

SUMMER 2010

BRIGADE



FOCUSING ON THE FRONT LINE

New Chief Euan Ferguson talks to *Brigade*

ALSO: COMMAND AND CONTROL, ESTA FEATURE AND FIRE ACTION WEEK

CONTENTS

SUMMER 2010

Kerry Murphy PSM AFSM



From the Chairman

With the fire season now upon us, it is very pleasing as Chairman of the CFA Board to witness the latest injection of communications equipment that we have been able to provide our volunteers and staff. As the years progress, technology is playing a growing and central role in our operations during fires and other emergency events. Communications systems in particular are becoming increasingly more sophisticated.

This year we have seen the roll out begin of more than 10,000 new digital radios over the next two years. When fully operational and matched to other systems, these radios will elevate our operational communications to a next generational standard that will have the added benefit of improving safety on the fireground. The new digital radios have inbuilt capabilities that will allow the sending of GPS information to pinpoint truck locations and short status messages from fire crews in the field. The digital mode will deliver clearer voice, especially in fringe areas and our firefighters will eventually have the capability to receive and send messages in either voice or digital message mode.

In a further boost to our communications resources we recently began the introduction of a further 4000 new pagers for CFA fire brigades this fire season. This represents a \$2 million boost to the emergency paging system. The investment means 33,000 volunteer firefighters will have pagers by the end of the year. Additional pagers have been a priority for many of our brigades that have recently experienced growth, and I'm pleased we've been able to meet this demand.

These additional pagers are part of the \$44.5 million Volunteer Support Package, announced recently as part of the Victorian Government's response to the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission. The package also includes upgrades to regional field training grounds, health and wellbeing support, and the employment of additional volunteer support staff.

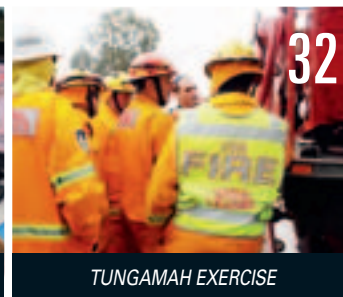
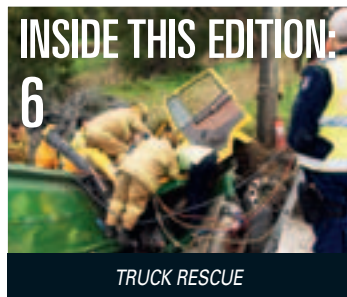
Our new Chief Officer, Euan Ferguson, rejoined our organisation last month after ten very successful years heading up South Australia's Country Fire Service. We wish Euan all the very best in his new role.

In closing let me again, on behalf of the Board, thank every member of CFA for your marvellous individual and collective support to CFA over this year.

I wish you all a very happy Christmas and trust you and your colleagues will have a safe fire season. ■

Kerry Murphy PSM AFSM
Chairman

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Cover: Scoresby firefighter Phil Miatke and new CFA Chief Officer Euan Ferguson during his first week in the job. Read the cover story on pages 4-5. Photo by Keith Pakenham

Brigade is produced by CFA Strategic Communications
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Design by Spike Creative (03) 9427 9500
Print management by Printelligence

Change of address

If you need to update your address details to receive *Brigade* magazine, please phone the FIRS RMS Project Officer on 1800 62 88 44.

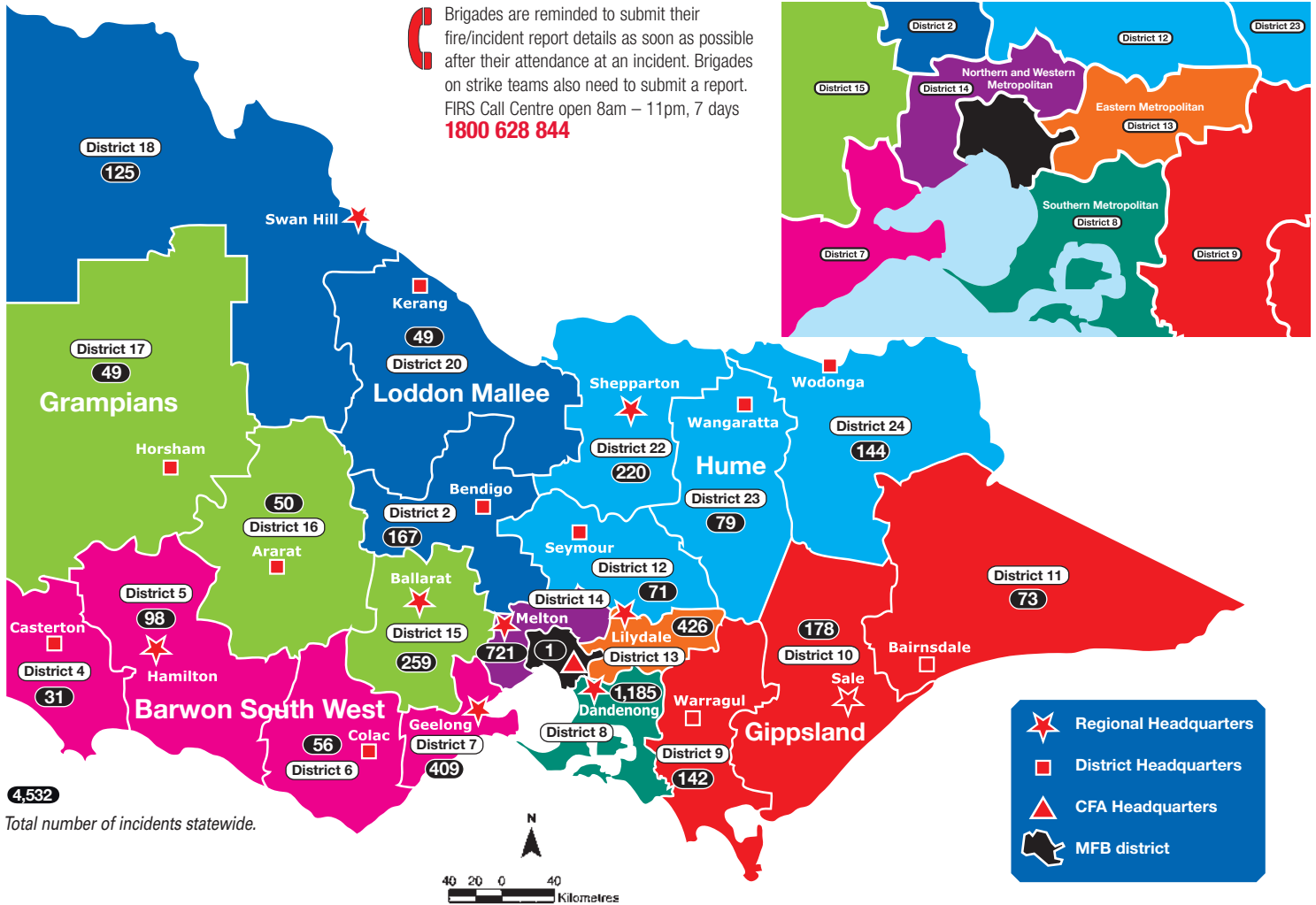
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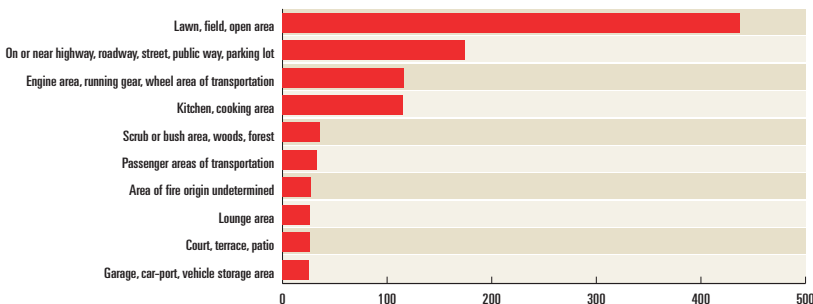
In this section of *Brigade*, we summarise CFA incidents and examine the total number of incidents for each region. All statistical information has been extracted from CFA's Fire and Incident Reporting System (FIRS).

