

# BUSHFIRE

## BULLETIN



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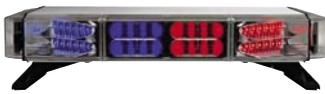
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FIREFIGHTING



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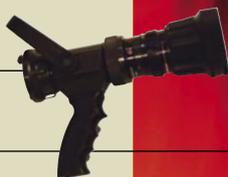


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# FOREWORD



As another fire season approaches we are asked to speculate about what sort of summer it's going to be and whether it will be a difficult bushfire period. We can make some educated guesses based on what we know about fuel conditions, weather forecasts, drought and so on, but we can't make an accurate prediction.

What we know for certain is that an Australian summer has the potential to produce weather capable of generating fire spread and intensity of such magnitude as to threaten those things and people we hold dear.

What we can do is prepare. Some comfort should be derived from the fact that, no matter what summer brings, our firefighters are better trained and more knowledgeable, and are better equipped than ever before.

While some valuable hazard reduction work has been carried out, it's never enough. Even if we met all our targets (which we don't due to weather conditions and other impediments), it still wouldn't be enough. Thus one is compelled to ask, what is enough? The short answer is that there is no exact figure.

Managing the risk is not simply a matter of hazard reduction or well prepared brigades or having a well informed community. It's about all those things and more. Property owners and land managers taking steps to protect their property will complement our ability to protect these assets. Strategic hazard reduction will complement property owners' ability to take protective measures and well prepared firefighters will assist in maximising hazard reduction and self-protection.

In recent years we have seen legislation enacted to improve risk management and town planning. These laws will produce some tangible results in the years ahead. All in all, with better planning, equipment, training, preparedness and mitigation, our collective ability to create safer communities improves almost monthly. The most critical factor? You, the RFS volunteer firefighter. Stay safe this summer, you are irreplaceable.

Phil Koperberg



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



1 GENERAL NEWS



*Smoke screen...Dangar Island Rural Fire Brigade conducted a hazard reduction burn in August. Photo by Michelle Rumsey.*

## HOUSE FIRE DEATHS FIRM FOCUS ON SMOKE ALARMS AND ESCAPE PLANS

The deaths of 13 people in house fires over a fortnight in May more firmly focused fire authorities and the NSW Government on structure fires and fatalities, particularly in winter.

The tragic deaths included an incident attended by Coonamble and Gulargambone Rural Fire Brigades in Coonamble Rural Fire District, with NSW Fire Brigades (NSWFB) colleagues, on 5 June.

Three children on an isolated property escaped a house blaze and raised the alarm by walking several kilometres to a neighbouring home.

Their parents had returned to the burning home in an attempt to rescue their young son and these three family members perished.

Four children aged between 15-months and seven-years-old were killed in a fire in a two-storey home at Wyong on June 9 in NSWFB area.

RFS volunteers attended over 180 residential house fires between 1 April and 24 August 2005 with a spike in June and July.

RFS community education and communication activities are ongoing and many had already been undertaken in preparation for winter.

The programs concentrate on installation of smoke alarms and formulation of escape plans. An example is the FireGuard for Kids program presented in schools throughout NSW by the RFS, which shows children how to 'get down low and go, go, go', as well as giving them an escape plan to take home and prepare with their parents.

However, the spate of deaths showed that even more emphasis was required to encourage behaviour change.

RFS and NSWFB collaborated in a television advertising campaign to encourage people to be properly prepared for house fires. This ad campaign featured RFS Commissioner Phil Koperberg and NSWFB Commissioner Greg Mullins.

RFS district staff and brigades utilised all their skills and resources to further promote and encourage people to install smoke alarms and work out escape plans.

Just one example is RFS Gosford and Wyong districts conducting a four week campaign in partnership with local radio stations 2GO and SeaFM with local brigades for live crosses and handing out smoke alarms.

Many brigades and districts held displays with a winter fire safety focus at a variety of venues – often at hardware stores – to encourage purchase of smoke alarms.

The NSW Government introduced legislation making smoke alarms mandatory in NSW.

Emergency Services Minister Tony Kelly announced that the laws make it a condition of property sale that smoke alarms be fitted and that alarms be part of formal rental agreements. The legislation will take effect from 1 May 2006.

The RFS will continue to back up this legislation by conducting education and communication activities that encourage people to test alarms and replace batteries, and plan and practice their escape from house fire.

The RFS will be conducting a smoke alarm campaign in 2006 to coincide with the proclamation of the legislation and at the end of daylight saving – "Change your clock, change your battery!"

A new street sign will also be available from this September.

We can work towards reducing the number of house fires and also prevent loss of life when they do occur by people fitting a functioning, tested smoke alarm.

**Smoke alarms save lives!**

### FIRE FACTS

#### HOUSE FIRES BY MONTH:

April	26
May	35
June	51
July	46
August	26

#### HOUSE FIRES BY RFS REGION:

North	46
East	76
West	29
South	33

## FAMILY ESCAPED TWO STOREY BLAZE



Fire quickly engulfed a Murrumbateman home on Sunday 7 August destroying the two storey property.

The fire call came just before 5pm and crews were confronted by fire shooting from roof openings and upstairs windows.

Crews attending included five units from Murrumbateman, three units from Springfield, two from Jeir and Yass Support Pumper, a total of 32 personnel.

The RFS was supported by NSW Fire Brigades from Yass, NSW Police, NSW Ambulance and Great Southern Energy.

Firefighters contained the blaze within an hour, preventing damage to surrounding property.

The fire was believed to have started in an upstairs room and the family of four were inside but able to escape.

The Yass Support Brigade had only recently formed and the structure fire provided this crew with their first major incident, proving their ability to work closely with other units at this level.

Members of the Murrumbateman brigade and community have assisted the home owners with recovery and short term accommodation.

**RFS crews successfully saved surrounding structures from this fire which destroyed a two storey home. Photo by Julia Dean.**





## FERN BAY FIRE A TASTE OF THINGS TO COME

RFS Lower Hunter crews had their first taste of what the coming fire season may well hold for them when a large bushfire broke out at Fern Bay, north of Newcastle, on 20 August 2005.

The coastal areas of Port Stephens had received well above average rainfalls during the summer, so fuel loads were heavy. A lack of rain over the winter period, coupled with almost a fortnight of dry windy conditions added to the fire's force.

The fire was reported to Lower Hunter Fire Control at 11:36 hrs, with the initial response being Salt Ash 1 and 7. Group Captain Les Bowden and Deputy Group Captain Mick Lowe were out visiting stations, so they also responded to the incident.

A quick assessment of the situation upon their arrival determined that more resources would be needed. The fire was rapidly developing and running hard in thick coastal scrub.

Les transmitted a "Blue" message to FireCom requesting two additional Cat 1 tankers, two additional Cat 7 tankers, and the Lower Hunter Quad Squad. Brigades from Tanilba Bay, Raymond Terrace and Medowie were responded.

Fire ground conditions were less than ideal. A strong north westerly wind was gusting to 42 kph, and the relative humidity was below 30 per cent.

Given the heavy fuel loadings and the access problems, a direct head attack was impossible. There was also the added problem of heavy tanker access, as the few tracks that existed were comprised mostly of loose sand that would easily bog a Cat 1.

The plan was to contain the fire within existing trails and keep it to about 40 ha. If the fire was to escape then it would burn clear through to Stockton Beach, taking out some 200ha of coastal heath.

Salt Ash 1 and 7, Medowie 1A and Raymond Terrace 7 were detailed to flank attack. Tanilba Bay 7 and the Quad Squad were detailed to put in a backburn well ahead of the fire.

Weather conditions improved slightly mid afternoon allowing backburning operations to proceed. By 1500hrs the fire was well behind containment lines and no longer posed a threat to the Stockton Beach area. As night fell, the fire classified to patrol status and by morning it was declared out.

*Story and photos by Supt Alan Gillespie, RFS Lower Hunter Zone Manager.*

*Top Left: Backburning enabled RFS crews to keep the Fern Bay fire to 40ha.*

*Bottom Left: The Fern Bay fire crowning.*

*Top Right: The RFS Lower Hunter Quad Squad and Tanilba Bay 7 crews backburn ahead of the fire.*

*Bottom Right: RFS Lower Hunter crews backburning to contain the Fern Bay fire and prevent its spread to Stockton Beach.*



## SOUTHERN VOLUNTEERS DISCUSS ISSUES AT BATEMANS BAY

The Commissioner and senior staff travelled to Bateman's Bay on 28 May for the latest in the series of forums with volunteers.

So far, volunteer forums have been held in western NSW at Dubbo and Parkes to canvass a range of issues, advise on new projects and collect feedback on RFS initiatives.

Most importantly, they provide a chance for volunteers to ask questions of the Commissioner and staff on any issues of concern to them.

For the Bateman's Bay Forum volunteers from the eastern area of RFS Region South were invited to come along and hear about a number of new Service activities, including the launch of the new volunteer website, MyRFS.

More than 100 volunteers attended the forum.

The issues raised included:

- > the need to improve information flow from head office to brigades
- > issues about ageing populations and recruitment of young volunteers
- > hazard reduction and fire trails
- > tanker replacement programs
- > budgets to replace old vehicles such as troop carriers and
- > legal protection for volunteers.

Further volunteer forums will be held in the state's north and south western areas in coming months.

## HIMALAYAS HEAT UP WITH RFS EXPERTISE

RFS expertise in hazard reduction and community fire safety education assisted five forestry officials from the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan who visited in June 2005.

The Bhutanese foresters took part in a hazard reduction burn at Hornsby on Wednesday 8 June, and community education facilitators' course in Young with 40 RFS members from western and southern NSW from 17 to 18 June.

The RFS and AusAid assisted the Bhutanese to learn how to conduct hazard reduction using prescribed burning in order to reduce the damage fires can cause to the forests and rivers of the Kingdom.

Bhutan does not experience a large number of fires, but the steep Himalayan terrain and dry conditions make them difficult to control, very intense and destructive.

Loss of forest cover by fire causes soil to wash into rivers and block hydro-electric turbines. Electricity is Bhutan's major export, so damage of this kind is a setback for the developing country.

To help mitigate this risk, the Bhutanese have taken part in RFS firefighting and prescribed burning courses in Hornsby and the Blue

Mountains, and attended hazard reductions in RFS Regions North and East.

RFS officers visited Bhutan last year to demonstrate how well-prepared prescribed burns can be conducted in the steep terrain without destroying the environment.

"The RFS is a world leader in community based firefighting and fire mitigation. We have highly skilled firefighters, world class equipment, excellent training programs and best practice techniques," RFS Community Safety Executive Director, Assistant Commissioner Rob Rogers said.

It is practically impossible to use water-based fire suppression in Bhutan because it is too steep for fire tankers to operate, or for portable pumps to be useful

The RFS experience in dry firefighting techniques, creating firebreaks to use for

backburning, and mitigating the risk of damage caused by fire by conducting hazard reduction through prescribed burning, assisted the Bhutanese to deal with their own fire management issues.

The hazard reduction at Hornsby reduced ground fuels in the Berowra Valley Regional Park at Mt Colah. The 17ha burn will assist to protect about 30 homes.

The Bhutanese foresters helped establish containment lines for the burn by chipping a trail. They also formed a crew with support from RFS officers and use of a Hornsby tanker to help start the prescribed burn using drip torches, monitor and manage it to ensure it didn't escape, and patrol it to ensure it was completely blacked out.

The visit was funded by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAid).

*Below: Front row Tshering Dorji, Tshering Pendjore, Aurora Watts (AusAID), Chado Tshering, (Joint Director, Social Forestry Division and leader of the delegation). Back row Karma J. Themphel, Kerry Groves (AusAID), Sithe Dorji.*

*Bottom: The Bhutanese foresters in RFS protective equipment and a Hornsby tanker.*



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# RFS COMMUNITY EDUCATION



*Dangar Island Rural Fire Brigade members conducted a hazard reduction in August. Photo by Michelle Ramsey, Dangar Island RFB.*



*Tracey Daly demonstrated their technique for showing children how smoke rises and why you 'get down low and go, go, go.'*

As RFS Community Education grows, regional forums are being held to enable educators to share ideas, advance their skills and set strategies for education programs specific to their areas.

With around 400 participants, the annual RFS Community Education Conference in Orange had expanded to a point where it had become difficult to include the increasing number of people joining RFS community education ranks.

For the first time, regionally based Community Education Forums will help capitalise on the enthusiasm of these dedicated volunteers by providing practical sessions, while the State Conference continues to set strategic direction.

Forums have been held for all RFS regions with Region North gathering in Coffs Harbour, Region South and West combining for a conference in Griffith and Region East congregating in Bathurst.

The first forum was held in Coffs Harbour for RFS Region North on the weekend of 13-14 August with 100 volunteers and 20 staff attending.

A Volunteer Community Education Facilitator of three years, and now staff member, Zofie Lahodny-Gesco from RFS Far North Coast Team, "thoroughly enjoyed" the forum.

"It will help us tailor our programs, showed us what other areas are doing, what other resources are available to use and different ways of displaying and presenting information," Mrs Lahodny-Gesco said.

"These types of forums are invaluable because RFS Community Education has become more widely known about and requested by communities. Community Education is also becoming more popular with RFS members who want to contribute but don't necessarily want to be active firefighters."

The Region North sessions included:

- > The first Community Safety Assistant training was delivered as a pilot project to eight volunteers. CSA training is the first level of a three tiered package for community education specialists which will be rolled out across NSW
- > Conducting street meetings – discussion and advice on targeting areas according to risk and ways to get residents involved
- > FireGuard for Kids – demonstrations of displays and techniques for presenting fire safety messages for children
- > Remote Rural Women's Program – engaging isolated community members in emergency service and safety education
- > Coordination of FireWise Facilitators

Of particular interest at the Region North forum were the results of a survey to assess community attitudes, awareness and behaviour to fire safety and the role of RFS educators in helping communities to prepare.

"RFS volunteers spend thousands of hours helping their communities prepare, and surveying is a way of ensuring that effort is directed to areas that really need it," RFS Region North Community Safety Officer Simon Borgert said.

"We can get information on the current level of awareness and preparedness, determine how we should be targeting our programs and get a good indication of how effective our programs are at changing the community perceptions of fire."

A survey of 235 people was conducted by Region North volunteers this year. When compared to results of a survey in 2000 we are able to see how communities have progressed or what areas need further assistance.

For example, the survey showed that between 2000 and 2005 people have increased activities such as cleaning gutters (from 74 percent to 84 percent) and removing fuel around property (from 86 percent to 93 percent).

But the number of people surveyed who have a household relocation and evacuation plan for a fire event has dropped from 59.8 percent to 57.8 percent.



# FIGHTS BUSHFIRES

## BRIGADE HEALS



The survey assisted with the creation of a 'preparedness index' which provides a figure out of 10 to indicate how prepared a community is based on responses to the survey. While this has increased from 5.9 to 7.5, there is still a lot of work to do.

Volunteers were also able to see how many hours they had devoted to education work as their activities are being entered on the Bushfire Risk Information Management System (BRIMS).

By collecting this data the RFS is able to report on where and when community education activities are taking place and further recognise the excellent work of volunteer community educators.

*Above: About 100 RFS volunteer community education specialists inspected displays of their Region North counterparts during the Coffs Harbour forum.*

After years of in-fighting Lake Macquarie's Reserve Brigade found itself in disarray and facing closure. Determined to pull itself together, the brigade worked closely with district and regional staff to regroup.

Internal bickering and behavioural issues over a couple of years had compounded, causing members and staff concern.

"The brigade was in turmoil. It got to the point where we were given the option of cleaning up the brigade's act or closing down," said former Captain, currently Deputy Captain, Noel Townsend.

"We changed the management of the brigade and pulled our socks up by formulating a management plan."

In conjunction with senior volunteers, RFS regional and district staff, the members of Reserve Brigade agreed to develop a Plan of Management to enable them to once again function cohesively.

On Wednesday 2 February 2005 Chief Supt. Bruce Holz, Regional Manager Region East, met with officers from Reserve Brigade, Lake Macquarie, and Team Manager of The Lakes, Supt. Steve Sowter, to sign off the Plan of Management.

The plan has now been in place for several months and the Brigade is once again functioning professionally.

"It enabled us to set goals and gave us something to go by as a guide. Previously we had no focus, nothing to aim for. It was a case of just get in run it and hope it works out. The management plan gives us an idea of what to work for," DC Townsend said.

The plan sets milestones for such things as training and number of people attending incidents.

"It is a standard plan available to everyone and in this case it was able to take the brigade back to basics, to focus on what they were really there for, which is to serve the community," said RFS Region East Operations Officer, Supt Brian Graham.

It's taken 12 to 18 months to go through the process, but it has been worth it, said new Captain Malcolm Bland.

"We're running a lot smoother, the atmosphere is better. You feel welcome when you walk into the station whereas before, you cringed," Capt Bland said.

"We still have our differences here and there but now we're able to sort them out quickly."

DC Townsend said the brigade's running 100 percent better.

"People are happier and able to perform better. Naturally we have disagreements but at least we can look at the plan and say - this is what we're aiming for."



