities," the Commissioner said.

"Training is a crucial part of all RFS brigades and Arcadia's new training room provides a great place for members to meet and learn new skills to ensure the local community has the best trained firefighters available."

"This important project couldn't have been completed without the significant financial commitment provided by the NSW Government and the Hornsby Council, not to mention the valuable contribution made by the community," the Commissioner said.



Arcadia Brigade's Senior Deputy Captain Michael Elvidge expressed his appreciation to all members, past and present, for their enthusiasm and hard work fundraising and during the grand opening as well as recognising the contributions made by the local community.

Special thanks must go to the tireless work put in by the building committee who put in the long days and nights to make sure we achieved this fantastic goal.

"We would also like to thank all the people that made this day possible, including Galston, Catering and District Support Rural Fire Brigades," he said, "Also a big thank you to the community for making this day so special."



Apart from the station opening, it was a special day for the Arcadia Brigade for another reason, with firefighter Harry Jacobs recognised with Lifetime Membership of the brigade for over 25 years of volunteering service.

TOP: Arcadia Brigade proudly in front of their new state of the art station.

CENTRE: A crowd of past and present members and community came to the launch of the new station.

ABOVE: Harry Jacobs was recognised for his lifetime of service.

ABOVE LEFT: The Commissioner officially opened the new station at Arcadia.

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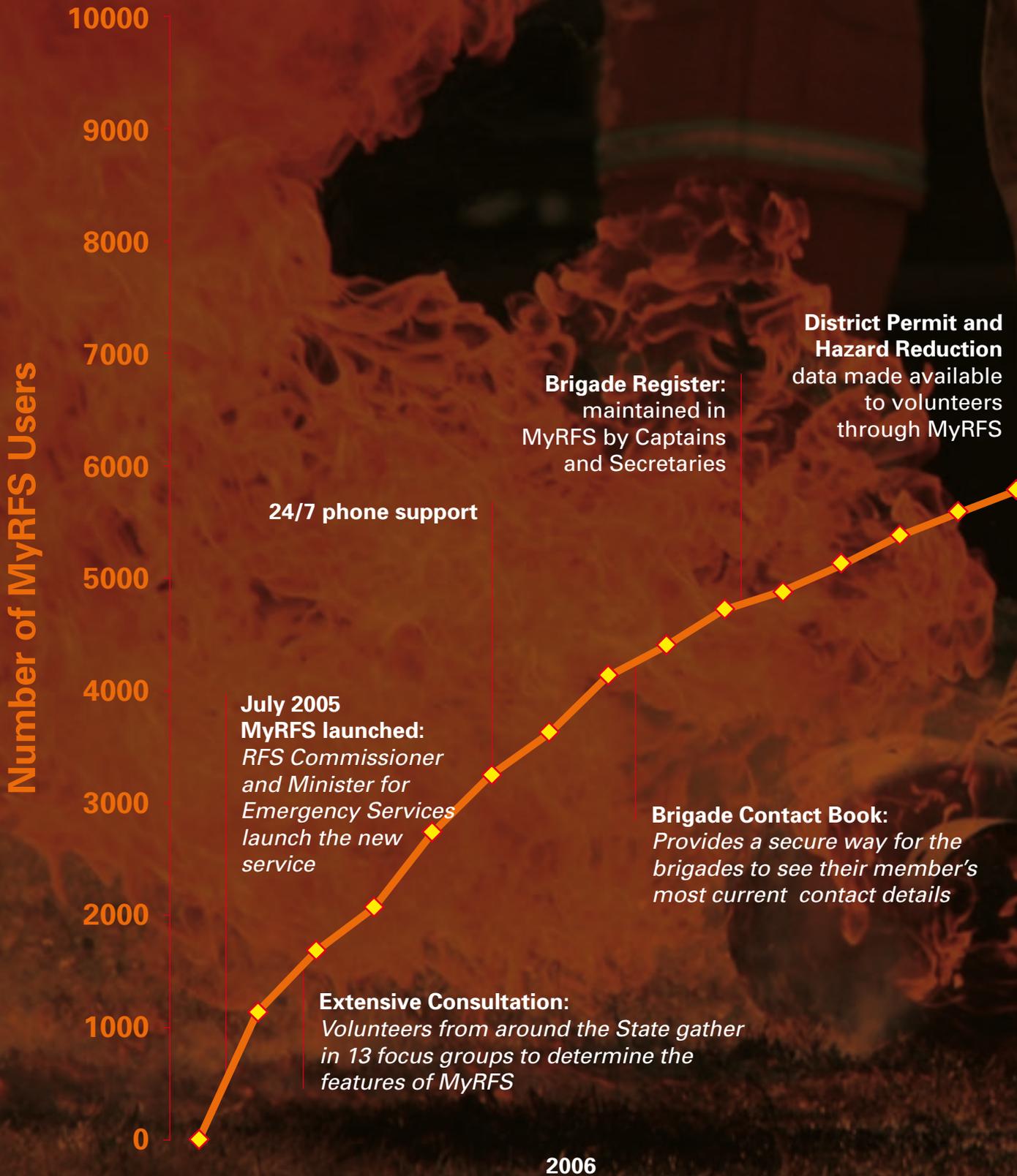
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Shows brigade boundaries and assists with operational planning

Thank you to our volunteers across the State who have helped us design and build MyRFS into an effective information and brigade management tool.

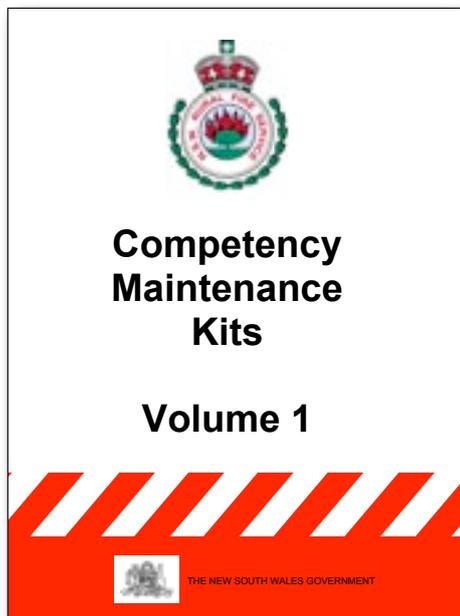
District News and a feature-packed Brigade Statistics module are coming later in 2008. We're also working on a new suite of tools that will make brigade management easier.