Summary	July – September 2010			1 October – 18 November 2010		
	Est. loss	Est. ha burnt	Incident count	Est. loss	Est. ha burnt	Incident count
Bush and Forest		0	0*		175	8
Car Fires and MVA			1,042			619
False Alarms			1,587			1819
Grass Fires		4	4#		67	12
Hazardous Materials			548			306
House Fires	\$13,575,421		320	\$7,013,250		135
Industrial Fires	\$2,476,300		47	\$1,508,600		24
	\$16,051,721	4	3,548	\$8,521,850	242	1,923

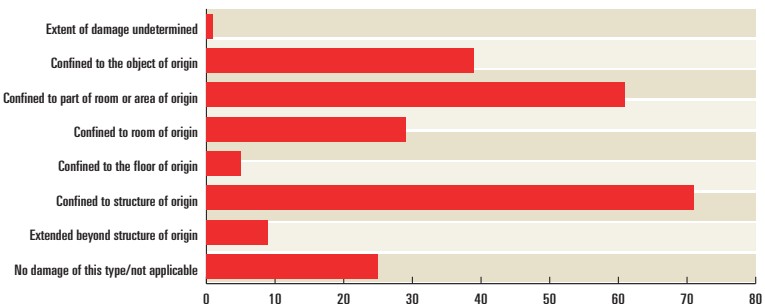
*These figures only represent Forest and Bush fires and Scrub or Bush and Grass mixture fires larger than one hectare
larger than one hectare



Top 10 fire starts 1 October – 18 November 2010



Extent of flame damage 1 October – 18 November 2010





Euan Ferguson does the media circuit and meets with members during his first week as CFA Chief Officer. Photos by Keith Pakenham

CFA welcomes back experienced leader

Euan Ferguson's appointment as Chief Officer of CFA has been roundly applauded both inside and outside the organisation. He returns to CFA after almost 10 years heading up South Australia's Country Fire Service. And his credentials as a leader in the fire services are about as impressive as one can get.

Our new Chief Officer brings to CFA a remarkable level of experience across three fire services spanning thirty-plus years of his career. In fact he has been fighting fires since 1977 when he started as a young Field Forester for the Victorian Forests Commission at Bruthen in East Gippsland. He spent about 17 years in forest fire before moving on to CFA.

Euan joined CFA in 1993, initially starting at the training centre at Fiskville setting up specialist courses for air observers, as well as forest and plantation firefighting.

He spent several years as Operations Manager at Sale in East Gippsland and has maintained a strong contact with the people there.

In 1998, Euan took on the role as the Manager of Forest Industry Brigades. Later that year he led a team that conducted the operations review of the Linton fires in which five CFA firefighters lost their lives.

Euan was later Manager Operational Planning - Deputy Chief Officer, and Acting Chief Officer, before moving to South Australia in 2001.

He is a past President and Chair of the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council (AFAC).

Brigade's Darren Grevis-James spoke with Euan recently.

BRIGADE: How do you feel about accepting the CFA Chief Officer role?

EUAN FERGUSON: I'm honoured to have been selected as CFA's Chief Officer. CFA is a great team and I am privileged to be one of its leaders. However, I'm very wary about coming into CFA and telling people how things are going to be done over the next five years. What I want to do is get around the state very early and listen to volunteers and staff throughout the chain of command to hear what their issues and aspirations are, and to test some ideas and thoughts that I have.

I'm looking forward to the challenges ahead, I am pleased to be able to join a team that will be working through the lessons learnt from the 2009 fires and the recommendations we have adopted from our reviews and those of the Bushfires Royal Commission. I'd like to reinforce the importance of the role of CFA's volunteers and of our frontline firefighting staff and I look forward to getting out and engaging with them. In my view, a key role of senior management is to provide support and resources so that firefighters feel well-sustained, trained, equipped and well-led.

BRIGADE: Do you have any particular philosophy about being the Chief Officer of CFA?

EUAN FERGUSON: I do have a very strong philosophy, and that is that the person who is at the frontline is actually the most important person in the organisation. So that might be the person who is on the end of the cutting tool, the person who is donning the fully encapsulated gas suit to do a hazmat job; it might be the person who is sitting down with the community in a neighbourhood explaining a bushfire survival plan. In my view it's the rest of the organisation that exists to support that man or woman. Everything we do should be to underpin and maximise the support to these people.

*...the person who is at the frontline
is actually the most important
person in the organisation*

BRIGADE: How will you be communicating with CFA people?

EUAN FERGUSON: People think of fire services and they think of trucks, they think of aircraft, hazmat vans, road rescue equipment. I look at a fire service and I see people. If you accept that the fire service delivery is done by individual people then the way in which you design your systems of work is one where you bring those people together and the sense of collaboration really has to underpin everything.

So we need to have an intent that is underlined, and common within the CFA organisation. We need to have more conversation with our own people. That's all about listening and communicating with our members on matters that are both good and bad. You must bring to the table an attitude that we can do a good job, we can also challenge ourselves and improve, but the best way of doing that is by working together. And it's important, particularly as a volunteer organisation, that our people are getting satisfaction in the job they do.

BRIGADE: What's been an important achievement for you personally in your fire service career?

EUAN FERGUSON: One thing I'm proud to be associated with is the introduction of a culture around firefighter safety. This emerged out of the tragedy of the Linton fire in 1998. I was fortunate to led a team that conducted a review of the operations at Linton, which claimed the lives of five CFA firefighters. One good outcome that emerged was a renewed and vigorous approach to how firefighters conduct their activity on the



BY DARREN GREVIS-JAMES

fireground and during all emergency events and incidents. It's telling that the safety culture is alive and well and that's something that I will continue to pursue in my role as Chief Officer.

BRIGADE: What influences your style of management?

EUAN FERGUSON: One of the things that I am very comfortable with is looking at an organisation like CFA that has a whole range of policies, procedures and standing orders and recognising that often we look at the detail and forget about the objective and how we are going to achieve that. So I'll be drawing some conclusions about the systems of work that are in place in CFA. I think you need systems that allow you to change and adapt. In other words the organisation needs to recognise that we will always be capturing the lessons we learn from a previous fire season or a major incident and adapting to improve our business.

