

MEDIA RELEASE



NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

New chapter of progress for Blue Mountains volunteer fireies

31 March 2012

NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons has joined volunteers from the Blue Mountains in celebrating the longevity and thriving tradition of the district's firefighting brigades.

As Commissioner Fitzsimmons formally opened the brand new Valley Heights rural fire station and unveiled a new mobile field kitchen, he said that the Blue Mountains region was widely recognised as having some of the most bush fire prone land in the world.

"Our volunteers here in the Mountains are up against some of the most challenging terrain and conditions in the world, and the Service is proud to support these dedicated members.

"Whilst it's a measurable achievement to open this wonderful facility worth over three-quarters of a million dollars – it is with tremendous pride that I am also presenting 57 RFS volunteers with medals in recognition of their steadfast and selfless commitment to their community.

"These men and women have more than 1400 years of experience between them, and together they provide an invaluable level of protection and assistance to people in times of crisis and emergency."

Commissioner Fitzsimmons also paid tribute to two members who were being recognised posthumously for their long-standing allegiance to their brigades and local community.

"David Belfanti and Ken Esgate have each left a legacy that our young members can aspire to. Serving for 20 and 50 years respectively, both of these gentlemen have played integral roles in building community resilience and helping others when the call for assistance has gone out."

The official proceedings also saw NSW RFS brigades across the Blue Mountains take ownership of several new operational vehicles including two bush firefighting trucks.

"These vehicles worth more than \$670,000 are replacing older models, and bring with them the tools and new technology that our members need in order to continue their outstanding work.

"The Blue Mountains and surrounds hold a place on the World Heritage List and I know the Rural Fire Service members that are trained to manage the challenges that this region present, do so with professionalism and pride."

"Whether they're facing bush fires, house fires, road accidents or assisting during storms and floods, these men and women remain on-hand 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and we should be rightly proud and grateful for their contribution," said Commissioner Fitzsimmons.