If you're not registered, discover what you're missing at www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au

2007

2008

TRAINING



PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Firefighting is the same as any skill, from bowling a cricket ball to playing a musical instrument, if we don't regularly practice, our ability to perform that skill fades rapidly.

On top of that, the training many firefighters received a decade or two ago, is substantially different from the equivalent training offered today.

These two factors can lead to a skills gap among some brigades and volunteers. To address this the Learning & Development Systems is releasing Competency Maintenance Kits (CMKs). CMKs will fill the skills gap and help volunteers stay up to the date and up to scratch on some rarely used (but vital) skills. The first CMK is available now and is about interface firefighting.

Any member, from the very new to our veterans, can attend a CMK workshop as there is no assessment and no pre-requisite. CMKs are run at D/T/Z level and are based on local requirements.

CMKS are offered to volunteers in the form of short or one-day workshops and it is all presented in the classroom.

The first Competency Maintenance Kit

CMK-1 covers the new material for interface firefighting (fighting bush fires which impact on built-up areas) contained in CL (2005) training in an eight hour session. The topics covered include:

- Fire behaviour in the urban-wild-land interface
- Sizing up and structural triage
- Offensive and defensive strategies and firefighting methods (such as ember defence)
- Safety in the interface
- Managing and participating in hectic operations

The guides of CMK-1 are fairly thick as they contain Chapter 8 of the new CL manual, plus various case studies and papers on interface firefighting. These have been produced by national and international fire services and are to be used as a reference if the trainee chooses. Reading through the reference material is not a necessary part of the CMK training event.

CMK-1 has now been distributed to all areas. Every Learning and Development Officer in NSW has now received the kit which includes everything required to present the workshop such as powerpoint presentations on CD and a script of learning modules.

More to come

L&D Systems is aiming to release up to three CMKs a year, covering a variety of topics.

Topics that are being planned for the coming year are communications, developing a pre-incident plan, supporting an operation where BA is used, relay pumping, fire behaviour and the results of Project Vesta.

For more information on CMKs, contact your local L&D Officer. To listen to interviews and panel discussions on skills maintenance in the RFS, download Episode 2 of Firecast from the podcasts section of MyRFS.



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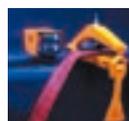


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The impact of wildland fires around the globe is becoming increasingly devastating, more costly and exposing communities and the environment to unprecedented risk. Global warming is resulting in changing weather patterns and more frequent extreme fire weather events in countries that traditionally have a wildland fire problem. Serious fire weather events are occurring in countries that were traditionally considered to be at the low end of the risk scale. So we are facing an uncertain future with regard to wildland fire.

This Conference to be held in Sydney, Australia, one of the most wildland fire-prone areas of the world will look at what the future holds.

The Conference will present three main streams covering
 Technology & Research,
 A Safer Community
 and Challenges
 We Face.

These streams will afford the opportunity for a range of topics to be presented to an international audience of fire personnel, land managers, environmental agencies, educators and government and community representatives that have the protection of life and property from the ravages of wildland fire as their main concern.

Expressions of Interest

To register your interest in attending the Conference and to receive information and news of Conference updates, please visit the website www.wildfiremanagement09.com

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SPOTLIGHT ON VOLUNTEERS

BRIGADE IN PROFILE: MINTO HEIGHTS "THE BRIGADE WITH SPIRIT"

Name of Brigade: Minto Heights Volunteer Rural Fire Brigade

Year brigade formed: 1978

Current Captain: Ron Taylor

Current President: Ian Michie

D/T/Z: Campbelltown/Macarthur Zone

Can you give us a brief history of the brigade?

The Brigade was formed 14 June 1978 as a result of a council meeting and we first operated out of one of the RFS member's premises. Foundation members of the brigade raised funds and built the station in Hansens Road, at the cross with Newman Road, Minto Heights. The station was opened on 15 September 1982.

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

There was once a bush fire in Florence Ave, Minto Heights that impacted on the nearby Brown Acres Nudist Camp. Upon the brigade's arrival bodies were seen running everywhere!

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

Bush with an urban interface. We are a Category Village One Brigade.

What types of incidents does your brigade attend?

Our main calls are bush and grass fires with some car fires, storm damage, MVA's and a limited number of structure fires.

What vehicles do you have?

Category 1, Category 7 and a PC.



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

We have two training sessions a month - an evening and a day training session. Our Training Officer bases the training around BF, AF, VF modules and suggestions from brigade members.

What are some unique skills and features of your brigade?

Ours is a family oriented brigade, so the most unique feature of our brigade is the spirit around the place.

What are some unique features of your community?

Minto Heights has only a single road access which makes it distinctively susceptible to

people being trapped should a fire impact upon the area. Our area also has a disabled respite house, two Nudist Camps and the Vijayaloka Buddhist Retreat.

What community events does your brigade participate in?

We enjoy attending Fishers Ghost Parade, school fetes, Minto local community events, River Fest and the Camden show.

Any final thoughts or comments you would like to add?

The Minto Brigade motto is the "Brigade with the Spirit". We are very proud of our brigade and the community we serve.

Written by Captain Ron Taylor, Minto Heights Rural Fire Brigade



OFFICER IN PROFILE: ALF RAISTRICK

Name: Alf Raistrick
Rank: Group Captain, Camden Group 1
District: Macarthur Zone
Years in Service: 56

How old were you when you first joined your local brigade and what made you decide to join?

I was 12 years of age and the captain of Cobbitty said I looked strong enough to help out - so I did. It also cost me two shillings per year to be a member!

How long have you been a member of the Service and what keeps you as a member?

I've been a member for over 55 years. I've always felt that I should give something back to the community and I enjoy the fellowship and camaraderie between members. I still get the adrenalin rush when I attend fires. Although I've seen just about everything so the "rush" isn't as great as it used to be. I plan to remain a member of the RFS as long as I feel I can contribute.