BRIGADE: You have mentioned that you might consider applying a different approach to CFA operations management. What do you have in mind?

EUAN FERGUSON: I'm an advocate of a number of systems that the military uses. I spent some years in the Australian Army Reserve, which for me were formative, and I am comfortable with a number of philosophies that the Australian Defence Force is currently putting in place. One of these is a concept of 'Mission Command' which I think is very suitable for an organisation like CFA.

Mission Command is a command and control philosophy which is adapted to organisations that are decentralised with a delegated change of command. This is usually found in an environment where commanders are encouraged to use common sense to exercise initiative and operate in sometimes a very dynamic and difficult environment where the level of direction may not be as great as in a normal work environment. I intend testing that concept of mission command when I have discussions with our operations people.

BRIGADE: Do you see as the future challenges for CFA?

EUAN FERGUSON: CFA will need to continue to be agile and respond to changes and adapt to better ways of doing things. We also need to listen more intently to what the community needs from CFA.

There have been some very important issues and expectations that have been set as a result of the Bushfires Royal Commission. We have a bushfires implementation program and that will be a foremost priority of focus to make sure all the changes that we are committed to are introduced and developed to the best standards.

Our challenge will continue to be getting out information that is accurate and timely. We also need to exploit technology that is proven, reliable and stands up under pressure. ■

Euan Ferguson



From the Chief Officer

It is great to be back at CFA following my 10 years with South Australia's Country Fire Service.

Stepping into the role of Chief Officer CFA, it's impressive to see how CFA has advanced over the last decade with the introduction of new trucks, fire stations, equipment and personal gear. It's well-recognised around Australia that CFA has been a leader in the fire and emergency services sector in introducing many innovative designs and procedures, particularly following the fires of 2009.

Underpinning this, of course, the volunteers and paid staff have not changed in terms of their dedication and service to the organisation – however as I move around the organisation even in these early weeks of re-joining, I believe CFA members are more professional than ever in the skills they apply whether it be in operations, or community safety, mechanical support, technical services or administration.

It is my intention in the first few months to continue to be out and about the state as time permits to visit brigades and District HQs, and talk with as many CFA members as I can at all levels of the organisation.

My full focus of attention will of course be leading CFA Operations through what is expected to be no less a dangerous fire season than we have normally come to expect in Victoria. As we move further into a summer that is forecast to have average rain and above average temperatures, we will need to be focused and prepared to respond to any bushfire threat.

Despite the big rains we had through the second half of the year the immediate risk of bushfires is very real. The recent spring rains have promoted growth of grass and crops, particularly in the north central and western parts of the state. So you need to be well-prepared for fast-moving fire in these grasslands around Victoria.

With summer comes a heightened and more frequent level of fire risk, so I implore all CFA members to maintain the highest standards of group and personal safety particularly those that work on the fireground. That said, safety must also remain of primary focus if you are attending any emergency event, whether it be road accident rescue, hazmat incidents, or structure fires.

I look forward to the challenges ahead and working with you in delivering excellent fire and emergency service to the community of Victoria.

May you all have a happy festive season and above all a safe fire season. ■

Euan Ferguson AFSM
Chief Officer



Photos by Keith Pakenham

Lucky escape

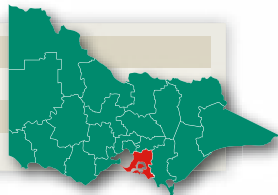
BY SOPHIE JACKSON

Incident: Dandenong rescue

District: 8

Date: 27 August 2010

Brigades: Dandenong



CFA was called to a rescue in Dandenong North on 27 August after a truck and trailer ran off a bridge and into a creek.

The truck, filled with cement, had veered off Stud Road and into a ravine in Dandenong Creek. When Incident Controller Greg Christison arrived at the scene he found several civilians trying to aid the trapped male driver.

Dandenong Pumper 1 and 2, Dandenong Rescue and the Dandenong Support Vehicle, along with 11 crew members worked for just under two hours to release the injured driver. The fully loaded trailer, containing

16 tons of reclaimed concrete, was thrown from the vehicle and into the creek without crushing the cabin further. The trailer did, however, come unhitched, moving forward and trapping the occupant by pressing his legs against the dashboard inside the cabin.

Rescue Commander Greg Anderson coordinated the rescue operators to stabilise the truck and work alongside paramedics in very messy conditions to ensure the male was released with as little injuries as possible. He was later transported by Air Ambulance to the Alfred Hospital.

Other services to attend included Victoria Police, Environment Protection Authority, VicRoads, Melbourne Water, Boral representatives and heavy haulage crews.

The rescue generated much discussion on CFA's online and social media networks, with many users, including a friend of the truck driver and the truck driver himself, later praising rescue crews on CFA's Facebook page. ■



Photos by Ryan O'Shannessy & Cassie Kirrane

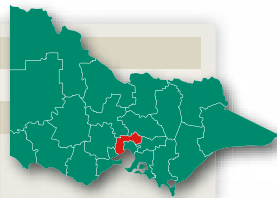
Smokey start to school BY KRIS PERKOVIC

Incident: Coimadai bus fire

District: 14

Date: 9 September 2010

Brigades: Bacchus Marsh, Coimadai, Bullengarook



When crews responded to a bus fire on Gisborne-Bacchus Marsh Road, near the small hamlet of Coimadai on 9 September, the 42-seater bus was fully involved, with flame and thick smoke. Crews used breathing apparatus in the firefight and had the fire suppressed in about 20 minutes.

Incident controller Ryan O'Shannessy says the operation "went like clockwork, our training really kicked in."

"It was an intense fire and we were hampered by fibreglass panels to the side of the bus, which had to be ripped off (to gain access to material burning inside of the saloon of the bus)," he says.

Firefighter O'Shannessy says it was a great team effort with about 20 firefighters from Coimadai, Bacchus Marsh and Bullengarook involved in the firefight.

Fourteen passengers, all students bound for schools in Bacchus Marsh, and the bus driver, escaped the inferno without injury.

Ambulance crews were on scene to look over the students, many of whom were shaken up but otherwise fine. Local operator, Bacchus Marsh Coaches dispatched another bus to escort the students to their respective schools.

The charred remains of the first bus were shortly hauled away for the company to investigate the cause of the fire.

Onlookers commended the actions of the driver, who noticed smoke outside the rear of the vehicle and immediately evacuated the students. The driver then moved the students to the other side of the road, as a fire developed in the bus.

The efficient way the bus fire operation was handled was also due in part to training undertaken by members of the Bacchus Marsh brigade in association with Bacchus Marsh Coaches.