*RFS members Harry Le Busque (back left), Marcia Le Busque, Don Arthurson, Regional Manager Ian Thomas (front left) and Brett Condie (front right) express their gratitude to Black Toyota GM Danny Scott for the dealer's assistance in their recent fundraising efforts for Tsunami victims through a trek around RFS Region North. Photo courtesy of The Daily Examiner, Grafton.*

## WHERE THERE'S SMOKE THERE'S A COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICER

The Blue Mountains district has launched a major part of the new Community Liaison Officer (CLO) program which aims to keep people informed about fires and other incidents the RFS is attending.

The new CLO role, soon to be a vital part of the community education and public information areas, is a pivotal information source and contact point for residents and community in general – especially when there is smoke around.

The main tasks for the CLO are to:

- > Be a visible presence to the residents
- > Provide a focal point for information about the incident for residents
- > Allow firefighters to still provide information to residents without being distracted from their firefighting operations
- > Provide information to the Incident Controller or Division Commanders about specific requirements for specific residences
- > Provide timely access to accurate information on incident details.

Suzanne Bliss, from Falconbridge Brigade, undertook the role during hazard reduction operations at Falconbridge on the weekend of 4-5 June 2005.

Prior to the hazard reduction Suzanne had spoken with many of the residents during pre-event meetings and was a familiar face to many of the locals.

She spent a large amount of time moving around the area, speaking to residents with concerns or questions, as well as monitoring some of the identified special requirements, such as bee hives and some dogs whose owners were not at home at the time of the hazard reduction.

Teaming up with Blue Mountains Community Safety Officer, Inspector Eric Berry, the duo also walked along sections of the fire line to speak to the crews and see how well the burn was going in - information that could then be provided to interested residents.

The initial impressions were that the trial run of the CLO was very successful and has given a

great foundation on which to build as the position dimensions are fully examined.

*Story and photos by Eric Berry, RFS Blue Mountains Community Safety Officer.*

*Community Liaison Officer Suzanne Bliss speaks to a local family about the hazard reduction.*

*Community Liaison Officer Suzanne Bliss provides information on the hazard reduction to a resident. Photo by Eric Berry.*





## SUPPORT FOR NORTHERN RIVERS FLOODS

On the 30 June 2005 heavy rain fell over north eastern NSW, flooding rivers in Tweed Heads, Ballina and Lismore and small communities surrounding them.

RFS crews were responded to assist with flood evacuations, traffic control and clean up. On the 30th, crews from Wyrallah, Alstonville, Dunoon, The Channon, Caniaba, Alphadale and Tullera assisted with this work. In Lismore a recently completed levy bank in the heart of the town was tested during the flood emergency.

The CBD of Lismore was closed and a number of shops had moved stock to higher ground.

RFS crews were tasked with evacuating the CBD if the levy bank did not hold. Police and SES directed operations and because the levy bank held crews from the RFS were stood down later on the first evening.

RFS volunteers from Alpadale, Wyrallah, Tullera, Clunes, Caniaba, Tuncester, Yorklea, Fairy Hill,

Woodview, Broadwater and Myall Creek attended to incidents over the next two days.

Staff from RFS Northern Rivers, Far North Coast and Northern Tablelands Teams provided liaison to district and local emergency management groups.

**Story Cameron Wade**

*RFS crews assisted other emergency agencies with flood work in northern NSW in June. Photo by Rebel Talbert.*



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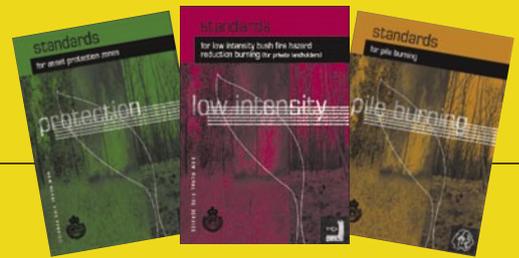
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# THE CODE

## HELP TO HANDLE ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS OF HAZARD REDUCTION

It will be easier for the people of NSW to plan hazard reduction due to changes to the Bushfire Environmental Assessment Code, the process the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) uses to help land owners streamline environmental regulations for hazard reduction.

The RFS developed the Code, which began operation in July 2003, following concerns that environmental regulations hampered hazard reduction.

Changes to the Code gazetted in September 2005 extend the land area and types of assets where the RFS can use the fast-tracking capabilities of the Code.

Further protection for public assembly buildings such as schools, hospitals and nursing homes may be provided due to the changes.

The result is the RFS can assist even more land managers and land owners across a larger area of NSW with the environmental aspects of hazard reduction planning, and collect more information on hazard reduction being conducted.

Firefighters and bushfire prone communities will benefit as more information on when and where hazard reduction has been conducted across a larger area may be collected, providing a more accessible and improved picture of NSW's hazard reduction activity.

Firefighters and fire managers can use these hazard reduction details when developing strategies to fight bushfires (e.g. where to place a backburn) and undertake risk management planning to reduce fire threat (e.g. where further hazard reduction may be needed to protect assets).

### CHANGES TO THE CODE

The new Code includes the following changes:

- > Extending the area where the Code can be used to include Land Management Zones (forests, farms, reserves etc). Before September 2005, the Code could only be used in Asset Protection Zones and Strategic Fire Advantage Zones, making up less than 10 percent of the bush fire prone area of NSW. By increasing the area the Code can cover to include Land Management Zones it can now be used across most of the State.
- > Extending the types of assets covered by the Code to include;
  - Special fire protection structures such as schools, hospitals and nursing homes,
  - Plantations
  - Boundary fences, and

- Increased distances from 10m to 20m for major buildings such as communication towers, farm sheds, industrial and commercial buildings,
- > Improved measures to protect river corridors and reduce soil erosion
- > Improved measures to assess works for impacts on threatened species.

### HOW DOES THE CODE HELP HAZARD REDUCTION?

The Code addresses the environmental aspects of carrying out hazard reduction works by assessing the potential for clearing and burning of vegetation to cause damage, such as destroying animal habitats and cultural heritage or causing soil erosion and smoke pollution.

Prior to the existence of the Code, land owners who wanted to do hazard reduction were expected to negotiate the wide range of environmental regulations on their own.

Using the Code, the RFS helps land owners and managers to consider environmental regulations by fast-tracking environmental assessments for hazard reduction when people apply for a free Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificate.

### REVIEW OF THE CODE

After a year in operation, the Code and its supporting documents were reviewed in consultation with key stakeholders and land management agencies including:

- > RFS volunteers
- > NSW Farmers Association
- > Local Government
- > Nature Conservation Council
- > State Forests
- > Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC)
- > Department of Infrastructure Planning and Natural Resources (DIPNR).

The Code was put on public exhibition for 46 days and submissions were received and considered. There was strong support for the added consideration of soil erosion risk, protection for environmentally sensitive areas and the use of further scientific measures in the processes outlined in the Code.

### RFS ADVICE AND PUBLICATIONS ON HAZARD REDUCTION

With the revision of the Code, the range of related documents that provide members of the public with advice on how to conduct safe hazard reduction have been updated and are available free from [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au) and RFS fire control centres across NSW.

The publications include:

- > Standards for Asset Protection Zones
- > Standards for Low Intensity Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Burning
- > Standards for Pile Burning.

They are a good place to start for advice relating to establishing asset protection zones, burning

and mechanical hazard reduction. They should be distributed to members of the public before hazard reduction works are undertaken.

RFS officers are also available to provide advice. Training courses have been delivered across NSW to all RFS Certificate Issuing Officers (CIOs) and most are now qualified to assess Certificate applications under the new Code.

### HOW THE PEOPLE OF NSW ACCESS THE CODE

For any mechanical and burning hazard reduction work that would require other environmental approval land owners may fill out a Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificate application form (available free from RFS fire control centres).

Applicants should provide as much information as they can about their proposed hazard reduction and property history and then return the form to their local RFS.

RFS officers will assess the application within seven days (unless requirements for more information or regulations outside the scope of the Code cause delays).

The Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificate application form has also been modified to simplify the application process.

### HOW IS THE CODE USED IN THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS?

1. Application for Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificate (available from RFS)
2. Issuing Officers assess the proposed works using the Code
3. Site investigation by Issuing Officers
4. Application approved, modified or rejected

### WHAT WILL A HAZARD REDUCTION BE ASSESSED FOR?

The Code outlines many environmental aspects that need to be considered before hazard reduction work is given approval.

An authority issuing a certificate (such as the RFS) will take into account:

- > the bush fire management zoning of the area
- > any existing land management agreements
- > the type and extent of works proposed
- > impacts on environmental assets such as:
  - > soil stability
  - > threatened species
  - > water quality
- > impacts on any Aboriginal or cultural heritage sites
- > the potential hazards and impacts of smoke
- > the vegetation type and its recommended fire frequency.

## VOLUNTEERS INCLUDED IN SYDNEY EVACUATION PLAN

NSW Premier Morris Iemma recently detailed a comprehensive evacuation plan for Sydney's CBD in the event of a terrorist attack, which includes the involvement of RFS members as marshals.

Mr Iemma revealed Sydney's CBD would be divided into three distinct evacuation zones:

- > City North, incorporating the financial district;
- > Mid-City, covering Town Hall and the Pitt Street Mall;
- > City South, covering Haymarket;

"Half a million people work, live and visit Sydney's CBD everyday - their safety and security is paramount," Mr Iemma said.

"The images of London are fresh in our minds - and remind us no city is immune from a terrorist attack.

"The attacks in New York, Madrid and London have shaped the way the NSW Government's Counter Terrorism and Disaster Recovery Unit developed the plan.

"Experience shows getting timely, accurate information to the community is crucial during a terrorist attack or emergency."

### OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE PLAN INCLUDE:

- 1. SydneyALERT** - a new, highly secure, information system will provide messages direct from NSW Police to building managers, security staff and chief fire wardens across the CBD. The system uses email, text, telephone and facsimile to contact registered members who will in turn use public address, email and telephone messages to warn people in their building.
- 2. Sydney Safety Sites and Marshals** - NSW Police will command the safety sites and be assisted by specially trained members of the NSW Rural Fire Service, State Emergency Service (SES) and officers from the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority.
- 3. State Coordination Centre** - a new purpose built facility to ensure a co-ordinated response between Commonwealth and NSW Government agencies in the event of a significant incident in NSW.
- 4. www.emergency.nsw.gov.au** - a new website designed to provide up-to-date information on any terrorist incident or natural or human caused emergency caused. The site also provides a range of preparation advice for hazards including bushfire, flood, storms and earthquake.

Additional resources are also under development to ensure the people of Sydney receive accurate, timely information and directions during an emergency.

This includes:

- > Siren and public address system - the RTA is developing the world's first siren and public address system operated through the CBD traffic management system.
- > Variable Message Signs - permanent signs will be erected in key locations in the CBD to give police the ability to send directions and advice to people on the streets.

The Premier also made it clear that the new resources would also be used outside Sydney for natural hazards and emergencies across the State.

"The new emergency website has been designed to prepare and inform people living right across NSW in case of emergency whether it is caused by a natural occurrence or by human beings."

## SIGNING ON FOR DEAF FIRE AWARENESS

RFS Riverina Firewise facilitator Christine Eccleston recently completed Auslan training in communication with deaf people, and quickly realised a unique opportunity existed to provide advice to a group often overlooked in traditional RFS Community Education delivery.

Together with TAFE NSW Wagga Campus Outreach program, RFS Riverina Zone Com Ed group developed a one day program in Deaf Fire Awareness.

The first session was held on Saturday 25 June at the Riverina Zone Fire Control Centre training rooms. Auslan teacher Lisa Euler and interpreter Lee Pearse introduced the Com Ed facilitators and volunteers to deaf communication techniques, the culture of the deaf community, and some basic sign language.

By the end of this session everyone was able to introduce themselves by name and engage in simple conversations.

Fifteen members of the local deaf community joined the group for lunch. Communication between both groups was initially difficult and challenging as group expectations were unknown.

Facilitators recalled the morning's communications lessons and were able to introduce themselves using sign language and the finger alphabet. In addition, the important points of good eye contact, facial expression, body language and face-to-face communication were used to facilitate natural interaction.

Interpreter Lee Pearse accurately delivered the Firewise message by sign as the facilitators spoke to the group. The group interacted with the facilitators through questions, and participating in various activities.

Demonstrations included how to extinguish a kitchen fire and how to escape from a house fire. This promoted great discussion about the type and availability of fire alarms suitable for the deaf.

The RFS Riverina Com Ed Group found this an inspirational and enlightening experience.

"We were challenged to recognise the needs of others within our community and to acknowledge that having different communication requirements doesn't equate to disability," Riverina Community Safety Officer James Smith said.

*Auslan Interpreter Lee Pearse signs while Com Ed Facilitator Brett Christmass demonstrates fire extinguishers*



## FOOTBALL FIELD SIZE BLAZE AT TIP



A fire in green waste the size of a football field challenged RFS firefighters who attended Narromine Tip for several days in August.

Crews were alerted at 18:52hrs on Sunday 7 August arriving on scene at 18:59hrs.

Four appliances responded with two bulk water carriers. Over 50,000 litres of water was applied to the fire to no avail.

On Monday morning an excavator and dozer were brought in to open the fire and allow water penetration, but little effect was achieved due to heat.

The fire was at patrol status by Tuesday and was being allowed to burn itself out with crews keeping an eye on its status.

Rural Fire Brigades from Narromine Headquarters, Frost, Timbreebongie and Euromedah attended.

Investigations will determine what started the fire, however, spontaneous combustion is the likely cause.

*Narromine Headquarters brigade members Tegan Finley and Sally Harding patrolling the Narromine tip fire. Photo by Narromine News and Trangie Advocate.*



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## AMBULANCE OFFICERS PRAISE BRIGADE

At 1830hr on 11 July 2005 Glen Innes Rural Fire Brigade responded to an accident 6km south of Glen Innes on the New England Hwy.

Two vehicles had collided head on with three people critically injured and trapped in one vehicle with an infant trapped but unharmed. Another victim was critically injured in the second vehicle suffering massive head injuries.

While the Glen Innes crew provided fire protection, assisted by NSW Fire Brigade, Volunteer Rescue Association and NSW Ambulance officers effected the rescue and transported victims to hospital.

The highway was closed and the brigade attended for several hours with a stop called at 1am.

In a letter to RFS Northern Tablelands office, NSW Ambulance Glen Innes Station Officer John Adams praised the efforts of the brigade in providing effective protection to services on scene at what he described as one of the worst accidents he had seen in the area.

"I would like to express my appreciation to all... for the excellent cooperation that officers of this service received both at the scene of the accident and in discussions and support offered following the incident," Mr Adams wrote.

"I am sure that this accident will be listed as one of the most serious that has occurred within the district mainly due to the severity of the damage that was sustained to the vehicles involved as well as the serious nature of the injuries received by the casualties in those vehicles."

*Bottom: One person was trapped in this Ford Falcon in an accident attended by Glen Innes Rural Fire Brigade.*

*Below: Glen Innes Rural Fire Brigade personnel were praised for their work at this difficult motor vehicle accident. Three people were injured and trapped along with an unharmed infant in this Commodore.*





## GOOLGOWI KIDS GET FIREWISE

The children of Goolgowi Public School, Carrathool, are now well versed on the FireWise message after a visit from the RFS Mid West Team on 3 June 2005.

Volunteer facilitator Ron Harris, Mid West Team Operations Officer Nigel Bradford and Mid West Team Community Safety Officer Jason Wall visited the Goolgowi Public School to deliver the Firewise message to the students from kindergarten to year 6.

The students were taken through stop drop and roll, the benefits of smoke alarms and then shown around a Cat 1 tanker, all the equipment that they carry and how it works.

*By Jason Wall, RFS Mid West Team*

**Goolgowi Public School students get FireWise.**



## \$60,000 JEEP DESTROYED

In a scene reminiscent of a Mad Max movie a possible oil leak sparked the destruction of a brand new \$60,000 Jeep on Stockton Beach, north of Newcastle, at about 1.30pm on Sunday 7 August.

The jeep was near the ship wreck the Sygna on the beach, which is popular with four-wheel-drives. The owners' attempt to put the fire out with an extinguisher were unsuccessful.

RFS attended but was only able to extinguish the remains.



## NEW GROUP FOCUSES ON BUSHFIRE CONSULTANT COMPETENCE

The Fire Protection Association Australia (FPA) has established a group focused on the qualifications, skills and competence of consultants in the field of design and construction in bushfire prone areas.

**FPA Australia is a not-for-profit member association and a technical and educational fire safety organisation**

Bushfire design and planning consultants are available to work as contractors for anyone wishing to build or renovate in areas deemed bushfire prone.

The quality of work and qualifications of such consultants became a concern for the RFS, FPA Australia and consultants themselves. The RFS has worked with FPA Australia to establish the Bushfire Planning and Design Special Interest Group (BPAD/SIG), which was created in late 2004.

"Quality is not just a 'nice-to-have' in our industry," said Interim Chair of the BPAD/SIG and planning and design consultant, Ron Coffey.

"It can mean the difference between life and death for the occupants of buildings caught in a bushfire. As our industry grows, we are concerned that it be properly governed so that the public can be sure that the advice they receive comes from a reputable consultant with all the relevant skills and knowledge.

"Right now, pretty well anyone can call themselves a bushfire planning and design consultant and set up business giving advice. This greatly alarms us."