What do you do when you're not wearing an orange helmet?

I paint houses for a living and enjoy gardening, visiting friends, watching sport on TV and I don't mind the odd drop of French red wine. My big passion is fishing and I vividly remember catching a big black marlin off Sydney.

What have you gained personally from your time as a volunteer?

I've become a lot more confident in myself and in my ability to be a leader. I also have many long term friendships that started through the Service.

What are some of the most significant changes that you have witnessed during your time with the Service?

When I started we only had a small slip on unit and no specialised protective equipment. I remember when Cobbitty got its first truck in the late 1950's - an old ex-army petrol-powered Blitz. The most significant visual change has been with the equipment and PPE. Another major change is the professionalism of the RFS and training provided to the volunteers. The use of modern technology such as mobile phones, pagers and radio communications

has also meant that we get to fire calls much faster which limits the average size of the fire.

What has been the most frightening moment you have experienced?

Probably my first experience with a "big" fire was at Yanderra near the train station in the 67/68 Summer season. We were in the fire's path and it went straight over the top of us. Luckily no one was hurt but it's an experience that I will never forget. I was also involved in a similar overrun experience during the 1994 Blue Mountain's fires along the Hawkesbury Road.

What are some of the other big fires and memorable incidents that you have been too?

The 1988 fires at Sydney Royal National Park, Cootamundra in 1990, Baulkham Hills in the 80's, 1997 Hawkesbury fires, the 1994 fires that surrounded Sydney and Christmas fires in 2001.

There have also been numerous MVAs, house fires and a few aircraft accidents that have involved fatalities.

What is your most satisfying moment?

Receiving thanks from residents and the community for our efforts in saving their property from fire as well as receiving thanks for showing compassion during incidents.

What recognition did you get when you clocked up 50 years?

A certificate from Council and a long service badge. There was also a small article at the back of the local paper. I also have a National Medal and three rosettes.

What advice can you give to other volunteers?

Be very conscious of firefighter safety and the safety of members of the public. We also need to remember that as soon as we put on the "yellows" we are on display and we need to project that we are professionals as well as being responsible members of the community. We should also be aware that we are not above the law.

Interviewed by Captain Andrew Macdonald,
Catherine Field

ABOUT BOOKS

FIREFIGHTER BY HERMAN WILLIAMS, JR

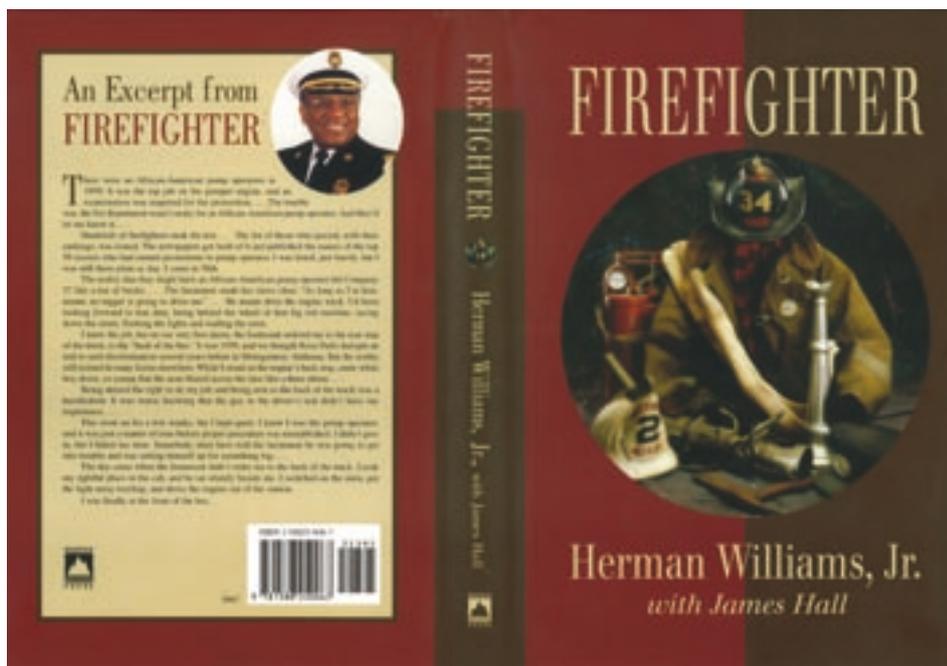
Mountain Movers Press, 2002
By Russell Taylor,
Commissioner's Chief of Staff

As firefighters we are generally interested in the cultures, trials and tribulations of other firefighters irrespective of where they are stationed or the nature of the service in which they serve - or, at least, I am, and hope you are too!

If this is not the case then you may not be interested in the life and work of Herman Williams Jr. I found this a fascinating insight into the firehouses of the Baltimore Fire Department.

The book traces Williams from an early age through the streets of Harlem until he and his family moved to Baltimore following a series of race riots that resulted in the murder of his grandmother. In Baltimore, the young Herman, discovers a different kind of life, one chiefly defined by colour and its attendant racism. For this aspect alone, I found this book very absorbing but its personal account of large scale social movement and change, seen through the eyes of an individual who is struggling to grow up and eventually find his way in such a society, is compelling.

Williams' decision to become a firefighter was not instant and he moved through

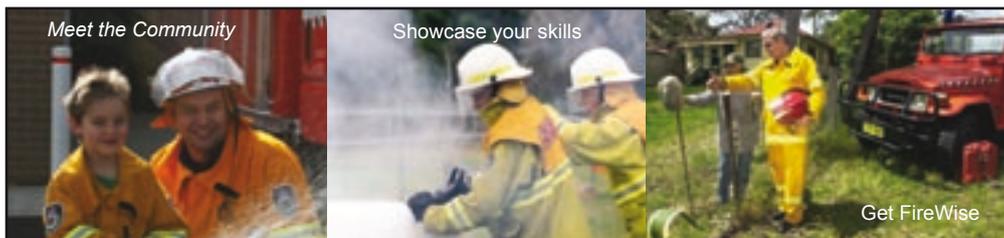


a number of jobs that were, until then, restricted to whites only. Alas, in the fire department, racism was no less evident. He fights for simple human decency and dignity while he strives to do his civil duty as a firefighter in an often hostile environment and workplace.