Recently, Bacchus Marsh and Melton brigade members undertook a specialised training session that focused on the mechanical safety features of a bus, including the location of batteries and fuel tanks. ■

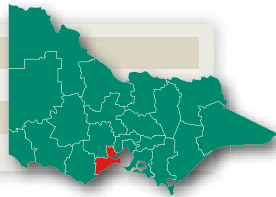


Photos by Darren Apps

Crash causes chaos

BY ALISON APRHYS

Incident: Geelong plane crash
District: 7
Date: 25 September 2010
Brigades: Belmont, Grovedale, Geelong City



Belmont, Grovedale and Geelong City Fire Brigades attended a plane crash on the Surf Coast Highway at Mount Duneed, west of Geelong on 25 September.

The light aircraft clipped powerlines as it attempted to land at Geelong Airport, near Grovedale. The plane landed upside down on the highway and, amazingly, two people escaped with only minor injuries before it burst into flames.

Fire Officer David Moore of Belmont Fire Brigade was the Incident Controller and says it was a fortunate escape.

Upon arrival, he sent two crew in with breathing apparatus to knock

down the flames and contain leaking fuel. "We had to flip the wing and isolate the leak," he says.

A family driving down the Surf Coast Highway also narrowly escaped after its car was struck by the powerline, which had earlier been clipped by the aircraft.

"Another very lucky escape as he (the driver) missed oncoming traffic, another couple of seconds it could have been so much worse," David says.

He praised CFA members and other emergency service teams attending the incident.

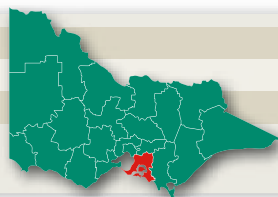
"The crews did an excellent job containing the fire to the aircraft and the fuel spill, and there was very good coordination between the services," he says.

CFA provided fire protection and secured the scene until the casualties were removed.

The incident caused a blackout to over 4,000 homes and Powercorp was on scene shortly after to restore them to the network. The highway was closed for several hours. ■



Incident: Patterson River
District: 8
Date: 15 September 2010
Brigades: Patterson River, Dandenong Rescue



Oops wrong way

BY KEITH PAKENHAM

A jet-ski owner launched more than his water craft at Patterson River on 15 September.

Following the successful release of his jet-ski into Patterson River from the Launching Way boat ramp, the owner went to drive back up onto dry ground. Somehow the car and trailer sailed off into the river.

Patterson River brigade and Dandenong Rescue responded to a report of a car into the river around 12 noon. When Fire Officer Michael James and his crew arrived on scene the owner was already clear of the car in his wetsuit. The wagon was given a thorough sponge bath because the rear tailgate and the drivers' side door was left open.

Within an hour the tow truck driver had waded into the water to secure the load. Needless to say the jet-ski didn't get used that day and was re-loaded and towed away by a friend's four-wheel drive. ■

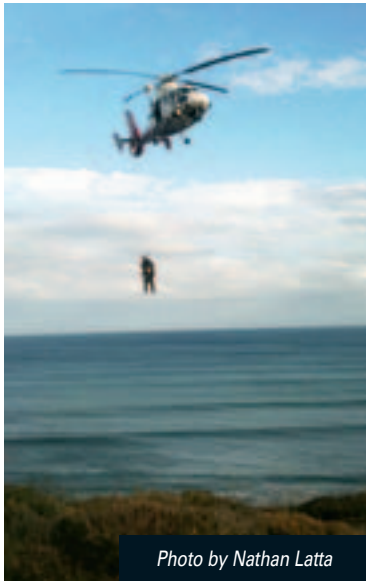


Photo by Nathan Latta

Surfers watch as man winched

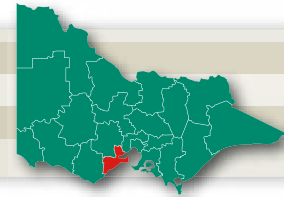
BY ALISON APRHYS

Incident: Torquay cliff rescue

District: 7

Date: 11 September 2010

Brigades: Torquay, Belmont, Geelong Rescue Support



Torquay Fire Brigade (TFB) attended a cliff rescue at Jan Juc, near Bells Beach on 11 September. TFB was on scene when a man was winched from the cliffs at Jan Juc to the Victoria Police Air Ambulance.

The rescue involved a number of agencies including Torquay SES, Victoria Police Air Wing, Belmont Fire Brigade and Geelong Rescue Support. The District 7 Duty Officer was also in attendance.

The rescue was also watched by many interested surfers who had the prime position for viewing the helicopter and crew in action.

The incident was an excellent example of different emergency services working together for a positive result. ■

Controlled burn turns nasty

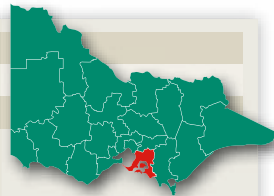
BY KEITH PAKENHAM

Incident: Cranbourne grass and scrub fire

District: 8

Date: 21 October 2010

Brigades: Cranbourne, Devon Meadows, Hampton Park, Clyde, Skye, Frankston, Langwarrin, Narre Warren, Pearcedale, Kooweerup, Tooradin

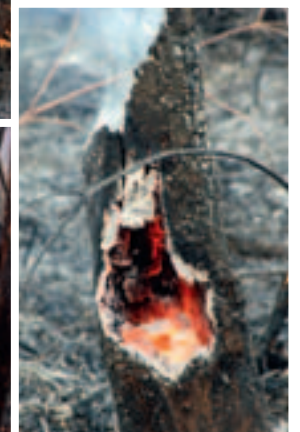


Firefighters found themselves in Cranbourne on 21 October when a six-hectare fuel reduction burn being conducted by staff at the Royal Botanical Gardens began to get out of control.

The Cranbourne tanker was on-site with grounds staff when the request for assistance went out from the firefighters on scene. As brigades responded, the pillar of smoke became quite visible on what was a warm and still day. Fire Officer Michael Cherry of Cranbourne brigade broadcast a "Grass and Scrub fire Not Yet Under Control" alert just after 2pm. A request was made for "Make tankers 6" and shortly after was upgraded to eight.

Operations Officer Jim Dore gave a Situation Report (Sit Rep) at around 4.30pm of a grass and scrub fire that was approx 20 hectares in size with 10 tankers on scene and with Royal Botanical Gardens staff also assisting. The gardens were closed off to the general public while crews worked into the natural bush vegetation from the few roads and tracks in the area. Although the area had received a fair amount of rain prior to the incident it didn't stop the heath and other scrub from rapidly burning and spotting in the surrounds.

Command was handed over to the group at around 5pm with Incident Controller Shane Keen at the helm. By just after 7pm, a request to "Make Slip-ons 3" was made and then a "Grass and Scrub fire under control" alert was broadcast just before 8pm. Just after 10pm, CFA handed over control to gardens staff for their night patrols. ■



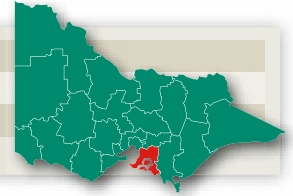


Photos by Keith Pakenham

Car wreck factory catches alight

BY KEITH PAKENHAM

Incident: Dandenong factory fire
District: 8
Date: 1 October 2010
Brigades: Dandenong, Springvale



CFA crews attended a factory fire in Dingley Avenue, Dandenong on 1 October. The fire was quickly brought under control with five vehicles including Dandenong's Rescue and Springvale Pumper attending the incident.