The group developed as more bushfire planning and design consultants began to appear and operate after the introduction of legislation requiring buildings in bushfire prone areas to meet planning and construction standards.

Historically, the RFS has listed on its web site consultants who have attended training sessions, but the RFS does not accredit, promote, endorse or guarantee quality of service.

Gradually the RFS has worked with education and training bodies to establish programs to increase competency and skills of such consultants. The BPAD/SIG is welcomed by the RFS as a forum for standardising qualifications and skills of these consultants.

The University of Western Sydney is leading the way in providing training in construction and planning through its Graduate Diploma in Bushfire Prone Areas.

This course, developed and presented in conjunction with the RFS, includes bushfire behaviour, planning and building, bushfire fighting and emergency management, and alternative solutions for bushfire prone areas.

Practitioners currently studying the Graduate Diploma approached FPA Australia to set up the BPAD/SIG.

The aims of the group are to protect property and life endangered by bushfire by:

- > Providing a forum for practitioners, fire services and regulators to discuss matters related to design and construction in bushfire prone areas
- > Establish competency standards and a Code of Practice for bushfire safety practitioners recognised at National and State level
- > Assist the general community through education with respect to issues of design and construction in bushfire prone areas.

The first task is to establish a nationally recognised accreditation/certification scheme. A voluntary system will be established under FPA Australia as precursor to a formal, national, government endorsed scheme. The scheme will incorporate competency based training and recognition for the various skills required to work as a bushfire planning and design consultant.

"Once we have this accreditation scheme, potential customers will be able to choose a consultant who can prove their competence," Mr Coffey said.

Membership of the BPAD/SIG through FPA Australia is open to all with a specific interest in bushfire planning and design. For more details and meeting dates contact Bob Scott, FPA Australia, on (03) 9890 1544 or email [bobscott@fpaa.com.au](mailto:bobscott@fpaa.com.au).



# ILLAWARRA

## EDUCATION TOP OF THE AGENDA FOR ILLAWARRA

To residents looking around the Illawarra bathed in green, the start of the bushfire season might seem an eternity away.

However, with projections of another extended dry season, planning was well underway across the region.

Forty volunteer members of the RFS Illawarra Team, the NSW Police, local government and insurance representatives came together on 30 April to discuss improved ways of communicating with local residents.

The conference venue, the Tops at Stanwell Park, was hard fought ground in the 2001 fires, and was provided free by the owners who recognised the value of education and preparedness.

Conference participants exchanged ideas on the best methods of communicating with the public and how to provide information in ways immediately usable by all residents.

Clear, precise and practical information was needed so the community could play their part.

The RFS volunteers working to raise community awareness stand alongside other operational units in the RFS and work in tandem with other emergency services and local government.

Cooperation and the value of a combined approach was evident at the weekend conference.

In addition to RFS personnel, participants heard from Lisa Westwood of the NSW Police, Sally Perry of Wollongong City Council, Barry Lewis from NRMA Insurance and the IAG Group, Shane Geerin from RFS The Lakes Team (Lake Macquarie and Wyong Districts) and Andrew Sweeney, Senior Deputy Captain of Gerringong Rural Fire Brigade.

As Crime Prevention Officer for the Wollongong Local Area Command, Senior Constable Westwood spoke about the value of working with schools, of networking among emergency services organisations, targeted campaigns, developed through community surveys and carefully evaluated, and how NSW Police welcomed RFS involvement.

An informed community and their role in risk management was the message from Ms Perry, Wollongong Council's Bushfire Management and Conservation Project Officer. Wollongong City Council is working through a program of asset protection in bushfire prone zones and will rely on the community to help maintain those areas.

Managing insurance risk for natural disasters is a mammoth task for the insurance industry. Mr. Lewis detailed the work done for NRMA Insurance by the CSIRO. Of the 20 recent natural disaster claims handled by the big companies, 19 were weather related.

NRMA financially supports community education (including a substantial amount of sponsorship



for which the RFS has been grateful) and NRMA promotes its 11,000 employees engaging with their local communities in practical ways.

Insp. Geerin liaises closely with his RFS counterparts in the Illawarra. He faces a large task in promoting bushfire education for the 230,000 residents of RFS Lakes Team, a region with special environmental protection zones and limited scope for the usual response of hazard reduction burning.

As Andrew Sweeney, Captain of the Gerringong Brigade emphasised to the conference, a better informed community makes the firefighters' job easier should a serious situation arise. Communication was vital when dealing with property protection and personal safety.

As other emergency services have seen, young children respond well to personal safety messages and take home those messages to their parents. The RFS has been very successful, throughout NSW, with pre-school programs and primary school presentations developed in consultation with the Department of Education.

RFS programs in the Illawarra, which are well-targeted and are being very well received, are coordinated by Christine White and Renee Merritt. Christine and Renee gave a very practical demonstration to the conference.

"Community education is a core role for the Service and each brigade will be encouraged to appoint its own Community Safety Officer (CSO)," explained RFS Illawarra Team Manager, Supt. Richard Cotterill.

Those officers will have a multi-faceted role in managing the community education tasks in the Brigade and, through Brigade Captains, they will be a catalyst for implementing the Brigade's

*Despite the green surroundings, bushfire management agencies in the Illawarra prepare for the upcoming season through strategic community education. Photo by Belinda Lee.*

community education plan and overseeing events on the annual calendar.

The CSO's will promote displays at events such as local agricultural shows, RFS Brigade open days, publications, displays, videos, assist with media campaigns and hold one on one discussions with residents.

The RFS produces specialised rural fire safety publications and provides support services for rural landholders. Rural people are in the front line should a fire erupt in our region. The Farmwise Program, where RFS members are invited to inspect rural properties and advise on fire preparedness and fire safety matters, was taken up by the Illawarra RFS with enthusiasm.

Farmwise activities in our region have been so successful that Illawarra personnel now promote Farmwise to other RFS regions in NSW.

Given the success of this community education conference and the development of the CSO positions, meetings of RFS personnel on community education will become a regular event.

**By Ross Cook,  
RFS Illawarra Community Education Team**

*Photos by Belinda Lee*

## SIGN UP TO MYRFS TO WIN

All volunteers who register for MyRFS before 1 November will be eligible to win – for their brigade – a GPS unit and a Brigade First Aid Kit, and other brigade specific prizes.

There will be one winning Brigade from each RFS region and all previously registered users are already entered in the draw.

One winner from each region will be announced on the MyRFS website on November 1st, and in the next edition of the Bushfire Bulletin.

**Be in the running to win a first aid kit and GPS unit by registering for MyRFS – just get your Firezone number from your district office and go to [www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au).**



## POLICE TRAINED IN FIRE INVESTIGATION

RFS Fire Investigation experts trained 18 NSW Police forensic and crime scene specialists in fire behaviour in Dubbo from 15 to 17 June as part of a police wildfire investigation course. RFS officers lit small fires at a location on the Eulomogo Rd, 12 km from Dubbo, to show police officers how fires move and how to find indicators on a fireground to identify the cause and origin of a fire.

This information is used to assist wildfire investigations, to determine if a fire was deliberately or negligently lit and provide a brief of evidence for police investigations and coronial inquiries.

"The RFS and police work closely together on wildfire investigation and this course was conducted to enhance the skills of forensic and crime scene specialists in this area," RFS Fire Investigation Manager Richard Woods said.

"Coordinated firefighting is also a vital part of the work the RFS and police do together. Both organisations have key roles when bushfires are affecting communities so the course also focuses on incident control systems for bushfires, how incident management teams are formed and operate, and the responsibilities of each agency so we have an efficient team working well together in the field of investigating wildfires."

Police gained insight into not only fire behaviour and interagency arrangements but also the mapping capabilities of the RFS which can assist with wildfire investigations.

## MYRFS – ONLINE INFORMATION FOR VOLUNTEERS, BY VOLUNTEERS

Emergency Services Minister Tony Kelly launched the RFS's new volunteer extranet, MyRFS, on 27 July 2005.

MyRFS aims to improve information flow to volunteers. It gives volunteers access to central data. It does this through the web, making the information available 24/7.

This valuable data must be managed carefully and securely. The best way to do this is through an Extranet which is entirely secure, available only to RFS volunteers, and uses similar technologies to those employed by financial institutions.

MyRFS has been built by RFS Information Services using data and content drawn directly from RFS databases. It is managed by Media and Public Affairs, and will provide volunteers with greater access to a wide range of information.

"MyRFS web has been set up within the Service on a state-of-the-art computer system," Luuk Honings, the MyRFS Application Architect, explains.

It provides secure web access for our volunteers using the latest databases and web-based technologies

"It provides secure web access for our volunteers using the latest databases and web-based technologies, and will allow volunteers to securely access information provided by and for them, via the internet."

"It is also extremely stable."

But don't be scared off by all the technical aspects, warns Liz Mead, MyRFS Communications Co-coordinator.

"The site has been designed with volunteer usability in mind. What we are hearing from volunteer focus groups is a need for a less graphic intensive site that is easy to load and access.

"The overwhelming message is 'keep it simple,'" Liz said.



"MyRFS is a site that volunteers with all levels of computer experience will be able to use. And one of the great things we've discovered is even inexperienced members are trying it out."

One of the most exciting features of MyRFS is the Incident Whiteboard. The "Whiteboard" is representation of the current notifiable incidents that the RFS has been tasked to.

"A notifiable incident is one that is of interest to RFS State Operations and Regional management. It can be a motor vehicle accident (MVA), a structure fire, or a developing Section 44," said Glen Benson, RFS Application Development Manager.

"However, it is not usually a small fire that one tanker may have been assigned to.

"The 'Whiteboard' is a real time data feed from the RFS's corporate Incident Database (IDB). And shortly it will be taking direct feeds from the new online operational system iCON."

The Whiteboard also shows information relating to Total Fire Bans and aircraft deployed to incidents.

As the site is being rolled out in phases, it may be a while before users will receive the full benefit of a Brigade Extranet. The first focus is to ensure all volunteers know where the site is, and how to register online.

Once they are online, volunteers are encouraged to contribute opinions on what they would like later phases to include.

"MyRFS is for volunteers," says MyRFS Communication Team Member Belinda Landry. "As a result, their requests are what ultimately inform our decisions."

On-going research, discussion groups, workshops and focus groups will continue during 2005 as each new function of MyRFS is tested with the users of MyRFS – the volunteers.

Requests and feedback can be sent online at [www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au). Log on now!

**Below Left: Volunteers draw up how they would like the site to be structured.**

**Below Right: The Hastings Focus Group contribute their ideas for MyRFS.**



## COASTERS RETREAT – FIREFIGHTING WITH A VIEW

Coasters Retreat is almost your typical RFS Brigade. Run by dedicated volunteers, with a community to serve, and a job to do.

However, when this brigade is turned out there is no Cat 1 screaming down the main road, no Cat 7 navigating the national park, not even a PC rushing extra crew to the incident.

In fact, when Coasters Retreat responds to an incident in their area, no lights and sirens are involved. Why? Simply because they don't have a vehicle.

Coasters Retreat Brigade is situated in Warringah/Pittwater district, and with stunning views overlooking 'The Basin'. They have 25 active members, making up 40 percent of their membership.

Coasters Retreat is unique because they are on a part of the mainland which is accessible only by water. There are no roads or infrastructure to support use of an appliance.

Yet they need to provide fire protection for the 52 houses that make up the tight knit community. To carry out this role the brigade has a cart called 'Unit 1' which carries all essential firefighting equipment, and is wheeled to the incident.

Anything extra that is not on the cart is carried by the members. The brigade looks after an area 1.2km long and 250m wide. For asset protection and training purposes the area is divided into three sectors, Alpha, Bravo and Charlie.

Training is on the last Sunday of every month. Teams are formed depending on the sectors members live in. A senior member in the sector is in charge of the team.

The brigade relies on tank water or on water pumped from 'The Basin'. To overcome delays, Coasters Retreat uses a device called a 'Tank Thief' to quickly obtain water from tanks. The metal top of this device is dropped into the top of a tank, a hand pump on the side is used to generate suction, and the pump is easily primed.

The brigade does not have to deal with the often difficult task of using suction hose. With the use of the 'Tank Thief' one team in the brigade is able to boast a record of 18 seconds from the 'Tank Thief' entering the tank, to water on the fire.

A high number of brigade members are trained in Senior First Aid. This is because they are the closest emergency service for lost or injured bushwalkers in the national park surrounding Coasters Retreat. They are able to secure and take care of injured persons until ambulance and rescue services arrive.

Portable pumps and hoses can be taken out onto the water to fight boat fires. They simply load their equipment and extinguishers into their vessels and can be on the scene of a water incident in minutes.

Training is not restricted to the types of incidents in their own area. Brigade members are trained in the use of RFS appliances even though their brigade has none. Every so often district office brings Category 1 and 2 tankers down to

'The Basin' for the members to brush up and refine their skills on the vehicles.

It is essential the brigade have these skills as their members can be deployed as part of a composite crew during bushfire emergencies, or to assist with hazard reductions such as the Resolute hazard reduction in West Head, almost directly opposite their community.

For the members of Coasters Retreat, portable pump operations knowledge remains one of the key components of their training. Without this knowledge they are unable to fight any fires in their area.

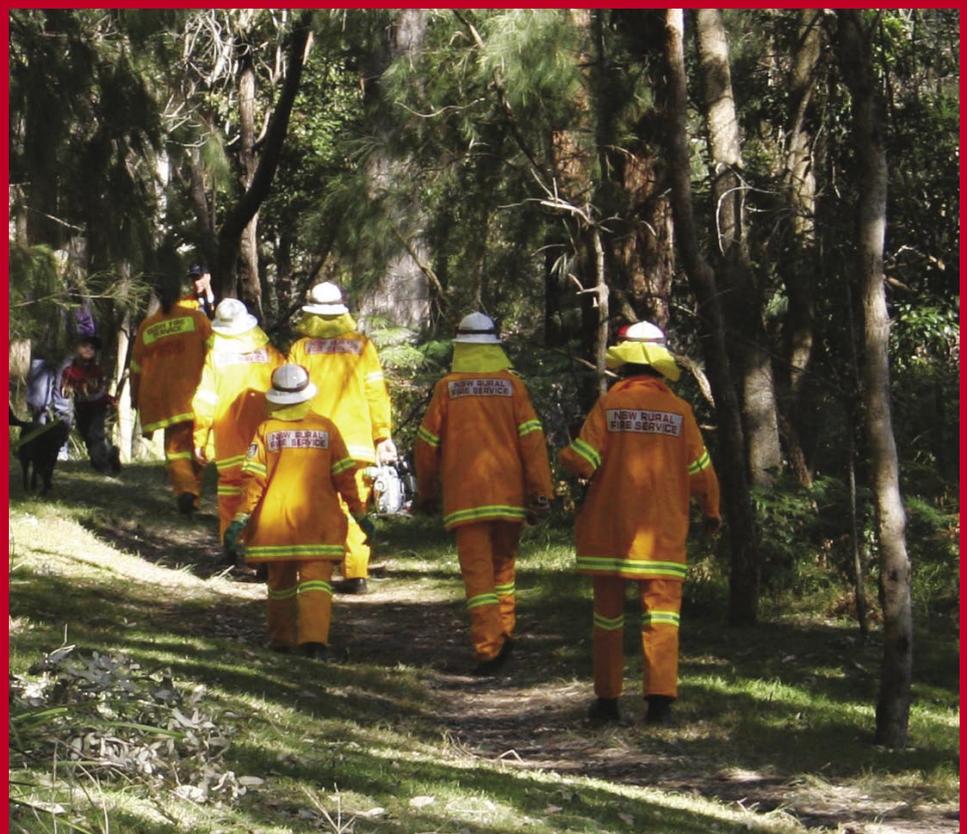
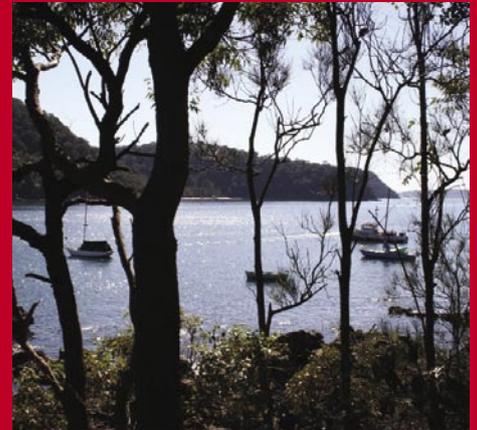
Coasters Retreat may not be the busiest brigade, may not have the most area to look after, or the highest number of members. But attend one of their training sessions and there is no question that their dedication to the protection and service of their community is equal to all other brigades in their shire.

However, the question still needs to be asked. With the view from the Coasters Retreat station balcony, why do the members go home?