That he succeeds at all is remarkable, given the politics of the US in the 1960's and 70's, but that he succeeds so spectacularly, eventually rising to become the first African-

American fire chief in a major US city, is inspiring and a testimony to Williams' tenacity.

I enjoyed this book very much and recommend it to anyone interested in the world-wide fraternity of firefighters or for those who simply want a good biography that is also a good read. For anyone looking for a gift for a firefighter, this would make a great present.



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We have a different manufacturer of the Sleeveless Vests which are now available in sizes 3XL, 4XL and 5XL. We have been able to reduce the price to \$35.00 for all sizes and this includes your Brigade OR personal Name if you wish. The sizing and quality are as previously supplied.

When current stocks have gone, the Polar Fleecy 1/2 Zip Jumpers and Vests will be a slightly darker navy. Until then you may get a mix of the navy colours "Stencil" or "Winning Spirit."
This means that right now the size range has increased to include up to 5XL.

Our Polar Fleecy Beanies are very popular at this time of year as are the Full Zip Jackets.
This does not mean that we cannot supply the Polo and T Shirts, Caps or any of the other items listed on the right or on our web site.

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TRIBUTE TO A GREAT FIREFIGHTER AND SPINNER OF YARNS

By Narelle Swanson, Bonville Rural Fire Brigade

This is a salute to Mervyn Strong, a man whose passion was to fight the "red steers of summer". Who would never let the truth get in the way of a good story and reckoned "a big part of being a member of a bush fire brigade is the social side."

Mervyn Strong was a banana farmer and a member of Bonville Brigade, Coffs Harbour for over 25 years. He really enjoyed fighting fires. After a mop up, Merv, like the fire, was blacked out from head to toe. When things were not too busy on the fire front, or back at the station after the work was done, Merv would tell stories to anyone he could get to listen.

Merv graduated to writing down the stories, first for the local fire magazine "Burning Issues" and then a book co-authored with Mike Hayes and published by ABC books, titled "Yarns! Upper Bungle Creek Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade".

His writings capture much of the spirit of the 1990's and the organisation "which stands between the community and the red steers of summer". He was Senior Deputy Captain of Bonville Brigade at the time of his death in 1998. A framed and illustrated collection of five of his best stories now hangs proudly in Bonville fire station as a memorial to this special member.

His stories were everyday events, like getting to a fire, falling big trees or pump problems. He would grin and claim a story did not contain a word of truth, but members who had been around for some time knew of incidents, people and places that had inspired him.

Merv was awarded the nickname 'Scratch', when he scratched the newly painted brigade tanker. He never wrote about how this happened. All we do know that it was on an annual control burn with other local banana farmers and we do know is that

watching control burns provided the time to do a bit of talking.

Legend has it that Merv's stories spread over Coffs Harbour during one hazard reduction, when the radio 'send' button had been accidentally depressed for some time.

The following stories are by Merv 'Scratch' Strong, official purveyor of truth of Bonville Brigade and are published with permission from Merv's widow, Gloria Strong.



A BRIGADE MEMBERS'S LAMENT

Well folks, it was just one of those days. It was as hot as hell and a good northerly wind was blowing. Our brigade member's throat was as dry as a fire shovel so he decided to partake of a liquid refreshment in the shade of his veranda.

He'd just got settled when he spied a fearful sight, smoke from a fire on the flat at the bottom of a steep slope. He quickly phoned for brigade assistance and donned his uniform and knapsack, deciding to do what he could while waiting for the arrival of the brigade.

He sprung aboard the tractor, but alas, the battery was flat. Our brigade member raced around the side of the house for another look at the fire. "Splat!"

When he regained his feet and his composure, inspiration struck. There on the ground lay his conveyance to the fire - the BMX bike. So with the knapsack on his back he mounted the bike and raced off down the slope at breakneck speed, towards the fire.

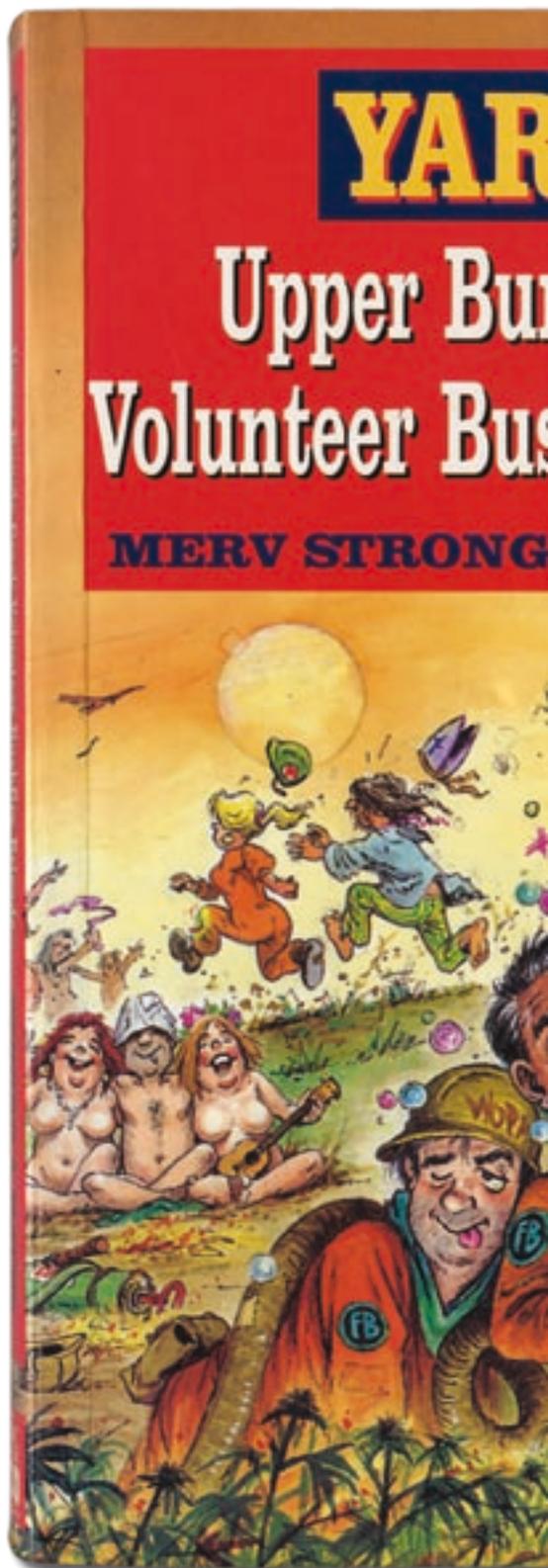
He was clearing fallen logs and startling wallabies with feet to spare. Look mate, this bloke was to wheelsmanship what "The Man from Snowy River" was to horsemanship.

