

# BUSHFIRE BULLETIN



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AT GLENHAVEN



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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.

Cover photo by Rebel Talbert

'RFS firefighters are transported by SES colleagues during the water transport scenario at RFS Region West Exercise'.

## FOREWORD

Now that the bushfire season has drawn to a close, at least formally, it is necessary to focus sharply on fire prevention programs particularly prescribed burning and other means of fuel reduction.

Predictions for a dry autumn and winter auger well for a productive period of fuel reduction. The Rural Fire Service will work closely with Land Management Agencies to ensure that opportunities for strategic fuel reduction programs are not lost and to this end we will monitor closely the implementation of risk management plans at the local bushfire management committee level.

The phasing in of the Bushfire Risk Information Management System (BRIMS) program will allow more accurate monitoring and reporting of activity in this regard. Having experienced two relatively benign fire seasons we should not assume that there will be a third and preparation for the next season is obviously something to which we should collectively turn our attention. The Rural Fire Service continues to grow in stature and professionalism and my congratulations and gratitude go to our firefighters and staff alike for another year of considerable achievement. Need driven change continues to occupy the minds of all members of the Service in the quest for safety, professionalism and a healthy cohesive organisational entity.

The need to involve volunteers in every aspect of Service development is obvious and it is certainly our policy to ensure as much consultation as is required to optimise service delivery, ensure volunteer welfare and community respect. Keeping our volunteer firefighters "in the loop" is also a pre-requisite of good management and constitutes one of our major obligations to our firefighters. To this end we will, by July 1 of this year, introduce a web based volunteer intranet site called "My RFS". This \$300,000 program will eventually enable every volunteer to access pertinent information about the Service including their own records and almost any matter in which they have a legitimate interest.

This is an ambitious program designed to ensure inclusiveness and provide technical information, relevant data, policy detail and matters of general interest to all those who serve their communities in the capacity of RFS members. More details on this initiative shortly. Finally, we have embarked upon a program of volunteer forums, already having met hundreds of firefighters, staff and local government officials in Parkes, Dubbo and West Wyalong in recent weeks. These information forums provide invaluable input and allow RFS management to fully comprehend the views, concerns and needs of our volunteers.

Thank you all for your efforts in recent months and please take credit for the invaluable service that you all provide not only to the community of New South Wales but indeed further afield.

  
Phil Koperberg

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# GENERAL NEWS



*'RFS Region North Strike Team leaders are briefed during the Region North Exercise. Full story on page 40.' Photo by Meeka Bailey.*



# COMMUNICATION TOWERS SAVED FROM FIRE

Crews protected vital communications infrastructure during a four-day operation to contain and extinguish a fire on the only bump in the western part of Greater Hume Shire, Goombargana Hill, in early January.

About 400ha was burnt on the hill, west of Walbundrie, from a fire started by lightning strike on Tuesday 4 January 2005. Goombargana Hill last experienced fire in 1975.

The Hume District experienced a run of intense fire activity starting on Christmas Eve, with 19 incidents in 10 days. The weather was hot and, as is the case in that part of the state, very dry.

Humidity generally sits below 10 per cent for the majority of the summer period; temperatures are usually over 35° C. Dry thunderstorms are not unusual, but rain is rarely seen.

The hill is mostly privately owned except for the Crown land that is home to the district's western most repeater site. It occupies 250ha of the landscape and is mostly bushland.

Once the fire started it was a challenge to stop. Gusty 30km/h winds from the west northwest pushed the fire in an easterly direction toward the communications towers, burning 50ha by 1500hrs on Tuesday.

The site is also home to repeaters for the police, ambulance, Country Energy and Telstra. Crews worked hard to save the communications equipment but the fire came very close.

As it burnt out onto surrounding pasture it was contained with more than 25km of backburning carried out from containment lines.

After four days it had completed the majority of its run with another two days to mop it up.

Over 80 volunteers, 17 tankers, aircraft and several pieces of heavy machinery were involved in containing and eventually extinguishing the fire.

*Story by Marg Wehner,  
Community Safety Officer, RFS Hume Zone*

*Photos by Matthew Smithwick, Border Mail.*

## FIRE FACTS

### BRIGADES ATTENDING:

#### Greater Hume District

Goombargana, Alma Park, Bulgandra, Bungowannah, Burrumbuttock, Brocklesby, Culcairn South, Glenellen, Jindera, Merri Meric Mullengandra, Walbundrie North, Walbundrie South, Walla Walla

#### ALBURY DISTRICT

Lavington, Thurgoona

#### COROWA DISTRICT

Balldale, Buraja, Howlong, Paragon



## 1800 NSW RFS – NEW FREE RFS NUMBER

RFS Headquarters has a new, toll-free, 24-hour number – 1800 NSW RFS (1800 679 737).

The number provides the people of NSW and RFS members with a free contact point for 24-hour information.

This includes:

- > 24-hour bushfire information
- > 24-hour statewide total fire ban information
- > 24-hour contact with RFS Headquarters
- > Basic information on protecting your home and property
- > Assistance relating to development application issues

This frees up other RFS toll-free numbers specifically for volunteer needs.

1800 049 933 is now dedicated to activating Critical Incident Support Services (CISS) peer support for RFS members. Operators answering this number will know from the outset that the call is sensitive and confidential, and a specialised level of service and attention can be provided.

1800 679 700 is dedicated to RFS members to make Firezone, or Fire Incident Reporting System (FIRS) calls. During periods of high activity dedicated operators will take Firezone calls from RFS members.

The new 1800 NSW RFS (1800 679 737) number provides different options aimed at helping members of the public and RFS members access the information they require.

These include incidents, current weather and total fire ban information, community education information, or speaking to an operator.

This helps RFS Headquarters staff to provide the right information in a timely and efficient way.

## ZONING STRENGTHENS FIRE MANAGEMENT IN ALBURY AND GREATER HUME



The close relationship between RFS volunteers and staff in Albury and Greater Hume districts was strengthened and formalised with local councils and volunteers agreeing to zone the two rural fire districts in January 2005.

On 12 November 2004 a working group comprising RFS volunteers and council representatives agreed to formally merge the districts to transform the RFS Albury Greater Hume Team into RFS Hume Zone.

The Mayors of Albury City and Greater Hume signed the agreement on 16 December 2004 and the zone took effect from 1 January 2005. (The Greater Hume local government area is an amalgamation of the former Holbrook, Culcairn and Hume Shires).

“Zoning enabled the RFS to put in place an effective and efficient management structure to provide a greater level of service to volunteers, the community and councils,” RFS Hume Zone Manager George Alexander said.

### A few volunteers were concerned there would be a lack of personal contact with the Fire Control Officer

“By forming the RFS Hume Zone, rather than splitting the area into two, we can work as one unit to prepare for and combat fires more effectively and therefore provide better protection for the community and volunteer firefighters.”

Leo Corrigan, a local Group Officer of 14 years (Holbrook Group Officer prior to council amalgamations) and an RFS member for 45 years, said a few volunteers had reservations about zoning.

An effective consultation process assisted volunteers and councils to raise and address their issues. Mr Corrigan was a member of the Zone Working Group.

“A few volunteers were concerned there would be a lack of personal contact with the Fire Control Officer,” Mr Corrigan said. The result was actually more RFS staff to assist volunteers.

“We’d had a couple of years notice about the prospect of zoning and it was put before all brigades individually at their meetings. Most members in Holbrook area accepted the concept of zoning, however, a few did have their concerns.

“When the zone working party formed we went through a number of steps prior to the zone being formed. Assistant Commissioner Mark Crowther

attended a couple of meetings in Holbrook town to address the concerns.”

Mr Corrigan said brigades were operating in the same way since zoning took effect with no real change at grass roots level. The main advantage is more staff available to help volunteers, and a more efficient focus on staff roles in the key areas of operations, training, community safety and management.

“The fact that we have four salaried staff is a huge advantage. We can pick up a telephone or radio and someone will answer whereas this wasn’t always possible in the past with one Fire Control Officer - and he worked longer hours to cover the situation.”

An improvement in training highlights the benefit of staff being able to concentrate on one area of expertise.

“Service members accept that everyone involved in the RFS must have some level of training and with a zone training officer working on this full time he can really focus on working with volunteers to get training programs together,” Mr Corrigan said.

Operationally, access to resources has improved.

“It’s not so much that we have more firefighters and tankers to call on, but it is easier to access those resources because they are part of the zone, rather than requesting out of area assistance.”

The RFS has formed 20 zones throughout NSW, involving 56 rural fire districts.

“The main benefit is that we can reduce duplication of tasks across districts that have many common characteristics. For example, instead of doing paper work twice, we do it once, which gives us more time to ensure that communities are prepared for bushfire,” Supt Alexander said.

“This is the beginning of a new era for rural firefighting in the Hume area and I am pleased with the collaborative approach of the two shires relative to this important community service.

“All the stakeholders have been involved in this process and everyone has agreed that forming the zone is the way to ensure the people of Greater Hume and Albury City get the best service and protection possible. Volunteers, who are the backbone of the RFS, have been consulted throughout.”

A new multipurpose emergency centre will be built in Albury to service RFS Hume Zone and other emergency agencies.

The centre, to be located near Albury’s airport, will include the RFS Hume Zone staff, Albury City Council emergency management and two other emergency services.

## ELECTRONIC FIRE INVESTIGATION

In-field electronic reporting on fire investigation is now operating, reducing duplication of paperwork and saving the valuable time of RFS Fire Investigators.

RFS Information Technology (IT) conducted a statewide roll-out of the Fire Investigation System (FIS) to salaried Fire Investigators on 23 January 2005. It is anticipated that volunteer investigators will be able to access the FIS in the near future, once computer access arrangements are finalised with IT.

The FIS is an electronic reporting system that allows the investigator to complete reports in the field, real time. This process negates the duplication of completing reports twice, once in the field and another for submission from the office.

The system will also support the emailing of reports direct from the system to streamline the dissemination of reports to all stakeholders i.e. investigating Police and RFS Zone/Team Managers. Other streamlining features include the automatic calculation of fire behaviour data from entered weather data.

The FIS will eventually be developed to link to the Fire Incident Reporting System (FIRS) so that when information on a fire is viewed, the Fire



Investigation Report can also be viewed to give a more complete perspective of how, when, where and why the fire started.

FIS will also link to the Operations Management System (OMS) to access current fire mapping and allow for the investigators to utilise the mapping to plot fire origins and spread.

FIS will support the reporting of investigations to Australian Incident Reporting System (AIRS) standards while still maintaining the standardised fire cause

information required by the Rural Fire Service. It will also provide the RFS Fire Investigation Unit with the ability to generate statistical reports to satisfy the reporting requirements of the Service at both State and District levels.

The development of FIS is expected to be completed by mid 2005.

*'RFS volunteer firefighters were trained by Fire Investigation during the Region West Exercise in March 2005' Photo by Rebal Talbert*

## ARSONIST GETS LONGER GAOL TERM

The RFS welcomed the 6 May 2005 Court of Criminal Appeal decision that increased the severity of the sentence of convicted arsonist David Mills, a former RFS probationary trainee.

In late 2004, Mills was convicted of a number of arson offences relating to a fire in Ku-ring-gai National Park that threatened homes and destroyed almost 1500 hectares of bushland.

For this Mills received a minimum of 21 months periodic detention. With the Service's strong support the Government appealed the sentence as it was considered inadequate considering the potentially disastrous nature of the offences.

That appeal was heard on 6 May and Mills' sentence was amended to imprisonment of five years and two months, with a minimum period of two years and eight months - to be served by way of full time detention.

RFS Commissioner Phil Koperberg said the Service welcomed the increased sentence.

"The RFS does not tolerate any form of criminal activity and volunteers and staff assisted in the investigation of the cause of the fire, providing valuable information to the NSW Police Service in relation to this case," Commissioner Koperberg said.

"The previous sentence was manifestly inadequate given the seriousness of the offences, and sent the wrong message to the community.

"The new sentence, with a minimum of two years and eight months full time detention, sends a strong deterrent message to those who would join the Service as a platform for this antisocial behaviour.

"It is also a very clear indication that the RFS will not tolerate these kinds of people in our ranks."

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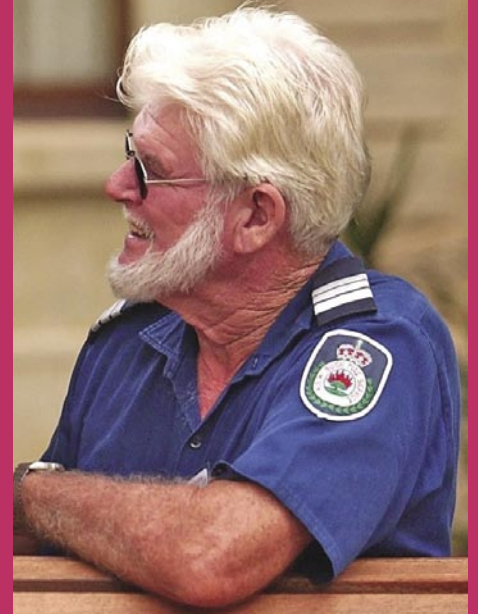
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# BRIGADES HELP VICTIMS OF



*FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Don Arthurson, Danna Worthing and Harry LeBusque. Photo by the Daily Examiner Grafton.*



## **The Tsunami of Boxing Day 2004 will be remembered by generations as the worst natural disaster the world has ever seen.**

As an emergency service members of the RFS felt compelled to assist. Some brigades and districts took it upon themselves to raise money and assist with donated items.

Examples of this include RFS Cumberland Zone where brigades in the Penrith, Blacktown and Fairfield areas opened their doors as collection points for clothing. Blue Mountains brigades helped deliver clothes to Cumberland and stations also opened their doors as a collection point for toy donations.

## **Some brigades and districts took it upon themselves to raise money and assist with donated items.**

Tilba Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) from RFS Far South Coast Team (Bega Valley and Eurobodalla) raised \$3763.75 from locals and tourists.

Warringah/Pittwater district brigades collected money from beaches in Pittwater and many volunteers and staff attended the memorial services held throughout the state.

One of the most successful fundraisers was the group from Trenayr Brigade in Clarence Valley Zone. Below is an excerpt from Marcia LeBusque's story about their fundraising trek.

## **TSUNAMI TREK**

Returning from a break with our son and his family we watched with disbelief as the reports appeared on television. Feeling helpless my husband Harry LeBusque, Captain of Trenayr RFB and ex-Army engineer, watched the engineering unit with which he served head off to assist, giving hope to people by cleaning up and erecting buildings as he had many times.

With the help of three other members of the Brigade a plan was formed and Don Arthurson our Vice President was offered a vehicle from Black Toyota (Grafton) to use at no cost to us. This was the start of something we all felt good about. We worked on a route that would enable us to contact other brigades, districts, teams and zones.

Care Australia was chosen as the beneficiary of the funds as Harry had seen some of their work in Asian countries and they also have the lowest overheads. Our dedicated crew believes in the RFS and its members and hoped that we would receive at least \$1 per head of the volunteers and staff and the public, which would enable us to reach our target.

The day to set off on our trip has arrived and we start from Clarence Valley Fire Control on 7 February being seen off by Ian Thomas Regional Manager, Brett Condie Clarence Valley Manager, Ian Schoonwater chaplain, and James Clark Operations Manager. Add to that newspapers and television.

Mullumbimby was our first stop where we were welcomed and given cheques and cash from local volunteers and staff. Then to Lismore to do a short street walk collecting money, then forward to Yorklea for the first night. We stayed in the training room on our traveling beds and used the

kitchen for cooking and eating. This was our first day and we already had \$1164.90, a good start.

On the second day we were welcomed at Tenterfield, then on to Moree looking at places I had never been. The windows of the vehicle started to become very warm and the air conditioner was our life saver. Found Fire Control and we were given a great welcome by Inspector Marty Thick and Kim Hurle. Great town, like an oasis and so thankful to the Moree hotel who provided us with free air conditioned accommodation. As we drove out of Moree a fine misty rain started and we hoped that this would help the extreme dry conditions they were enduring. Coming from the coastal area it was quite an eye opener.

Dropping into smaller towns along the way our next stopover was Coonabarabran. We looked as we drove into the area remembering roads and locations from the fires there a few years ago. Green now but we recognised spots where we were tasked. The National Parks and Wildlife Service was very supportive and helpful. Woke to hear reasonable rain, which was wonderful for the area, being so dry and in their words 'water deprived'. This is another side to the RFS which we who live on the coast tend to forget.

The next visit was Willowtree. We had a wonderful lunch, many laughs and a great time. A fun photo session and onto the next stop. As we left we all recognised that the RFS attracts many wonderful and dedicated people who have stayed in touch with reality.

Tamworth was a stop I was anticipating with pleasure. After a meeting at Fire Control the Tamworth City RFB came to meet, greet, feed and entertain us.

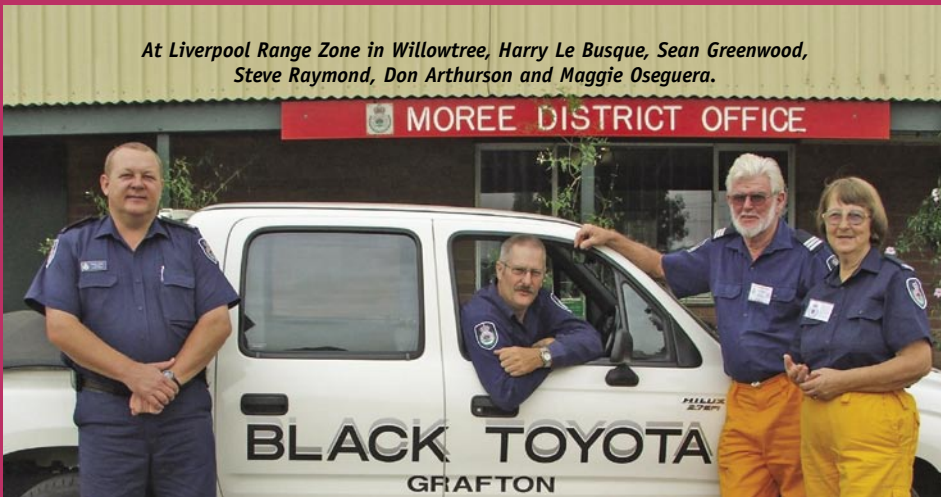




# THE TSUNAMI



At Moree district Office with Marty Thick, Don Arthurson, Harry and Marcia LeBusque.