*Story by Matt Schroder.*

*Top: The view from Coasters Retreat RFB's station balcony. Photo by Rebel Talbert.*

*Right and below: Brigade with no appliance.... Coasters Retreat RFB train to protect their community of 52 homes. Photo by Rebel Talbert.*





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Polar Fleecy Jacket - Full zip front, Elasticated cuff, Draw cord waist	S-XXL (N)avy only	\$52.50			
Sloppy Joe - Super fleecy / Low pill with round neck & Australian made	S-XXL 3XL-6XL (N)avy only (N)avy only	\$29.00 \$31.00			
Dress Jumper - 80/20 Wool/Polyester blend, Shoulder & Elbow Patches, Epaulettes, Pencil pockets & Australian made	S-XXL 3XL-5XL (N)avy only (N)avy only	\$85.00 \$87.00			
Beanie - Acrylic - One size fits all - Embroidered RFS Logo	OSFA (N)avy only	\$11.00			
Beanie - Fleecy - One size fits all - Embroidered RFS Logo	OSFA (N)avy only	\$13.50			
Cap - Baseball - Brushed cotton, Adjustable velcro, One size fits all, Embroidered RFS Logo	OSFA (N)avy only	1-24 \$8.50 / 25-99 \$8.00 / 100+ \$7.50			
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RFS members refuelling and working with emergency service colleagues during Air Base Operator and Aviation Radio Operator training at Casino 20 to 22 May 2005. Photo by Tony Griffiths

## CAPTAINS MEETINGS IMPROVE COMMUNICATION

Captains meetings are proving to be a key communication tool for the RFS, providing an opportunity for discussion of local and Statewide issues, developing initiatives and presenting Service positions.

Captains meetings are held in every zone/district. Some meetings include deputies, some include secretaries

The Bushfire Bulletin asked a number of zone/district officers why meeting with Captains on a regular basis is necessary.

The Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area Zone Manager, Kevin Adams, takes the opportunity in these meetings to strengthen the link between staff and volunteers.

Everyone gets to find out what's happening in the field. For instance, during the drought, Fire Control Centre staff were better informed about the general well-being of their community and their members via the Captains' meetings.

Once they knew this, they were better able to manage the demands placed on volunteers during this difficult time.

Cudgong Zone Manager, John Parnaby, values them as a consultative tool. John believes that they are a transaction rather than a transmission of information. The philosophy in this zone office is to make a "long story short" and the meetings give him and his staff a chance to explain policy decisions by spelling out the direct implications for brigades.

The Namoi Gwydir Zone Manager, Steve Basham uses the meetings to endorse the decisions of the senior management committee but also sees a benefit in discussing local issues.

Because this zone spans 40,000 sq km it's difficult to stay abreast of every local issue. This is particularly so in the area of property development.

As the Captains have their finger "on the pulse" of the broader community, Steve believes the meetings are an invaluable tool for communication and issues management.

The Warringah Pittwater District Operations Support Officer, Jan McKenna, believes regularity is essential for running Captains' meetings. The district boasts excellent attendance because of this.

Their meetings involve Senior Deputies and Captains. The agenda items come from the floor from the previous meeting. New issues or updates in the brigades are itemised and tasked to follow through.

All of the district staff attend so they can take questions from the floor. They feel this is a good forum to stay connected.

Northern Rivers Team Manager, Stan Taylor believes they are good for promoting and sending information direct to volunteers and particularly for updating Captains about all four functional areas of operations, community safety, learning and development and management.

He believes they are also good for quarterly updates, as it is the one chance for the group to come together and find out their problems aren't isolated.

The Operations officer in that team, Steve Hall, believes Captains' meetings are most valuable in getting information out in a simple and direct way, particularly issues like training and those requiring specialist presentations.

Recently RFS Mitigation Officers did a presentation to Captains in his area, showing them how the system works and addressing common fears and misconceptions. In a similar way, a Fire Investigation specialist was able to explain the importance of their systems and the role Captains and Brigades play in determining the cause and origin of fires.

Far North Coast Team Community Safety Officer Laurence McCoy says the meetings ensure consistency across the district particularly in critical areas like operating standards and community safety issues.

## 10,000 VISIT RFS PRIMEX DISPLAY

The PRIMEX Agricultural Field day at Casino was the busiest ever for the RFS with over 10,000 visitors through our interactive display.

The focus this year was on winter fire safety, with 2100 showbags given to those that could answer simple questions about being FireWise.

This message was supported by RFS Northern Rivers Team staff promoting Hazard Reduction Certificates and Development Applications. RFS Engineering Services from Headquarters were on hand to answer any technical questions.

The RFS Northern Rivers Community Education Team provided 420 man-hours over the three day show and proved to be incredibly versatile switching between community education facilitation and live fire displays.

Incredibly versatile switching between community education facilitation and live fire displays.

The demonstrations included techniques for extinguishing fuel fires using a dry chemical extinguisher; how to use a fire blanket on a stove top fire; and a motor vehicle accident with persons trapped fully involved in fire.

New appliances on display included a Cat 1 and Cat 7. Big Ed once again proved a hit with children queuing to play the fire safety computer games and the new Community Education trailer got its first real workout.

The crew from Broadwater proved that PRIMEX grounds really were once a swamp as they managed to get their Cat 1 bogged twice. Fortunately there was a large amount of earth moving machinery on site to extract them!

A special thanks to all the volunteers that manned the stand over the three days and to Group Captain Steve Hall for all his organisation.

Story and photos by Simon Borgert, RFS Region North Community Safety Officer.



Crews display their skills during a simulated motor vehicle accident.

## TROOPIES GO PC

The topic of Troopies has come up at a number of volunteer forums this year.

At the Bateman's Bay Volunteer Forum in May, a volunteer from the Lake George Zone floored the crowd when he offered to return the troop carrier his brigade was given in 1930 - in the hope of getting a new one.

Despite the humour, the topic was raised and taken seriously.

What is the RFS doing to improve this popular and much needed vehicle?

Who and how many use the Troopy?

And are those users being consulted on the best choice of vehicle?

What it is that makes the review of Troop Carriers so topical? Ian Hall from RFS Engineering Services worked on the Review of Personnel Carriers project and provided responses to these questions.

### WHAT IS A TROOPY?

A "Troopy" is a general term used to describe a Brigade Personnel Carrier vehicle, classified as RFS Category 12 and used for the transport of Brigade members (and some equipment) associated with fires, other emergencies, hazard reductions, training and community education.



### HOW LONG HAS THE REVIEW PROJECT BEEN GOING ?

The project was started about two years ago after concerns were raised about the safety of certain Personnel Carrier vehicles in the RFS fleet.

### WHAT WERE YOU HOPING TO ACHIEVE?

We had definite aims - they were:

- > To investigate any safety issues with the vehicles currently used by the RFS as PCs
- > To implement a risk assessment, including countermeasures, for these vehicles
- > To investigate the availability, features and cost of alternate vehicles to meet the RFS needs.



to be changed according to the risk assessment. This will mainly involve preventing the carriage of personnel and equipment together in the same vehicle compartment.

### WILL IT BE MANDATORY AND MEAN LOTS OF EXTRA FUNDING IS REQUIRED?

The list of vehicles to choose from is available now, but no one vehicle will suit all applications. It will probably mean that several different vehicles will be used across a District. The selection of a particular vehicle will not be mandatory, but must be based on a risk assessment, the requirements of the particular Brigade, and the RFS vehicle performance and features specification (as described in the Circular). The cost of many of the vehicles on the list is less than the currently used troopy. Overall the exercise should not require significant additional funding.

### HAVE YOU ANY FINAL ADVICE FROM ENGINEERING SERVICES?

The best outcome would be for Districts to move towards a mix of vehicles. In this way they can cater for the numbers of members and type of equipment to be transported in relation to the type of terrain and distances travelled.

*Top: The latest model Toyota 'Troopy'. A mix of vehicles is recommended for districts to use as personnel carriers depending on their transport needs and terrain.*

*Above: The inside of the latest model Toyota personnel carrier.*

## GOODOOGA GRABS ITS FIRST NEW TANKER

Goodooga Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) in Brewarrina Shire, RFS Barwon Darling Zone, received their first brand new firefighting appliance on Friday 5 August.

The dual cab Cat 7 will complement the brigade's Cat 1 and will boost their capabilities to respond to village and scrub fire incidents.

Assistant Commissioner Mark Croweller officially handed over the Cat 7 to Goodooga RFB Captain Bill Stanton in a ceremony at Goodooga Public School.

RFS Region West Manager, Chief Supt Dominic Lane, and RFS Barwon Darling Zone Manager, Supt Cecil Miller, attended the handover which took place in front of more than 50 local school children, residents and RFS firefighters.

**Goodooga Rural Fire Brigade members with their new Cat 7. Photo by Rebel Talbert.**



### DID YOU ASK VOLUNTEERS WHAT THEY THOUGHT?

We consulted with volunteers, we also analysed the fault and accident reporting systems, and we held discussions at many field days. Submissions and discussions from volunteers were reviewed, and we made personal contact with volunteers. We assessed the findings from a personal perspective through our role as a RFS volunteers.

### WHAT ARE YOU HOPING FOR?

The best outcome would be to assess the risk associated with all the existing PCs and implement any necessary physical or usage modifications. We need to find a suitable vehicle for future purchases which will meet all of the RFS requirements at a reasonable cost - this is probably not possible as there is not one suitable vehicle available which meets all or even most of the requirements.

### WHEN WILL YOU ANNOUNCE THE FINAL CHOICE OF VEHICLES?

The RFS circular was issued in August (available from district offices). This includes details of the vehicles on the market which could be considered for the RFS PC role. As there is no perfect vehicle, the end user will have to pick which vehicle best meets their needs. The list of vehicles will be regularly reviewed by Engineering and Fleet as models and availability change.

### DOES THE PROJECT INVOLVE WITHDRAWING SOME TROOPIES FROM THE FIELD?

It should not be necessary to withdraw troopies from the field, but in some cases usage will have

# OPERATIONS



## STRIKE TEAM COMPOSITION AND RESPONSE

The deployment of out-of-area firefighting resources, such as Strike Teams, Task Forces and Response Teams, is organised using RFS State Assistance Procedures.

These procedures aim to ensure the right resources are sent as a priority to areas of need, while also ensuring that sufficient resources remain in the supplying district.

The State Assistance Plan was implemented in January 1999 and has recently been reviewed and replaced with the more user-friendly State Assistance Procedures which contain the associated request and dispatch forms.

Generally, the request for assistance will come from the Incident Controller and will be forwarded through the Major Incident Coordinator (MIC) situated at State Operations or the Region. This request then goes to the District/Team/Zone supplying the resource.

When extreme fire weather days are forecast, State Operations analyses the potential of all reported bushfires and may, in discussion with Incident Controllers, deploy Strike Teams and aircraft.

During the early stages of an incident the Incident Management Team (IMT), at the local Incident Control Centre is often fully occupied reacting to the incident and may not be considering resource requirements 12 to 24 hours ahead.

MIC teams are often better able to concentrate on future resource requirements.

Prior to each fire season the Regional Operations Officer in each Region plans with their Districts/Teams/Zones for a number of Strike Teams to be identified.

Consideration is given to which Category of tankers could be made available, whether crews could be available at short notice, the crew's area of expertise (whether grassland, bush or urban interface), the various deployment periods, the location of the resources to be assembled, assembly time, etc.

On extreme fire weather days or on Total Fire Ban days, when there is significant risk, or in urban interface areas, Districts/Teams/Zones are encouraged to assemble a small strike team to provide an initial weight of attack to any reported fire so that knock down can be achieved while the fire remains manageable.

## STRIKE TEAMS

A Strike Team is a number of firefighting appliances (usually made up of five units) that have an established minimum number of personnel. Strike teams always have a leader in a separate vehicle and a common communication system.

Out of area Strike Teams should, where possible, be kept together or at least in the same vicinity.

## Strike Team Leader (STL)

- > The STL should be crew leader qualified as a minimum, which includes Captains and Deputy Captains
- > The STL is located in the field and responsible for up to five appliances
- > The STL (in a large or very large incident, which has divisions/sectors) is not a Sector Commander, but is there purely to ensure the Strike Team is suitably tasked and is also responsible for their welfare
- > The STL has a separate vehicle, may have a driver/offsider and reports direct to the Response Team Coordinator.

Note: If a Strike Team is responded to a "running incident" the STL may be tasked by the Incident Controller to "act at will" in a particular area to protect persons from injury or death and protect property from damage by fire in which case the STL becomes the Operational Officer for the appliances under his/her direct control.

## Collective Naming Convention

The name of a Strike Team or Task Force will be based on the following information:

- > The NSW Region, State or Country supplying the team.
- > A number allocated by the MIC or Region (to avoid duplication).
- > A letter of the phonetic alphabet for each crew rotation, for instance Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, Delta.
- > e.g. A Strike Team from RFS Region East with their first relief crew would be: EAST 14 A



*Strike Team comprising three Cat 1 and two Cat 7 tankers with the Strike Team Leader briefing the crews.*



NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

# FIREGROUND

**INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAM**

- Incident Controller
- Operations Officer
- Planning Officer
- Logistics Officer
- Staging Area
- North Division
  - Sector A
  - Sector B
  - Sector C
- Air Operations
- South Division
  - Sector Z
  - Sector Y
  - Sector X
    - Strike Team
    - Task Force
    - Appliances

Agency	Strike Team / Task Force Name:		
RFS	NORTH 12A		
	HHHL		
<input type="checkbox"/> REQ	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORG		
DURATION OF DEPLOYMENT			
2 DAY (WEEKEND)	3 DAY		
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
INSTANT RESPONSE <input type="checkbox"/>			
COMMS IN TRANSIT CHANNEL NO: 10			
AT ACCIDENT CHANNEL NO: 50			
RESPONSE TEAM COORDINATOR: BRIAN DAY			
MOBILE NO: 04-99 219 093			
Strike Team Leader: FRANK ZAMBELLI			
Mobile No: 04-99 623 517			
Resource Name	Vehicle Type (see below)		
STL/TF Leader	Command		
MAIN ARM 1A	CAT 1		
BURRINGBAH 1A	CAT 1		
MURWILLUMBAH 1A	CAT 1		
UKI 7A	CAT 7		
KUNGHUR 7A	CAT 7		
DTG Arrived	DTG Released		
24 1200			
TASK Location / DTG 24 14:00 DEC 02			
BURRINYAH DRIVE			
STATUS STAGING AREA			
ER:	S/O		
AVL: 24 1200	U/S		
ALC:			
Vehicle Type			
Cat 1	AWD	Heavy	3001-4000 litre
Cat 2	AWD	Medium	1601-3000 litre
Cat 7	AWD	Light	601-1500 litre
Cat 9	AWD	Map Up	350-800 litre
PC	AWD	Personal Transport	
AUG 2005			

**T Card**  
 • Strike Team/Task Force T cards to be filled out by ST/TF Leader

The official RFS version of a Strike Team/Task Force T Card which will gradually replace old stock

# NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE ORGANISATION



**Firefighter and Equipment**

- Full bushfire fighting Personal Protective Equipment
- Drink bottle
- Authority card
- Wet weather gear
- Medication and sunscreen
- Sleeping bag or swag
- Casual clothes
- Personal requirements

**Tanker and Equipment**

- Single resource T Cards
- Sufficient non-perishable field rations and drinking water for the crew for 24 hours
- An esky

Name: <b>MAIN ARM IA</b>		<b>H</b>
Vehicle Category/Type:		
CABA Sets: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ISUZU CAT 1		
<input type="checkbox"/> REG <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORG <input type="checkbox"/> SB STRIKE TEAM/TASK FORCE ID: <b>NORTH 12A</b> DURATION OF DEPLOYMENT: INSTANT RESPONSE <input type="checkbox"/> 2 DAY (WEEKEND) <input type="checkbox"/> 3 DAY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 5 DAY <input type="checkbox"/> PMP <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GRN <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UHFCB <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FIREGROUND <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER: MOBILE NO.: <b>0499 655 668</b> ROOF ID No. <b>7812</b>		
Rank	Name	Skills
OIC CAPT	<b>BOB GRAHAM</b>	GL/VF
Contact No.	<b>0499 655 668</b>	
DC	<b>TODD FROST</b>	CL/VF
FF	<b>KEVIN DAY</b>	CSO
FF	<b>STEPHANIE LITTLE</b>	SFA
FF	<b>PETER SMITH</b>	BF
FF	<b>RACHEL JONES</b>	BF
DTG Arrived: <b>24 1200</b> DTG Released:		
TASK Location/DTG: <b>24 14-00 DEC 02</b>		
STATUS: <b>BURRINGBAR DRIVE STAGING AREA</b>		
E/R	S/D	
AVL: <b>24 1200</b>	U/S:	
ALC:		
SKILLS		
Basic Firefighter	BF	Senior first Aider SFA
Advanced Firefighter	AF	Rural Fire Driver RFD
Village Firefighter	VF	Chain Saw Operator CSO
Crew Leader	CL	Breathing Apparatus Operator BAO
Group Leader	GL	Remote Area Firefighter RAF
ALJC 2005		

**T Card**

- Single resource T cards to be filled out and handed to Strike Team Leader

The official RFS version of a Single Resource T Card which will gradually replace old stock

## TASK FORCES

A Task Force is a combination of units (usually five) or equipment assembled for a specific purpose or task, i.e. bulk water carriers, heavy plant to establish a control line, plant and hand tools to clear around a significant asset, remote area firefighting teams, chainsaw crews, etc.

Task Forces always have a leader in a separate vehicle and a common communications system.