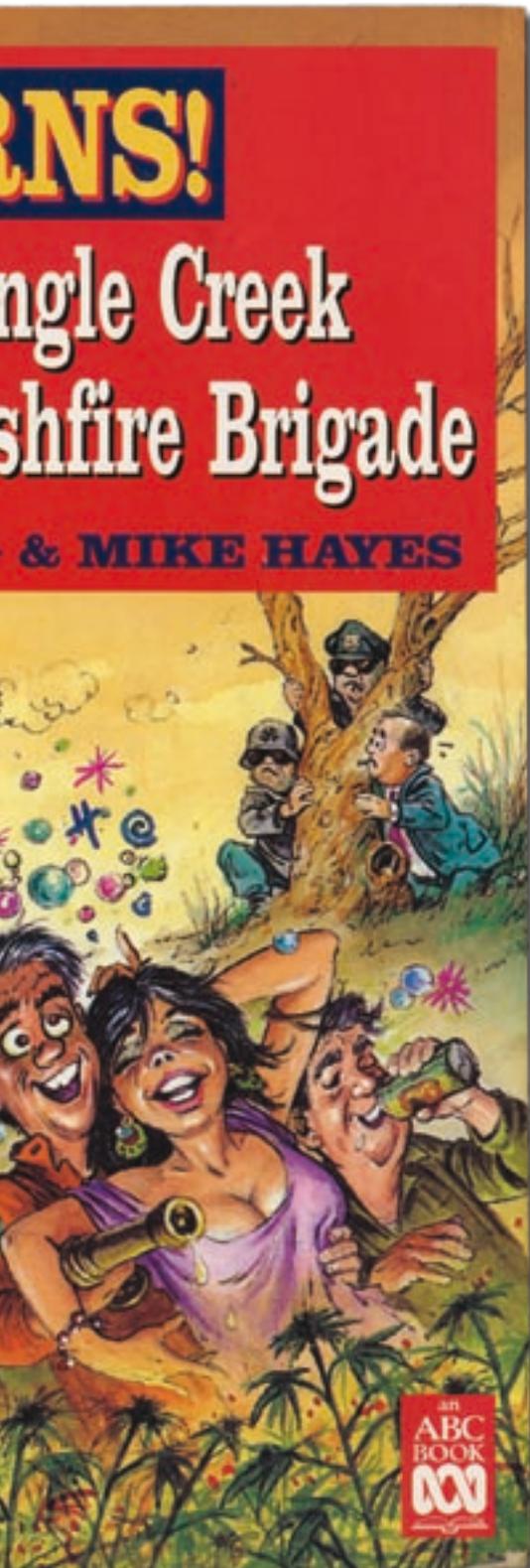
But, alas, he didn't see the stump and rammed into it. Well, the bike landed in the fork of a tree and our poor member landed in hospital. (Luckily, the brigade arrived in time to put out the fire out and have our member conveyed to hospital.)

The question our brigade members often ponder is what speed our brigade

member was doing on the bike when he hit the stump because when he came out of hospital six weeks later, and went to retrieve his bike from the fork of the tree, he found the back wheel of the bike still spinning furiously.

(Originally published in "Burning Issues" June 1993.)



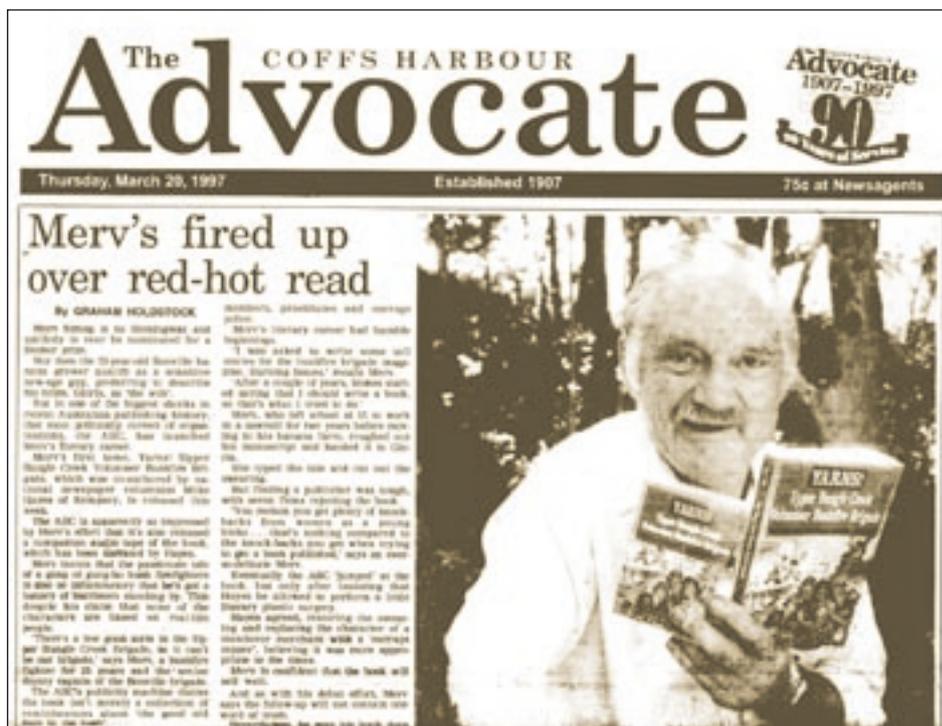


PUMP OPERATOR'S LAMENT

Pumps, don't talk to me about pumps, mate. They are enough to drive a well bred person to the demon drink. I will relate this tale to verify the before mentioned point.
 "There we were, assembled at Bonville Creek in a vain attempt to fill Bonville Tanker with the pump. We tried all methods of priming to no avail. The language was rather colourful to say the least. Blistering profanity was the order of the day. One member of German origin, who had exhausted all the profane words in English, broke into German dialect.