At Liverpool Range Zone in Willottree, Harry Le Busque, Sean Greenwood, Steve Raymond, Don Arthurson and Maggie Oseguera.

What a happy and dedicated group who made us feel right at home. Next morning after a breakfast with the Brigade we had two television teams and newspapers to see us be given a very generous donation raised by the Brigade. We felt so at home that it was hugs all round when we left. The hospitality again was something to be believed.

Armidale we thank you for your generosity and welcome. The Communications Group as well as brigade Presidents and Captains came to greet us and hand over donations.

Onto Hastings where we stayed at local brigade station and were again looked after so well. Home to Grafton and welcomed by local brigades who supported the concept of what we have been doing and had raised funds.

Whilst traveling we were given items to be raffled and this is now underway and will give us extra funds to add to the \$6,000 already raised. We also have McDonalds assisting us with a weekend fundraiser. The completion time for our target we have made June sometime.

We are hopeful of being able to provide enough money for the building of an orphanage, school and fit them out. RFS Region North and all the brigades in the region have been so supportive and we thank you all. If this is achieved everyone who contributed, whether if was small change or notes, we sincerely thank you and you can be proud of taking part.

Story by Marcia LeBusque

## LEAD THE SERVICE IN THE DIRECTION YOU WANT

RFS volunteers can help set the direction of the Service by taking part in the RFS Volunteer Survey mailed out with this edition of the Bushfire Bulletin or available online at [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au).

The survey is designed to get member views on a number of issues to ensure that they are considered in the development of the 2006-2008 RFS Strategic Plan.

Data collected from this survey will assist in the development of a series of volunteer related programs within the RFS Volunteer Relations Section and will also significantly assist in the development of a wide range of Service initiatives over the next few years.

### The objectives of the survey include:

- > Capturing a 'snapshot' of some of the issues that the RFS currently faces
- > Highlighting opportunities and challenges for the future
- > Making recommendations of priority areas for consideration in future planning.

The completed survey will be processed and analysed by an independent research organisation, Cliff Reece & Associates Pty Ltd. The final analysis will then be given to the RFS.

This data will be an invaluable source of information for many Service planning processes. It is therefore important that all sections of the survey are clearly filled out so that this independent organisation can readily analyse each survey.

It is particularly important that you identify the District or Team/ Zone you belong to so that we may be assured that an RFS volunteer is completing the survey.

Completing the survey online at [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au) is the preferred method, however, a hardcopy of the survey has also been included in the May 2005 edition of the Bushfire Bulletin (#27/2). The survey will take about 20 minutes to complete and should be returned 'Reply Paid' by 8 July 2005.

Please let other volunteers know about the online survey and encourage them to complete it. Everyone's views are welcome, and confidentiality is assured.

**Thank you all for your input!**

## BUSHFIRE HAZARD REDUCTION CERTIFICATE PROCESS PROVES ITS WORTH IN HASTINGS

Hazard reduction season in the Hastings District has shown the benefits of the Bushfire Hazard Reduction Certificate process.

### CASE 1 – RESIDENT CONCERNS HEARD

Residents voice concern through the Wednesday edition of the local paper that an area of Crown Land behind them is a bushfire hazard. On inspection it is found that the high fuel loads do present a threat.

The RFS Fire Mitigation Officer contacts the land manager (Dept of Lands) and advises of the situation; an agreement is made that a burn is needed followed by the implementation of an Asset Protection Zone (APZ).

A Bushfire Hazard Reduction Certificate and permission to enter lands letter is issued. The local brigade is consulted and with favourable weather conditions persisting the burn is conducted on the Sunday.

The entire process takes two days to plan, approve and conduct. RFS staff put in extra hours in the planning process and volunteers give up

their personal time to conduct the burn. The burn and it is carried out safely and effectively. The burn generated great public and media interest and the works were undertaken with the professionalism expected of the RFS.

The local community were appreciative at how fast their concerns were acted on, cementing the good relationship between the RFS, its volunteers and the community.

**Note: The RFS has a hazard reduction complaint process available for the public to report concerns about bushfire hazards.'**

### CASE 2 – BRIGADE ASSISTS PROPERTY OWNER

A private land owner applies for environmental approval to conduct a 30ha burn around a sawmill. On inspection of the property it is discovered that the land-holder cannot effectively carry out the hazard reduction with the equipment he has at hand.

Because of this one of the conditions on the Bushfire Hazard Reduction Certificate is that the RFS assists to carry out the works.

With the help of RFS volunteers and staff the burn is conducted safely and effectively. The local brigade's careful planning using the systems and procedures provided by the RFS - and patient wait for the prescribed weather conditions - assisted the landowner.

These actions potentially averted a privately conducted burn from becoming a wildfire and in turn prevented needless property loss and environmental degradation.

These examples are a real testament to the efficiency of the Bushfire Hazard Reduction Certificate process the Service has introduced for undertaking hazard reduction with the environment and the community in mind.

*Story and photos by Kane Lambkin  
Fire Mitigation Officer  
RFS Lower North Coast Team*



# STATION DESIGN PROJECT BUILDS ON VOLUNTEER CONSTRUCTION EXPERIENCE

Local fire stations are where RFS brigades conduct the front line work of the Service, and the facility each local community most associates with the RFS.

Many of these local landmarks have been designed, built and in numerous cases, funded by the tireless efforts of volunteers. This has been done with an enormous amount of good will on the part of volunteers, the local community and local councils.

The Service recognises the vital contribution that has been made. To build on this hard work an RFS project has been established offering a set of station designs to help brigades with station construction. To make this project work for your local area, the Service is asking for your feedback on these designs by 31 July 2005.

Over the lifetime of the RFS, station designs have been independently developed across the State. The involvement of 142 local government areas has seen 142 different solutions being developed to address the same issue.

This project is attempting to harness the knowledge and experience of Service members in the area of station design. By using examples of existing stations, discussions with firefighters and

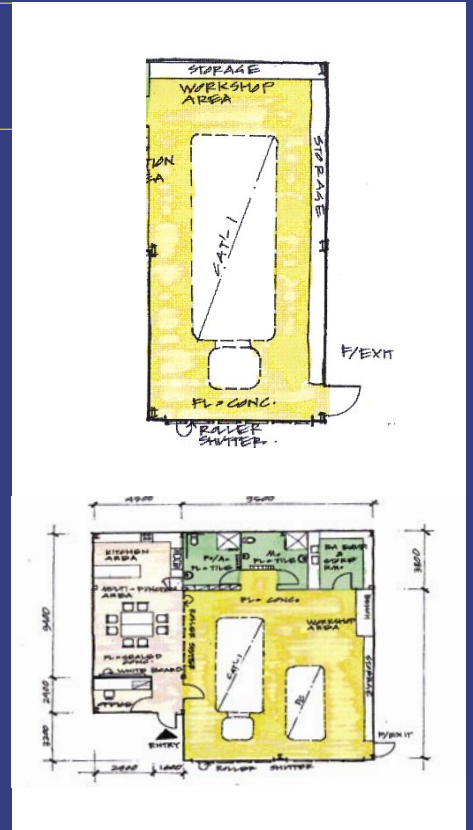
incorporating best practice, the project will create a realistic, workable and flexible set of designs, some with a number of options.

The range of designs includes 1,2,3 and 4 Bay Stations for remote rural, rural and village brigades. An option of a transportable station specifically for remote areas is also available.

These options will assist with reducing the time and effort Service members need to put into getting a new station built. The designs will allow the Service to set acceptable standards for facilities across the State. This will also address key areas such as occupational health and safety, and pre-empt future changes such as new truck sizes and brigade classifications.

The designs simplify the process and reduce costs by using standard fittings and materials. They also will save valuable time and costs previously spent on architects and engineers.

Consultation will occur over the first half of 2005. It will involve local government and members of the Service, through volunteer forums, publications and through RFS district offices. To read more about these design options contact your local zone/district office.



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# RFS ONLINE

## ONE-STOP SHOP FOR OPERATIONAL INFORMATION

A computer system for managing incidents where RFS brigades are in attendance is being developed – the Operational Management System (OMS).

The web-based, electronic system will enable Incident Management Teams (IMT) to directly input situation reports (SitReps) into the RFS Incident Database – providing 'real-time' information for the Service and the people of NSW.

The OMS helps to coordinate incidents of all sizes by enabling incident managers to do such things as online submission of SitReps to RFS Headquarters, draw maps and create and attach Incident Action Plans (IAP).

Online situation reporting will reduce staff time and effort required with reporting. Sitreps to RFS Headquarters were previously faxed and the information was re-entered by customer service staff in order for the central Incident Database to be updated. By the next fire season this can be done electronically.

Volunteers will continue to follow normal procedures to provide SitReps to FireCom. While OMS is not an in-field reporting system for volunteers to use for every incident, it will be a system that volunteers can use during incidents requiring situation reporting to RFS Headquarters – from Fire Control Centres and in the future from laptops on the fireground.

The first stage of OMS is web-based and will provide district staff with a streamlined process for completing and submitting SitReps

RFS Headquarters Information Services and Operations groups have been testing the first component of OMS this year. The concept for this system has around for a long time, but the past nine months has seen considerable planning, design and development.

OMS has the potential of being an interagency system that may eventually encompass many of the aspects of running and controlling an incident, whether the incident is a small one tanker response to a multiagency, large scale section 44 incident.

The first stage of OMS is web-based and will provide district staff with a streamlined process for completing and submitting SitReps, attached fire maps, and IAPs. All of this information will be transferred back to Headquarters via either the RFS network or the Web.

The online SitReps will also be integrated with the total incident management system and the Geographic Information System database. Under OMS one set of information will be entered and captured and there is the facility to attach a map to each SitRep. These SitReps will be created by the local officer and cleared by the local incident controller.

The report and map will be posted to a central database via the web where it will be collated with other information about that incident, thus giving the RFS one set of data that can be validated for accuracy and currency.

This will provide many benefits across the Service, such as:

- > More timely information on the central Incident Database by removing the need to re-enter faxed data
  - > Better information for the public on bushfires and other emergencies via the RFS website which will display the Incident Database
  - > Lessen the need for other staff to intrude upon the IMT for status reports
  - > Ensure that previous SitReps are not lost and can be retrieved easily by following shifts, or anyone else with authorised access
  - > Allow for queries to be written across a range of reports on the same incident
- > Over time this data will permit better analysis of incidents for research, training or coronial purposes
  - > Less time and effort faxing and re-entering data
  - > Time and money saved on administration

Fifteen districts as well as National Parks have been user-testing the program since February. NSW Fire Brigades and SES are aware of the project and NSW Fire Brigades have access to the demonstration environment to test the system.

Changes and improvements to SitReps were being made over March with the component going live from late May 2005. It is anticipated that all three components will be available by the next fire season.

In March, staff from Information Services travelled to the RFS Region North Exercise in Glen Innes to conduct a controlled trial of the electronic SitRep tool within an IMT exercise. The electronic SitReps were loaded up in the Glen Innes Fire Control Centre and tested on 16 different scenarios.

Staff reported that the link to the Internet worked well and that the tool was well received. It was then used on a laptop at a forward command location. The laptop was connected to the Internet using a CDMA card and the results were again pleasing. Once final testing of the fire mapping tool and the IAP screens are completed, it is also intended to use these tools in a controlled trial.



*RFS Operations and Information Services officers tested the OMS in the field at the Northern Five exercise in Glen Innes.*

## OVER 150,000 FREE MAPS SUPPLIED TO BRIGADES

The RFS Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Services Unit and State Operations have negotiated with the Department of Lands to provide Rural Fire Brigades and Fire Control Centres with over 150,000 topographic maps for the state of NSW.

This will ensure over 4000 tankers, group vehicles and personnel carriers have up to date maps of their brigade area. At the moment, maps of varying condition and sources are being used throughout the Service.

RFS volunteers will be safer and more effective because they will be better able to navigate using the most current mapping information available.

Each RFS office will be provided with maps for their designated area in ample numbers to supply Category 1 through to Category 12 vehicles, with an extra set of maps to remain in the Fire Control Centre.

These maps will be distributed in 2005, with the rollout across the State expected to take a number of months.

In the past, districts have ordered maps in times of need during Section 44s and peak emergency periods. The Department of Lands would like to avoid this in the future, and has happily met the extraordinary request of over 150,000 topographic maps.

The supply and distribution of these maps will ensure Service members have fast and efficient access to map information during both emergency events and in the day-to-day running of the brigade and district.

### HOW SHOULD MAPS BE STORED?

A combination of flat and folded maps will be included in the distribution. The folded maps will be circulated to RFS appliances. The flat maps are for Group Captains and use within the Fire Control Centre. As damaged maps in the future will have to be replaced at cost to the District/Team/Zone, volunteers and staff should maintain the maps in good condition where possible.

### WHAT HAPPENS WHEN AN UPDATED MAP IS RELEASED?

The published dates of the maps range from 1963 to 1994. As part of the negotiated arrangements the Department of Lands will continue to provide updated map products as they are released. These updates will be coordinated for the Service by the RFS GIS Unit.

### WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE NEW MAPS AND OLD MAPS?

It should be noted that the most recent 1994 topographic maps are in a different datum to maps

published prior to 1994. It is important to ensure users of both types of maps have a full understanding of the differences between the Australian Geodetic Datum 1966 (AGD66) and the Geocentric Datum of Australia 1994 (GDA94). On average across NSW, there is a 200-metre difference in the grid reference location provided from both maps.

The newer GDA94 maps include the GDA logo. To minimise confusion RFS GIS encourages members to supply the correct datum information whenever they are reporting grid references.

In future all topographic maps will be updated to GDA94. For more information on these datums refer to [www.icsm.gov.au/icsm/gda/mapsgda.pdf](http://www.icsm.gov.au/icsm/gda/mapsgda.pdf) or discuss with your GIS Support Officer.

*The GDA logo is displayed on maps in GDA94 datum*



## CELEBRATING HASTINGS NEW FIRE CONTROL CENTRE

The Hastings Pipe Band entertained crowds at the Volunteer Community Day held on 11 December 2004 to officially open the new Fire Control Centre and Hastings Headquarters Brigade Station in Wauchope.

Between 400 and 500 people attended the Hastings Volunteer Community Open day in organised by the RFSA and Hastings district volunteers. Commissioner Phil Koperberg presented a flag to the Headquarters Brigade and the keys to a new Cat 1 to King Creek Brigade. Joy flights and a kids train entertained everyone.



## CHECK YOURSELF OUT AT WWW.MYRFS.NSW.GOV.AU

### A new website is planned for volunteers.

My RFS will be accessible to volunteers via the public website [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au), as well as its own dedicated address [www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au), by the end of June 2005.

Volunteers can register and create their own password to access the site.

Once they are on the website volunteers can view data about their brigade and area that is drawn from Firezone and other databases.

MyRFS is a big project and will be completed in phases. Individual volunteers will be able to view and update some of their own information held in Firezone as part of the first phase of the project.

The first phase is expected at the end of June 2005. Volunteers will be able to find out where it is, log on, and provide feedback about what they would like from a website.

District officers will be able to give volunteers their registration information. It's then up to volunteers to pay a visit to the website and make a comment about what they would like to get from the website.

MyRFS will provide volunteer decision makers with access to information 24-hours a day. Information entered in Firezone will be available to view. However, if it hasn't been reported or entered, the information won't be available.

The sort of information available in the future will be about incidents, responses, attendances. This data can be used for planning, educating and training.

More news on MyRFS will be included in the next edition of the Bushfire Bulletin. Visit the site at [www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au) over coming weeks to see how phase 1 will look.

## NATIONAL PARKS PASS FOR VOLUNTEERS

Every year, RFS volunteers are issued with an annual pass to National Parks which enables free entry to all parks in NSW.

As the current stickers expire in June 2005, District, Zone and Team Managers were asked to submit the number of volunteers entitled to this privilege. Entitled volunteers must be active members.

The stickers will be available for pick up after 1 June 2005.

To pick up a sticker, each volunteer must complete an application form and bring a copy of their vehicle registration form to their district office. The application forms are also available from 1 June 2005.



## ARE YOU INTERESTED IN TRAINING IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS?

- Constructing access tracks
- Operating dozers and graders in fire ground situations
- Undertaking site assessments

- Practical and theory training is available in these and **other modules** from the Conservation and Land Management training package with a bias towards fire prevention and control. Attendance is flexible to suit your needs and can be on a weekend basis.
- With further study these modules can lead to a Certificate III in Conservation and Land Management.

### CONTACT:

TAFE NSW Western Institute Orange  
Campus  
PO Box 1059, ORANGE NSW 2800  
Phone: 02-6391 5787 or 6391 5777



## 3,300 PEOPLE APPLY TO JOIN OR TRANSFER BRIGADES

The community places a great deal of trust in members of the RFS. For this reason volunteers requested that the process to join the Service involve a more rigorous screening component.

The Service Membership Unit (SMU) helps facilitate that process to ensure that fit and proper people represent the RFS in its emergency service and community work.