### Task Force Leader (TFL)

- > A TFL is a competent supervisor for the purpose or task
- > The TFL is located in the field and is responsible for the five units and/or equipment under his/her control
- > The TFL is there to lead the Task Force, ensure that the units and/or equipment are suitably tasked, ensure that the purpose or task is appropriately undertaken and is also responsible for the welfare of task force members
- > The TFL has a separate vehicle, may have a driver/offsider and reports direct to the Response Team Coordinator.

## RESPONSE TEAM

A Response Team is one or more Strike Teams and/or Task Forces.

### Response Team Coordinator (RTC)

- > The RTC is usually a salaried staff member
- > The RTC is located in the Incident Control Centre as part of the IMT and is responsible for the tracking and welfare of up to five Strike Teams/Task Forces and for ensuring that they are suitably tasked.

Note: If it is a 24 hour operation, then a second salaried staff member is required as a Deputy RTC.

## PRE DEPLOYMENT BRIEFING

Prior to a team's departure from its District/Team/Zone, a briefing should be held advising team members of the details of the proposed deployment. A "Tasking Advice" should be provided. This should have the latest Fire Map and SitRep of the incident attached if available.

When you are fully aware of what is expected, you must confirm that you wish to proceed or withdraw.

The advice includes the incident name, location, contact and communication details, Strike Team or Task Force name, tasking, duration of response, travel arrangements, en-route logistics and accommodation.

Tasking will be classified as "Standby" or "Active". "Standby" may be in your own District/Team/Zone or at the Incident Staging Area and "Active" will be active firefighting, mopping up, patrolling etc.

The duration of the deployment has recently been reviewed and may be:

- > Instant response – single shift (max. 12 hrs including travel)
- > Two day response weekends only (21.00 Friday – 22.00 Sunday including travel – day or night shift)
- > Three day response (including travel – day or night shift)
- > Five day response (including travel – day or night shift).

Note: Travel time means travel from and back to your District/Team/Zone staging area.

**Chief Superintendent,**  
**Alan Brinkworth**  
**Manager Operations,**  
**Policy and Standards**

## EN-ROUTE

Any problems en-route, including breakdowns, will be managed by the STL through their supplying Regional contact, who will arrange for assistance to be provided by the District/Team/Zone through which they are travelling.

If the Strike Team comes across an emergency incident, the STL will be the Incident Controller, will notify the emergency services via triple zero and will render assistance as required until local resources arrive when control will be handed over and the Strike Team will resume their journey.

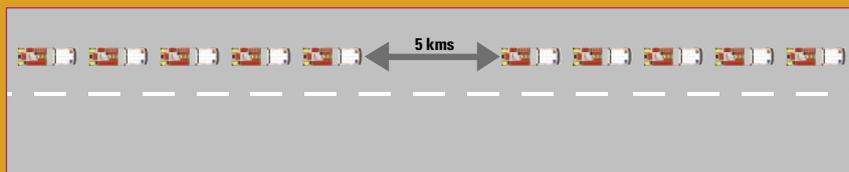
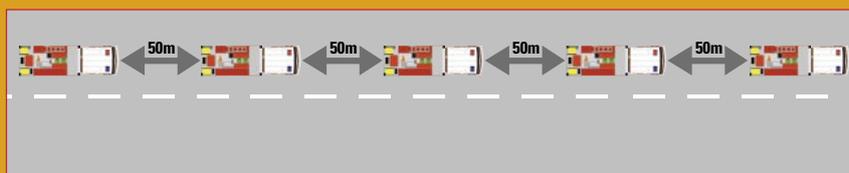
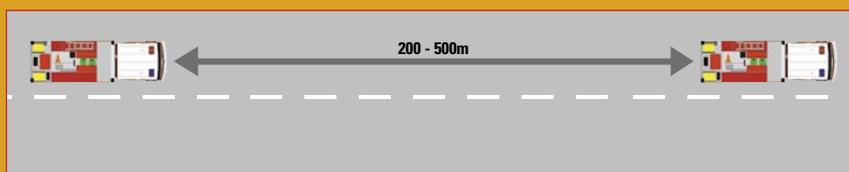
If a service vehicle is involved in an MVA, the STL will manage the incident, will, if necessary, notify the emergency services via triple zero and will render assistance as required. If only minor damage has occurred particulars must be exchanged before the Strike Team resumes their journey. If an injury requiring treatment by a health professional or substantial damage has occurred the driver, crew and appliance are to remain. The STL will, as noted above, seek local assistance through their Regional contact and if instructed will resume their journey with the remaining Strike Team appliances.

### Driving

- > Vehicle Checking Stations
- > All vehicles over 4.5 tonnes to enter vehicle checking stations (except when responding)
- > Drivers log books
- > Drivers of "Government Vehicles" are exempt from maintaining a "National Drivers Log Book"

### Convoy Driving Briefing

- > Departure time
- > Destination
- > Estimated time of arrival
- > Route
  - Stopping points and length of stops
  - Driver changeover
  - Meals
  - Fuel
- > Order of vehicles
- > Stick to that order
- > Communication channel
- > Use of lights and sirens
- > Respond or proceed



## SPACING OF CONVOY VEHICLES

NOTE: Illustrations not to scale

Top: 200-500m on open road

Middle: 50m in built up or urban areas

Bottom: 5km between strike teams





# HUNT FOR GAMES GOLD

The RFS was represented by members of Region West staff at the Australian New Zealand Police and Emergency Service Games held in Adelaide from 9-16 April 2005.

Superintendent Chris Favelle, Cobar-based Team Leader for RFS Far West, competed not only in the indoor rowing but also backed up the next day in the 5kms cross country event.

Chris recorded a personal best time for the 1000m rowing and completed the cross country in good time

Gold Medal hopeful, Inspector Robyn Martin, Community Safety Officer for the Far West Team, had to withdraw due to a tennis injury sustained after the Region West Exercise the week earlier.

Superintendent David Hagarty, Operations and Learning and Development Officer for the Barwon Darling Zone based in Brewarrina, competed in the Clay Target Shooting Competition.

David started well but lost a shoot off for the bronze medal for C Grade in the 25 target Skeet. David then lost another shoot off for C Grade in the 25 target Sporting Clays to claim the Bronze medal. David in his main events of Trap didn't shoot too well and finished out of medal contention.

In 2007, the World Police and Fire Games will be held in Adelaide from 16-25 March.



For more information visit the website [www.wpfg2007.com](http://www.wpfg2007.com). Although the website is currently under construction it is possible to register an expression of interest.

Come on you budding Olympians – forget Bronze and Silver – let's go for Service Gold next year!!

**Below: Chris Favelle completing the 5km Cross Country**

**Left: David with his bronze medal**



## STATEWIDE OPEN DAY 8 OCTOBER

More than 400 Rural Fire Brigade Stations across NSW will open their doors to the public on Saturday, 8 October 2005 in the second annual RFS state-wide open day.

The RFS Open Day will be a great opportunity for communities around the state to meet their local volunteers and look through brigade stations and inspect fire tankers and equipment.

This is the second annual state-wide RFS Open Day. It aims to increase the profile of RFS volunteers, what they do and how they do it 24 hours a day, seven days a week, all year round.

It is also an excellent time for people to learn more about what they can do to protect their home and property in the event of fire.

The RFS Open Day would not be possible without the support of Chubb, who have helped us provide resources to all of the participating brigades.



Chubb Fire and Chubb Security - protection for your local community

## OPEN DAY

NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

...for our community

Chubb is proud to be the official sponsor of the 2005 RFS Open Day. Chubb's long relationship with the RFS reflects its commitment to providing fire and security protection for local communities, and its support for the volunteers who serve these communities.

Brigades have organised a range of activities and demonstrations that will be of interest to all the family and everyone is invited to come along.

For more information on what brigades will be open see the RFS website at [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au), or contact your local Fire Control Centre.



# AUDITS

## AUDITING EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE ASSISTS FIREFIGHTER SAFETY

A new auditing program will help ensure the RFS is meeting the needs of volunteers and the community.

An example of how the Service Audit Framework can affect firefighter safety is through its ability to check whether equipment maintenance programs are being conducted.

The RFS has a legal obligation and moral responsibility to ensure the efficiency, effectiveness and safety of firefighters. This, in part, is achieved by ensuring all equipment is maintained in a serviceable condition.

The RFS has set in place Service Standard 5.3.1 Equipment Maintenance to ensure we meet our legal and organisational requirements to achieve this.

The RFS may choose to conduct an audit in a particular District/Zone/Team to ensure the processes and programs within this Service Standard are being implemented.

An auditor will need to verify the 'who, what, when, where, how' of maintaining RFS equipment.

An audit may cover all or some aspects of equipment maintenance from verifying the conduct of annual inspections at District/Zone/Team level to ensuring use of 'defect' or 'unserviceable tags' at Brigade level (as outlined within the Service Standard and the accompanying RFS Equipment Officers Handbook).

An audit is an 'evidentiary' process. Auditors will need to see evidence that actions have been carried out. Using the equipment maintenance example, an auditor would verify that the annual inspection occurred.

This could be by sighting a completed annual inspection checklist, or diary appointments of the Brigade inspection plus seeing appropriate maintenance being undertaken at the Brigade station through maintenance schedules, maintenance logs and requests for new or repair of equipment.

An auditor is required to objectively evaluate or simply make a judgement regarding the adequacy of the evidence supplied. Where the evidence is sufficient, this is duly noted.

However, where the evidence is not available or is insufficient, this will result in a Corrective Action Request (CAR) being raised. The CAR will then give the District/Zone time to implement actions to fix any identified issues to ensure the requirements outlined within the Service Standard can be met.

In addition, the audit process will allow the Service to objectively identify areas for improvement, whether that be development or review of policy documentation, resourcing issues, training issues etc. This information is also captured and forms the basis for future business planning and projects/initiatives.

Overall, the result is continual improvement of the organisation, safer volunteer firefighters and better service for the community.



*Grass Wold Rural Fire Brigade, Hawkesbury district, conducted a hazard reduction at Yarramundi on 30 April 2005. Photo by Karen Gorrie.*



# AUDITS

## 'ARE YOU BEING SERVED?' SERVICE AUDITS AND THE COMMUNITY

The RFS has introduced an audit program to ensure the range of fire and emergency services we provide to communities meets the needs of the people of NSW and volunteers.

The audit enables the RFS to ask and answer several questions. 'Are we doing what we say we are doing?' 'How well are we doing it?' And 'can we improve?'

The Service Audit Framework will look at all RFS business to ensure that as we grow and mature as an organisation, we continually monitor our performance, achieve what we set out to achieve, comply with our legal and organisational obligations, reduce our exposure to business risks as well as identify ways in which we can improve our operations

The framework provides a coordinated, systematic and cost effective approach to the management and conduct of internal systems audits

The framework has been rolled out as a project throughout this year and will take a few years to implement fully.

The process is coordinated by the Audit Coordination Group (ACG), a sub-committee of the Corporate Executive Group, and consisting of Executive Directors, functional area managers and regional representatives.

Personnel are being selected via nomination and expression of interest selection to conduct the audits in RFS offices across the State. The auditors will hold appropriate functional or operational knowledge as well as being trained in auditing methods and processes.

### WHAT IS AN AUDIT?

An 'audit' is a systematic and independent process for examining audit evidence to objectively determine the extent of the management systems implementation in accordance with planned arrangements and whether this is being done effectively.

### WHAT IS BEING AUDITED?

The RFS's management system, as outlined within the Service Delivery Plans, Service Agreements, Standards, Policies and Standard Operating Procedures form the basis of the audits. However, an audit may involve practically any aspect of our working environment for the purpose of ascertaining compliance, performance, effectiveness and efficiency in our operations.

### WHEN WILL I BE AUDITED?

An Annual Audit Plan and Schedule has been developed. It is intended that every District/Zone/Team will be audited, at a minimum, once per year for at least one functional area (Management, Operations, Community Safety and Learning and Development) against identified audit priorities. A brigade will become involved in an audit if it is affected by the management system being investigated. See the case study on auditing Equipment Maintenance Service Standard on page 26 to see how a Brigade may become involved.

### HOW WILL AUDITS BE CONDUCTED?

Audits may be conducted on-site at the District Office, Regional Office, Headquarters and any Brigade Station for which the audit is related. Audits may also be in the form of a desk top audit, where assessment is conducted by an auditor (from outside the area being audited) against relevant, objective, verifiable evidence supplied by the auditee. Formal guided self-audits are also available through the use of checklists/questionnaires. Where self-audits are utilised they can be subject to verification and validation by an auditor, usually by on-site or desk-top audits.

### HOW DOES THIS AFFECT ME?

As a volunteer or an employee, every aspect of our work should be conducted in accordance with the organisation's system of management i.e., Service planning documents, agreements, standards, policy or standard operating procedures. The audits focus on 'ground truthing' how well we apply those procedures and/or how well we achieve our desired goals in relation to Service plans and agreements.

Therefore, as a staff member or volunteer you may be requested to participate in or provide working documentation to support the audit process. Alternatively, you may be involved in 'fixing' any identified issues as a result of an audit.

### WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE?

For further information in relation to the Service Audit Framework, details are available within the 'Projects' section on the RFS website [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au). Alternatively you can contact Kerri Grott, Audit Systems Officer (02) 8741 5150 or via e-mail [kerri.grott@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:kerri.grott@rfs.nsw.gov.au).

*Eight firefighters from Warringah Rural Fire District undertook Compressed Air Breathing Apparatus training at Cessnock hot fire centre on 13 August with the support of 12 personnel. Photo by Chief Supt Alan Brinkworth.*



## PROGRAM ADDRESSES THE PROBLEM

Rural addressing is a simple and straightforward way to locate and identify rural properties.

It is administered by local councils with support from the Department of Lands.

The system assigns a number to a property according to set rules, defined under an Australian Standard.

A street number is determined by the distance of a property from the entrance of the nominated start of the road.

So a property located at 2.02 Jennings Rd would be 2.02km from the start of the road.

This is of great benefit to emergency services as finding properties in rural areas often relies on local knowledge and vague descriptions such as "just past the creek" or "after the last mail box".

**This can cause life threatening delays for emergency services unable to find these properties**

The rural addressing system provides a standardised way of locating rural properties, which is accurate and easy to understand.

Rural addressing also benefits the delivery of goods or services to a property, as they are easy to find. This saves time and money.

Nearly seventy per cent of councils have successfully completed rural addressing.

The Department of Lands expects to provide support for 29 councils to develop rural addressing in 2005-2006 and a further 23 councils in 2006-2007.

*Story by Matt Schroder*

## KERB NUMBERING BOOSTS BRIGADE PROFILE

It is a problem that often confronts and frustrates emergency services – how to find that important address when there is no clear house number and you don't know whether you are moving towards or away from a burning kitchen, or child with breathing difficulties.

The residents of the village of Blackhead, south of Taree, do not have home mail delivery service.

Instead, they collect their mail at the local post office. This means that in a village of almost 300 households, there are no letterboxes.

Emergency personnel are forced to rely on small, inadequate, and often missing, numbers on front or side doors.

Members of the local Rural Fire Brigade at Diamond Beach recognised the dangers inherent in inadequate house identification and took action.

In conjunction with the Hallidays Point Lions Club and the Hallidays Point Chamber of Commerce and Tourism, they began a program of kerb numbering throughout their area. Blackhead and other villages and rural residential sections of their district were targeted.

"From the brigade's point of view, the project has many benefits," said Captain Mike Donohoe.

"We are seen out in the community working with other organisations, including our newly formed brigade support group.

"The kerb numbering project has proved to be a cheap and effective investment in both community safety and community education. People often stop and have a chat with the painting team, asking questions about fire safety which are then referred to brigade members.

"It's great to drive around our area and see all the crisply painted and highly visible numbers. At a cost of about \$1 per house, I would say that this has been a project well worth doing, and I would recommend it to other brigades."

Armed with the permission of Greater Taree City Council and a map showing the correct house numbers, a small but dedicated group began the task.

The three stage process involved: cleaning the kerb, brushing on a panel of bright blue paint on either side of the driveway, spraying on a white number.

A flyer explaining the program was then slipped under the front door (remember, no letterboxes!) and the team is away.

The flyer clearly explains that the kerb numbering is a free community project but that donations are always welcome.

Working for only a few hours once a week, the group made rapid progress, completing 300 residences within a month.

The program has been very well received, generating plenty of positive feedback and compliments for the organisations involved.

The Diamond Beach/Red Head Brigade benefited by an increased profile in the community, which also assisted community education objectives. And, of course, the brigade and other emergency services will have much less trouble finding addresses.

*Story by Robyn King, Diamond/Red Head Rural Fire Brigade*

*Below: Deputy Captain Robyn King and Captain Mike Donohoe outside the clearly and brightly identified station in Diamond Beach. Photo by Gwenda Duncan.*

*Bottom: Brigade members Jim Wootton and Alan Kempe painting a blue panel on a kerb in Panorama Dr. Photo by Gwenda Duncan.*





## WAY OUT WEST

The RFS Far West Team looks after a big area; 200,000 sq km of western NSW stretching south from Euabalong on the Lachlan River, east to Cobar, north to the Queensland border and west to the South Australian border.