Now, I know no German, so he could have been praying for divine intervention, but by the dark expression on his face I would say that was unlikely. We could get that goddam blasted pump to do everything (including yodelling) except pump water from the creek up into the tank. After due consideration and pontificating it was agreed that the pump should be returned to council to be repaired.

A week or so later I asked our captain if the pump had been fixed. He replied. "Yes, it's fixed. She's pumping good now, but you wouldn't want to know, we've got the greensies on our back." "How come?" I asked. "Well," he said, "the pump has got so much suction now that it keeps pulling the bends out of the creek!"



Now, our new tanker can do nearly everything except float.
 "Why didn't you drive around and come in from the other side?" I hear some drongo ask. "There is no flamin' road in from the south side mate."

Nearby stood a box tree with a bit of size about it. A brigade member gave it a tap with an axe and proclaimed it to be as hollow as a drum.

TALL TREES AND TALL TALES

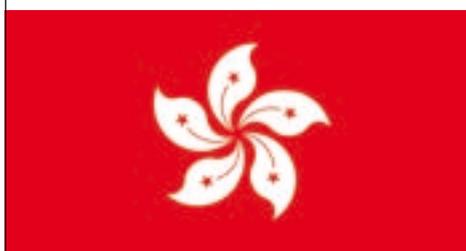
On the north bank of Pine Creek stood our new category one tanker.
 Gathered round it, the Brigade members wondered, pondered, prevaricated and pontificated on the problem. You see, the fire was on the other side of the creek.

Quickly the tree was felled across Pine Creek. (You couldn't see the sun for the chips flying.) Thus we were able to drive the tanker through the hollow log to the fire.

All went well until the return trip we met an incoming assisting tanker halfway up the log. Now, I did say this log had a bit of size about it so to save an altercation between the drivers, our tanker reversed up a hollow limb to allow the incoming tanker to pass.

Cartoon illustrations by Stephan Gordij and Narelle Swanson.

WORLDFIRE



FILM STUDIO UP IN FLAMES

March 2008

Sunday 2 March this year saw 80 Hong Kong firefighters battling a fire in a warehouse in an area known as Kowloon Tong.

The warehouse contained film equipment used for productions across China and South East Asia. The two storey building contained an 80 square metre store room on the ground floor.

Firefighters managed to bring the fire under control after three hours however this room was severely damaged with a loss of equipment of more than HK\$10 million (AU\$1.34 million approx).



TEENAGERS TAKES TRUCK ON A JOY RIDE

May 2008

In the United States a teenager discovered an idling fire truck and decided to take it for a spin. The firefighters, who were tending to a medical aid call, were startled to see their \$450,000 engine rumbling off down the street.

The teens joy ride was short lived however, as a 28,000 pound fire truck, lights blazing is anything but inconspicuous. He was apprehended by police a short time later. "He didn't get very far," said Greg Glass, interim chief of the Visalia Fire Department. "They don't go real fast and they're hard to hide."

Not satisfied with breaking one law for the night, the teenager was also charged with hit and run, resisting arrest, driving under the influence and possession of marijuana.

The incident has forced the fire department to reconsider its routine procedure when attending incidents. It is common practice for firefighters when attending an incident to pull to the side of the road, leave the lights and engine running to ensure the truck is highly visible. The department will review its security procedures, Glass said, "but what we don't want to do is overreact to the situation."

In his 36 years in the fire service, Glass said he's never heard of someone stealing a fire truck.

"I've known things to be stolen from fire engines, like chain saws or things that are of use to people, but the majority of the time, no one really has a use for a fire engine," he said. "It's not like you can sell it."



URINE USED TO QUASH FIRE

May 2008

Firefighters in Chengdu, Sichuan, made history in May by extinguishing a fire with urine. A fire had broken out in two farm houses and firefighters responded promptly.

Firefighters began extinguishing the fires using the town's water supply but the well soon dried up. Left with little options, they proceeded to utilize the resources at hand... urine. Upon learning that the village had two sewage tanks, firefighters quickly set up a pumping relay and used it to extinguish the fire.

Before long the fire was under control and eventually extinguished.

'BEST IN SHOW' FOR AUSSIES AT US CONFERENCE

By Captain Tony Jarrett, Hazelbrook Rural Fire Brigade

In October 2007 I went to the Human Dimensions of Wildland Fire Conference in Fort Collins, about 80 kilometres north of Denver, Colorado, United States on behalf of the RFS. The RFS and the RFSA supported my trip.

The Human Dimensions Conference bought together wildland fire managers and social scientists to expand and build networks and to foster new research collaborations.

'Human Dimensions' is a term that refers to the ways through which individuals, groups, and society interact with, affect and are affected by – fire.

I was lucky enough to present at the conference in a special session on the Australian 'Stay or Go' approach.

John Handmer from RMIT and the Bushfire Co-operative Research Centre spoke on the historical evidence base for the 'stay or go' approach. Alan Rhodes from the Victorian Country Fire Authority talked about factors influencing the 'stay or go' decision. Sarah McCaffrey from US Forest Service discussed the notion of applying the approach in United States. I rounded off the session by speaking about the RFS Firewise programs and actions used in NSW.

The special session went down really well, and in fact got the 'best in show' award. The conference participants, especially those from the US, applauded the way the RFS goes about delivering fire services to the community, especially the role of volunteers in firefighting and particularly incident management.

The forthright approach of the Australian way – such as saying that a fire truck cannot be guaranteed at every property – was in stark contrast to the experiences of most conference participants.

Another area of interest for the participants was my brief discussion on working with residents in the wildland urban interface. In major fires in United States, residents are generally evacuated and firefighters are working at empty properties. I pointed out the contrast to Australia, where more and more, residents are staying to defend their well-prepared property.

The discussions on mandatory evacuation versus 'stay and go' continued over breakfast, lunch and dinner. In fact, they continued until the last wheat beer was consumed each night!