The SMU is located at RFS Headquarters within the Operations and Regional Management Directorate. Since the formation of the SMU in July 2004 the SMU has processed in excess of 3300 applications through the new membership application process.

About 2560 of these were new membership applications and around 750 were existing members applying for a transfer or dual membership.

For new and transferring volunteer members and new staff the process now includes a national criminal history record check conducted on the Service's behalf by the CrimTrac Agency. Panel interviews and probationary periods also form part of the process to join a rural fire brigade.

### HOW DOES IT WORK?

In order for an application to be processed, both sections of the application need to be received by

the SMU. The 'application form' itself is referred to as Section 1 of the application and is to be completed by the applicant. This includes a 100-point identification check and interview being undertaken. Section 1 will then be signed off by both the Brigade Secretary and Captain and forwarded into the SMU.

The 'consent to obtain personal information' form is referred to as Section 2 of the application and is to be completed by the applicant only and forwarded into the SMU in the pre-paid envelope provided. This section is private and confidential and requires no signature from anybody other than the applicant.

Once both sections of the application are received by the SMU, the necessary information is then forwarded to the CrimTrac Agency for processing. Within a 24-hour period of referring this information to CrimTrac, the SMU receives an initial result of whether a name is clear, or whether there is a possible name match.

### HOW TO AVOID DELAYS

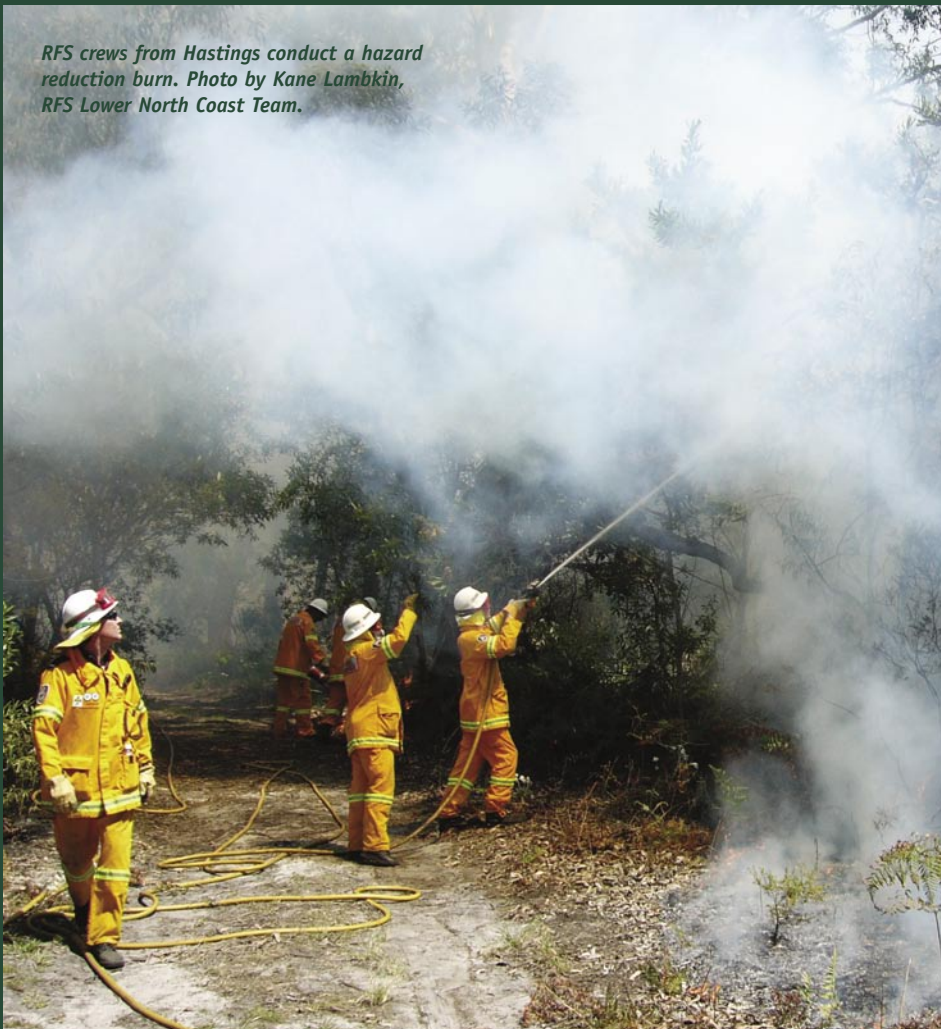
It is important that both sections of the application are received by the SMU - in complete form. They need to be signed, validated by the district/zone/team, legible, and include, where

possible, all the personal details requested. Until this has occurred, the SMU is unable to begin processing the application. It is at this point that most applications are delayed.

If a name is clear, the current turn around time is five days. This five-day turn around time includes processing a letter to the applicant and providing advice to the district/zone/team office, who in turn advises the brigade. The applicant is also entered or updated on Firezone.

If the result indicates a possible name match, it may take up to 15 working days to receive a clearance or confirmation from the relevant Police jurisdiction concerned through the CrimTrac Agency. It is hoped that this delay will be significantly reduced in the very near future. Once this advice is received from CrimTrac, SMU will then complete the process within the five-day turn around.

Until such time as the SMU provides a clearance, the applicant cannot participate in any training or operational activities, whether they are an existing member who is transferring or a new member to the Service.



*RFS crews from Hastings conduct a hazard reduction burn. Photo by Kane Lambkin, RFS Lower North Coast Team.*



# HANDLING FOOD SAFELY

## THE RFS COMMITMENT

Concern has recently been raised that RFS volunteers preparing food or people kindly donating food during emergencies must be licensed or undertake accredited training.

Draft Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to be released in coming months clearly state that while this is not the case, it is important to recognise that the RFS is committed to safe food handling principles.

RFS volunteers and a variety of community groups and businesses provide food during RFS activities, including firefighting, training days and to members of the public at fundraisers or education events.

Catering can range from:

- > Sandwiches prepared and kindly donated by community groups
- > Barbecues held by RFS brigade volunteers for the public at fundraisers
- > Barbecues or catering for RFS brigade volunteers at training events
- > RFS catering brigades established specifically to feed hundreds of firefighters thousands of meals during long campaigns using customised catering vehicles
- > Restaurants or other commercial catering providers contracted to provide meals during bushfire emergencies.

At the request and with the assistance of RFS volunteers, and in consultation with community groups, the RFS has developed draft Safe Food Handling SOPs to help provide common sense advice to those preparing and accepting food. They recognise the role of people who generously donate a plate, or a good Aussie barbie at the station, and are in keeping with the spirit of safe and sanitary practices in the NSW Food Act.

### THE PROCEDURES GIVE GUIDANCE NOT RULES

Because RFS brigade members are volunteers, and as our catering is generally not to make a business profit, the RFS is not required in all circumstances by law to adhere to food legislation. However, the RFS does want to provide and use safe food, and agrees with the principles of safe food handling legislation. RFS members often find themselves in situations where an understanding of these principles is helpful.

### THE PROCEDURES DON'T REQUIRE LICENCES

The procedures do not stop community groups or volunteers from donating food during emergencies or fundraisers. While restaurants and food outlets must adhere to legislation under the NSW Food Act, there is no licensing or accreditation system for people who donate food or for RFS volunteers who prepare food. Training in safe food handling is not demanded by RFS Service Standards or procedures. An accredited person is not required to supervise RFS catering activities.

### SAFE FOOD HANDLING PROCEDURES DON'T MEAN COMPULSORY TRAINING

In many circumstances, due to their dedicated, professional attitude, RFS volunteers, particularly in catering brigades, want this level of training and accreditation. RFS catering brigades have varying degrees of complexity in their roles and equipment.

Training and accreditation is often seen by these brigades as proof of their professionalism and dedication to their role. The RFS will assist and encourage them to do this, but will not require state-of-the-art equipment or rigid training standards.

### SAFE FOOD HANDLING DOES REQUIRE COMMON SENSE

Not all levels of catering want this level of training, or require it. But all should have access to some basic guidelines on safe food handling, and the option to consider training.

For example, in the case of food donations, the guidelines will recognise the years of experience in preparing food that organisations such as the CWA, SES, Red Cross and Salvation Army have. The procedures will also offer advice to those accepting donations on how to best store the food. All common sense.

The responsibilities and the levels of competency of a person managing the catering function at a large multi agency emergency, with for example over 300 personnel on the fireground, are far greater than someone who organises a barbecue for a small gathering at a brigade station.

### QUICK AND EASY GUIDANCE FOR ALL CATERERS

The procedures will provide practical guidelines on how to best prepare, store and handle food, whether it is donated for a simple function, or to feed hundreds of hungry, tired firefighters. The procedures also make people aware of the availability of safe food handling courses, and encourage people to consider taking part in them if they wish, but do not require it.

An interim Service Standard 3.1.11 Application of Food Safety Standards helps provide policy advice on this issue until the new procedures are released.

### WHAT SOPS WILL BE AVAILABLE?

The Service Standard and SOPs that will be published during 2005 will cover the following aspects of Safe Food Handling:

1. Food handling operations including receipt/storage/processing/packaging/and distribution of food;
2. Health and hygiene of food handlers;
3. Maintenance/cleanliness of all vehicles, equipment and premises;
4. Identification and control of potential hazards;
5. Systematic monitoring of controls;
6. Process design for corrective actions;
7. Record keeping;
8. Auditing and compliance; and
9. Training provided to personnel in the management and operations of safe food handling.

The draft documents will be rolled out in coming months and full implementation is expected to take a couple of years.

### WHO TO CONTACT FOR ADVICE

RFS volunteers can obtain advice by contacting their district staff, through the chain of command. Prior to the SOPs being released staff can contact the RFS Policy Office on 02 8741 5233, or 02 8741 5140 for further information. Email [pol&ss.feedback@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:pol&ss.feedback@rfs.nsw.gov.au) with any comments or questions.

### BELOW: FROM TOP TO BOTTOM

*The old Canteen Alpha with its crew in 2001 – Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Catering Brigade based at Cherrybrook Station .*

*The view of the interior of the unit gives some idea of how the mobile catering unit gets the job done. From April 2003 to year-end 2004, nearly 6,600 meals have been served during fires, training sessions and special occasions.*

*Hornsby Ku-ring-gai "Catering Alpha" is an example of an RFS Catering Brigade vehicle that strives for safe food handling practices.*





## TWEED'S 'CHUCK WAGON'

'Andy and Millie's Chuck Wagon' has provided meals for hungry firefighters and flood workers in the Tweed Shire for 10 years.

Millie Higgins and her son Andrew Preston of Murwillumbah Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) run the trailer, which Mrs Higgins said works particularly well for quick response and mobility in difficult terrain for the RFS and SES.

"Often there's a hiatus with getting food to emergency workers, and we can fill that by getting there quickly," Mrs Higgins said. "If we're called out to feed 50 people at Commissioners Creek we set to and pick up sausages, steaks and bread on the way."

"If they need food out to Mt Warning where the roads are goat tracks, then we can do it, whereas a bigger vehicle couldn't. But I agree that there are situations where larger catering resources are needed, especially during large fires. Our trailer suits for certain situations, but not for others."

"I can also understand why the RFS would want to make changes. Gone are the days when we

would cook a stew and put it in the back of the car. There's no need to take risks like that, but the practicalities must also be considered."

The 'chuck wagon' has two barbecues, a gas stove, two gas cylinders, two ice boxes and four tables. It is filled with non-perishables such as tea, coffee, sugar and other necessities such as cutlery and serviettes.

"Catering for emergencies really is about common sense," Mrs Higgins said. "Sometimes it's as simple as preparing a nutritious salad roll or not putting meat in a meal - because you can't refrigerate it or guarantee someone will eat it straight away."

"It is important to remember that even when all care is taken with quality, preparation, handling and transportation of food, if it is left unused for any length of time because of the particular emergency, it will become contaminated and therefore a health risk."

"The difficulties in catering emergency services is due to the work being done. Sometimes emergency workers are isolated, sometimes you can't get the whole crew in to eat at the same time, and they need a decent meal to keep them going, so you have to work with those conditions."

### NEW SOPS SUPPORT MILLIE

The draft SOPs support the comments Mrs Higgins

has made - it's about common sense, knowing what catering resources can and can't do safely, and providing guidelines to help determine that.

When the SOPs are released, it is likely that Mrs Higgins and son Andrew could use them to check against their current operation. It might show them that they are doing exactly the right thing, within safe food handling recommendations. They might also provide ideas on how to extend their service if they choose to do so.



Millie Higgins and son Andrew Preston with the mobile catering unit they use to feed RFS and SES personnel. Photo by Credit Craig Sadler, Daily News.

## THOUSANDS OF MEALS FOR HUNDREDS OF PEOPLE

The professionalism of RFS catering brigades is illustrated by Hornsby Ku-ring-gai's Catering Unit which provides thousands of meals every year during fires, hazard reductions, training and community events.

The Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Catering Brigade serves an average of 3,500 meals a year, and served 6,600 meals from April 2003 to the end of 2004.

They cater from groups of 10 to 20 or up to 250 in a sitting.

All active members have voluntarily completed the RFS basic food handling course and about half have done basic firefighter training with a local brigade. The Captain, Senior Deputy Captain and five crew members have done accredited food handling courses and 20 crew members will go on an accredited course in June 2005.

There has been no RFS directive for volunteers to do this, the Brigade has chosen to take part in such training. The District Manager and Hornsby Shire Council are supporting this with allowance within the budget for 20 more volunteers to attend the course.

In November 2000 Captain of the Catering Brigade, Olivia Carter, decided to work towards decommissioning 'Old Red' and developing a new vehicle to ensure a higher standard of food safety.

In December 2000 a Catering Working Group was created to recommend how to best deliver and supply a sufficient number of nutritious meals in a timely and hygienic way.

To the Catering Working Group, firefighters needed to be fed from a well-equipped mobile delivery and supply unit with the flexibility to prepare meals or transport prepared meals in a 'first response' situation. A back-up unit (Catering Bravo) was also needed to cope with uncertainties such as changing numbers of firefighters and erratic feeding times.

Many bus and truck options for the mobile catering unit were considered. In July 2002 an Isuzu long wheel base truck was purchased and delivered to N&J Motor Body Builders Pty Ltd at Wetherill Park. The fit out included a generator, barbecue, awning, fridge and freezer, stove, microwave, hot water system, three sinks and taps, water pump, light fittings, bain marie and accessories, air conditioning, hose reels, hand washing unit and kitchen utensils.

Active fund raising met the entire cost of \$114,756. Captain Carter spent every Friday afternoon for nine months at N&J advising on specifications to get 'Catering Alpha' right.

"We're very proud of Catering Alpha. Firefighters are fed in a safe and effective way, compliance with food hygiene and occupational health and safety regulations has been achieved," Senior Deputy Captain John Williams said.

"Our Captain, Olivia Carter, was the driving force behind obtaining the new vehicle. Without her dedication and energy we might still be trying to serve meals out of 'Old Red'."

### WHAT DO THE NEW RFS SAFE FOOD HANDLING PROCEDURES MEAN FOR HORNSBY KU-RING-GAI?

Hornsby Ku-ring-gai's Catering Brigade is expected to provide a range of services, from preparing fresh meals, to transporting prepared meals in refrigerated conditions. They are a pioneering catering brigade who did extensive research on how to best provide their service.

The new safe food handling SOPs will help other districts or catering brigades who want to reach a similar standard. There is no compulsion to do so, but the implementation phase of the SOPs will include specifications of how to set up a custom built catering vehicle. This doesn't mean catering vehicles created before the SOPs will become redundant, but it provides useful advice for new vehicles.

The new SOPs back up the training that Hornsby Ku-ring-gai's caterers have undertaken. They don't have to be accredited, but because of their specific role in catering, members choose to undertake training. The SOPs are designed to accommodate the more complex needs of a group such as Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Catering Brigade, as well as the simpler needs of other catering situations.

## BUSINESS ACUMEN LEADS TO BRIGADE DONATION

The task by four schoolgirls of running a small business has led to a \$185.90 donation going to the Illawong Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) in the Sutherland Shire in the south of Sydney.

As part of the Year 9 Commerce syllabus, Charlotte Moore 14, Julia Montgomery, 15, Sarah Gemmell 15, and Emma Newman, 15, from the Aquinas College, Menai, had to come up with a business plan, advertise it and then put it into action.

"Our business was a 'Silly Sizzle'", the girls said.

"We cooked and sold lots of sausages at lunch time at school. We sold 93 at \$2 each. We could have sold more but we ran out of sausages!"

The students, as per the rules of the project, had to donate their earnings to a worthy cause and they chose the Illawong RFB.

"We have chosen your organisation as we are affected by bushfires in our area and hope our donation will be put to good use buying equipment that can be used locally," the girls said in a letter to the Brigade.

"We hope our donation is a help to your Brigade and thank you for your service to the community," the letter concluded.

The donation did indeed help the Illawong Brigade. The students attended the Illawong station to formally present the cheque to Brigade President Peter Moore and Captain Bruce Angus. Each student received a certificate of appreciation.

**Story by Graham Davis**

## CHASING THE ELUSIVE EASTER BUNNY IN THE BLUE MOUNTAINS

For over 30 years, a Rural Fire Service (RFS) navigation exercise through the Blue Mountains has taken place around Easter - this year from 30 April to 1 May.

The objective is to reach a destination, as elusive as the proverbial 'Easter Bunny'. This is because a veil of secrecy shrouds the exercise up until the weekend it takes place.

This year the Easter Bunny exercise was planned and managed by the Blue Mountains Group Support Brigade for several weeks leading up to the event. Representatives from each of the district's 23 brigades attend the exercise.