Silverton Rural Fire Brigade is an active village brigade with a voracious appetite for training

In the past 12 months, they have completed Basic Firefighter, Village Firefighter and Senior First Aid. They are also our most westerly brigade, situated on the edge of the spectacular Mundi Mundi Plains not far from the South Australian border.

Silverton is famous for its historic stone buildings and also as the location of some famous movies; Mad Max, A Town Like Alice, Dirty Deeds and Priscilla, Queen of the Desert are just some of the many movies and commercials filmed there.

The Captain of Silverton RFB is the genial Chris Fraser, publican of the world famous Silverton Hotel. In his spare time, Chris likes to race motorbikes, and this comes in handy when the brigade requires a fast response vehicle!

The instructors at the RFS courses always go home with wonderful stories to tell, after experiencing the joy of instructing in beautiful old historic buildings, the legendary hospitality of the locals; and their amazement of seeing camels and donkeys wander down the main street.

Training also becomes an adventure when busloads of tourists think that they have wandered across the new location for "Fireflies"!

**Story and photos by Robyn Martin and Inspector Bill Britt, RFS Far West Team**

*Right: Silverton Rural Fire Brigade training with their NSW Fire Brigades counterparts.*

*Below: Two-wheeled response!*

*Inset: Silverton RFB members practice hose drills.*



# FASCINATED BY FIRE

## INTERVIEW WITH AUTHORISED FIRE INVESTIGATOR INSPECTOR MARTY THICK

When Marty Thick moved from Sutherland to Urunga in Bellingen Shire in 1989, the RFS beckoned. He has since moved through the ranks and into staff positions (currently Community Safety Officer with RFS Namoi Gwydir Team) as well as taking on the role of Authorised Fire Investigator (AFI).

### WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO BECOME A VOLUNTEER WITH THE RFS?

My family and I moved to Urunga in 1989, from the Sutherland Shire. I never really got the chance to join the RFS before then so I thought I'd give it a go. I was tossing up between the RFS and the VRA but the brigade was looking for members and here I am.

### WHERE WERE YOU WORKING AT THE TIME WHEN YOU FIRST JOINED, AND HOW DID YOU FIT YOUR VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES IN AROUND THIS?

I was driving a crane truck at my brother's truss and timber plant. I also did the plant maintenance as I'm an electrician by trade. I needed a break from my trade and driving a truck in the country was very enjoyable. My brother was previously the Senior Deputy Captain of the brigade, so he was quite flexible most times.

### IN 1994 YOU WERE PROMOTED TO BRIGADE CAPTAIN THEN FOUR YEARS LATER TO GROUP CAPTAIN. YOU WERE OBVIOUSLY A WELL RESPECTED VOLUNTEER WITHIN THE AREA. WHAT DO YOU THINK MAKES A GOOD VOLUNTEER LEADER IN THE RFS?

The most important thing is to lead by example. I would never give my crew members a directive that I wouldn't or couldn't do myself. If we responded to an incident and we were light on firefighters I would get in there and work with them, not stand back and bark orders. I felt good when we arrived back from an incident, the task complete and everyone safe and well. We always debriefed after every incident.

All firefighters have some weakness or limitation. By recognising them and helping them to enhance their skills they, and the brigade, will benefit greatly.

If there are clear and proper channels of communication and everyone follows the chain of command, a lot of problems that have been caused by the distortion of information can be avoided.

I was very lucky as a crew leader because I had a very good crew, including my wife, daughter and son who were all members of the brigade and were always there to support to me.

As a brigade we did a lot of extra work for the community by assisting schools, the Surf Club

and local businesses. As a result of this, we were well respected by the community. They were great supporters of the brigade and were only too happy to assist with our fundraising activities, particularly when the Regional Championships were held in Urunga in 1998.

### IN 2003 YOU JOINED THE SALARIED RANKS. WAS IT DISAPPOINTING FOR YOU TO HAVE TO GIVE UP YOUR VOLUNTEER POSITION, OR WAS IT MORE OF A NATURAL PROGRESSION?

I wasn't so much disappointed as I was sad because my wife and I had to move away from the kids. Being a very close family, it made this a very difficult time. I had 14 terrific years with the brigade but I wanted to climb the ladder. I could think of nothing better than to earn a living doing what I genuinely love to do.

I'd be lying if I said I didn't miss the adrenalin rush and being in the action but running an incident from the other end of the microphone is also very rewarding.

### IN 2004 YOU COMPLETED THE WILDFIRE INVESTIGATION COURSE. WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO BECOME AN AUTHORISED FIRE INVESTIGATOR (AFI)?

I attended hundreds of incidents as a firefighter and crew or group leader. When I arrived back at base the incident was finished as far as I was concerned. One particular fire I was Incident Controller on required fire investigation. I was canvassed by the Investigator and at the time I thought this could open up a whole new world for me, post incident. I will never look at a fire the same way again since becoming an AFI.

### WHAT MAKES YOU CONTINUE TO BE A FIRE INVESTIGATOR WHEN YOU ARE NOT REMUNERATED FOR YOUR ROLE?

Even though I have only been in fire investigation for a short period of time, I am fascinated by what is waiting for me when I attend a fire to be investigated. It is a worthy challenge to find and read the indicators and a real sense of achievement if/when I find the area of origin and a cause.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE BIGGEST MISCONCEPTION WITH REGARDS TO FIRE INVESTIGATION?

We are not Gil Grissom's (from CSI)! Seriously though, I think some people have the opinion that because fire investigation is involved there must have been foul play involved.

### IF YOU COULD TELL PEOPLE ONE (OR MORE) THING ABOUT FIRE INVESTIGATION, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

It is very interesting and rewarding work. Even though the movie "Backdraft" was a little over the top, fire can "talk". The indicators are there, it's just a matter of finding and interpreting them.

### WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO SOMEONE (VOLUNTEER OR SALARIED) WHO IS INTERESTED IN BECOMING A FIRE INVESTIGATOR?

If it is what you want to do, go ahead. You won't be bored.

### HOW DO YOU MANAGE THE WORKLOAD BETWEEN YOUR SUBSTANTIVE POSITION AND YOUR DUTIES AS A FIRE INVESTIGATOR?

I haven't had any problems so far and my Team Manager, Michael Brooks, is very supportive of my role in fire investigation.

### WHAT ARE SOME OF THE MESSAGES YOU WOULD LIKE TO GIVE LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS TO REDUCE THE INCIDENCE OF FIRE IN YOUR AREA?

The biggest message I would give is not to be complacent. A lot of people still think they will never be affected by fire and don't take the necessary precautions, which are very simple and could save your home and your family.

I also find it very difficult to comprehend that with all the deliberately lit fires we respond to, there are no witnesses. We must encourage the community to get rid of the 'I don't want to get involved' attitude and report offenders so they can be dealt with by the legal system.

### HOW HAS YOUR ROLE AS A FIRE INVESTIGATOR INFLUENCED YOUR ROLE AS A COMMUNITY SAFETY OFFICER AND VICE VERSA?

I spend a fair bit of my time talking to people about fire safety and awareness. Fire investigation identifies fire causes. Community safety targets fire prevention. The two go together. The more fire prevention messages we get out there, hopefully there will be fewer fires to investigate. Identifying causes can help us to target certain areas in our fire prevention strategies.

### HOW DO YOU FIND PEOPLE RESPOND TO YOU WHEN YOU TELL THEM YOU ARE A FIRE INVESTIGATOR?

In the Service my peers are full of encouragement. Out of the Service my family and friends say, "Are you fair dinkum? How did you get into that? What does it involve?" It's a great topic for conversation.

### WITH REGARDS TO FIRE INVESTIGATION, DO YOU THINK THERE ARE ANY AREAS IN WHICH THE RFS CAN IMPROVE, IN THE WAY OF TRAINING, EQUIPMENT, SUPPORT FROM THE FIU OR OTHER OFFICES?

It's a bit difficult to say at this early stage. I would like to attend a refresher workshop every twelve months and attend a regional fire investigation forum after the fire season to listen to other fire investigators, what they have achieved, problems encountered, etc.

### AS A FIRE INVESTIGATOR, DO YOU THINK THERE ARE HOLES IN THE CURRENT RESEARCH/KNOWLEDGE THAT WE HAVE? IF SO, WHAT DO YOU THINK THEY ARE AND HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE THEM FILLED?

We've had a lot of header fires during harvest out here. Educating the operators on farming fire prevention helps but I think the manufacturers should devise some means of discharging the build up of static electricity during operation. As I previously mentioned, a lot of fires are deliberately lit but I don't know whether we will ever make an impact unless we can persuade people to report the offenders.

# INVESTIGATION

Our fire season can run for 9 or 10 months out here. Considering the number of legal fires that are lit (approximately 1800 during the Bush Fire Danger Period) we have very few escapes. Therefore, we must be doing something right!

**WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE CHALLENGES THAT ARE FACING FIRE INVESTIGATION IN REGION NORTH AND FOR THE SERVICE AS A WHOLE?**

There probably needs to be more Authorised Fire Investigators. Region North is a big area to cover and if we have a bad fire season and there are plenty of fires to investigate, we will be stretched.

The Region North Exercise was a great way to make our crews more aware of fire investigation and the impact they can have on whether an investigation is successful or not. We need to keep promoting this. As crew members told me after the exercise, "More, please!"

**CAN YOU SEE A TIME WHEN YOU WILL SLOW DOWN AND NO LONGER PARTICIPATE IN FIRE INVESTIGATION?**

When I win Lotto or retire. I know which one will come first.

*Right: Inspector Marty Thick enjoys investigating the origin and cause of fires.*



## INVITATION TO JUNIOR FIREFIGHTING COMPETITION

St Paul's Cadet Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) from RFS Cumberland Zone will be hosting its second annual junior firefighting competition on Saturday 29 October 2005.

The competition will be held at St Paul's Grammar School located at Cranebrook, 5km north of Penrith.

All competitors must be brigade members and be under 16 years of age on the day of the competition. Last year's competition involved brigades from as far afield as Tumut.

This year the events program includes:

**FOR TEAMS OF FIVE JUNIORS:**

- > Category 1 tanker
- > Category 7 tanker
- > Remote area firefighting
- > Junior challenge

**FOR TEAMS OF TWO JUNIORS IN TWO AGE DIVISIONS**

(under 14 years and under 16 years):

- > Two person category 9 tanker
- > Two person hose attack
- > Two person portable pump event
- > Two person handtool event

Brigades from throughout NSW are invited to compete. There will be a limit of 20 teams of five and 30 teams of two.

Brigades who are interested in competing should contact Anthony Head, Cadet Coordinator of St Paul's Cadet RFB, as soon as possible to obtain and information pack and registration form. Telephone (02) 47775013 during business hours or email [anthony.head@stpauls.nsw.edu.au](mailto:anthony.head@stpauls.nsw.edu.au).

*Story by Anthony Head, Cadet Coordinator of St Paul's Cadet RFB.*

*Cadets display their skills during the junior firefighting competition at St Pauls.*



# NEW SKILLS HELP KOREANS DETERMINE FIRE CAUSE

Concerned that deliberate fire-lighting was the cause of South Korea's recent damaging fire season, South Korean forestry representatives sought RFS expertise in fire investigation.

Korea's bushfire issues are similar to Australia, given the region is very mountainous, covered in thick vegetation and prone to very high temperatures and strong winds during summer.

Officers from the South Korea Forestry Service believe many of their fires were deliberately lit – but needed further investigation skills to determine fire origin and cause to confirm this.

Fifteen representatives of the Korea Forest Service and the Korea Forest Conservation Movement received RFS wildfire investigation training through the RFS Fire Investigation Unit (FIU) in August.

The personnel were put through the intensive RFS Wildfire Investigation Course. This internationally recognised course was developed by members of the US based National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG), of which the RFS is a member.

RFS fire investigation personnel used their extensive knowledge and experience to train the South Koreans in fire investigation. The course was run by Insp. Neale Ray, Fire Investigation Coordinator, Region East and Insp. David Templeton, Authorised Fire Investigator, and Learning & Development Officer for the Hunter Team.

Insp. Justin Back, Authorised Fire Investigator and Community Safety Officer, Cumberland Zone, and Supt. Richard Woods, Manager RFS FIU also provided assistance during the assessment component of the course.

The course involved intensive theory sessions, to give personnel a thorough understanding of the science behind fire ignition, fire behaviour and wildfire investigation. This was coupled with intensive practical demonstration and assessment using 10 firegrounds that allowed participants to practice what they learned through the week. The course was structured to ensure participants received both theory and practical instruction every day.

Complications of language and terminology were overcome by the presence of three interpreters for the course duration, which allowed for greater communication and information exchange. The assessment process was also expedited by their presence, allowing one interpreter per five person team.

The personnel investigated wildfires at Bargo and Bulli and were fascinated by the diversity and tenacity of the Australian bush. Although the weather for the week remained fine, they did get to experience a cool southerly change while being assessed, which added to their Australian experience.

All members of the South Korean delegation successfully completed the course. Mr Park Haeng-mo, Head of Delegation, had high praise for the professionalism of the staff and the organisation of the course.

The RFS FIU would like to acknowledge Bargo Rural Fire Brigade (RFB), Bulli RFB, RFS Highlands Team, RFS Illawarra Team, and RFS Macarthur Zone for their assistance in preparing the firegrounds used during the course.

Also, the FIU would like to thank the RFS Macarthur Zone Catering RFB for feeding the troops the entire week. Without the support of these volunteers and staff, this course would not have been viable.

Through the RFS Business Development Unit the RFS is able to work closely with international counterparts, putting them in touch with the organisation's expertise in bushfire management, suppression and investigation. Having the FIU host the Korea Forest Service and the Korea Forest Conservation Movement further strengthened these relationships.

The presence of these officers in NSW highlights the fact that the RFS is a world leader in fire investigation training, collaborating nationally and internationally with industry partners to improve the quality and training of fire investigators.

**By Jen Dainer and Insp Neale Ray, RFS Fire Investigation Unit.**

*Left: Insp. Neale Ray instructs Korean forestry personnel at a fireground.*

*Right Top: Korean forestry personnel tested their new investigation skills at 10 firegrounds.*

*Right Middle: Fifteen Korean forestry representatives are now skilled in wildfire investigation after participating in an RFS course.*

*Rigth Bottom: RFS volunteers helped to train Korean forestry personnel in investigation by assisting at firegrounds, hosting events and catering.*





## BRIGADES SCRAPPING FOR SMORGON DOLLARS

The RFS, together with rural fire agencies in other states, and Smorgon Steel are currently working together to promote the Smorgon Steel Great Scrap Round-Up.

The Round-Up is part of a wide-ranging initiative to clean up scrap metal from rural farms and public land across Australia and to give local brigades a financial helping hand.

The RFS supports the clean up and urged people throughout NSW to take part.

**Brigades can benefit by encouraging their communities to take part**

Smorgons have also been provided with RFS brigade contact details.

More information is available from Smorgon Steel's hotline 1300 669 102 (Monday-Friday 8.30am to 5pm) or by visiting the Smorgon Steel Great Scrap Round-Up web site at [www.scrap.org.au](http://www.scrap.org.au).

Launched in April this year in the Toowoomba, Nowra and Bendigo regions the Round-Up sees Smorgon Steel collecting scrap metal from farms across the width and breadth of rural and regional Australia.

Farmers who pledge their scrap for recycling can nominate their local rural fire brigade to receive \$15 per tonne for every tonne of scrap pledged. The farmers will also be paid fair value for their scrap.

Farmers can also choose to have the entire value of their scrap donated to their local brigade.

The initial response has been overwhelming with more than 3000 calls being received by Smorgon Steel since the April launch. Of these callers over 32 percent indicated their preference to donate the total value of their scrap to their local rural fire brigade.

Lee Kernaghan, Australia's leading country music singer, is the face of the campaign and is encouraging farmers to remove scrap metal. Research undertaken by Solutions Marketing in 2004 suggested that there is 1.5 million tonnes of scrap on broad acre farms around Australia, just waiting to be recycled.

Smorgon Steel Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, Ray Horsburgh, said the company was pleased to be helping local volunteer rural fire brigades.

"The volunteer brigades are the unsung heroes in regional and rural areas," Mr Horsburgh said.

"Every year they protect and assist when the bushfire season occurs. We are very proud to be able to assist them financially with The Smorgon Steel Great Scrap Round-Up as well as remove some of the fire hazards through the Round-Up that can hinder their great work."



*Members of Freemans Reach Rural Fire Brigade with Lee Kernaghan and Smorgons Steel representatives.*

## VOLUNTEERS HOSTED BY MALAYSIAN FIRE AND RESCUE

Three RFS volunteer firefighters travelled to Malaysia in early September to attend the International Structural Fire Fighting Course for Developing Countries hosted by the Malaysian Fire and Rescue Department (BOMBA).

The volunteers are Group Captain Peter Evans Sutherland acting as team leader, Deputy Captain Scott Callan Mulbring Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) Hunter Zone and firefighter Jason Newnes Arcadia RFB, Hornsby.

These participants were chosen following a statewide selection process open to all RFS volunteer members.

**This was the first time that the RFS has sent a delegation solely made up of volunteers to Malaysia to undertake a training course**

The volunteers participated in a wide range of training activities and exercises including high rise firefighting and urban search and rescue.