It certainly was worthwhile to participate in the conference. It was especially gratifying to be able to share the world stage with other Australian fire agencies.

I have always believed that the Firewise work delivered by our volunteer educators was cutting edge stuff. The Human Dimensions conference confirmed that we are at the forefront of innovative community safety programs that do work.



TOP: Tony Jarrett with many of the Australian crew who presented at the Human Dimensions of Wildland Fire Conference.

CENTRE LEFT: Sarah McCaffrey from US Forest Service with Captain Tony Jarrett.

CENTRE RIGHT: A standpipe alone in rugged country near Woodland Park.

BELOW: Poudre Country Fire Authority ladder truck in Fort Collins.

BELOW RIGHT: Alan Rhodes, Tony Jarrett and Sarah McCaffrey at Bear Lake, Rocky Mountains National Park outside Estes Park.





CADETS JOIN HANDS ACROSS THE BORDER

Cadets from the NSW RFS recently joined up with cadets from across the border in Victoria for firefighter training.

Students from Tumut High and McAuley Catholic Central School RFS cadets participated in the joint training with the Country Fire Authority (CFA) Youth Group in Khancoban in April. The CFA students came from CFA Region 24 which includes Corryong, Mt Beauty, Tallangatta and Wodonga.

The training involved using tankers to extinguish mock fires, tanker and equipment familiarisation, simulated search and also a tour of the Murray 2 Power Station.

Inspector Peter Jones Riverina Highlands Zone Community Safety Officer said:

"I am extremely proud of them; they interacted well with the Victorian cadets and demonstrated their ability to become excellent firefighters."

The Tumut Cadets are currently training to compete at the NSW RFS State Championships to be held in Tweed Heads in September. The Tumut Team is currently the third place champions in NSW and aim to take out first place in September!

TOP LEFT: RFS Community Safety Officer, Peter Jones demonstrates the use of a triple purpose director to the CFA cadets.

TOP RIGHT: CFA Cadets wait their turn for the next exercise

CENTRE: The CFA students came from CFA Region 24 and were joined by RFS cadets from Tumut High and McCauley Catholic Central School.

LOWER RIGHT: RFS and CFA Cadets undertaking a Primary Search (the masks help simulate blackout conditions).



FIREWISETM Fact

Make sure your home is cosy and safe all winter long.

Keeping you and your home safe from fire during winter

Home fire safety is important for the whole family and preparation can prevent a tragedy. Fires can start up in fireplaces, fuel stoves and heaters at any time, but winter is the most dangerous period for house fires. Here's some things we recommend all families do to prevent fires in winter:

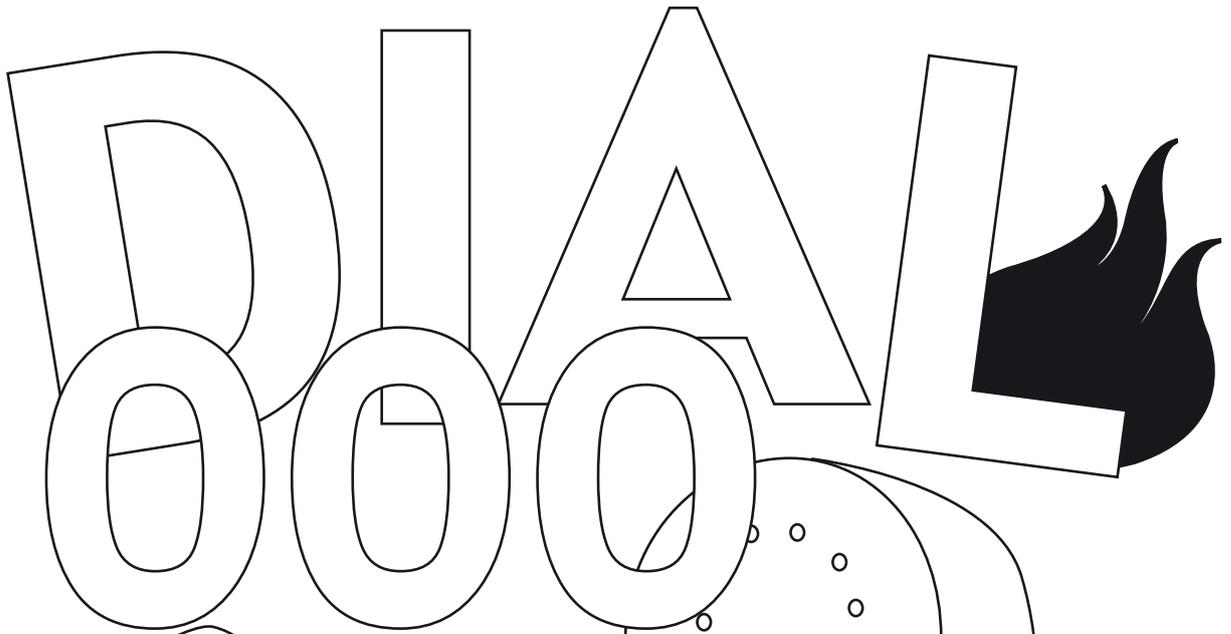
- Most importantly, have smoke alarms installed throughout your home and make sure that you test them regularly
- If you have a fireplace in your home make sure the chimney is clean
- Always put a screen in front of an open fire
- Take care to keep curtains, tablecloths and bedding away from all heaters and fireplaces
- Keep wet clothing away from heaters or fireplaces
- If you use a clothes dryer make sure you clean the lint filter each and every time you use it
- Only use one appliance per power point and switch them off when not in use
- Always put out candles or any other open flames before going to bed

Can you answer these questions?