As the destination can be on the outskirts of Lithgow or Oberon, brigades from adjacent districts are also invited. National Parks and Wildlife, NSW Police, State Emergency Services and NSW Fire Brigades are also invited and send at least one vehicle and crew.

The event is a four-wheel drive trail familiarisation exercise and is managed in accordance with principles of incident management (Incident Control Systems).

Each brigade team travels in a personnel carrier and there is a points score awarded for the best team covering Global Positioning System navigation, driving skills and practical knowledge. On the night everyone joins in around the campfire and in essence, it becomes the social event of the year.

The Incident Controller oversees the process where each team is given a grid reference for the start and a map. Progressive references are then given out by radio where brigades are required to report to a Group Officer at selected checkpoints. Overall there are an average of 20 checkpoints and as there are limitations around the information given out, the competition is fierce.

The winning team receives an award and holds the perpetual trophy for the following 12 months. This is a most coveted prize.

District management believe it's a great way of bonding the brigades as well as ensuring navigation skills are in place for those that combat fire within the remote areas of the Blue Mountains.

**Story thanks to Jack Tolhurst  
Blue Mountains – Operations Officer.**

## FUTURE VISIONS OF VOLUNTEERING

Don't be surprised if a budding film-maker knocks on your brigade station door looking for a story.

Volunteering NSW has just launched the Future Visions film making competition for young people. The program will run through schools until 10 June 2005. As a participating agency, the RFS is offering an open door to film makers to find stories about why volunteers do what they do.

The project is aimed at encouraging young people to value volunteering. Raising young people's awareness about volunteering is particularly important so a good number of next-generation volunteers are coming through. The Future Visions 4x5TM Young Filmmakers Competition also aims to provide credit where credit is often overdue: to the work and service of our volunteers.

Here's how it works: Future Visions 4x5TM will challenge young people to make short digital film about remarkable examples of the work volunteers are doing in our local communities.

The competition is aligned with many different secondary school subjects and is being supported throughout NSW secondary schools.

As a participating agency, the RFS is offering an open door to film makers to find stories about why volunteers do what they do.

By capturing the imagination of our young people and our volunteers – as well as parents and teachers - Future Visions 4x5TM will promote volunteering and improve participation in community organisations. For more information visit the Future Visions website at [www.futurevisions4x5.com.au](http://www.futurevisions4x5.com.au) or [martin.surrey@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:martin.surrey@rfs.nsw.gov.au) or call Volunteer Relations on 8745 5114 or 87415 5115.

## WALLACIA BRIGADE DEMONSTRATE SKILLS AT LOCAL SHOW



Wallacia Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) has been involved with the Annual Agricultural Show in the small town of Luddenham, near Penrith, for over 30 years.

The Brigade takes part each year by having a static display and a live arena demonstration on the Saturday night.

This year's show was held on the weekend of 12-13 February and the static display was assisted by the RFS communications bus "BIG ED". The bus had computer games for the children teaching them how to be fire safe and literature for their parents. Children also received a showbag.

The theme for the Saturday night demonstration changes each year. This year's display was the brain child of Senior Deputy Captain and Training Officer Jody Preston. Jody's idea centred on the burning and extinguishing of a mock house.

Other brigades assisting with the demonstration were:

- > Mulgoa with CABA search and rescue also fire attack
- > Regentville as back up CABA for Mulgoa and a backup pumper
- > Horsley Park and Wallacia were fire attack on the house

Insightful commentary on the display was provided by our Deputy Captain and President Steve Quye who explained to the audience what each brigade was doing.

RFS Cumberland Zone Manager came along to support. He commented on how impressed he was with the organisation and execution of the display by all the brigades.

The whole show went well and the audience had a wonderful time. Wallacia RFB would like to thank everyone that helped and participated in the show this year and hopefully we can do it all again next year!

*Story by Kara Glaves, Denise Glaves, Christine Maude and Cassy Semken*

*LEFT: Fire safety information was provided by 'Big Ed'.*

*BELOW: A mock structure was extinguished to demonstrate RFS structural firefighting skills.*





Rural Fire Service Approved

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All items are embroidered with the RFS logo

Item	Price	Qty	Colour	Size	Total
Polo Shirt - Double stitched Polyester/Cotton with pocket & Australian made	XS-XXL 3XL-7XL (L)emon/(N)avy/(W)hite XS, 6XL-7XL (N)avy only	\$29.00 \$31.00			
T-Shirt - Double stitched 100% Cotton & Australian made	S-XXL 3XL-6XL (N)avy/(W)hite 6XL (N)avy only	\$18.00 \$20.00			
Polar Fleecy Jumper - Half zip front with 2 slant pockets at bottom	XS-3XL (N)avy only	\$42.50			
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, Epauettes, 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			
Medium Kit Bag - Heavy duty nylon & zips, Base board, 3 external zipped pockets with shoulder & hand carry straps	L 50cm x H 30cm x W 20cm	\$35.00			
Large Kit Bag - Heavy duty nylon & zips, Base board, 5 external zipped pockets including "Wet" & Boot pockets with shoulder & hand carry straps	L 73cm x H 33cm x W 31cm	\$45.00			
Garment Sizes	XS XS S M L XL XXL 3XL 4XL 5XL 6XL 7XL				
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Postage & Handling per shipping address (Includes badges if part of order)					\$6.60
<b>SPECIAL OFFER</b> - Order 10 or more garments (excluding caps and bags) and your brigade name will be embroidered under the RFS logo at no extra cost					Total

Please print Name <b>and</b> / or Brigade for embroidering on garments and kit bags. Name or Brigade \$5.00 or Name <b>and</b> Brigade \$8.00	Type (Please Tick)			Total
	Name	Brigade	Both	

\*Red on Gold badges are Proban backed

Sew on embroidered Name or Brigade badges - 9cm x 3cm	Colour (Please Tick)			Qty	Total
	White on Navy	Red on Gold*	Red on Navy		
1-99 Badges \$3.30 / 100+ Badges \$3.00 Please note there is NO MINIMUM order For larger orders - please print clearly on extra paper					Postage & Handling per shipping address (Not required if included with garment order)
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Total					

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# SEE STRUCTURE FIRE SUPPRESSION ONLINE AT [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au)

Footage of Horsley Park Rural Fire Brigade's (RFB) structure fire demonstration can be viewed on the RFS website - [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au).

You can clearly see the progress of a structure fire, how easily it moves through a building and the suppression operation.

The demonstration was held at Horsley Park during Wetherill Park Rotary Club's Carols in the Park on 18 December 2005.

The structure was an occupied residential dwelling of timber and iron construction, single level, 5mx5m. This was constructed by a keen

member of the Horsley Park Brigade, Firefighter Vince Ciccotti.

Horsley Park Brigade responded, extinguishing the blaze using a Cat 1, two lines with two lengths of 38mm hose, and four CABA operators. Safety Officer for the event was Acting Senior Deputy Ayyaldiz and Incident Controller was Deputy Captain Luke Fowler.

The crowd of nearly 5000 was being briefed and educated through the event by Acting Captain James McDonald. The Brigade's one-day-old Cat1, was also on display to the community on the night. Horsley Park RFB attends about 400 fire calls annually.



## BRIEFS

### RFS SHOWBAGS A HIT AT SOFALA

Members of the Chifley Zone undertook a Community Education Display at the Sofala Show held on 27 February 2005.

The static display focused on asset protection, hazard reduction and evacuation strategies. The RFS showbags proved, as always, to be a big hit with more than 100 being distributed on the day.

### More than 100 showbags were distributed on the day

Members from the Wattle Flat/Sofala brigade assisted with the stand and conducted raffles throughout the day.

### RFS CONFERENCE - 18-19 JUNE 2005

The volunteers and staff of the RFS are invited to attend the 2005 Rural Fire Service Association (RFS) State Conference on Saturday 18 and Sunday 19 June 2005.

This year's theme is 'Working together for a better future'. The Conference will be held at Charles Sturt University, Bathurst.

Key Note Speakers include Director of the Western Australian Burns Unit 2005 Australian of the Year Dr. Fiona Wood and Bali bombing survivor Peter Hughes.

### TRIAL OF HINO CAT 1

RFS Engineering Section is evaluating a Village Cat 1 tanker based on a Hino cab chassis. The tanker was constructed as a prototype with identical Cat 1 bodywork to the Isuzu cab chassis and was built by Kuipers Engineering.

The main difference is the part-time four-wheel-drive on the Hino compared with full-time four-wheel-drive on the Isuzu and slightly lower overall height and higher ground clearance on the Hino.

The tanker was issued to Narara Brigade in Gosford. An evaluation sheet has been developed for completion by all drivers and crew to compare the performance and features with a similar Isuzu based tanker used under the same conditions.





## EDINGGLASSIE CREW FREES TRAPPED PERSON

At 1053hrs on 13 March 2005 Edinglassie Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) received a pager call to a diesel spill 1km on the Muswellbrook side of the Sandy Creek Bridge, Wybong Rd.

Edinglassie 1 with a crew of four responded to the call. Enroute we found an oil spill about 2m long at the intersection of New England Hwy and Aberdeen St, and then a 6m oil spill at the intersection of Wybong and Kayuga Rds.

The crew advised FireCom of the oil spills and requested that Edinglassie Cat 10 and NSW Fire Brigades Pumper 392 be responded to these spills.

About 200m from the intersection of Roxburgh and Wybong Rds the Edinglassie 1 crew saw a large, thick, black plume of smoke rising into the air in front of us. Simultaneously we were advised by FireCom of a motor vehicle accident at the intersection of Roxburgh and Wybong Rds, and were asked to attend.

On approach we saw a white sedan in the middle of Wybong Rd and smoke issuing from under a nearby tree, to the right-hand side of the road. As we approached closer people began waving at the crew pointing in the direction of the smoke.

Under the tree was a red Ford sedan, fully engulfed in fire with a person trapped inside. Another person was attempting to free the trapped person. The occupants of the other car were seated on an embankment away from the vehicles.

1112hrs - the following red message was sent to FireCom: "Edinglassie 1 on scene. Two car MVA. One car fully involved in fire. One person trapped and on fire. Urgently require Police, Ambulance and Rescue."

The crew deployed the 32mm live reel and extinguished the person in the car as well as the fire in the car. The engine bay was still on fire. An initial inspection revealed the trapped person was held in only by his left foot.

At this point Spring Creek 7 was arriving. Crew members offered support to the victim and prepared to free his foot so he could be removed from the vehicle.

**The victim was successfully removed from the vehicle and using an Acron branch a fine mist was used to cool the burns of person.**

The car was then extinguished and Spring Creek 7 continued cooling the car. All other people involved in the incident were checked and at about 1125hrs the ambulance arrived on scene.

Members of both Edinglassie and Spring Creek Brigades helped the ambulance officers with the treatment of the multiple casualties.

At 1136hrs NSW Fire Brigades Pumper 392 arrived on scene and Group Captain North sent them on to the Sandy Creek Bridge to look for the initial diesel spill. They returned some time later stating that there was no spill found.

The Westpac Rescue helicopter arrived and RFS crews assisted with loading the burns victim and his father, who also suffered burns, into the helicopter for transport to the Royal North Shore Burns Unit.

All emergency personnel on scene assisted the ambulance officers to continue treating the remaining casualties until all had been transported from the scene.

The initial crew from Edinglassie worked well under very difficult circumstances. All members of the RFS present at the scene – Spring Creek 7, Group Captain North and Edinglassie 1 – all worked extremely well with the other services – Ambulance, Police, Westpac Rescue Helicopter, NSW Fire Brigades and State Emergency Service.

The driver of the vehicle received burns to the upper part of his body. The 21-year-old passenger received third degree burns to 50 per cent of his body and both are receiving treatment in Royal North Shore Burns Unit. It is understood both will be OK as well as all other victims of the accident.

*Story and photos by Captain Jason Hayes, Edinglassie RFB*



# OPERATIONS



## SAFE WORKING ON ROADS

An integral part of the responsibilities of the RFS is to minimise all associated risks and ensure the safety of RFS personnel and other persons in the vicinity while undertaking activities on or adjacent to roadways.

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) have been developed to assist during non-emergency operations (hazard reductions and hydrant work) and emergency operations (bushfire, structure fire, vehicle fire, motor vehicle accident, fuel spillage, fallen tree and power lines down). See Safe Working on Roads Standard Operating Procedures version 1.1.

It is recommended that all RFS appliances carry a reversible 'Traffic Hazard Ahead/Smoke Hazard Ahead' sign plus three standard and three large traffic cones.

If the Police are present, they are responsible for the overall coordination of the incident ground, generally in consultation with the Senior Officer of the combat agency having jurisdiction for the fire, incident or emergency. In the absence of the Police or combat agency with jurisdiction, the RFS Incident Controller (IC) is responsible for the overall incident ground.

The IC (Deputy Captain or higher rank) at a fire, incident or other emergency may, when necessary, close or partially close a street or public place to vehicular and/or pedestrian traffic with other persons as the Officer deems

necessary (not limited to RFS members). The IC may, where reasonably necessary, sensibly and safely regulate the flow of traffic to ensure the effective exercise of the functions conferred by the *Rural Fires Act, 1997*.

A traffic controller is a firefighter or other person, wearing a safety vest, instructed by the IC (authorised under the *Rural Fires Act, 1997*) to stop or safely regulate the flow of traffic around or past a fire, incident or other emergency. If available stop/slow signs, torches, flashing red wands and reflective wands etc will assist.

RFS members may only control traffic during emergency operations. During non-emergency operations we may only provide traffic observers who are firefighters wearing safety vests, with the specific task of constantly monitoring traffic and advising the crew of approaching vehicles.

The IC is accountable for safety at any operation and each RFS Officer in Charge (OIC) is responsible for all firefighters under their direct control and other persons in the area. RFS personnel must wear full personal protective equipment (PPE). Appliances must be appropriately and safely positioned and operated taking the situation into account (type of incident, hazards, protection and safety of crew and public, terrain and weather conditions) with all visual warning devices fitted to the appliances (red and blue emergency beacons and hazard warning lights) operating when working on or near roadways.

Incident management shall be considered by the OIC and will include:

- > Analysis of the risks and hazards and implementation of controls
- > Priorities
- > Traffic observers for planned or non-emergency operations
- > Traffic management for emergency operations, which may include closing or partially closing a road in one or both directions and safely regulating the flow of traffic if necessary. In the interest of safety close the road using the appliance until the required traffic warning signs, cones and other resources become available
- > Additional precautions required where operations are near a curve or crew in the road or where visibility is otherwise obscured
- > Implementation of controls will be dependant upon priorities, number of appliances, crew numbers and other emergency service personnel and vehicles
- > Use of available traffic cones and traffic warning sign/s appropriately placed and operational briefing including safety to all participants.

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

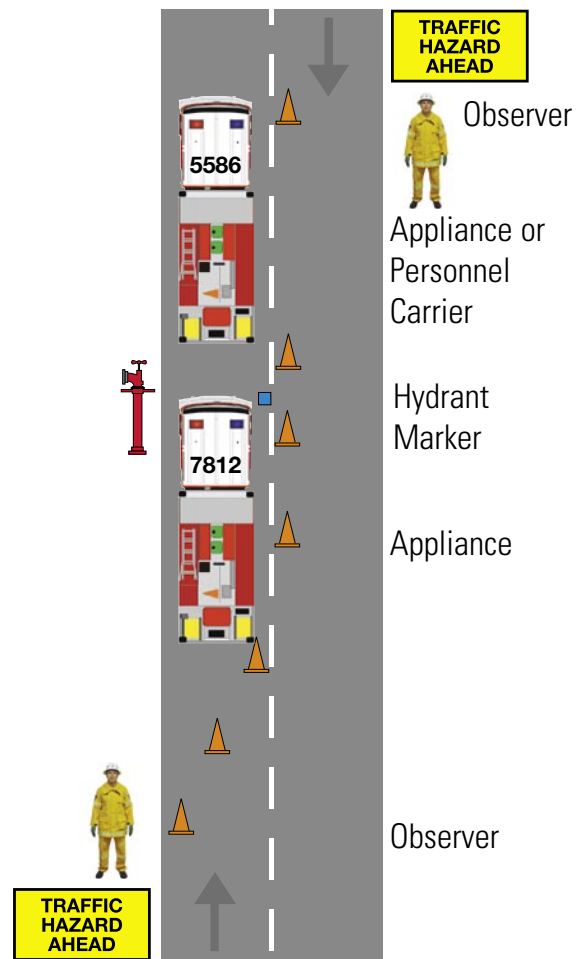
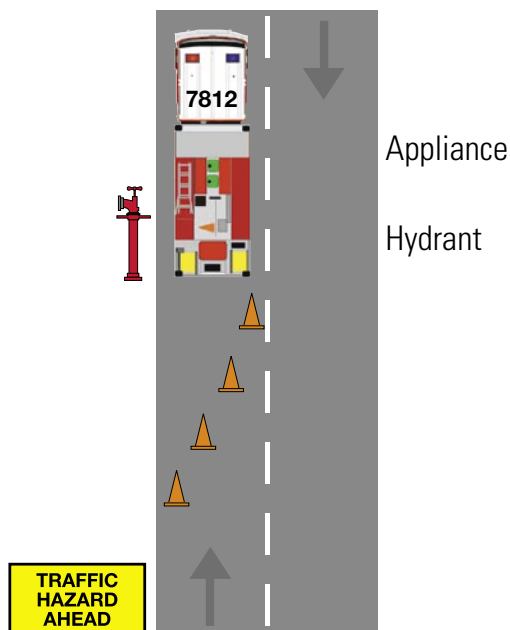




## Non-Emergency Operations Recommended Traffic Management

Filling from hydrant  
or for a breakdown

Installation or maintenance of hydrant  
markers on two lane road with speed  
limit 70 kph or less



"Traffic Hazard Ahead" sign is for any non-emergency operation or emergency operation, which may cause a traffic hazard.



