

# MEDIA RELEASE



NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

## Preparing for disasters – NSW RFS building community resilience

24 May 2011

The NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) is hosting more than four hundred emergency management and community engagement experts, at the 15<sup>th</sup> annual Australasian Community Engagement and Fire Awareness Conference (ACE&FA).

NSW RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said that the conference will explore the most effective ways of helping communities prepare for emergencies and disasters

“This is a tremendous opportunity for a variety of fire and emergency service agencies together with communication experts to share information, ideas and knowledge.

“The theme of this year’s conference, *“Building Community Resilience: Social Media and Tools of Engagement”*, is particularly topical with a growing expectation from the public to receive accurate, fast and accessible information.

“As a nation we have faced enormous challenges over the last 12 months with several states experiencing devastating natural disasters, including fire, storm and flood. A key component of this year’s conference is to share the experiences and lessons learnt from these natural disasters, as well as explore the rapidly changing role of communication mediums, such as social media.

“One of the lessons emerging from many of these disasters, and one of the key findings of the Victorian Bush Fire Royal Commission is the need for the community to be properly prepared prior to these big events,” Commissioner Fitzsimmons said.

NSW RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said the 2011 Australasian Community Engagement and Fire Awareness Conference will be held at the Novotel Wollongong on Friday 27 and Saturday 28 May with guest speakers providing insight into the needs and expectations of people living through adversity.

“This conference will be an opportunity for emergency services personnel to come together, share their experiences and enhance their ability to prepare, respond and utilise resources. A key focus is on building resilient communities that know how to respond before, during and after a natural disaster,” Commissioner Fitzsimmons said.

Over 250 volunteers from the NSW RFS will be joined by fellow volunteers from NSW State Emergency Service at the conference, in addition to dozens of other emergency service personnel from across Australia and New Zealand.

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