The car wrecking factory staff were dismantling a vehicle when the fire began in the centre of the building. The workers attempted to knock down the fire with hose reels and fire extinguishers, albeit unsuccessfully, before firefighters arrived to assist.

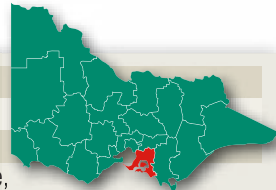
Fire Officer Rob Cochrane of Dandenong brigade was the Incident Controller and crews under his command worked quickly to contain the fire to a small area of the building. Paramedics also attended to assess the workers, and power was disconnected for safety reasons. ■



Cardboard crisis

BY LIVIA DE SANCTIS

Incident: Springvale factory fire
District: 8
Date: 2 September 2010
Brigades: Dandenong, Noble Park, Springvale, Scoresby, Patterson River, Narre Warren, Carrum Downs, Frankston



CFA was called to a fire at the Visy cardboard recycling factory on the Princes Highway in Springvale around 12:30pm on 2 September.

Eighteen vehicles were involved in the incident, including Dandenong Fire Brigade's 42-metre Bronto Ladder Platform, Scoresby's Hose Layer and Frankston's breathing apparatus (BA) van. Around 60 staff were evacuated from the building.

Incident Controller Bernie Frawley of Springvale brigade co-ordinated the firefight to prevent the fire in the bundling shed from spreading through to the adjoining buildings or damaging the conveyor systems.

Units from the Metropolitan Fire Brigade were part of the water relay and also supplied BA crews. Brigades from Dandenong, Noble Park, Springvale, Scoresby, Patterson River, Narre Warren, Carrum Downs and Frankston were in attendance.

The last unit left the scene around 8:25pm, some eight hours after the fire started. ■

Chemical mix turns toxic

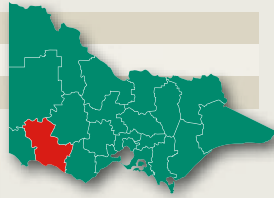
BY ALISON APRHYS

Incident: Koroit hazmat

District: 5

Date: 30 September 2010

Brigades: Allansford, Ballarat City, Grange, Kirkstall, Koroit, Mortlake, Penhurst, Port Fairy, Warrnambool, Winslow, Woodford



CFA firefighters from nine brigades used 18 vehicles to fight a toxic chemical blaze in the Murray Goulburn Farm Supplies and Hardware shop on Commercial Road Koroit on 30 September.

The fire burned through fifty per cent of the farming supplies shop. CFA members donned breathing apparatus (BA) as they sought to contend with multiple fuel sources within the building.

Operations Officer Steve Giddens was District 5 Duty Officer and said the firefight was significant.

“We had multiple fuel loads and a cocktail of chemicals to contend with as we brought the fire under control,” he says.

Members from Allansford, Ballarat City, Grange, Kirkstall, Koroit, Mortlake, Penhurst, Port Fairy, Warrnambool, Winslow and Woodford worked with their emergency service colleagues including SES, Ambulance Victoria and Victoria Police throughout the night to contain the fire.

Locals were advised to stay inside, with their windows closed and air-conditioners off to avoid toxic smoke.

Koroit Fire Brigade captain David Lumsden says his crew and the other CFA members did a great job.

“This was the largest incident we have turned out to so far this year,” he says. David says that the incident started out as an industry fire involving normal products sold in a farming supplies store.

“The initial firefight was BA and internal attack,” he says. “After that, drums of herbicide were burnt then the incident changed into a hazmat (hazardous materials) job.”

David adds that it was good teamwork by CFA and the other emergency service workers that had the blaze contained and the area secured as quickly as possible.

“Everyone worked really well together,” he says.

District 5 Operations Officer Chris Eagle says the fire appeared to be caused by a faulty electrical appliance. ■



Photo courtesy of the Warrnambool Standard



Fumes prove risky

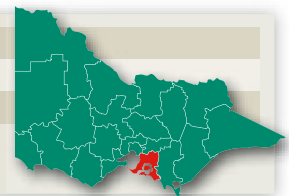
BY WAYNE CHARLTON

Incident: Noble Park hazmat

District: 8

Date: 3 October 2010

Brigades: Dandenong, Springvale, Hallam, Frankston, Narre Warren



In the morning of 3 October, Dandenong and Springvale brigades responded to what was initially paged as a smoke alarm operating at a factory premises in Tower Court, Noble Park.

Upon arrival at the Jaegar Australia premises, Incident Controller Fire Officer Andrew Turner was confronted with a factory building filled with fumes resulting from a spill of an unknown chemical inside the factory. Earlier, the factory owner had been partially exposed to the fumes, and had self-admitted to hospital for treatment. Additional resources were then requested to deal with what was fast becoming a hazardous materials (hazmat) incident, including the Dandenong Hazmat Detection Vehicle, and Hallam Hazmat.

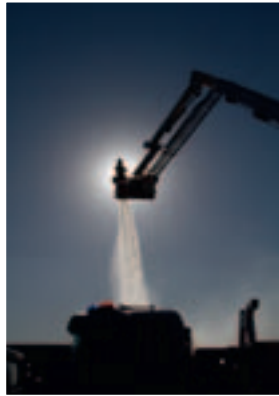
The spill was later identified as being approximately 800 litres of Peratec Fungicide which consists mostly of acetic and peroxy acids, and hydrogen peroxide. This fungicide is used particularly in agricultural and viticultural applications for the control of fungal and mildew type diseases.

Given the slightly acidic nature of the spill, crews worked in structural gear, Level 3 boots, breathing apparatus (BA) and chemical gloves to spread soda ash onto the spill to neutralise and absorb it. They then undertook a process of collecting the absorbed material and remaining liquid and placing them into oversized hazmat drums for later collection. Decontamination consisted simply of the hosing off of boots, gloves and uniforms.

This also provided an opportunity to trial the South East Group's new Rehabilitation Module and equipment, prior to final training and being placed online.

An incident stop was declared at 1.30pm, however crews remained on scene until approximately 3.30pm.

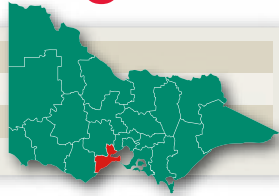
Ambulance Victoria provided a paramedic unit and Agency Commander. WorkSafe and Environment Protection Authority were notified, and liaison also occurred with CFA's Scientific Officer during the incident. ■



Photos by Darren Apps and Phillip Stubbs - Geelong Advertiser

Valuables salvaged as home burns BY MICK MCGUINNESS

Incident: Leopold structure fire
District: 7
Date: 21 October 2010
Brigades: Leopold, Geelong City, Corio



A large two-storey Leopold house, with views overlooking Geelong and Corio Bay, was destroyed by fire in October. The two-storey dwelling was on the north-west side of the Leopold Hill, and so people from all around the Geelong area could see a huge black plume of smoke as the fire quickly engulfed the family home.