"Smoke Hazard Ahead" sign is for a hazard reduction or fire, where smoke may be or become a hazard.





## Emergency Operations Recommended Traffic Management

Emergency Incident on two lane road  
affecting one lane in one direction.

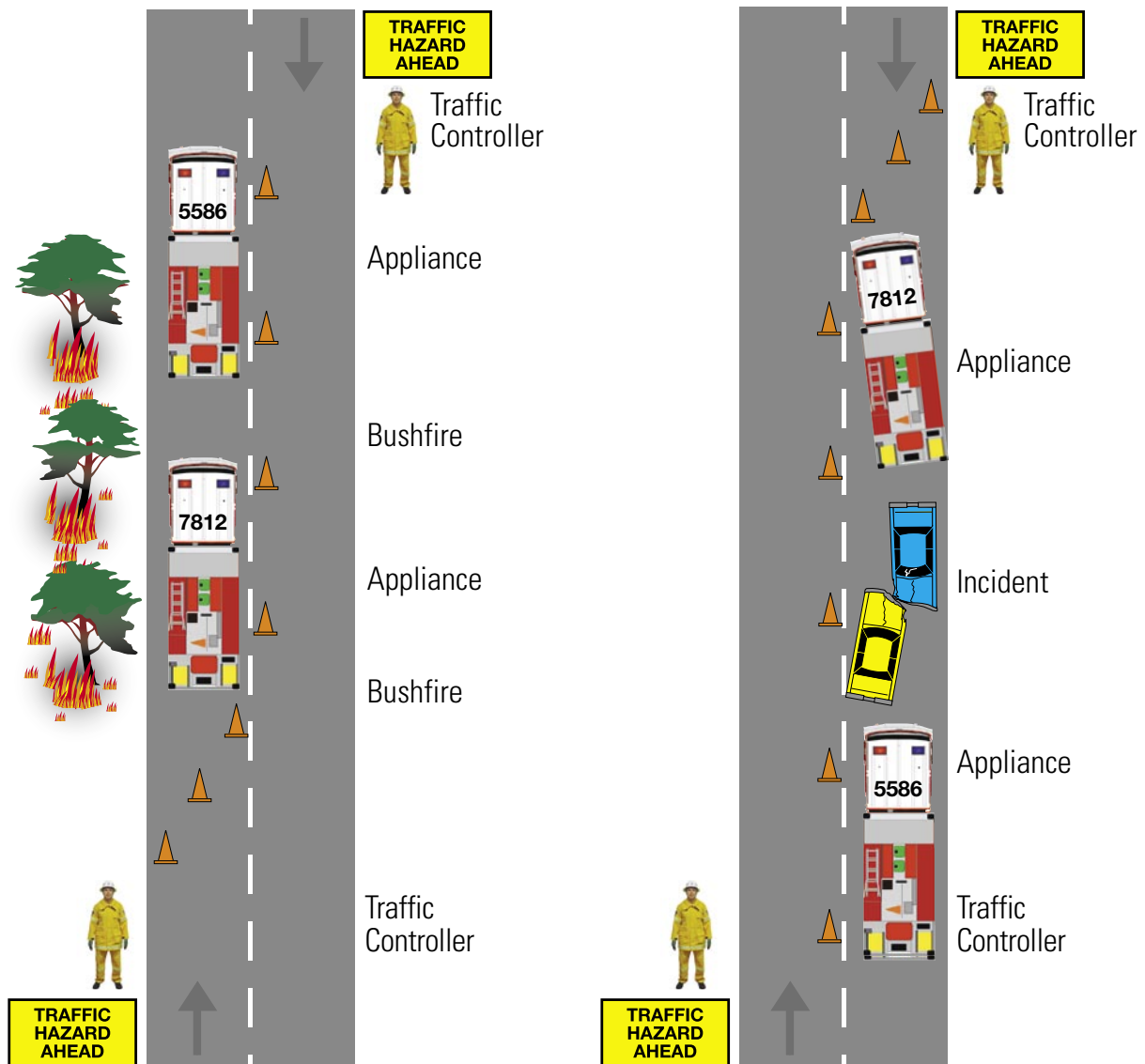
Two Appliances

REGULATE FLOW OF TRAFFIC IN ONE  
AVAILABLE LANE

Bushfire on two lane road affecting  
one lane in one direction.

Two or more Appliances

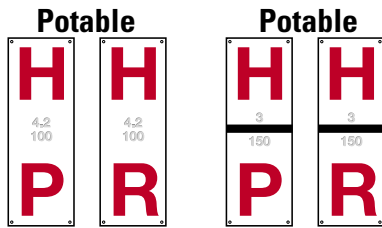
REGULATE FLOW OF TRAFFIC IN ONE  
AVAILABLE LANE



# Hydrant Markers

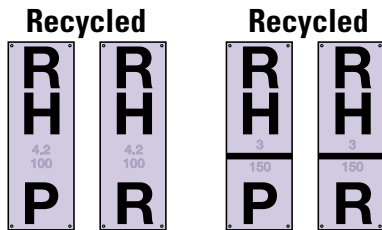
How to identify indicator plates for locating hydrants on potable and recycled water mains.

## Primary Indicator Plates



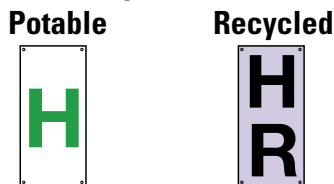
Primary indicator plates are marked with two sets of numbers. The top number gives the distance (in metres) from the plate to the hydrant and the bottom number gives the size (in millimetres) of the water main.

**Note:** H – Hydrant for potable water  
RH – Hydrant for recycled water  
P – Pathway  
R – Roadway



Black line on plate indicates hydrant is on opposite side of road.

## Secondary Indicator Plates



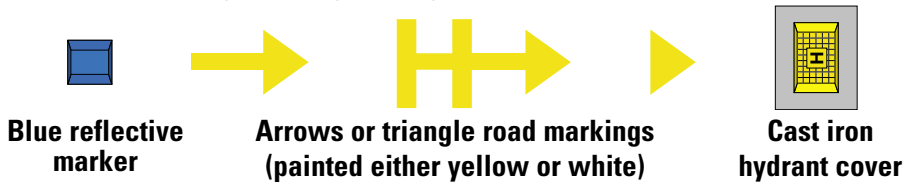
Secondary indicator plates should face each direction of approach from which the primary plates cannot be seen.



Static Water Supply indicator plate fixed in a location to be highly visible from the road and may include swimming pools, tanks, dams, ponds or creeks.

## Road Markers

Additionally, white or yellow triangles or arrows may be painted on roads, or blue markers may be fixed to the road to one side of the centre line. Hydrant cast iron cover may also be painted yellow.





# LOWER HUNTER

## FIREFIGHTERS STAGE HOUSE STRUCTURE FIRE

Rural fire brigades from Gresford, Vacy and Paterson responded to a house fire on Glendonbrook Rd at Gresford just after midday on Sunday 5 February 2005.

Gresford Brigade was first on scene and reported that the entire front section of the old farm house was fully involved in fire with flames leaping 30 feet into the air. Back up tankers arrived within minutes and firefighters using breathing apparatus battled the blaze for over 30 minutes. Subsequent investigations revealed that the fire was staged by...the firefighters themselves!

Zone Manager for the Lower Hunter, Superintendent Alan Gillespie explains. "The fire was totally staged by our training team to give firefighters some on the job practical training in fighting structure fires, and also to show them just how quickly a house burns to the ground."

When Gresford Brigade Captain Neville Lawrence was approached to burn down the derelict house to make way for a new one, he saw the potential for a very realistic training session.

"We don't often get to burn a house down, so we used the opportunity to hone the skills of our firefighters in a very realistic scenario," Zone Learning and Development Officer, Inspector Bob Gaston said.



"We made a number of dummy runs to give all the CABA crews a chance to experience some real fire scenarios and then came the real thing."

It took exactly 18 minutes for the house to be totally destroyed.

*Photos by Inspector Tami Snowden*

**ABOVE:** the old farm house on Glendonbrook Rd, Gresford was totally destroyed in 18 minutes

**RIGHT:** RFS crews donned CABA to experience the intensity of the fire



**BUSHFIRE HAZARD ASSESSMENT FIRE SAFETY ENGINEERING VALUE FROM PERFORMANCE BASED DESIGN**



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# LOWER HUNTER

## UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE AND WATER CONTAMINATION NO MATCH FOR LOWER HUNTER TEAMWORK

Well practiced cooperation between a number of State, Federal and private agencies was a key factor in firefighting operations at Salt Ash, RFS Lower Hunter Zone, of 8-10 January 2005.

A fire burning in the 70 km<sup>2</sup> Tomago ground water catchment to the north of Salt Ash moved into an area of Commonwealth property within the catchment.

The expertise of the Department of Defence, National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), Hunter Water Corporation, RFS, Energy Australia and the Native Animal Trust Fund combined to meet a raft of challenges.

The issues addressed by the team in addition to firefighting operations included:

- > Unexploded ordnance in the Salt Ash Air Weapons Range impact area
- > Contamination of ground water aquifers by flame retardants and sea-water
- > Continued mains water supply for firefighting operations
- > Maintenance of electrical power to pump water for firefighting and post-fire fauna rescue and treatment

### DAY 1 - SATURDAY 8 JANUARY

At 2005hrs six crew from Salt Ash/Williamtown Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) responded in the Brigade's Cat 1 and Cat 7 tankers to a fire reported on Hunter Water Corporation land to the south east of the Salt Ash bombing range.

On scene, they were joined by Tanilba Bay/Mallabula 1 and 7 and Hunter Water Corporation's

Cat 1. The fire was moving in a north westerly direction through dense coastal melaleuca and banksia scrub. By 2230hrs the fire appeared to be contained within a 4.5ha area and a patrolling operation was commenced.

### DAY 2 - SUNDAY 9 JANUARY

Patrols of the fireground began shortly after first light and indicated that the fire was still securely contained, but hot, dry weather with moderate south to south-easterly winds later in the morning saw the fire break containment lines.

The potential exposure for water pumping and treatment assets as well as infrastructure within the air weapons range was realised. At 1200hrs eight crew from Salt Ash/Williamtown Brigade responded three units including its Cat 5 heavy tanker.

During the afternoon and evening 15 RFS units from Tanilba Bay, Raymond Terrace, Bowthorne/Hinton, Dunns Creek, Anna Bay, Medowie, Soldiers Point, Martins Creek, Paterson, Vacy, Clarencetown, Stroud and Wards River Brigades were called up.

They were joined by two Cat 9 tankers from NPWS and a Cat 1 and Cat 9 from Hunter Water Corporation. RAAF deployed an airport fire tender and a Cat 9 tanker from the Williamtown Base and RAAF security elements were on scene. Plant provided by Hunter Water established control lines and backburning operations commenced late in the afternoon. By 2140hrs the fire appeared to be contained and perimeter patrolling and blacking out continued.

### DAY 3 - MONDAY 10 JANUARY

By 0700hrs the fire was well contained, but continued burning within control lines. A concentrated patrol program until last light by units from Salt Ash, Raymond Terrace and Tanilba Bay Brigades supported by units from Hunter Water Corporation and NPWS ensured that containment was maintained.

The Incident Controller said that the operation provided a valuable introduction to firefighting in coastal heath vegetation and on sandy terrain for many Brigades, especially those from the western areas of Port Stephens area and from Dungog Shire who had no similar topography in their brigade areas.

Salt Ash/Williamtown and Paterson Brigades were commended for their efforts in containing the northwestern head of the fire in dense vegetation and in a location where access was extremely difficult due to the extremely soft sand of the terrain. Their efforts prevented the fire from running into swampy, inaccessible country.

Although the incident was of comparatively short duration, the speedy containment and suppression of the fire was due certainly to the efforts of our RFS firefighters, but also to the cooperation between involved agencies at all levels. The operation highlighted the benefits of detailed management and incident control planning.

*Photo by Andrew Stegges*



*A fire burnt for three days in the Tomago ground water catchment north of Salt Ash.*



# LOWER HUNTER

## CATCHMENT COORDINATION

The Hunter Water Corporation manages three major drinking water catchments in the RFS Lower Hunter region, all of which have been affected by bushfires over the last decade.

The Grahamstown Dam catchment was heavily affected during the October 2003 Section 44 that burnt out over 2000ha of scrub and bushland.

The RFS and Hunter Water have benefited from fire research and environmental developments in the last 10 years and this has brought the two organisations closer together to ensure fire is managed as effectively as possible on all three water catchment sites.

Hunter Water has invested in a Cat 1 tanker and two Cat 9 slip-on units to provide fire protection to over 100 sq km of land in Tomago, Grahamstown and Chichester. A number of Hunter Water employees have completed RFS Basic Firefighter training and are equipped with personal protective equipment (PPE), GRN radios and have interchangeable firefighting equipment.

During the Grahamstown Section 44 in 2003, the Incident Controller requested a Hunter Water Liaison Officer work on the Incident Management Team (IMT) to provide specialist advice on dealing with fire retardants and foams near drinking water catchments and cross contamination of salt and fresh water. Hunter Water has since given the RFS access to their fire appliances for use during major campaigns.

Local RFS brigades have been given all-year-round access for training exercises and terrain familiarisation on Hunter Water land. Brigades undertake driver training on the heavily sanded fire trails and use the dams, ground water wells and 25 kms of reticulated water for pumping and firefighting scenarios.

Both agencies work together on joint burn planning which includes requirements for the RFS that are specific to safety, strategic value and effectiveness of burns and requirements for Hunter Water that are specific to drinking water hazards and water catchment environmental checks.

Hunter Water joined the local Bush Fire Management Committee (BFMC) in 1994 to provide land management expertise and to develop fire management techniques with the RFS. Hunter Water is also represented on the Risk Management Sub-committee and works with the RFS to address public complaints to local land management issues.

RFS Lower Hunter Zone and Hunter Water will conduct three joint hazard reduction burns in 2005 in preparation for the upcoming fire season.

***The Hunter Water Corporation purchased a Category 1 tanker from the RFS to protect their three major drinking water catchments. Photo by David Thomas***



## GREAT LAKES COMMUNITY EDUCATION MOBILE UNIT

The new Great Lakes Community Education mobile unit is now up and running. Volunteers used the unit for the first time at the Stroud and District Show of 1 - 2 April 2005.

Over the weekend thousands of people visited the quaint country town of Stroud and many visited the Community Education display.

Members of the public had questions ranging from when the fire season finished, new building regulations, tank water, asset protection zones and house sprinklers. Volunteers who were working on the display fielded these questions and many more relating to fire safety.

The children particularly liked the videos, activity books and show bags that contain lots of interesting information on fire safety. It was fantastic to see that most of the children knew

all about how to protect themselves during a fire. Their knowledge of 'stop, cover, drop and roll', 'Get down Low and go, go, go', and 'Dial 000' shows that the visits by facilitators to local schools is getting the message through.

***The team will take all the feedback and ideas from the first outing to make the trailer even bigger and better for the next event.***

***Story by Mark Blayden and Lorraine Bruce  
Photos by Lorraine Bruce and Brett Quinn***



## IT'S A BUG'S LIFE – FLIGHT FOLLOWING FREQUENCIES.

When RFS Region South was called to assist Department of Primary Industries (DPI) in the eradication of locusts, a necessary component of the request was to enable continual contact with aircraft employed.

The RFS had assisted with locust operations in a number of ways, including relaying water to aircraft and on two instances in Mudjee district, rural fire brigades attended incidents with aircraft involved in locust operations.

Finding communications solutions to assist the operations was another RFS task.

The air attack platforms required communication links with established "command centres" coordinating the plague spraying activities. The program of pest eradication began in mid December and was still underway in March.

The Aviation and Communications teams based at RFS Headquarters had been working on a program to ensure flights are connected and monitored, using our Stratnet radio system. The Service has a duty of care and an obligation to flight follow aircraft – which means we need to know where any of our contracted aircraft are.

The DPI advised of the need to track aircraft employed in the eradication of locusts, so a pilot project underway in RFS Region North as "proof of concept", was brought forward to facilitate a successful flight following program in RFS Region South.

The headquarters team rolled into action, receiving great cooperation from other government agencies in the site approvals and placements. Within seven days the red tape was cut and Operational Communications technicians were on the road to Narrandera to complete the installation.

By utilising a mid-band frequency (80 MHz), bridged into the strategic network, the Service was able to ensure radio communications from DPI contracted flights were relayed directly to RFS operations officers at Locust Command offices.

This concept worked so well the plan is to roll out a series of mid-band stations at strategic locations, into all regions in readiness for the next fire season.

The concept, placement and operation of this system will be further explored in following editions of the Bushfire Bulletin.

## NEW EMERGENCY SERVICES CENTRE

A new Emergency Services Centre, supporting both the RFS and the State Emergency Service (SES), was officially opened in Manilla on Saturday, 5 March 2005.

The new centre, opened by Emergency Services Minister Tony Kelly MP, has been designed to act as the joint base for the Manilla Headquarters Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) and the SES Manilla Unit.

RFS Commissioner Phil Koperberg and SES Director General Brigadier Philip McNamara also attended the ceremony.

In opening the centre Mr Kelly said the new facility was an investment in the emergency protection of Manilla families, farmers and businesses and fitting recognition of the vital roles the SES and RFS play in assisting their community.