They shared knowledge with 29 participants from 23 countries. It is believed that the RFS firefighters were the only volunteers taking part in the course.



The course ran for two weeks from 5 to 18 September. The aim of the course was to equip participants with the necessary skills and techniques to undertake structural firefighting.

Even though Australia is a developed country and emergency management is well advanced, the RFS enjoys a special relationship with BOMBA, and takes every opportunity to work together whenever possible. The relationship between the two organisations spans more than 10 years.

The Memorandum of Understanding between the RFS and Malaysia Fire Rescue Department signed in 1999 has seen the RFS work with BOMBA on a number

of projects including a program to assist BOMBA with the development and management of volunteer brigades, a less well accepted concept in Malaysia.

Other projects include officer exchanges and study tours. In the future there is the possibility of Malaysian officers undertaking fire related study at university in Australia.

*Jason Newnes, Scott Callan and Peter Evans undertook a structural firefighting course in Malaysia.*



*"This photo shows that as volunteers, we'll do anything to put a fire out!" said Karen Gorrie from Grose Wold Rural Fire Brigade. Crews from Yarramundi, Grose Wold and Hawkesbury Headquarters attended a fire call to an island in the Hawkesbury River at Yarramundi on 21 August 2005. Crews crossed the river carrying equipment to put the fire out. Photo by Karen Gorrie.*

## VOLUNTEER SURVEY RESULTS

The RFS has now completed the collection of the results from its 2005 Volunteer Survey and received in excess of 3200 responses from across the state

While we are still analysing the results, so far they have shown:

- > The primary reason people volunteer to join the RFS is to assist their community. Other reasons are concern over fires in their local area, closely followed by the influence of friends and family.
- > 17 per cent of the respondents were female and results show the percentage of female members is similar across all of our four regions.
- > 56 per cent of the respondents indicated they spend, on average, more than 11 hours per month involved in RFS activities, highlighting the commitment of our volunteers.
- > Virtually half (49.6 per cent) of the respondents had more than 11 years' experience as a RFS volunteer.

It is planned to conduct this survey every two years to help identify issues raised by volunteers. This information will be used by the RFS in the formulation of its Strategic Plan and the development of specific projects.

Once the analysis of the data has been finalised the results of the survey will be available for the information of our volunteers and community.

## REPORT THAT FAULT!

The fault reporting system is a mechanism that allows the RFS to monitor faults or problems with RFS supplied equipment and to organise an appropriate review of the items supplied through the Equipment Catalogue to districts.

The RFS Technical Committee believes the system is the most valuable way for feedback to be provided to the RFS from volunteers and those that use the equipment.

It should be noted that fault reports are not a forum to suggest design changes. They are only to be used to report equipment supplied that does not meet specifications set by the RFS, or where equipment supplied is in a defective state or fails while in use.

Brigade members should provide as much information as possible on the faulty equipment. This may include photos, any information on the equipment's use i.e. when and where and how often the item has been used and, most importantly, when the equipment was supplied to the brigade.

The district will initially process the fault report and follow a process for the actioning

of the fault report. The RFS has management structures in place to ensure that district staff members are supported in seeking responses from staff at headquarters.

The Technical Committee review the fault report register on a quarterly basis and discuss any issues that may be raised due to identified reports.

It is not the role of the Technical Committee to ensure that individual fault reports are actioned

It is not the role of the Technical Committee to ensure that individual fault reports are actioned, however, you can forward a copy of the report to your local delegate for information.

Some faults that have been identified through the system include the chassis cracks on Cat 1 appliances and poor quality storz spanners. Obviously, issues like these need to be identified so the RFS can take appropriate action.

## CRASH FREE DRIVING COURSE INTRODUCED

Interview with Headquarters  
Learning and Development  
Officer – Brett Storey

### WHAT IS CRASH FREE DRIVING?

Crash Free Driving (CFD) is an awareness based course about how a person perceives their driving ability by comparison to other drivers. The course assists drivers to identify hazards that experience has taught them to disregard or hazards that they perceive not to be a risk. The course is aimed at all levels of driving and is not just for response drivers in tankers but also personal vehicles.

### WHY IS THE RFS INTRODUCING THIS COURSE?

Like many other services and private industry, the RFS has identified that one of the largest areas of risk to personnel is during the time they spend in a motor vehicle. This course is designed to help drivers identify these risks early and adjust driving behaviour to suit the conditions and their driving ability.

The RFS and the Driver Improvement Consultancy (contracted to the RFS) has been developing this course for about six years. The developmental program was released during 2004, the revised program was released in 2005 and the final course will be ready for release to the RFS in 2006.

### WHO HAS ALREADY DONE THE COURSE?

More than 30 participants completed the 2004 program and this year about 80 participants undertook the two day program.

In June this year the first CFD Facilitators program was held at Dubbo Fire Control Centre. Twenty members attended the full week program and are now preparing to assist with delivering the next few courses to develop their skills base.

The delivery methods used in this course are unlike any of the standard RFS courses. This course is all about the cognitive processes and aimed at modifying the behaviour and perception of risk.

### WHAT DO PEOPLE THINK OF THE COURSE?

Most of our personnel are sceptical when they first enter the course, however, this changes very quickly when they are provided with a method by

which they can take back control of the risks. Most participants are surprised that this course does not involve driving a vehicle for the two days and all are looking for the standard advance driver courses on a track or skid pan. It is interesting that research is now showing that these courses may in fact be detrimental to a driver's perception of the hazards, risks and their ability.

### DO YOU THINK THIS WILL CHANGE ATTITUDES?

Many of the participants have identified that they have trouble changing their attitudes but in the longer term I believe this course will change the way we drive. This course actually provides a method to assess our drivers and although attitudes won't change overnight, we expect to see significant changes in the next 10 years.

### WHERE CAN PEOPLE FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION ON THE COURSE?

RFS members can contact Brett Storey from Learning and Development Systems on 02 8741 5555 or [brett.storey@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:brett.storey@rfs.nsw.gov.au) for further information.



## COMMEMORATIVE SERVICE AT MEMORIAL FOR VOLUNTEERS

On 1 January 1999, the Premier announced that a Memorial to honour the emergency services volunteers of NSW, particularly those who lost their lives on duty, was to be established in Sydney's Domain. It was subsequently constructed in the vicinity of Mrs Macquarie's Chair.

On Sunday, 16 October 2005 at 10.30am there will be a commemorative service held at the Memorial and all staff and volunteers are invited to attend

Anyone proposing to be present on that occasion should advise Cassandra Collins at RFS Headquarters, by 30 September 2005. Cassandra can be contacted on 02 8741 5555. Official invitations and circular advice will be distributed.

**The volunteer memorial near Mrs Macquarie's Chair.**



## PROTECTION MEASURES FOR BUILDINGS UNDER REVIEW

The RFS is currently reviewing Planning for Bushfire Protection 2001 (PBP), the document which guides developers, councils and home owners to plan buildings in bushfire prone areas with bushfire safety in mind.

One of the fundamental principles of PBP is to provide for the safety of firefighters during fire events by minimising the impact of bushfire on buildings.

PBP is intended to assist building survival during a bushfire and to provide for the relative safety of members of the community who may be occupying or trying to leave buildings during a bushfire, or those who could assist in defending a property during a bushfire.

It focuses on improving the preparedness and resilience of the community from bushfires through land-use planning and development controls.

When developing land in bushfire prone areas this may include such things as access to water supplies, construction of asset protection zones, siting of dwellings in relation to vegetation, vegetation management, road access and egress, or use of materials and designs for bushfire protection.

The reviewed version, planned to be released later this year, will be updated to include:

- > the latest scientific research and knowledge to mitigate the impact of bushfires on our community
- > flexible options for people to meet bushfire safety requirements
- > new legislation and planning reforms.

A range of stakeholders are involved in the review including:

- > Rural Fire Service Association
- > Planning Institute of Australia
- > Housing Industry Association
- > Urban Development Institute of Australia (NSW)
- > NSW Urban Taskforce
- > Architects Institute
- > Local Government and Shires Associations
- > National Parks and Wildlife Service
- > Nature Conservation Council
- > NSW Fire Brigades
- > Department of Lands
- > Timber Development Association.

Implementation of planning and construction provisions for developments in bushfire prone areas provides the most effective way of minimising the effects of bushfire on a development and the people occupying that development.

While no development in a bushfire prone area can be guaranteed to be entirely safe from bushfire, PBP offers assistance for safer planning and construction.

**For more information or any feedback on PBP you can visit the RFS website; [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au) or email [planning@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:planning@rfs.nsw.gov.au) or telephone 1300 308 781.**

## NEW OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY TEAM WORKING IN OUR BEST INTERESTS

The RFS's Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) capabilities were substantially enhanced on 30 May when three new staff members joined the headquarters OHS team under Alan Harris.

The focus on OHS aims to increase the safety of RFS members in the range of work they perform, from firefighting to hazard reductions, community education functions to training sessions.

Bringing with them a wealth of experience are Diane Anderson, Carolyn Cuello and Susanne Stirling all of whom are busily involved in the establishment of customer focused systems that will be used to provide professional OHS management expertise across the Service.

### The focus on OHS aims to increase the safety of RFS members

Diane, formerly with Staff Services, brings four years of RFS human resources background having worked extensively in workers compensation, rehabilitation and insurance management areas.

Diane is preparing for the roll-out of volunteer based health and safety consultation systems and is also creating OHS training materials and tools for

managers in their management and promotion of OHS responsibilities.

Carolyn, with a PhD in Pathology, was previously in the world of academia at the University of NSW and possesses an extensive array of research and analytical skills.

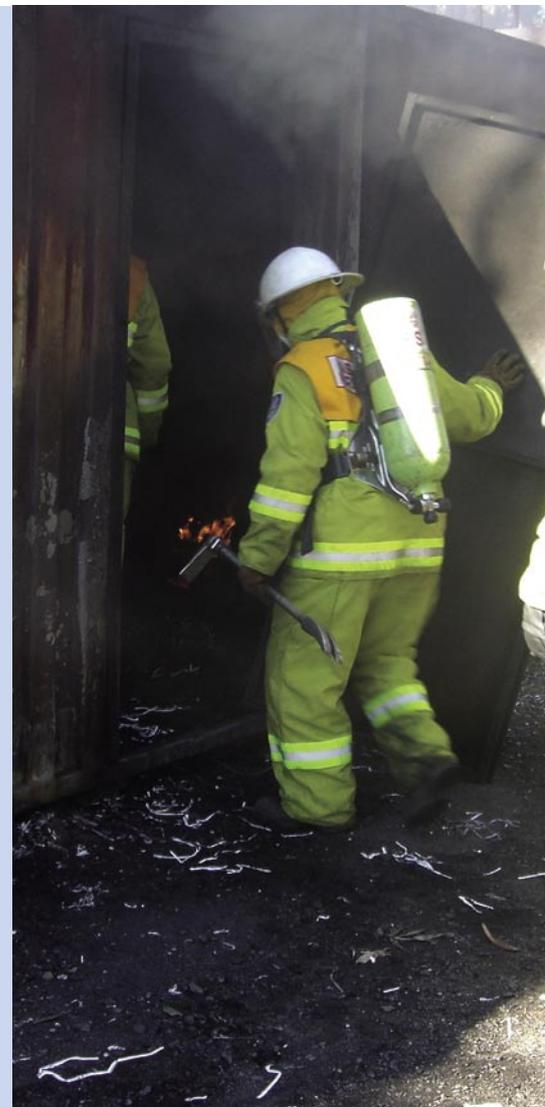
Carolyn has significant experience in OHS auditing and management systems and has designed the OHS component of the new volunteer focused extranet site, MyRFS.

Carolyn is also representing the Service in several key health and safety related research programs under the Commonwealth Government Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre.

Susanne, with 10 years' OHS experience in several government agencies, including NSW Fire Brigades, is an accredited OHS consultation trainer and has facilitated OHS risk management training in addition to training OHS committees.

Susanne is a member of the Public Sector Risk Managers Association and is developing a Service OHS consultation training package that will form the cornerstone of the Service's Health and Safety Consultative System.

Susanne is also the Executive Officer for the Service's Headquarters and Regions Health and Safety Committee.





## TOP ACADEMIC ACHIEVERS - REGION WEST

At a special graduation ceremony organised through TAFE NSW Riverina Institute in Forbes on 21 July, 20 members of the RFS's Region West staff were acknowledged by colleagues, peers and management as they each received a Diploma in Business: Frontline Management.

Dressed in academic finery they were among the first graduates of the course – developed jointly by the RFS and TAFE – which is aimed at increasing staff learning levels.

Dressed in academic finery they were among the first graduates of the course

Many of the graduates also received other awards including Certificate IV in Firefighting (Supervision); Certificate IV in Assessment & Workplace Training and Certificate III in Business Administration.

"This Diploma not only helps us, it helps the community as well," said graduate and Manager of RFS Mid Lachlan Team Ken Neville.



"The Service and TAFE worked together to provide a course to train Service staff in management positions. We did the course over 18 months and covered modules relating to leadership, managing change, OH&S and developing workplace relations".

Region West staff from Bourke, Hay, Mudgee, Dubbo, Orange, Coonamble and Nyngan travelled to Young five times in 18 months for four day blocks.

Head of the TAFE Cootamundra and Young campuses Kerry Penton said that the course was specifically tailored to meet the needs of RFS Region West.

Region West Manager, Dominic Lane said "this programme is the sounding board for the future and this partnership will be the basis of future success in the years to come."

Over 60 percent of all RFS Region West staff now possess academic and management qualifications and this is a reflection of the vision and commitment of Paul Smith, Dominic Lane and the staff themselves.

*Photos by Sean Davey.*

*Above: RFS business management graduates. Left: RFS staff in their academic finery during the business management graduation ceremony in Forbes.*



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**GME****Electrophone**

## FIFTY YEARS OF FIREFIGHTING



This year marks the 50th anniversary of two community groups on Scotland Island - the Scotland Island Residents Association (SIRA) and the Scotland Island Rural Fire Brigade.

In 1955, a water supply, enormous bush fire risk, parking and access, shelter sheds on the wharves and the connection of electricity were among the issues facing the residents of the isolated Pittwater community of Scotland Island.

Electricity has been connected and there are shelter sheds at Church Point Wharf (itself now undergoing change), but in 2005 offshore residents are still concerned about issues including water and parking, as well as wharf access, sewerage and the ever-present risk of fire.

The SIRA started life as the Scotland Island Progress Association. The first Scotland Island News, published in March 1955, reported that a meeting of 40 permanent and non-permanent residents decided to form a Progress Association and a bush fire brigade and the first meeting of 90 island residents was on April 10, 1955.

Long-time resident Bruce Healey had returned from Korea in 1954 and joined his younger brother, Colin, who was living on Scotland Island.

Bruce remembers working at John Griffin's boat shed at Bayview. At Church Point on his way home he was asked for a donation to help form a fire brigade. Fifty years later Bruce remains one of the members of the volunteer Brigade and is the Brigade's station officer, a role he has held for the past 11 years.

The first fire shed was built in 1955 in Catherine Park, next to Tennis Court Wharf on the northern side of the island. The equipment at the time included leather beaters, wet bags, knapsack sprays, shovels and a big brass bell. Because there was no electricity, a siren could not be mounted.

The fire shed performed the dual role of housing the Brigade's firefighting equipment and being the community centre and focal point for the island's residents. The start of the 1956 fire season saw the

Brigade's equipment expand to include a donated worn-out ex-army jeep.

Brigade Captain Bill Bridger reported in SINews: "The Scotland Island Fire Brigade has received a fire fighting vehicle .... complete with specially modified drums, independent petrol-driven pump and several hundred metres of high pressure hose."

Bob Blackwood, resident of the Island since 1960 and life member of the Brigade, recalled that the fire shed was also the meeting place for the Progress Association; a kindergarten twice a week; Trudy Engler's Dance Academy; Sunday School and "a countless number of parties, dances and concerts" until the present community hall was built in 1981.

The Brigade continued to operate under the banner of the Progress Association until 1966 when the two groups separated with the creation of what became the NSW Bush Fire Brigade and later the NSW Rural Fire Service.

As demand grew, the fire shed was extended. Eventually the old jeep was replaced with a Blitz wagon and members of the Brigade raised \$2400 to buy the first fire boat, commissioned in 1973.

By the mid 1980s the Brigade had out-grown its fire station. In late 1990, with funds from Warringah Shire Council, a new fire station was built higher up the hill, opened in June 1991 and extended in 2002.

The Brigade now has two firefighting vehicles, a troop carrier, high-speed fire boat and all the equipment needed to protect the island.

Members of the Scotland Island Rural Fire Brigade have attended a number of house fires, small kitchen fires and bushfire outbreaks and they have undertaken numerous hazard reduction burns and community education programs. Brigade members have also been active in assisting other brigades, in and outside the district.

RFS Commissioner, Phil Koperberg, was the official guest at the Brigade's 50th anniversary celebrations held earlier this year.