Crews from Leopold (Pumper, Tanker and Car), Geelong City (Pumper, Bronto Ladder Platform and Heavy Rescue) and Corio (BA Support) attended the fire, however as first crews from Leopold arrived the blaze had already engulfed the rear single storey section of the dwelling and had quickly spread up into the second level.

Quickly establishing that no-one was inside the building, firefighters donned breathing apparatus to enable them to successfully protect the property to the south side of the burning home and attack the ground

floor fire, while the Ladder Platform was quickly set up and commenced an aerial attack on the second level.

Water was an issue for pump operators, as the nearest ground ball hydrants were five lengths away in both directions. The Leopold Tanker was used to maintain water supply to Geelong Pumper 2 so hand lines for exposure protection and ground floor fire attack could continue, while Leopold Pumper set up a relay to supply water to Geelong Pumper 2.

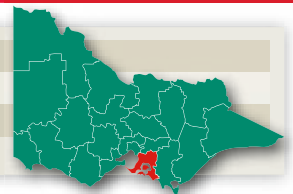
Crews commenced an aggressive internal attack in the front section of the home and were successful in saving three rooms where many valuable and sentimental items of the owners were kept. The fire completely swept through the ceiling of the first level, however smoke and water damage was kept to a minimum. Salvage operations were quickly activated and crews were able to move many items from the front rooms into waiting vehicles of the owners.

The fire took some time to contain and many hours into the night to completely extinguish. SES crews attended with large lighting units to provide valuable lighting and also to assist with the night time overhaul. ■

Fire shed's black cloud

BY KEITH PAKENHAM

Incident: Noble Park shed fire
District: 8
Date: 30 October 2010
Brigades: Springvale, Dandenong



Initial crews from Springvale and Dandenong were paged to a shed fire in Noble Park just before the rain hit on Saturday 30 October.

While the call was only for a shed fire, the huge black cloud indicated a decent fuel load.

When Incident Controller Brett Sleep of Springvale arrived on scene with his crew in the pumper, the large tin structure on a residential property was heavily involved in fire. Firefighters managed to protect neighbouring buildings as strong wind and rain hampered the firefight in the later stages. The fire was brought under control within 30 minutes as 25 firefighters and nine fire appliances tackled the blaze.

Noble Park, Frankston breathing apparatus (BA) van and Melbourne Fire Brigade attended, along with police and ambulance paramedics.

The building contained multiple cars and an office which were all totally destroyed. ■



CFA steps into rising waters

COMPILED BY LIVIA DE SANCTIS

CFA brigades across the state stepped in to assist the State Emergency Service (SES) with a relief effort in September after heavy rains caused widespread damage and some of the worst flooding in a decade.

Brigades were required to work alongside their SES colleagues to evacuate residents, fill sandbags, control traffic and assist with clearing debris and damaged property.

In District 15, the townships of Creswick and Clunes were severely affected with some 97 Creswick and 37 Clunes properties damaged. Members of the Creswick Urban Fire Brigade (CUFB) found their motor room under water when they returned from evacuating locals from rising flood waters.

The flooding also caused Campbells Creek to break its banks for the first time in many years. Campbells Creek Fire Brigade was paged to assist the Castlemaine SES unit with sandbagging a section of the creek.

District 22 experienced an early deluge of rain, resulting in floods in Euroa as the Seven Creeks River peaked at 5.3 metres. CFA firefighters

from Euroa group assisted with sandbagging, as well as helping SES with rescue jobs.

A few days later it was reported in District 24 that residents in Eurobin were marooned, with flood waters rising steadily to reach 6.9 metres. CFA was on hand to assist.

Kiewa Fire Brigade spent Sunday 5 September assisting SES with sandbagging as rising flood waters threatened the Kiewa General Store. A further call for assistance was answered by members from Sandy Creek, Baranduda, Wodonga West and Allan's Flat.

The Upper Ovens Valley was also isolated for several days, with no mail getting in and boil water notices issued.

For District 10, flood impact was minimal. "SES was stood down quite early and our resources were never actually put into operation," Operations Manager Allan Rankin said.

Over in District 11, while no rain fell over the wettest weekend, floodwaters came from catchments further upstream to affect East Gippsland properties. ■



Photos courtesy of The Buloke Times and Sarah Black



Mick Bourke



From the CEO

Significant improvements ahead of the fire season

Many volunteers and staff across CFA have put in a huge effort to deliver on projects for this year's Bushfires Program. A great amount of work has been underway for many months to act on the changes for this fire season which have flowed from the recommendations of the Bushfires Royal Commission, CFA internal reviews, and changes to Victoria's emergency management legislation. I'd like to commend everyone for their efforts in achieving very significant improvements to how we deliver our service to the community.

I'm pleased to provide an update on some of the key milestones that have been reached in the lead-up to this fire season.

We have made some major progress towards improving our community education and information products and services. A new *FireReady Kit* has been produced with updated information for this fire season. As a response to research undertaken on the previous *FireReady Kit*, the content has been simplified and more fire imagery has been used to create a sense of urgency and to provide a visual snapshot of how intense bushfires can be. The kit also contains two handy pull-out Bushfire Survival Plans, one for 'Leaving Early' and one for 'Defending Your Property.' This kit is being distributed through our community education programs.

The Household Bushfire Self Assessment Tool (HBSAT) has been updated and is more user-friendly. The tool meets accessibility standards with content delivered in Easy English and with a new audio function.

Our CFA website has been redesigned with a new look and feel. Critical fire safety information is highlighted along with special feature sections to promote topical campaigns and events. Content on the site has been updated to reflect new key messages and Fire Danger Ratings as well as showing the new Total Fire Ban and Fire Danger Rating boundaries. Information on Township Protection Plans has been simplified and is now in an easy-to-read template that aligns with the *Prepare. Act. Survive.* guidelines. This information along with a host of other valuable information to the community is available on our website.

Our Operations staff have also been extremely busy working on several crucial projects including a revision of the command and control structure and process. In this program we have appointed eight new Regional Commanders who will also act as Regional

Controllers during major bushfires. Under new arrangements, a line of control will report from all fire agencies up to the Fire Controller – this is the new Fire Services Commissioner's role on days of extreme fire conditions. New infrastructure, equipment and resources have been built up in our Incident Control Centres while we have boosted our resources to improve intelligence from the fireground. This project consists of intelligence gathering initiatives, including training and equipment to support ground observers and fire behaviour analysts, and intelligence gathering tools and software. Research will be undertaken to develop and align CFA and DSE's capability to provide and share valuable information to the community.

There has also been an important change to the Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System (AIIMS). From this fire season, the Information Unit will be a separate section that reports directly to the Incident Controller. One of the key functions of the Information Section is the delivery of timely information to the public. An updated version of Emergency Alert has been released and incorporated into all Information Officer training. The One Source One Message (OSOM) tool has been updated to improve usability and ensure more timely messages are delivered to the public. Critical Incident training will also be provided for new Information Officers to develop the expertise needed in an operational role.

As you can see, we have been highly active in preparing for the fire season that is now upon us. On the next page, you'll be able to read about the work undertaken on Neighbourhood Safer Places, Information Units and the Advice to Property Owners Program.