The Station St centre has been a joint project developed and funded by the RFS, SES and Tamworth Regional Council. The purpose-built facility meets the operational, training and community support needs of both the RFS and SES, with shared meeting and training rooms, kitchen and amenities for the two services.

As well as day-to-day operations, the centre will be the central operations hub for major

emergencies that require a coordinated and cooperative response by a number of agencies.

The Minister said both the Manilla RFS and SES were recognised for their hard work to assist and protect their local community and also for their willingness to travel to help their colleagues when trouble struck in other parts of the State.

Mr Kelly presented a grant of \$2000 to the Manilla Brigade towards the fit-out of the new building and also presented Mr George Harley with honorary life membership of the Manilla SES in recognition of his 40 years' service as Local Unit Controller.

***RFS members with Minister for Emergency Services Tony Kelly and Commissioner Phil Koperberg at the Manilla Emergency Services Centre.***



## VOLUNTEERS AIR CONCERNS AT FORUMS

More than 150 volunteers gathered at Dubbo Civic Centre on Saturday 12 February for the first RFS Volunteer Forum of 2005.

The discussion, at times, was lively and the Commissioner acknowledged that there were a number of issues for western volunteers that need to be addressed by the Service

Volunteers came from across Region West - from Orange, Parkes, Nyngan and Warren - to discuss a range of issues with the Commissioner and senior Service managers.

Some of the topics covered in the three hour session included hazard reduction and fire trail maintenance in National Parks, training (especially recognition of prior learning), the tanker

replacement program, tanker trailers, recruitment of new members, and Service funding priorities

The discussion, at times, was lively and the Commissioner acknowledged that there were a number of issues for western volunteers that need to be addressed by the Service, especially recruiting and retaining brigade members in the light of population changes in rural areas.

The forum also gave senior Service managers a chance to explain changes in a number of areas including the handling development applications and issuing of permits.

The Dubbo forum is the first of a number of volunteer forums to be held this year, with others planned for centres such as Armidale, Coffs Harbour, Batemans Bay and Griffith.



## 7000HA BURNT AT ALECTOWN

On Tuesday 30 November 2004 at about 1630hrs, Mid Lachlan Valley Team (Parkes, Forbes, Weddin districts) received a call to a fire on private property 12 km north of Parkes.

Weather conditions were gradually getting worse through the afternoon and evening. The initial crews responded to the fire were unable to hold the south western edge and at 1710hrs more units and aircraft were requested.

Firefighting continued into the night with a Class 2 declared at 1900hrs. By now 22 tankers, two plant and four aircraft were working on the fire. The fire was declared contained at 2314hrs and crews stayed on overnight to continue mopping up.

On Wednesday RFS, NPWS and private units continued to patrol and extinguish hot spots. The fire had burnt grass and cereal crop paddocks within 1 km of the Parkes Radio Telescope. At about 1445hrs weather conditions took a turn for the worse and strong south-westerly winds, in some cases up to 80kph, blew through the area.

A second outbreak occurred to the northeast and extra resources were sent to assist. The weather conditions did not ease and the fire took a major run through dry vegetation. A section 44 declaration was made later that afternoon.

The fire was heading directly towards the small community of Alectown. The population of about 40 people were warned of the fire's approach. Late that afternoon about 20 residents were evacuated by bus to nearby Peak Hill. They all returned later that evening. The fire came to within 500m of the small village and had burnt out the local tip.

The fire was contained again later in the evening and RFS crews as well as other supporting agencies started the big task of mopping up during Thursday and Friday. Local crews and landowners continued monitoring the situation for many days.

The total fire area was 7300ha. The majority of area was cereal crops and grass land with hundreds of trees scattered amongst the area also burnt. About 640 sheep were killed. A wool shed, two unoccupied houses and 18 other structures were destroyed or damaged.

**Story by Cameron Wade**  
**Photos Cameron Wade and Rebel Talbert**

**TOP: The southern containment line.**

**MIDDLE: One of the D9 bulldozers used to knock down trees still on fire after containment.**

**BELOW: Fixed wing water bomber assisting with mop up operations.**





## HAVE YOUR SAY ON HAZARD REDUCTION

RFS volunteers are invited to have their say on the Bush Fire Environmental Assessment Code, a tool used by Fire Control staff to assess private landowner applications for Hazard Reduction Certificates.

The Code streamlines the numerous environmental regulations that control activities such as clearing and burning vegetation, making it easier to plan hazard reduction work.

The existing Code has been in operation since July 2003, and has recently been reviewed to improve its processes and increase the land it covers.

RFS volunteers can comment on the reviewed document, which aims to allow a greater amount of hazard reduction work to be facilitated through the streamlined environmental process by increasing the land area it can be applied to.

The existing Code only covers land immediately adjacent to certain assets, that is asset protection zones (e.g. the immediate surrounds of a home) and strategic fire advantage zones (e.g. the urban interface area).

The Code has been revised to include land management zones, and hence will now cover most land within NSW.

The revised Code also allows for greater asset protection works for public assembly buildings (schools, hospitals and churches) and other major buildings, and protection works in and around plantations.

Many of the assessment methods for issuing Hazard Reduction Certificates have also been refined, such as the standards for the prevention of soil erosion, protection of riparian buffers and construction of control lines.

Hazard Reduction Certificates provide peace of mind for Brigades assisting with hazard reduction burns. Knowing that a Hazard Reduction Certificate has been issued using the Code means all legal approvals have been obtained. Where sensitive

environmental issues mean that a Certificate cannot be issued, the landowner will need to obtain approvals through other agencies.

The revised Code will be on Public Exhibition from 21st May to 1st July. If you wish to view the Code and associated documents, see the RFS website, or your local Fire Control Centre. Comments must be submitted by 1st July to the Manager of Natural Environment Services at RFS Head Quarters, Locked Bag 17, Granville, 2142, or via [bushfirecode@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:bushfirecode@rfs.nsw.gov.au).

**To see how Hazard Reduction Certificates and the Code are currently helping hazard reduction, go to page 8.**



## RFS OPEN DAY: 8 OCTOBER – START PLANNING NOW!

NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

# OPEN DAY

SATURDAY 8 OCTOBER 2005

Visit your local Rural Fire Brigade Station

- Meet the volunteer firefighters
- Learn how to protect your home
- Learn how your brigade operates

Find out how you can become a volunteer

**SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL RURAL FIRE BRIGADE**

Contact your local RFS Fire Control Centre.

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

Priority supported by **Chubb**

RFS will always prioritise you and your community.

NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

Following the success of last year's inaugural state-wide RFS Open Day the second Saturday in October will become the annual day for the official Service Open Day.

### THIS YEAR IT WILL BE HELD ON SATURDAY 8 OCTOBER

Why this particular day? Primarily because even though the 1 October is the statutory start of the Bush Fire Danger Period, the first Saturday in October is a public holiday! So the second Saturday was chosen.

The start of the BFDP is the perfect time to raise our profile and get our messages out to as wide an audience as possible. Even if a brigade opens its doors for only a few hours it will help enormously.

The impact of this day can be reinforced by taking the opportunity to look at other initiatives that could be explored at each station, such as

- > Fund raising
- > Recruitment of new members
- > Dissemination of community education and awareness literature
- > Promotional activities, and
- > General public relations activities.

From feedback received after last year's event we know that there was concern at the inadequate notice given to brigades and a lack of resources to support brigade activities.

Chubb will again be the day's official sponsor and the Service is most appreciative of the ongoing support and the relationship that exists between the two organisations.

Brigades will be provided with a promotional banner – some received theirs last year – and there will be supporting written material by way of posters and flyers, some targeted at promoting the day and others targeted at recruitment of new members. All of this will be funded by Chubb – there will be no cost to districts.

The day will be supported by state-wide advertising on the PRIME television network and in regional and state newspapers.

A comprehensive communications plan will be developed and implemented to support the day.

**Start your planning for this day now!**

**Any questions about the day can be directed to Michael Watts on 8741 5478**





## RESEARCH PROVIDES INSIGHT ON VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

A number of programs researching volunteers will help the RFS ensure volunteer firefighter needs are understood and met.

### FIREGROUND DECISION-MAKING

RFS volunteer firefighters will have the chance to provide information on the pressures under which firefighters have to make decisions. Interviewers from the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) will talk to firefighters as soon as possible after coming from the fireground, while memories are fresh.

This knowledge is necessary to assist firefighters make decisions which keep themselves and others safe. The interview takes about an hour (and takes place after a meal and rest if required). The information is private and confidential. Firefighters can end the interview at any time and have the option to later contact interviewers to request them not to use the information.

### PERCEPTIONS OF AND BARRIERS TO VOLUNTEERING

The CRC, RFS Region West management and RFS Volunteer Relations Unit have been working together to develop a survey for communities in western NSW. The survey is designed to glean information as to how the public perceive the Service, its volunteers and why people volunteer. The survey will also include questions to address the likely barriers to volunteering. The findings will assist those recruiting new members of the Service - particularly in the declining rural communities of the State.

Communities chosen for the survey project are Tibooburra, Ivanhoe, Trundle, Tullamore, Tottenham, Nyngan, Coonamble, Lightning Ridge, Mumbil, Stockinbingal, Ariah Park, Trangie and Rankin Springs.

The survey is expected to canvass 5,000 individual homes from these communities.

### V 21- VOLUNTEERING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

About 250 RFS volunteers will be surveyed as part of the research project, "V21 Enhancing Volunteering for the 21st Century".

The RFS Volunteer Relations Unit has assisted researchers from the Australian Catholic University to survey volunteer engagement in and to the Service. Engagement involves the attraction to, initial engagement with, transition into the organisation, and ongoing commitment to the task of volunteering and life within the RFS culture.

The research findings will assist volunteer recruitment drives and will be published in a report available from the Volunteer Relations Unit next year.

Following issue of the V21 Report, the Volunteer Relations Unit will be holding a number of small focus groups during June and July 2005. Locations for these focus groups will be advised in the next few months. The focus groups will be used to discuss and explore implications for the RFS and its recruitment practice.

### NATIONAL FORUM FOR FEMALE FIREFIGHTERS

The first ever Australian national forum for women involved in firefighting on 12 & 13 May was organised by the University of Western Sydney and attended by RFS members. The conference was supported by the RFS Volunteer Relations Unit and a number of other emergency services. The forum is intended to :

- > Recognise and celebrate the contribution of women to firefighting in Australia
- > Discuss the issues faced by women in firefighting
- > Develop strategies and support networks and
- > Encourage greater participation of women in all aspects of firefighting and fire management

The forum is not designed to create a separatist movement, or to pit female firefighters against male firefighters. Women firefighters have expressed a strong wish to network, meet other women firefighters, celebrate why they love the job, find role models of senior firefighting women, and talk about ways of fostering change. Research has indicated that this would best be done, in the first instance, with women talking to women. For this reason, the first national forum is a women's only event.

*Hazard reduction in Gosford.*

*Photo by Rolf Poole  
Community Safety Officer Gosford*



## INSURANCE COVER FOR RFS TANKERS

Recently there has been some discussion about the level of insurance cover for RFS tankers, especially for property damage.

Questions about insurance cover and the Service are raised from time to time, and volunteers need to know that they will be covered under all circumstances.

The Service has invested considerable effort in training and equipment to try to prevent accidents from occurring, but unfortunately accidents can happen.

Volunteer firefighters are covered for personal injury under existing workers' compensation arrangements. They are also covered for public liability in the event of negligence.

As far as RFS tankers are concerned, they are covered by insurance for personal injuries caused to either volunteers or members of the public.

Because the value of the tanker plays a part in determining insurance premiums, local councils have arranged for property damage coverage. This cost is covered by a 100 percent reimbursement by the Service.

However, some councils, particularly in western NSW, have chosen not to take up this offer and let their property coverage lapse.

This does not mean any responsibility or liability for volunteers. It does leave the local ratepayers exposed to the risks that follow from not carrying adequate insurance.

The Service is working to encourage these councils to resume their property damage coverage, but in the end this is their choice. But it is the council and not RFS volunteers that carries the liability in the event of an accident.

## 12 NEW COMMUNITY EDUCATION UNITS



Twelve new community education trailers are now spreading the FireWise message for the RFS, thanks to the generosity of ClubsNSW and their platinum partner, Club Keno Holdings.

Club Keno Holdings donated \$100,000 for the new mobile education units. The RFS and ClubsNSW handed over the new trailers to volunteer firefighters at the RFS State Headquarters on May 16, as part of the ongoing commitment by the RFS to further enhance local community education programs across the state.

Each trailer bears the ClubsNSW and Keno logos. They will be allocated for use at street meetings, school events, community forums, and wherever they are needed to help communities be FireWise.

RFS Commissioner Phil Koperberg says that by providing bushfire prone communities with more community education resources, RFS volunteers will have even more opportunity to spread the 'FireWise' message.

"Community education trailers are integral to our ongoing community education programs – working with people living in bushfire prone areas is our first priority," said Commissioner Koperberg.

"By providing the people of NSW with more information on how to manage fire – we can all work together to ensure that bushfire prone communities are prepared to deal with the ongoing threat of bushfires.

### Community education trailers are integral to our ongoing community education programs

The RFS Southern Tablelands, Riverina Highlands, Monaro, Far South Coast, Mid-Murray, Far West, Canobolas, Orana, Tamworth, Northern Rivers, Lower Western and Upper Hunter received trailers.

Volunteer firefighters and community education officers will take the trailers to street meetings, school events, agricultural shows, local community forums and anywhere else they are needed to spread the 'FireWise' message.

"The ongoing partnership between the RFS and ClubsNSW continues to reap results for the community and the volunteers that work so hard to protect it," said Commissioner Koperberg.

ClubsNSW Chairman Peter Newell says that Clubs have always enjoyed a strong relationship with Rural Fire Brigades across NSW because of their shared determination to look out for local communities.

"ClubsNSW is proud to be able to help the Rural Fire Service in its vital efforts to better educate the community of the danger of bushfires and how we as individuals can better manage them.

"I urge everyone to take the time to visit one of the RFS education trailers during these next few months - these trailers contain an incredible array of information that may one day save your life or just as importantly, allow you to save the lives of others," said Chairman Newell.

*Inset: Executive Manager of Club Keno Holdings Rae Breakwell, Deputy CEO of ClubsNSW Wayne Krelle and Commissioner Phil Koperberg during the education trailer handover ceremony.*

*Above: RFS community safety and education specialists from around NSW attended a ceremony to handover education trailers provided thanks to the generosity of ClubsNSW and Club Keno Holdings.*

*Photos by Adam Hollingworth*



## GILGANDRA CREWS SAVE HOMESTEAD

RFS volunteer firefighters from Gilgandra District in Castlereagh Zone and State Forests crews worked to contain a fire between Gilgandra and Mendooran during a four day effort in March.

The fire started when lightning strike ignited bush at 'Rainville', a property near Goonoo State Forest on Friday 4 March 2005.

Low relative humidity and strong erratic wind conditions pushed the fire south-west towards a homestead and crews worked hard to protect the structure as the fire jumped a road and moved into the State Forest.

Around 50 personnel, a fixed wing aircraft and heavy plant worked to contain the fire that breached containment lines twice during the four day effort and burnt out over 460 hectares of State Forest and private property.

*Story by Rebel Talbert  
Photos by Phil Southwell*

*The fire burnt out over 460 hectares of State Forest and private property and took four days to contain*



## INTERACTIVE FIRE CHALLENGES YEAR NINE STUDENTS

RFS Community Education is about to launch the program "Fire Challenge" for Year 9 students.

The "challenge" involves the management of a fictitious fire in a rural area and the student assumes the role of working in an Incident Management Team (IMT) planning section.

The program consists of a CD that starts with a video of fire and then goes into a series of radio messages to and from the fireground.

The students are required to react to pertinent information within the radio messages. The task involves plotting the fire on a fictitious topographical map. They will acquire and relate weather information to fire behaviour over various topographical features and fuel types.

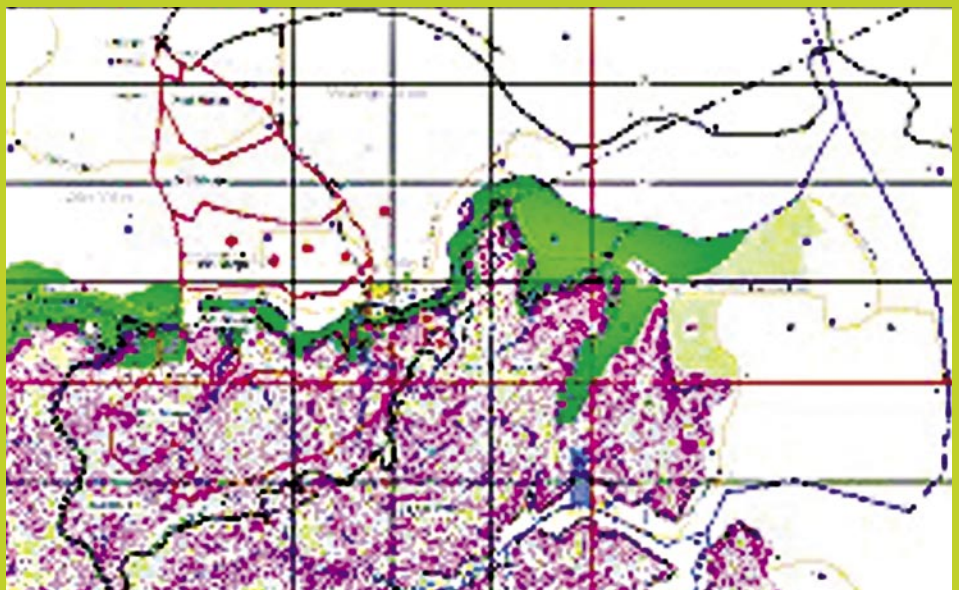
### Management of a fictitious fire in a rural area

Students are required to analyse assets and their values, to consider social impacts caused by a fire on a community and resources required to control the fire. The objective of "Fire Challenge" is to foster an understanding of fires, their impact on a community, the financial, economic and social costs and to develop an understanding of fire prevention and mitigation.