*Above: RFS Commissioner, Phil Koperberg, was the guest of honour at the recent 50th anniversary celebrations for the Scotland Island Rural Fire Brigade. Other guests included local federal member, Brownyn Bishop, Pittwater Mayor, Lynne Czinner, Assistant Commissioner Mark Croweller, Supt Steve Yorke (a member of the brigade), Supt John Parker from Batemans Bay (a former Captain of the Island brigade) and Warringah Pittwater Fire Control Officer Craig Geddes. Photo by Adrian Chaldecott.*

*Below: Now...Past President and life member Bob Blackwood, station officer Bruce Healey and Captain Graeme Richmond.*

*Bottom: Old Shed...Viv Yelland, Alton Musto, Bob Blackwood, Wendy Blackwood, Ted Gill, Graeme McLean, Bill Thompson and Roy Denoon in 1967 working on an extension to the original fire shed on Scotland Island.*





# WOMEN IN FIREFIGHTING

## FEMALE FIREFIGHTERS GATHER FOR NATIONAL FORUM

At Australia's first National Women in Firefighting forum held 11-12 May, 130 uniformed and civilian female firefighters came together to discuss gender diversity in the fire services.

Speakers at the conference included Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner Pru Goward, the University of Western Sydney's Dr Marilyn Childs, NSW Minister for Women The Hon. Sandra Nori, MP, NSW Fire Brigades Commissioner Greg Mullins; NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) Assistant Commissioner Mark Crowweller; and NSW Department of Environment and Conservation CEO Lisa Corbyn.

While there are over 12,000 paid male firefighters in Australia, the national average for paid women firefighters sits at just three per cent

The RFS has 14,000 volunteer and salaried women in the Service - roughly 20 per cent of our membership.

Some of the issues facing women in the RFS are the need for support for younger female members; more effective communication, especially in encouraging females to become active firefighters and letting them know about training opportunities - including how to protect their family and property during a fire.

Suggestions also include accessible training options to provide online courses for volunteers who are also mothers to do from home.

This is a pivotal issue for single parents who are impeded in progressing through the organisation. Station provisions such as private toilet facilities need to accommodate women visitors as well as female firefighters.

### Discriminatory behaviour was discussed at the forum.

"The fact that it occurs often covertly makes it very hard to identify or report," said an RFS representative who attended the forum.

"Some members believed that discriminatory behaviour would be denied if reported and the person who lodged the complaint would be targeted or ostracized and the issue made out to be a misunderstanding.



*Sue Talbert (Kenthurst RFB, Baulkham Hills), Julie Ellis (Wardell RFB, Ballina), Assistant Commissioner Mark Crowweller, Julie McLane (Group Officer Dubbo) and Dianne Perceval (Wambanumba RFB, Young).*

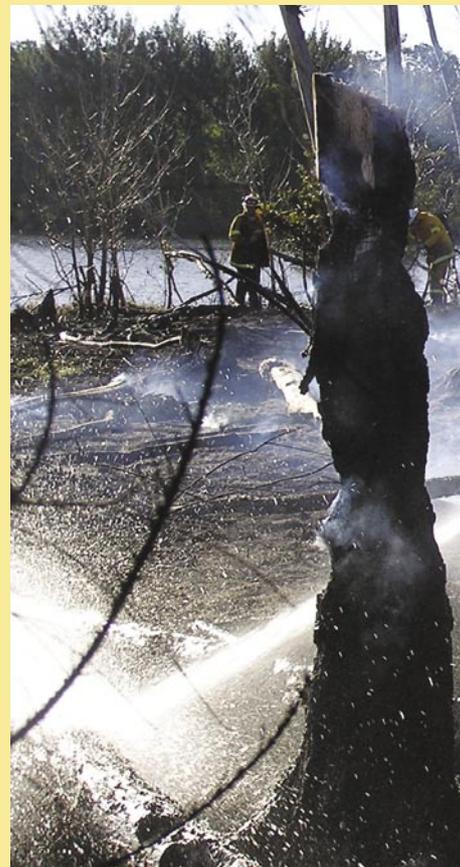
"In most cases, if a woman wanted to report something, they would be reporting to a perpetrator. The problem is that unless it is reported not a lot can be done."

Networking, sharing ideas and solving common problems were all seen as advantages of the Forum. In particular, the representatives, who were sponsored to attend by the RFS and the Rural Fire Service Association, all believed they had a responsibility to encourage more women to become active within the RFS.

A number of these participants are running forums in their districts/zones to share information from the forum with their members.

The RFS Volunteer Relations Unit is running a number of forums around the State during 2005/06 to build on the recommendations from this national forum.

The final word came from a volunteer firefighter, "I thought I was in control of what I could or couldn't achieve, now I feel I've been an ostrich with my head buried in the sand. I have changed my attitude from "God it's too hard!" to "It's my responsibility and I just haven't tried hard enough".



## INAUGURAL NATIONAL WOMEN IN FIREFIGHTING FORUM 11-12 MAY 2005

### WHY HAVE A WOMEN IN FIREFIGHTING FORUM?

To discuss issues facing women and their colleagues and examine why women constitute 50 per cent of the Australian population, but less than three per cent of the paid firefighting workforce in Australia (and only 20 per cent of RFS volunteer ranks).

### WHO PARTICIPATED?

Women from paid and volunteer firefighting services from every state in Australia and from New Zealand.

The term "Fireman" is often still used where "Firefighter" would be more correct



### WHAT ARE THE ISSUES FACING WOMEN IN FIREFIGHTING?

#### Childcare

Still widely regarded as women's domain, access, workplace programs, shiftwork and also care of older relatives.

#### Uniforms

Wearing ill fitting and sometimes uncomfortable male designs.

#### Sexual Harassment

Porn posters/videos, inappropriate comments and gestures, explicit confrontation, innuendo.

#### Gender Stereotyping

Firefighting still depicted as a masculine domain through cultural understanding of firefighters, images in the media, storytelling, family – the term "Fireman" is often still used where "Firefighter" would be more correct.

#### Development of a Non-judgemental Culture

Need for support network, the desire to discuss concerns, access knowledge in an open/honest non-critical environment.

#### Recognition

That there are masculine and feminine aspects to men and women's personalities. We need to create a supportive work environment where all people are able to display both the masculine and feminine aspects of their personalities without fear of recrimination.

#### Different Management/Leadership Styles of Men and Women

For example, many women discuss, ask for opinions and consider the other points of view of their team members. Sometimes this is perceived as an inability to make a decision, rather than a consultative approach which acknowledges the skills and experience of the team and can result in a better decision than one made in isolation.

#### Paid/Volunteer

More women in volunteer ranks than paid staff. Childcare was more of an issue for volunteers than paid staff due to unpredictable nature of work.

#### Division of Housework and Time Spent With Children

Men generally still do significantly less of both than even working mothers.

### WHERE TO FROM HERE?

A Steering Committee is being formed with members from a variety of firefighting organisations across Australia and New Zealand to write a paper to put to the Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC) to establish a Women in Firefighting Association to pursue the proactive concepts outlined below:

#### Recruitment

Targeted through images (posters, photos etc) that dispel gender myths by containing women alongside men in a variety of firefighting roles. Use of education programs, positive word-of-mouth, publicity campaigns.

#### Retention

By use of effective mentoring programmes, particularly for new recruits. Also, the new Association would provide an excellent means of networking and support for women in firefighting.

#### Lobby Government

To provide more quality childcare and respite care in areas of highest need.

#### Lobbying Firefighting Organisations

To ensure that they have developed and effectively implemented adequate policies on issues such as maternity/paternity and harassment.

#### Future Forums and Other Events

Involving both men and women to ensure that relevant issues are being addressed.

**Report by Susan Courtney (Cambewarra), Jenny Lawther (Callala Beach) and Jane MacCulloch (Huskisson)**

*Left: Crews from Yarramundi, Grose Wold and Hawkesbury Headquarters attended a fire call to an island in the Hawkesbury River at Yarramundi on 21 August 2005. After crossing the river with equipment crews got to work. This photo shows the island's blackened landscape, with the Hawkesbury River in the background. Photo by Mark Brown.*

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## SAFETY PARAMOUNT WITH CHAINSAWS

Chainsaws are one of the deadliest hand tool in the world. Which is why RFS volunteers from the Muttama and Coolac Rural Fire Brigades (RFB) braved chilly weather to attend the 'Basic Cross Cutting' and 'Simple Tree Felling' Chainsaw Operators Course on 28 May 2005.

Starting at 9am with a theory session, RFS Riverina Highlands Zone Learning and Development Officer, Brian Williams, covered topics such as basic safety, maintenance of chainsaws and cross cutting sequences. Safety is the priority in a course such as this.

"The saw doesn't cut anybody while it's sitting on the ground," Insp. Williams said.

"It's the operator who makes the saw cut and that's the part I try to get through to all potential chainsaw users – that you are the one responsible for having the accident, not the saw.

"So that's why we really concentrate on the safety techniques on how they use the saw, how they present the saw to the timber."

Muttama RFB Captain Bruce McGregor credits the RFS for making training, such as the Chainsaw Operators Course 'more available...and people are starting to find the benefits of it'.

He credits the training with reducing the number of accidents that occur.

"The more training you get, as in every job, the better you get, (the) less accidents. It's as simple as that," Capt. McGregor said.

It's important to have everyone on the same page in training, Insp. Williams said.

"(So) that when we go out into the bush in a large fire...everyone who is designated chainsaw operator is all at the same basic level or advanced level. We would be remiss as an employer if we didn't provide all the best safety training possible for our volunteers."

In the hills of the Muttama Valley, members donned their yellows and braced themselves against the dropping temperatures to start their practical assessments. While assessing members on their general safety around chainsaws, actual handling and their knowledge of timber, Insp. Williams ensured safety was the foremost concern of the day.

"To have a good knowledge of the type of trees you're cutting will help you decide what type of cut you'll put in the tree."

Members of Muttama RFB have participated in a number of courses, including Village Firefighter, Advanced Firefighter and Senior First Aid. But it doesn't stop there. Members have their sights set firmly on future courses, such as Crew Leader and driving courses.



*Inspector Brian Williams and Muttama Rural Fire Brigade member Rodney Butt examine Rodney's cross cutting sequence technique*

They are not a large brigade, but important to those they protect. The training days run by the RFS not only aim to ensure the protection and safety of its members, but train members to protect others more quickly and efficiently.

The members and trainers who give up their free weekends and leave their families to participate in these training sessions are a symbol of true heroism.

*Story by Stacey McMahon as a special thank you to the Muttama RFB*

## TECHNICAL COMMITTEE UPDATE

### CAB CHASSIS MOUNTS

Gilbert & Roach have attended Gosford Council workshop to investigate Cat 1 tankers suffering ongoing wear damage to rear and centre cab chassis mounts.

Consequently, new rear mounts were fitted and the centre mount adjusted. The mounts are a serviceable item and will be damaged if not maintained properly.

Since then several vehicles were inspected at the Gilbert & Roach Huntingwood premises and repaired/adjusted accordingly as a goodwill measure.

The solution is to shim the mounts. This will remain an ongoing line maintenance issue.

### GRASS SPRAY BARS ON CAT 7 TANKERS

The Technical Committee recommended to the Operations Committee that the Cat 1 spray bar technology be adopted for the Cat 7 tankers with the proviso that the spray bar is capable of operating for 10-15 minutes.

The Manager RFS Engineering Services provided advice to the Operations Committee to ensure that all of the issues from both a technical and operational viewpoint were considered before a final decision was made.

It has been decided that grass spray bars will be an option for future builds for Cat 7 tankers. Research is ongoing to ensure that the spray nozzles for Cat 7s are the most appropriate.

### CAT 11 TANKERS

At this stage construction is to commence on two prototypes. A Hino Ranger-Pro 8Z 4 x 4 crew cab chassis will be used featuring a redesigned platform. There is an extensive consultation program in place with the prototype customers, updates will feature in this space.

### FAULT REPORT REGISTER

Fault reporting, follow-up and monitoring has traditionally been a problem across the Service. A revised system is being implemented which should overcome the problems, and provide an improved service to members where faults in equipment occur. See article in this edition of the Bushfire Bulletin which provides details of the revised system.

### CABLE OPERATED GRASS SPRAYS FOR SINGLE & CREW CAB CAT 1 AND CAT 2 TANKERS

Engineering Services advised that a retro fit is possible. However, one size does not fit all. Contact Terry Brownlow Engineering Services for supply information. The cable is not excessively expensive and there will be a price advantage for multiple orders. Terry can provide drawings and technical information to facilitate the work being carried out.

### TANKER IDENTIFICATION MARKINGS

The RFS has accepted a recommendation from the Technical Committee that the Service Standard

on vehicle identification be amended so that the Brigade name is clearly displayed on the body of the tanker. This is already occurring in some Districts, but the Service Standard will ensure it happens across the State, and in a consistent way.

### BARRIER TAPE

RFS-specific barrier tape is now available from our supplier (Blackwoods) for general use by Brigades. This is consistent with the use by other services such as the SES, Police and NSW Fire Brigades who have their own identifiable tape.

### FUEL IDENTIFICATION TAGS

The RFS conforms to the national code in colour identification of the containers for various fuel types. As well as the colour coding of the containers, as a back-up to avoid any confusion, clip on fuel tags are now available on the equipment catalogue.

### ENGINEERING SERVICES CONTACT

Before contacting Engineering Services consideration should be given to discussing matters with the District/Region involved. When issues cannot be resolved contact the Engineering Services Administrative Assistant, Ms Helen Strasser on 02 8741 5215.

**Tony Howe**  
*Assistant Commissioner, Operations Support*

## HOSE WINDERS

### MANUAL WINDERS

Since 2003, the hose reels (live reels) on the current model of Cat 1 tankers have been fitted with a reduction chain (see Figure 1) as a standard item.

This lowers the winding point making it easier for winding hose onto the reels. This chain drive can also be supplied as an optional item on new Cat 2 tankers or in kit form for fitting to existing Cat 1 and 2 tankers (contact Engineering Services 8741 5215 for further information).

### POWERED HOSE WINDERS

Alternatively, the electric hose winder (as shown in Figure 2) can be fitted as an optional item on new Cat 1 and 2 tankers or fitted to existing tankers by one of the hose reel suppliers that are under contract to the RFS.

It is important that any hose reels fitted to any RFS tanker is provided by a supplier that is under contract to the RFS as other hose reels may not conform to RFS specifications.

As an alternate to fitting electric hose winders to their live reels, the Bundanoon Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) in the Southern Highlands has fitted a hydraulic hose winder on their Cat 1 tanker (see Figures 3, 4 and 5).

Although hydraulic hose winders are not a new concept, this winder has been specifically designed for fitting to the standard RFS hose reel.

The system contains less than 10 litres of oil and the hydraulic pump used to pressurize the oil is coupled to the Hatz engine of the main fire-fighting pump set.

Each hose reel is fitted with a hydraulic motor used to wind the hose onto the reel. The winding rate is controlled by the operation of a control valve for each of the reels. For safety, a pressure relief valve is installed in the system.

This winder is simple to operate, has operated reliably and has the following features:

- > The winding speed is variable
- > The winder automatically stalls should either someone pull firmly on the hose or should the hose becomes snagged
- > This system does not require electrical power, so there is no chance of flattening the pump battery.

**Figure 1:** Standard hose reel fitted with the chain drive.

**Figure 2:** Hose reel fitted with electric drive.

**Figure 3:** Bundanoon's hydraulic winder fitted to the standard hose reels on their Cat 1.

**Figure 4:** View of a hydraulic motor and gearbox fitted to a hose reel.

**Figure 5:** View of the winder control levers (mounted above the pump control console).

**Figure 6:** Craig and Dean Rowley, a couple of the designers of the hydraulic hose winding system fitted to Bundanoon 1.

**Figure 7:** Flat hose winder in operation (utilises the handle from a standard hose reel).

Recently, several other Southern Highland brigades have opted to have this winder fitted to their Category 1 and 2 tankers (manufactured and installed by a local engineering firm at a cost of approximately \$4,500 per tanker). For further information on this hydraulic hose winder, contact Engineering Services.

### FLAT HOSE WINDERS

As a final note, for those firefighters who enjoy rolling flat hose, a manual 'flat hose' winder (shown in Figure 7) is now being fitted standard to the current series of tankers.

It is also available in kit form from RFS contract tanker builders for fitting to existing tankers (contact Engineering Services).

### 'IDEAS' EVALUATION PROCESS

The RFS encourages firefighters and staff to put forward new ideas for doing things better. In the case of technical ideas, there is a process to be followed. This process requires the:

1. Brigade to submit their idea to their local district office for endorsement.
2. If the idea has a practical application, it will be referred onto the Technical Committee for evaluation.

The evaluation of ideas does take some time as typically an engineering assessment is required (including field trials) to verify the item meets RFS standards, that fitting it won't have any adverse affects and, most importantly, that the 'idea' is safe to use.

Where new products are involved (as in the case of Bundanoon's hydraulic hose winder) the onus is upon the designer to prove to the RFS that their product meets legislative requirements, that the product is provided with operating instructions, can be supplied in quantity and is covered by a manufacturer's warranty.





# BUSHFIRE BULLETIN ADVERTISING RATES AND SPECIFICATIONS



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Issue 1	Issue 2	Issue 3	Issue 4
First week of January	Last week of March	First week of July	Last week of October

## MECHANICAL DETAILS

(mm)	1/6page	1/3page	1/2page	Full Page
Width	60	190	190	190
Height	137	90	137	277

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## COPY DEADLINE

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