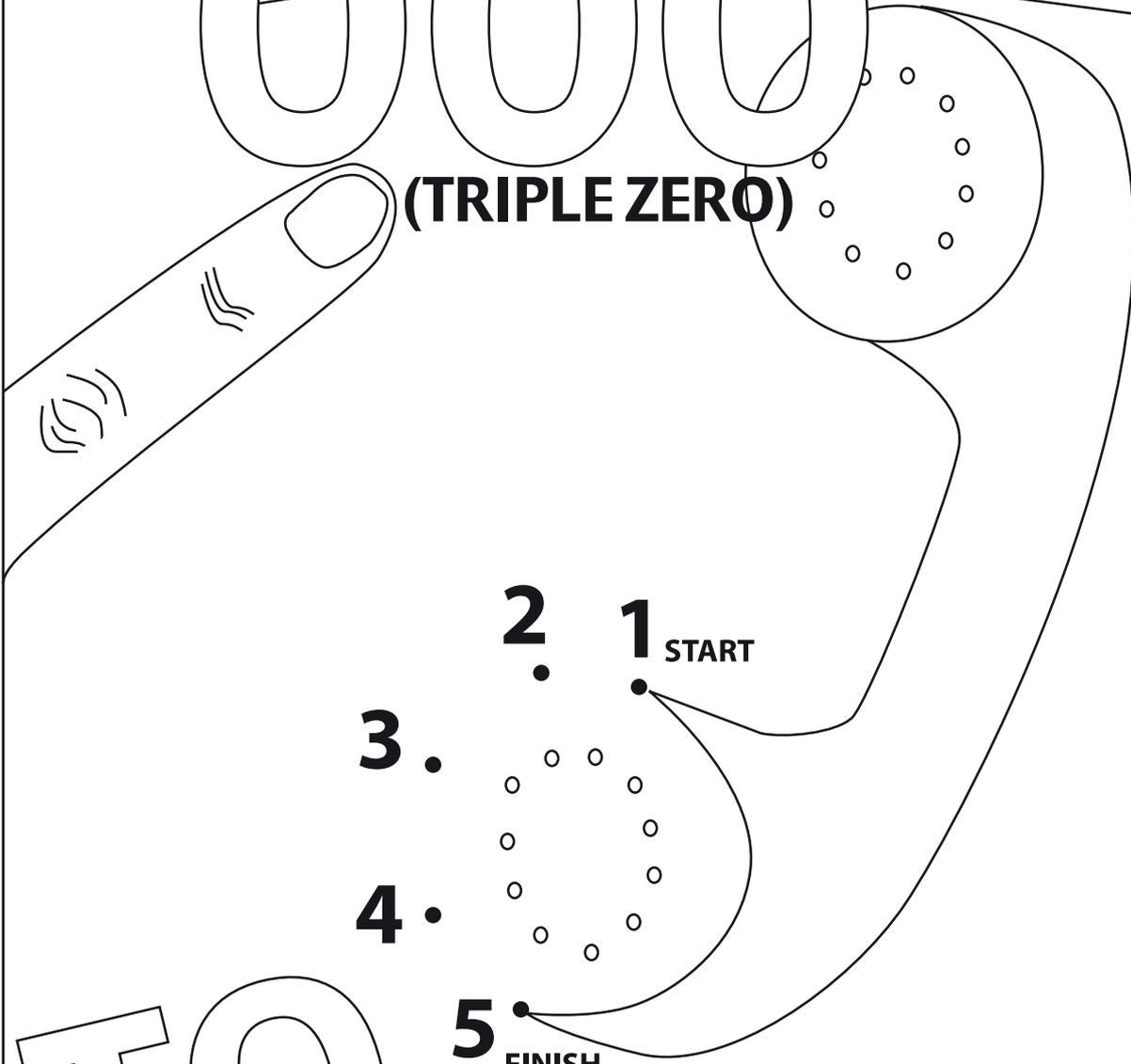
(Ask Mum or Dad if they know the answers too!)

1. Why is winter the most dangerous time for home fires?
2. What is the most dangerous time of year for bush fires?
3. Why should chimneys be cleaned regularly?
4. What could you put under a candle to make it safer?
5. Who should be using matches in your home?
6. What is the number to ring to report a fire in your home?

COLOUR IN AND JOIN THE DOTS!



(TRIPLE ZERO)



TO REPORT A FIRE



FIFTY YEARS AGO

The Bush Fire Bulletin, the journal of the NSW Rural Fire Service, has been in circulation for 56 years. The first issue was published on 1 September 1952 by the then Bush Fire Committee.

EASTER SHOW 1958

Compiled by Megan Jones, RFS Librarian

The RFS has exhibited at the Royal Easter Show since 1940. In the March 1953 issue of the Bush Fire Bulletin, the exhibit is described as being "bigger than ever" and was "located in its usual location in the Dairy Hall."

Information regarding the RFS participation in the Easter Show has been regularly reported in the Bulletin from 1953 onwards.

Fifty years ago the Bush Fire Committee's exhibit and information bureau at the 1958 Royal Easter Show, looked like this (pictured right).



The previous year saw the introduction of 'Smokey' the Committee's fire prevention Koala. Smokey was used for fire safety education and promotion (above). Smokey is seen here in action at the 1957 exhibit (pictured lower right).



RFS Library

The RFS Library welcomes all members of the NSW Rural Fire Service and is also open to researchers and members of the public. The Library holds a collection of resources focusing on bush fire management. Also other fire-related subjects, environmental management, community education, volunteer management, organisational theory and health and safety. Contact the librarians, Prue Lofay and Helen O'Rourke, on 8741 5456/5 or by email at rfs.library@rfs.nsw.gov.au.

Location & Opening Times

15 Carter St, Homebush Bay, NSW 2127 | Hours: Monday-Friday 9am-5pm.

BUSH FIRE BULLETIN READER SURVEY

Overall, how appealing did you find this edition?

- Very appealing
- Fairly appealing
- Neutral
- Fairly unappealing
- Very unappealing

Comments:

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For each of the following, please indicate or comment on the features you were interested in reading in this issue (tick column applicable)

	Yes, I was interested	No, I wasn't interested	I will use this section
Incidents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corporate News	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
General News	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Operations Pull-out	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spotlight on Volunteers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please list the types of stories, or specific story ideas, you are interested in reading in the Bush Fire Bulletin

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MyRFS

congratulates Troy Kilsby and Hopefield Brigade for registering the 10,000th MyRFS user.

Troy and Hopefield Brigade were presented with a TomTom GO 720 by Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons at the opening of the Corowa Berrigan Zone Fire Control Centre in May 2008.

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