On behalf of the directors and management of CFA we wish every member seasons greetings and above all else a safe fire season. ■

Mick Bourke
CEO



Lisa Sturzenegger



From the Director Community Safety

Since the fires of 2009, we have made big changes to the way we prepare for and respond to bushfires. It is with pride that I consider how many challenges we have risen to, and how much work is being delivered as a result of the second Bushfire Preparedness Program (BFPP2).

One of the areas where we are delivering positive change is in communicating with Victorians – CFA and its partners are now reaching more communities with more specialised information than ever before. The *FireReady* campaign has been boosted to better inform and prepare people for the coming fire season.

In this edition of *Brigade* you will find your copy of the *Members Quick Reference Guide (MQRG)*, a booklet designed to give you the most up-to-date information for this fire season.

Over the coming season you may be approached by the community with questions. The *MQRG* will help you pass on up-to-date advice and point people in the right direction for further information, such as CFA's website, the Victorian Bushfire Information Line, Household Bushfire Self Assessment Tool or the *FireReady Kit*.

The *MQRG* is just one of the projects to support you in informing the community around the newly created Victorian Bushfire Safety Policy Framework, a key recommendation of the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission.

You may already be aware of some of the changes coming into effect:

- A much greater emphasis on 'leave early' messaging and more information about the range of options available to individuals in different circumstances
 - More information for the community about Township Protection Plans and Community Preparedness Guides, Bushfire Safer Precincts and Neighbourhood Safer Places
 - A new Fire Danger Rating graphic and changes to Code Red ratings to reflect local conditions in some districts
- CFA will be holding workshops in the near future on the changes resulting from this policy, with dates and locations to be advised shortly.

Our new Chief Officer Euan Ferguson will be travelling around to some of these workshops and I'm looking forward to joining him as we speak with brigades across the state about the Bushfire Safety Policy Framework.

Until then I'd like to wish you all the best for the upcoming fire season and thank you for the critical role you play in keeping our communities informed and safe. ■

Lisa Sturzenegger
Director Community Safety

Bushfires Program Update

BY ANNE SHEEDY

Michael Wootten, Chair of the Bushfires Program Steering Committee provides an update on some of the work achieved so far for the Bushfires Program.

NEIGHBOURHOOD SAFER PLACES

"An enormous effort has been undertaken to assess Neighbourhood Safer Places (NSPs) with some great outcomes," Michael says.

Since 24 December 2009, a total of 40 NSPs have been designated, with 243 sites assessed by CFA. Today there are 135 designated NSPs with a total of 694 sites assessed by CFA, with 40 of these sites reassessed.

CFA, Municipal Association of Victoria and municipalities will be able to share information and receive real-time status updates on NSPs with the development of an online system. The CFA website is being updated so people can search for an NSP via township, municipality or postcode.

INFORMATION UNIT STRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

In accordance with the recommendations of the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, the Information Unit has been escalated to the level of 'Information Section' with the Media, Community and Public Information Units placed within this new structure.

INFORMATION OFFICER TOOLS

Training for current Information Officers is being rolled out at ICCs across Victoria. Twenty-two refresher sessions and three new information courses will be held at times that accommodate both staff and volunteers. A new version of Emergency Alert has been released by the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner (OESC) and incorporated into the Information Officer training. The One Source One Message (OSOM) tool has been updated to improve usability and ensure timely messages are delivered to the public.

INFORMATION UNIT ALL HAZARDS APPROACH

To further develop the all hazards approach to emergencies, the State Emergency Service (SES) participated in a CFA/DSE Information Unit 'Train the Trainer Session' recently. Further work to ensure that training is relevant for a multi-agency incident is underway by the Community Warnings and Advice project and Learning and Development.

ADVICE TO PROPERTY OWNERS

Six new Fire Safety Officers (Wildfire) are being appointed to meet demand in high bushfire risk areas. It is anticipated the new appointees will start at the beginning of December. The nine existing Fire Safety Officers (Wildfire) are currently promoting the program to the community to arrange site visits. ■



Knowing the Fire Danger Rating in your district

The Fire Danger Rating (FDR) predicts how a fire would behave if one was started, including how difficult it would be to put out. The higher the rating, the more dangerous the conditions. The rating is your trigger to act, so to stay safe you need to be aware of the FDR in your district.

Improvements continue to be made ahead of the fire season with Fires Services Commissioner Craig Lapsley in October detailing changes to Fire Danger Ratings (FDRs).

“The Fire Danger Rating predicts how a fire would behave if one started including how difficult it would be to put out – the higher the rating, the more dangerous the conditions,” Mr Lapsley said.

The most noticeable change to FDRs is a revised arch shape graphic which better illustrates the rating.

“Research has shown that this arch shape is more familiar and easier for people to understand,” Mr Lapsley said.

“New signage will be installed across the state to reflect this change.”

Another change is the adoption of scientific modelling for the grassland districts of Mallee, Wimmera and Northern Country so that the highest FDR – Code Red – now requires higher thresholds to be met that reflect local conditions. There are no changes for the remaining six Victorian districts.

A number of predicted trigger points – including temperatures, dryness and wind – are factored in before an FDR is calculated.

“Code Red days are rare – last fire season we had two Code Red days which affected three districts – but these declarations are extremely serious and people need to be aware of the actions they need to take,” Mr Lapsley said.

“These changes mean a Code Red day will now better reflect the very serious risk and conditions being posed locally if forecast.”

Mr Lapsley said leaving high risk areas the night before a Code Red day occurs, or early in the morning, is the safest option and that people must have a Bushfire Survival Plan.

FDRs are forecast by CFA during a fire season and are provided for the following four days. A Code Red day is called one day beforehand.

Other changes to FDRs include simpler messaging on what each means and the actions people need to take. The name has also changed from ‘Code Red – Catastrophic’ to simply ‘Code Red’.

The FDRs will feature in weather forecasts and be broadcast on radio, television and some newspapers. It can also be found on the CFA, Department of Sustainability and Environment and Bureau of Meteorology websites or by calling the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667. ■

Information on what each FDR means and what people should do at each stage is also available at www.cfa.vic.gov.au

FIRE DANGER RATING

Code Red
These are the worst conditions for a bush or grass fire. Homes are not designed to withstand fires in these conditions. Leaving high risk bushfire areas the night before or early in the day is your safest option - do not wait and see.

Extreme
Leaving high risk bushfire areas in the day is your safest option. Consider staying with your property only if you are prepared to the highest level. Your home needs to be situated, modified and constructed to withstand a bushfire and you can actively defend your home if a fire starts.

Severe
Leaving high risk bushfire areas early in the day is your safest option. Well prepared homes that are actively defended can provide safety - check your bushfire survival plan.

Low-moderate/High/Very High
Check your bushfire survival plan. Leave if necessary.

The Fire Danger Ratings have been revised ahead of the coming fire season

Fires Task Force finishes Commission assignment BY DARREN GREVIS-JAMES

After almost 18 months, the 2009 CFA Fires Task Force has ended its role as the coordinating team for CFA's organisational response to and participation in the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission process.

