

MEDIA RELEASE



NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

Busy start to fire season across northern NSW

13 October 2012

NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons has thanked volunteers and their employers across the state's north, after one of the busiest starts to the bush fire season in the region in recent years.

While milder conditions are providing some respite, there have been 670 bush and grass fires across the region since July, burning through nearly 20,000 hectares.

"Over the past few months, we have seen an incredible effort from NSW RFS volunteers across region north," Commissioner Fitzsimmons.

"Of the 670 bush and grass fires experienced in recent months, many have been burning in remote areas requiring a big commitment in terms of people and equipment such as aircraft.

"It's been an incredible team effort from our volunteers, Incident Management Teams and other agencies such as the National Parks and Wildlife Service, limiting the damage from these fires in what have been, from time to time, difficult weather conditions.

"During periods of fire activity such as this, the support of employers is critical.

"Many of our volunteers have taken time off work to attend these incidents to protect communities and this simply couldn't be done without the ongoing support of employers.

"In some cases, our volunteers are self-employed, meaning they have made a significant sacrifice to help protect their local community."

The Commissioner said the recent fire activity across the region is a reminder that now is the time to finalise preparations.

"We're hopeful of some brief respite with the current milder and wetter conditions but it's only a matter of time before warmer weather returns, with summer only weeks away.

"People should be taking the opportunity now to prepare themselves, their home and their family – and that means taking the steps around their home and property and making a Bush Fire Survival Plan.

"Unfortunately many of the fires our crews have attended have been the result of escaped private hazard reductions, showing how important it is for landholders to take precautions when using fire on their property," Commissioner Fitzsimmons said.

For further information contact NSW RFS Media on (02) 9898 1855.