The program is part of the FireWise partnership with the Department of Education and Training. This program is an addition to the fire history syllabus introduced to high schools several years ago. It will be presented in schools and through remote distance learning.

The program launch is expected in the next few months and will be sent to all Government schools at that time.

Contact Terry Jackson on 87415417 if you would like to find out more about this program.



A sample topographic map from the "Fire Challenge".



# CHRISTMAS ACTION IN WARRINGAH PITTWATER

## A CHRISTMAS PARTY WITH A DIFFERENCE - COAL & CANDLE BRIGADE

Coal & Candle Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) in Warringah-Pittwater district had a more active Christmas party than planned in December 2004.

A few members were at the station on a Saturday afternoon setting up for the party, when Deputy Captain Roger Pearce came down the driveway in a state of agitation. The property next to the station had been conducting earth-moving, and had some heavy machinery parked nearby. DC Pearce noticed smoke billowing from the engine of an unmanned tractor and immediately alerted the Brigade.

The response by Coal & Candle 1 Alpha - 73 metres - was easily the shortest response ever. Firecom was notified and the crew attacked the fire with 38 mm hose, but as the tractor was fully involved, significant damage was done. Investigation revealed that the fire was probably due to an electrical fault.

This unusual incident gave us the latest brigade legend which came in useful later in the night when a large storm struck and knocked out power at the station.

The party was held by generator power.

## CHRISTMAS EVE EXPLOSIONS - TERREY HILLS BRIGADE

At about 1740hrs on Christmas Eve 2004 two loud explosions and a large plume of black smoke were observed by Terrey Hills RFB members who were in the vicinity of the Australian Native Landscapes (ANL) Depot at Myoora Rd, Terrey Hills.

The members set out towards the station and pagers were activated for Terrey Hills Brigade and the Flyer (first response pumper unit for entire district, crewed 24 hours). On arrival crews were faced with two trucks fully involved in fire, with the potential to spread to a large workshop and a 20 foot container of tyres.

Both crews donned Compressed Air Breathing Apparatus (CABA) and the Flyer crew cooled two oxy-acetylene cylinders and two jerry cans on the rear of the mechanic's truck, while the Terrey Hills crew went to work on a large rigid Peterbilt tip truck.

After discussions with ANL employees on site, it was established that the fire was spreading towards a workshop that housed fuels, oil and oxy-acetylene cylinders. A red message was passed to Firecom and Terrey Hills 1, Headquarters 1 and Forestville NSWFB Station 51 were responded and the fire was quickly contained.

A stop was passed at 2030 hrs and the scene was preserved for Fire Investigation.

Story by Terrey Hills RFB Captain, Ben Shepherd  
Photos by Kevin Kohlhagen and Inspector George Sheppard



**TOP:** Coal & Candle firefighters responded 73 metres to the tractor fire.  
**ABOVE:** Firefighter Heather Martin from Coal & Candle RFB gets to work.  
**BELOW:** Two vehicles were completely destroyed by fire on Christmas Eve 2004 at Australian Native Landscapes.

## NEW INCIDENT CONTROL SYSTEM TRAINING FOR INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAMS

The Incident Control System (ICS) has been used in operations at all levels of the RFS for many years.

Relevant parts of the ICS have been included in RFS Bush Firefighter (BF), Village Firefighter (VF), Crew Leader (CL) and Group Leader (GL) training for some time.

A new set of training programs is now being introduced for the people operating in incident management teams (IMT) at large incidents.

### ICS FOR IMTS COURSE

The first of these new training programs is the ICS for IMTs course. It covers the general principles of ICS and introduces people to the role of the various positions in an IMT.

There are no prerequisites for this course. It is completed using a self-directed learning/assessment workbook (i.e. you don't have to attend a face-to-face course.)

Successful completion enables you to act in any of the junior roles in an IMT to which you

are suited. It is also one of the prerequisites for becoming qualified to operate in any of the senior IMT positions.

If you have already successfully completed an Australian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS) ICS course or have been assessed as competent in AFAC Module 4.04, Incident Control System, you do not have to do ICS for IMTs training.

If you send an authenticated copy of your AIIMS certificate or 4.04 results to your Regional Learning and Development Officer they can issue you an RFS ICS for IMTs certificate straight away.

### COURSES FOR SENIOR IMT POSITIONS

Specific training and qualifications are being introduced for the senior positions in an IMT. These positions are the Operations Officer, Planning Officer, Logistics Officer and Incident Controller.

At some time in the future (i.e. a few years away) it will become a requirement to be qualified to operate in those various roles. However, until there are enough people trained in all of the

above to enable these qualifications to be made mandatory, they will remain as 'recommended qualifications' only.

Most of the training courses for the senior IMT positions have three stages – self directed learning and assessment, participation in a workshop with other trainees and participation in an Incident Management Exercise (IMX).

For more information on the IMT training and exercise system go to the RFS website, [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au) under Equip and Train/Training.

*Story by Phil Robeson  
Manager RFS Learning and Development Systems*

## COUNTRY MUSIC AND CARLTON UNITED – MUSIC TO OUR EARS

A financial partnership between the Service and Carlton United Beverages (CUB) at the Tamworth Country Music Festival proved so successful that it is being repeated in the south of the State.

Each year as part of the Tamworth Country Music Festival, CUB gives a financial donation to a specified organisation. This year CUB nominated the Service as the beneficiary.

The proposal was supported by advertising and point of sale material advising the public that 10c from each schooner of VB purchased over the festival period would be donated to the Service.

At the end of the festival \$10,000 had been raised. As a consequence of that success CUB proposed a similar promotional campaign in the south of the state capping any donation to the Service at \$10,000.

It is hoped that these two campaigns will represent the start of a longer corporate relationship between CUB and the Service with both organisations gaining significant benefit from the links.

## KOSCIUSZKO CORONIAL FINDINGS RECOMMEND FIRE TRAIL PROGRAM

The findings of the Coronial Inquiry into the fires which burnt out more than 1.4 million hectares in south eastern Australia and around Kosciuszko National Park in 2002-03 were released in December last year.

After reviewing the findings, RFS Commissioner Phil Koperberg welcomed them, describing the inquiry as wide-ranging, and a thorough examination of these extensive fires.

The Kosciuszko fires of 2002-03 were some of the largest fires ever seen in the region and it was only thanks to the coordinated efforts of the RFS, National Parks, State Forests and the local communities that they were eventually contained and controlled.

During the inquiry the Coroner looked at the causes of the fires ...

During the inquiry the Coroner looked at the causes of the fires and concluded that all were the result of dry lightning strikes. The Coroner also looked at the build up of fuel and the maintenance of fire trails.

The only recommendation from the inquiry was that the NSW Bush Fire Coordinating Committee (BFCC) consider augmenting local funding for an

ongoing program of fire trail maintenance for specific trails on private land - a recommendation which the RFS supports.

In addition the Coroner observed that the District Bush Fire Management Committees develop a realistic annual program that may get approved in principle by the BFCC as a basis for ongoing fund augmentation. The RFS supports this also.

In commenting on the findings RFS Commissioner Phil Koperberg said Coronial Inquiries are a very valuable process, providing insights into the handling of major fires and helping agencies such as the RFS and land managers develop better fire management strategies.

"The efforts of our firefighters during the very long and difficult summer of 2002-03 cannot be overlooked," the Commissioner said.

"They worked in very rugged terrain, under extreme weather conditions and not one life was lost and property damage kept to a minimum in NSW."

"Their courage and dedication, along with the efforts of all the other government agencies involved in fighting the fires in the Kosciuszko area, brought great credit on themselves, the Service and their communities."



## RFS ASSISTS AT HEAVY MACHINERY ACCIDENT



At around 1500 hours on Tuesday 8 February 2005 emergency service personnel were called to a heavy machinery accident at a property about 14 km north of Beckom, near Wagga Wagga.

NSW Police, Ambulance Rescue, SES Rescue, RFS and SouthCare doctors worked for almost seven hours to free a 27-year-old male who was trapped under a 22 tonne front-end loader after it rolled while clearing a dam.

RFS crews from West Wyalong, Kildary and Mirrool provided fire protection and coordinated the landing of the SouthCare helicopter that transported trauma specialists and equipment from Canberra.

Ambulance officers attempted to resuscitate the man but were unsuccessful. Police and WorkCover were investigating the incident.

*Story and photos by Rebel Talbert*



## HAZELBROOK TAKES PART IN PARRAMATTA AUSTRALIA DAY FESTIVITIES

Major Sydney Australia Day events at Parramatta Park and Penrith Lakes offered a unique opportunity to showcase the RFS to thousands of families.

'Friend of a friend' contacts resulted in the Hazelbrook Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) being invited to participate in the Parramatta Park Australia Day celebrations.

The day was better than expected despite rain causing the Brigade's site to be relocated under trees and under cover. Fourteen members of the Brigade trekked 14 kilometres and were immediately besieged by kids lining up to look over the Cat 1 tanker and to sit in the fire truck.

More than 750 kids and many parents, some waiting for up to half an hour, were shuffled through the cab with five at a time being given a brief explanation of 'how it works'. Many photos were taken – mainly on mobile phones!

A 1944 Blitz tanker – fully restored by Brigade and district members – was also on display while core facilitators from the Blue Mountains community education units had a busy time showing videos and answering numerous questions, many relating to issues faced at urban interface areas.

These included the decision to 'stay' or 'go', effectiveness of sprinkler systems and the merits or otherwise of the 'Elvis' type of helicopter.

There were many positive comments about the Service, the volunteers and the Brigade and donations to the Brigade were received from several people.

I know our members were delighted with the responses of children and adults to the Brigade's display, as were the organisers. On leaving the park we carried out a final 'child friendly' task – the rescue of a foam aeroplane lodged high in a tree. Task completed we left.

The Hazelbrook RFB certainly will be back again next year. The scale of the exercise is such that our Brigade will have difficulty expanding the display or adding further activities. A proposal will be put to our Blue Mountains Community Education Group to expand participation to other brigades.

Note – the Woodford Rural Fire Brigade from the Blue Mountains also attended the Parramatta Park activity as part of the Variety Club Bash vehicles display.

*By Stephen Wardle, Captain of Hazelbrook RFB*

## TRAFFIC HAZARD REMOVED BY FIRE

High temperatures and wind from the west caused umbrella grass to blow over and block the Canowindra Rd at Cowra on Sunday 3 April 2005.

Police were called to undertake control traffic and determine how to remove the hazard.

The problem was handed over to the local Council who made a few attempts to remove the grass with no success. They contacted the RFS Canobolas Zone Community Safety Officer to inspect the area.

It was decided it was safe to burn the grass with the assistance of Warwick/Glenlogan and Cowra Headquarters Rural Fire Brigades. Police closed the Canowindra Rd during the burn which lasted 25 minutes.

*Story by RFS Canobolas Community Safety Officer Supt Arthur Sharp*

*Photo by Col Fliedner, Cowra Shire Council*





## WEDDIN JUNIORS ARE BRIGHT LITTLE SPARKS

Weddin Headquarters Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) of the RFS Mid Lachlan Valley Team has once again started up their Junior ranks after a long break.

Since this picture was taken another two members have joined. The Juniors have been doing some theory at Weddin Fire Control with their instructors Chris Hill and Glenda Howell, and have recently been out and about learning how to draft water.

They managed this rather well, quickly picking up the skills they need.

A mapping exercise will be held soon along with an emergency drill. It promises to be fun! This could not happen without the support of the Weddin Headquarters Brigade itself. Members have come along to help out and it has been good for the Juniors, to see how things are done by the Senior members of the Brigade. The Mid Lachlan Valley Team Championships will be held at Weddin this year and it is hoped that the Juniors, while not being able to compete this year, will come along and learn a bit more.



Maybe the Alectown Juniors will spur them on to compete next year! A big thank you to Karen Pearce of Alectown for the smaller sized overalls. If any brigades out there have the smaller size overalls, how about seeing if there is a Junior Brigade that might be able to use them?

*Back Row: Jacob Wiegold, Areley Piper, Julian Pollard and Damian Hill*

*Front Row: Jessie Piper, Terry Ryan and Robert Ryan*

*Photo by the Grenfell Record*

## TEMPEST TECHNOLOGY

### Mobile Ventilation Units



Tempest has a range of Mobile Ventilation Units (MVU) for fires in large structures. When building an MVU, you have a number of alternatives including size, power systems, fan adjustments and mounting configurations. Other options include misting systems, telescoping lights, generator, equipment compartment and a lowering system.

### PPV Training System

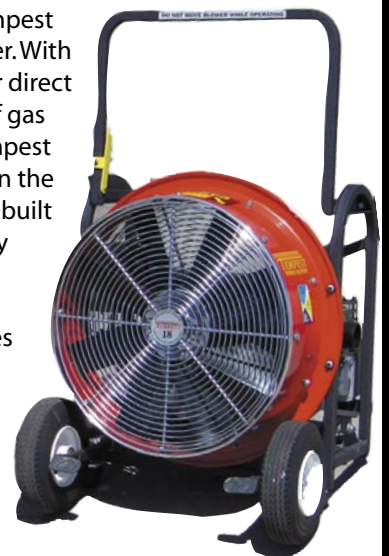
Positive Pressure Ventilation techniques allow toxic fumes to be replaced by clean, fresh air, making it easier and safer for fire fighters to enter a structure, locate victims and extinguish the fire. Tempest offers a number of comprehensive PPV training packages.

## World Class Blowers

For more than a decade, Tempest has been known for manufacturing the finest power blowers on the market.

### Power Blowers

You name the job - Tempest has the perfect blower. With a choice of sizes, belt or direct drive and a selection of gas or electric engines, Tempest has the largest range on the market. All blowers are built with the highest quality materials available and are engineered to last. And with safety features such as front and rear grills and exhaust extension you can be assured you're also getting the safest blower on the market



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with the

# community



## TX6200



## TX610



The TX6200 5 Watt handheld is not only a fully featured 40 channel UHF CB Transceiver, but it also incorporates a Wide Band Receiver capable of storing an extra 20 receive channels between 403 and 520 MHz. These extra channels can be included in the scan sequence of normal CB channels.

The GME Electrophone TX610 sets a new benchmark in compact 40 channel UHF Handheld Transceivers. Not only is the TX610 packed with features, its circuit design incorporates a super sensitive receiver with front end filtering and powerful 1 Watt output power. With twice the RF output compared to most compact handhelds, the TX610 is hard to beat in the performance arena.

**GME****Electrophone**



## FIREFIGHTING AND EDUCATION CONVERGE

**Thirty volunteers from across RFS Region North enthusiastically participated in a FireWise Facilitators workshop at Lismore on the weekend of 19 to 20 February.**

RFS headquarters and regional staff lead the training in order to boost the number of community education facilitators volunteering in Region North.

Participants were unknowingly exposed to the Objective, Reflective, Interpretive, Decisional (ORID) discussion method, a recurring theme throughout the weekend, as they introduced themselves.

It soon became apparent that the participants had both a wide variety of firefighting experience and a diverse range of educational knowledge. This set the tone for discussions as participants recognised the benefits of utilising the existing knowledge in a community.

A detailed look at fire sciences raised many eyebrows around the room as participants extended their understanding of fire behaviour. The effectiveness of using small 'bites' of video to reinforce a point was emphasised as the presenters showed some home video footage of the 2001 Christmas Fires impacting on houses in the Blue Mountains.

The first afternoon finished with an outside group activity that accentuated the importance of using a variety of communication techniques. All participants had a very pleasant evening meal, and fire and education stories were swapped until late in the evening.

Sunday morning began with participants using the Wide Angled LENS method to consolidate their understanding of factors influencing fire behaviour. These results were then utilised to plan a FireWise activity using the ORID method.

House survivability was then covered with a series of interesting photos of ignition points on houses taken after the 2003 Canberra fires. While using the House Survival Meter it became obvious that one of the key variables in improving the survivability of a house is occupant attendance.

This prompted further discussion on targeting of specific localities with different FireWise programs in order to provide residents with enough knowledge to make an informed decision whether to 'Stay or Go'.

The course concluded with a presentation on the forthcoming alignment of Community Education Facilitator training (at different levels) with National Public Safety Competencies and a course evaluation.

Any RFS member who is involved in Community Education should be encouraged to attend a facilitators' course as it provides many of the 'soft' skills necessary to be a more effective facilitator.

Region North now has an additional 30 trained facilitators who can't wait to become involved in all Community Education initiatives.

*By Simon Borgert, Community Safety Officer, RFS Region North*

*RFS Region North FireWise Facilitators Course – the introductions begin! Photo by Paul Fowler.*



## CREWS CONTAIN GRASS FIRES CAUSED BY TRAIN



A train travelling through the Jindalee area near Cootamundra ignited grassland in three separate locations at about 1420hrs on 13 January 2005.

The fires quickly took hold in the adverse weather conditions and eventually burnt out 600ha.

The weather conditions at the time of the fire included 41 degree temperatures with an relative humidity of 10 per cent and north westerly winds up to 20 kph.

The response was 12 RFS units, four NSW Fire Brigades, three fixed wing water bombers and two helicopters.

At one stage a number of farm homes were threatened. One was damaged during the initial run of the fire. Crews contained the fire by 2000hrs and continued mopping up for the next three days.

*Story by Cameron Wade*

*Pictures by The Cootamundra Herald*



# REGIONAL EXERCISES

## EXERCISE IS GOOD FOR YOU – 700 ATTEND REGIONAL TRAINING

More than 700 members attended the Region North and Region West exercises held in March and April respectively.

The highly successful exercises provided opportunities for RFS members to demonstrate their skills and learn new ones by taking part in simulated incidents and theory sessions, as well as coordinate with other brigades in strike team situations.

Crews were broken up into strike teams and took part in scenarios including; pumps and water management, motor vehicle accident response, heavy tanker driving, structural fires, electrical safety, fire scene preservation for fire investigation, HAZMAT, tanker maintenance, chainsaw safety, and transport of firefighting crews over water.

### NORTHERN FIVE

The Region North exercise continues to grow, with 500 members taking part in the fifth exercise, Northern Five, from 18 to 20 March at Glen Innes.

About 350 volunteer firefighters from 60 crews were supported by nearly 150 communication and catering officers, incident managers, marshals and field commanders.

Crews from around northern NSW stayed at a basecamp at the showground. NSW Fire Brigades (NSWFB), State Emergency Service (SES), Volunteer Rescue Association (VRA) and Police colleagues joined them.

"The exercise used the command and control system to simulate the conditions used to coordinate large numbers of brigades responding

to large-scale campaign fires," RFS Region North Manager, Chief Superintendent Ian Thomas said.

"The Region North Exercise gets bigger and better every year and that is due to the hard work of the volunteers who attend, who want to get the most out of the event as possible, and the committee and support personnel who produce such a well organised exercise."

Gerringong RFB from the Shoalhaven district in Region South haven't stopped talking about their attendance at Northern Five.

"The trainers were outstanding, the scenarios were very well thought out. Logistics, catering, communications all did a fantastic job," said the Gerringong crew who joined Strike Team Mike with Old Bonalbo, Bobbiwaa and Dundee Brigades.

### REGION WEST

RFS volunteers from all over the central and far west of NSW – some as far away as White Cliffs and Silverton – gathered at Burrendong Dam near Wellington for their regional exercise from 1 – 3 April.

They were joined by NSW Fire Brigades, Country Energy and the SES.

### "An outstanding success"

"The weekend was an outstanding success with over 220 people participating in the exercise," said RFS Region West Manager, Chief Superintendent Dominic Lane.

"Crews agreed that using skills they already have and building new skills has improved their capabilities to supply an effective fire service to the community.

"Working with volunteers and other agencies from neighbouring areas gave crews the opportunity to share experiences and firefighting techniques which will be invaluable during upcoming fire seasons.

"Managers and support personnel were also given an opportunity to rehearse their procedures and operations in a low pressure environment."

The Rural Fire Service Association (RFSA) assisted the RFS Far West Team in attending the weekend by donating the cost of airfares to make their attendance possible.

#### BELOW FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:

*Devils Pinch Brigade members deal with a tanker accident during a scenario at Northern Five, Glen Innes. Photo by Meeka Bailey.*

*Broadwater and Guyra Brigades suppress a car fire during a Northern Five scenario. Photo by Meeka Bailey.*

*Crews from Wilcannia and Cobar Brigades turned out in force for the Region West Exercise at Burrendong Dam.*

*SES transport RFS crews during the water transport scenario at Burrendong Dam.*

*Photos By Rebel Talbert*



# REGIONAL EXERCISES

## GERRINGONG BRIGADE PRAISES REGION NORTH EXERCISE

At 2220 hours 17 March 2005 Gerringong 1 departed the station, destination, Glen Innes. Crew on board: Andrew Sweeney, Rod Orford, Terry Wicks, Keith Gray and Alan James.

About 12km north of Moombi on the New England Hwy at around 0630 hours on 18 March we were flagged down by a woman on the opposite side of the road. We had noticed a small caravan and 4WD vehicle down in the gully and thought that it was someone camping, but in actual fact the driver had run off the road.

She was unhurt, but distressed because one of the five dogs she had in the caravan was missing. The 4WD vehicle and the caravan would have been a write-off; the two had parted company half way down into the gully after travelling about 150 metres. We contacted the police and while we waited for their arrival helped search in the bush for the missing dog, but were unsuccessful. We left the scene shortly after the arrival of the police.

We arrived at the Showground in Glen Innes at about 1000 hours. T-cards were filled out and handed to the staff at the entrance. Accommodation was arranged in a basketball hall and stretchers were provided. The logistics were impressive, with RFS containers full of sleeping bags and stretchers, two semitrailers providing showers and 18 portaloos. Tea and coffee was available on arrival. Dinner was at 1830 hours, with

a licensed bar serving between 1830 – 2030 hours. The catering staff were well organised.

The following morning, breakfast was available at 0600 hours. We were then divided up into 15 strike teams (Alpha to Oscar). Ours was Strike Team Mike led by Steve Corbet. It consisted of four Cat 1's - Old Bonalbo, Bobbiwaa, Dundee and Gerringong.

For each exercise a leader was nominated to give instructions to the other crews. Gerringong led four of the 10 exercises we were involved in. The scenarios were very realistic and had been well thought out. The presenters explained the nature of the problem before we started an exercise. After completion of each exercise at least 15 minutes were devoted to de-brief the crews, asking what we thought of the exercise, what we thought we had done well and what we could have done better. This was followed by a breakdown of how we had performed and what should have been done. We all thought the presentations were excellent.

Prior to departure from the showground all drivers were breath tested.

On the first day the exercises were:

1. An MVA where a Mazda sedan with five male occupants had collided with a tanker
2. Relay pumping from both fixed and portable pumps
3. Introduction to chainsaw safety
4. A burn plan for hazard reduction
5. Water transport with the SES to transport firefighters, portable pumps, hoses and drafting equipment to tackle a fire on top of a cliff some 20 metres high
6. Fire entrapment.

On the second day we encountered problems starting Gerringong 1 and had to jump-start from Southampton Cat 1. Reporting this to our Strike Leader, he organised for an auto-electrician to have a look at the problem. He reported that the alternator was in fact charging at 25.8 volts but that there was some drainage from the battery when the truck was not in operation.

The exercises on this day were:-

1. Fire Investigation when extinguishing a house fire where arson was suspected
2. Shell tanker roll over
3. Aviation safety relating to working with helicopters, pin pointing areas for water-drops
4. Vehicle maintenance and inspection with checklist – which will be used regularly from now on.

Overall, we were all impressed. Communications were stretched to the limit dealing with 15 strike teams to ensure they were in the right location for the right exercise. Logistics and catering did a marvellous job. As a learning environment it could not have been better. It must be a cost effective way of training, using all the top instructors from the region and involving 500 firefighters.

We left Glen Innes at 1440 hours arriving at Gerringong by 0130 hours on Monday, 21 March. All of us thoroughly enjoyed ourselves, and learned a lot from the experience. We have written to thank Brian Daly in Grafton for the opportunity to take part in the Region North Exercise.

*By Andrew Sweeney (Deputy Captain), Rod Orford (Deputy Captain), Terry Wicks (Deputy Captain), Keith Gray and Alan James.*



## THE CRAFTINESS OF LADIES BENEFITS COPACABANA BRIGADE

Nearly five years ago a group of ladies donated \$500 to the Copacabana Rural Fire Brigade, followed shortly afterwards by two more donations.

Members of the Brigade visited the ladies to say 'thank you' by making morning tea and enjoying a 'sing-a-long'.

The ladies adopted the Brigade but it wasn't until they explained how they raised the funds that they were nicknamed the 'Crafty Ladies' – a name which remains until this day.



In April 2003, following a tour of the Emergency Operations Centre, the ladies were made honorary members of the Brigade and presented with their new hats and badges, as well as a framed photo as a memento of their efforts.

Brigade members take the ladies on regular outings including nights out and barbeques. This is a classic example of young and old working together and illustrates the point that behind our volunteers there are other volunteers supporting them. Their generosity and friendship are highly valued by the Brigade and the Service.

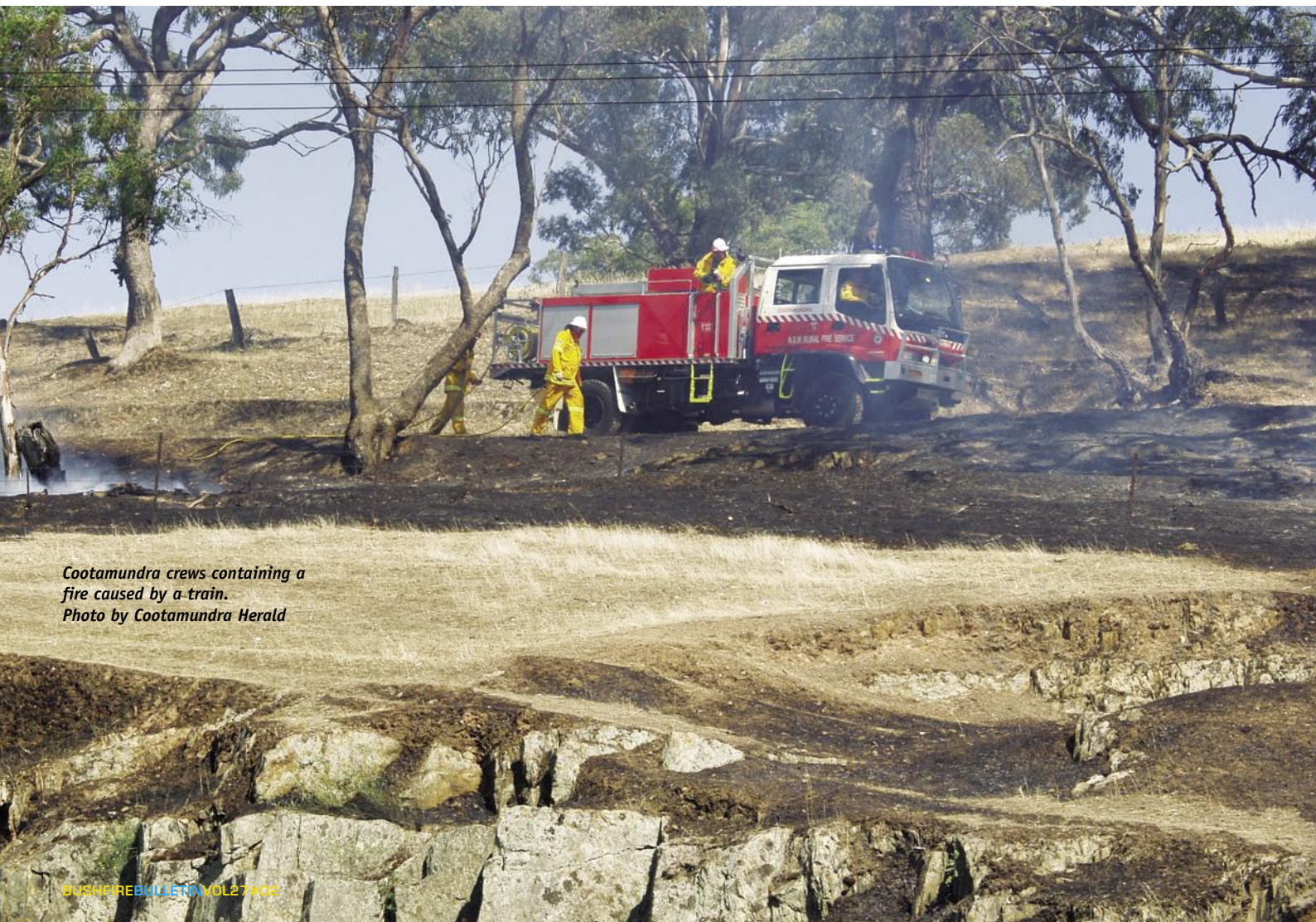
*By Alan Lundie  
Captain Copacabana RFB*

The Crafty Ladies knit, crochet and do craftwork, which they sell to their neighbours. So far they have raised over \$13,000!

Much of this money has gone to re-equip vehicles with updated communications equipment such as new portable radios, new portable PMRs, VHF/UHF radios, GPS units and Icom radios.

Most of this equipment has gone into the Brigade's Cat 9, which the ladies have adopted as their own.

*Crafty ladies take a bow! A big thank you to Wilma Cannon, Maisie Bissett, Bobby Small, Joan Mitchell, Enid Berry, Irene Hewitt-Button, Lorna Aldridge, Maree Beach, Audrey Young and Sheila Hughes as well as all the people who support them at their stalls and provide items to sell.*



*Cootamundra crews containing a fire caused by a train.  
Photo by Cootamundra Herald*



## WHERE IS IT? WHERE ARE WE? PATONGA'S NAVIGATION AND MAP READING COMPETITION

Brisbane Water National Park is the location for Patonga Rural Fire Brigade's (RFB) 2005 navigation and map reading competition on Saturday 4 June.

Teams from the RFS and other emergency services will participate. Competitors will have to locate a series of checkpoints identified by grid references.

Points will be awarded for each checkpoint successfully located with the team with the highest points tally at the end of the day declared the winners.

Trophies will be awarded for first and second places.

This year's course covers sparse open bushland, thick scrub, canyons and rocky outcrops over an area of 8km<sup>2</sup>. There are two radio checkpoints and 18 marker checkpoints.

This will limit teams to fairly open fast walking in some areas of the course and slow bush bashing in others.

Competitors will need to be able to navigate accurately, finding small navigational markers and plan an effective route to return to the finish point.

A barbecue will follow the event, which finishes at 1630hrs.

Entry is open to all emergency and rescue services including National Parks and Wildlife, Police, State Emergency Service, Volunteer Rescue Association, NSW Fire Brigades, NSW Ambulance and others.

For further information please contact Course Controller Mark R Zwan on 0401 710 190 or e-mail [zwans@bigpond.com.au](mailto:zwans@bigpond.com.au) and an application form and competition rules can be sent to you.

**By Mark Zwan, Senior Deputy Captain Patonga Beach RFB**

*Patonga RFB members set out checkpoints for the 2004 navigation exercise.*

## RAIN, HAIL AND FIRE - GLENHAVEN'S BUSY WEEKEND



The weekend of 19 - 20 February 2005 marked one of the busiest that Glenhaven Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) has seen in a while, and likely to be one talked about at training and meetings to come.

The weekend started with both our Cat 2 and Cat 9 vehicles with full crews departing to assist Dural Brigade in Hornsby District with a hazard reduction. The day ended abruptly when the forecast thunderstorms brought heavy rain onto the fire ground and we were released from the successful hazard reduction and returned to our station.

From the look of the clouds, and the wind, it seemed as though we might be called out on storm damage for the second time in two weeks.

No sooner had the truck been backed into the station and the last crew member disembarked the tanker when our pagers were activated reading "Incident - Glenhaven Structure Alight". We were responded to assist Kellyville Brigade with a house that had been struck by lightning.

When Glenhaven 2 arrived at the incident the house was well alight, with Kellyville 1 and 2 already on scene and crews were donning Compressed Air Breathing Apparatus (CABA) ready for an offensive attack. Glenhaven provided extension to the initial attack line as well as deploying two lines of 38mm hose (each three lengths) for defensive firefighting and exposure protection.

**On the way back we received a call on the tanker phone telling us that hail was falling in Glenhaven and Round Corner.**

Soon after Glenhaven 2 arrived on scene, so did Rouse Hill 7 and two NSW Fire Brigades appliances. Water supply was sorted and defensive firefighting continued until the CABA crews entered the building.

Unfortunately the top floor of the house was severely damaged. Although there was some water damage on the bottom floor most of the contents of this floor were saved. Glenhaven 2 was stood down from the incident shortly after the fire was extinguished in the top floor of the house.

On the way back to station Glenhaven 2 was notified of severe storm damage in the Glenhaven area and sent to Carinda Dr. The crew worked on two houses in the street, and then returned to station to change crews, after which it then returned to Carinda Dr to work on three more houses. It was joined by Glenhaven 9, which had been conducting storm damage work since Glenhaven 2's call to assist Kellyville. Both crews finished work in Carinda Dr and then moved on to the rest of Glenhaven, working until about 2330.

Sunday saw Glenhaven 2 again fielding a full crew and conducting storm damage work in the Glenhaven, Castle Hill and Northmead areas of the Baulkham Hills Shire.

**Story by Matt Schroder  
Firewise co-ordinator  
Glenhaven RFB**

**Photos by Wes Schultz and Cameron Wade**



## TOY DRIVE



There's no end to the generosity of RFS rural fire brigades. When Tamworth volunteer Pat Rogers visited her grandchild in Tamworth Base Hospital last December, she noticed that the children had no toys to play with.

Distressed that the children wouldn't have toys during the Christmas season, her Brigade, the Tamworth City Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) decided to take matters into hand.

Marshalling their fund-raising skills, the Brigade organised a toy drive. With the help of local toy stores The Warehouse and Toyworld, they launched the drive with a sausage sizzle in the The Warehouse carpark on a busy Saturday.

Donation boxes were then set up in The Warehouse store as well as the local RFS district office. Due to the generosity of the Tamworth community the drive was a great success.

Not only was the Brigade able to present the hospital with toys for children in the hospital over Christmas, but they were also able to donate larger toys and outdoor equipment for the hospital to use all year round.

**Thanks to Vikki Scanlon for this story**



# BUSHFIRE BULLETIN ADVERTISING RATES AND SPECIFICATIONS



## BOOKING DEADLINES

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

## ADVERTISING RATES per issue (includes GST)

1/6page	1/3page	1/2page	Full Page	Inside Cover
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475	675	850	1275	1800
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NICHOLE INGRAM

15 CARTER STREET  
HOMEBUSH BAY NSW, 2127  
LOCKED MAIL BAG 17  
GRANVILLE NSW 2142  
**TELEPHONE** (02) 8741 5555  
**FACSIMILE** (02) 9737 0171