Fires Task Force Coordinator, Deputy Chief Officer Greg Esnouf said the period of the Commission was a long and challenging journey that was an incredibly demanding period for everyone at CFA.

More than 100 CFA witnesses were either called to give evidence or provide statements to the Royal Commission. Seven Task Force personnel also presented evidence. "The Fires Task Force's job included gathering evidence, and responding to information required on summons – sometimes at very short notice to meet the schedule of the Royal Commission," Greg said. In addition, a mapping simulation developed by the Task Force was used extensively by the Royal Commission during the presentation of evidence on each fire.

Task Force staff made a significant contribution to the development of CFA responses to recommendations from both the Interim Report and Final Report of the Bushfires Royal Commission, and provided policy advice to Directorates throughout the period.

Welfare support for members who were required to give evidence at all Royal Commission hearing sessions was a key part of the work of the Fires Task Force according to Greg. "CFA's Peter Davis, former Secretary of the Victorian Urban Fire Brigades Association, was on call at all hours, seven days a week providing personal assistance, mentoring, arranging accommodation, meals and all those other administrative

matters to assist CFA witnesses. Our CFA regions helped enormously also with the provision of welfare support to CFA members during this period. The CFA regions, brigades and individuals gave immense assistance in sourcing operational information that helped in the preparation of statements and other relevant material needed for the Royal Commission," Greg added.

Greg believes that the work done by the Fires Task Force has further reinforced learnings within CFA that emerged over the 18 months of the Royal Commission.

"The important lesson for all of us is to improve our systems and ensure that the fire services are better prepared in the future," Greg noted. Task Force staff spent some time reflecting on their work in the Fires Task Force and how they might improve some of the corporate internal systems in CFA. "There are a number of ideas that CFA might consider for the future including development of a better document management process to build on the work of the Task Force Records Consolidation project. This could include the development of a permanent process to ensure quality data management across the CFA organisation."

The Fires Task Force has now handed over the response to ongoing legal actions arising from the 2009 fires (including coronial inquests, criminal proceedings, and class actions) to CFA's Corporate Counsel, while the ongoing implementation of the outcomes of the Royal Commission are being managed by the CFA Bushfires Program. ■

Implementation Plan released

BY ANNE SHEEDY

In October, the Victorian Government released its *Implementation Plan*, a plan that outlines the actions required to implement the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission's (VBRC) recommendations. The Government supported in full or in part 66 of the 67 recommendations of the VBRC Final Report.

Many of the changes contained in the *Implementation Plan* will be delivered for the 2010-11 fire season. CFA, emergency services agencies, local government, businesses and communities will work in partnership to deliver these changes.

The priority of work is to action changes for the upcoming fire season along with the changes that most impact on the protection of human life.

Under each VBRC recommendation, information is provided on the lead agency and the actions and processes required to undertake the changes. A summary of the work already underway is provided, along with a timeline for the completion of projects.

Programs and items of interest for this fire season include:

- The new Bushfire Safety Policy Framework
- Warnings, sirens, emergency alert phase two
- Review of the Total Fire Ban districts and fire danger ratings

- Advice to property owners on bushfire preparedness
- Township Protection Plans, Neighbourhood Safer Places – Places of Last Resort, Bushfire Safer Precincts, Evacuation
- Assisting vulnerable people in high bushfire risk areas
- Improved mapping support
- Level 3 joint training exercises
- CFA radio blackspots
- Arson prevention programs
- Investigating safety incidents and near misses.

The Victorian Government appointed Neil Comrie AO APM, a former Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police, to monitor government departments and agencies as they implement the VBRC's recommendations.

Mr Comrie will deliver a progress report on 31 July 2011 and a final report by 31 July 2012 for the Premier to table in Parliament. Read the plan at www.cfa.vic.gov.au ■



Neil Comrie AO APM

FEATURE Command & Control



Under new Command and Control arrangements, a State Controller, State Control Team and State Emergency Management Team have been introduced to coordinate all major bushfires



COMMAND AND CONTROL ARRANGEMENTS

— CHANGES FORMALISED FOR SEASON 2010

BY DARREN GREVIS-JAMES

New 'State Command and Control Arrangements for Bushfires in Victoria 2010' have been formalised by the State Fire Control Team comprising the Fire Services Commissioner, the Chief Officers of Victoria's fire services and Victoria Police.

The new arrangements follow changes to emergency management arrangements in Victoria that have arisen from amendments to the State Emergency Response Plan and the recommendations of the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission. The new arrangements provide a framework for an effective multi-agency approach to the assessment and prioritisation of major strategic and operational risks and consequences, and the allocation of resources before and during major bushfires.

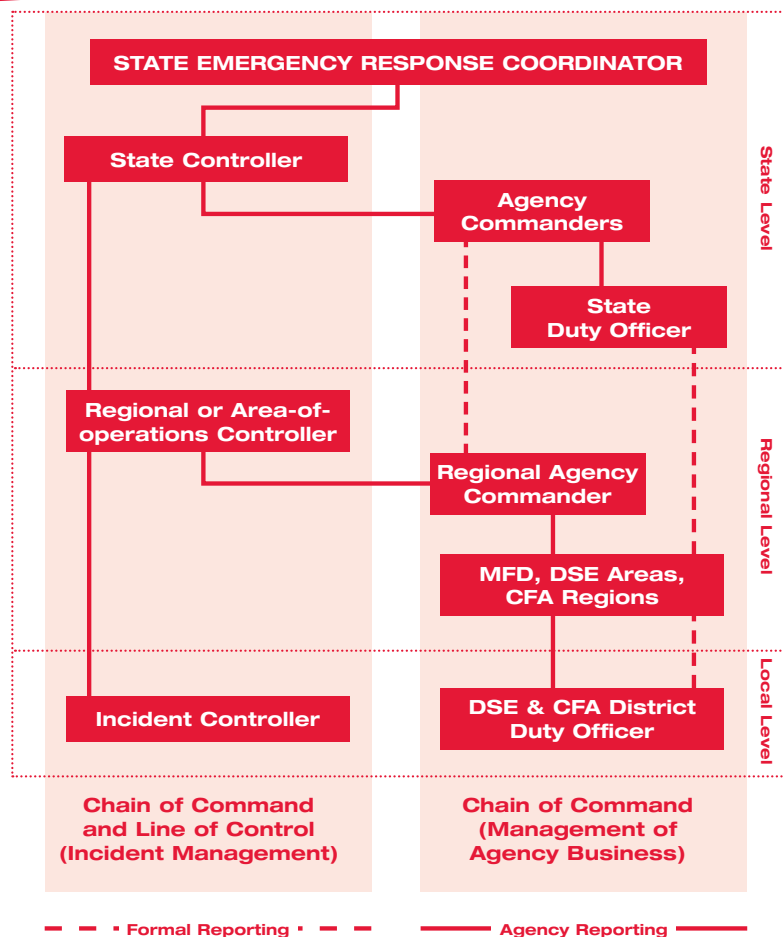
Under the new arrangements, a State Controller, State Control Team and State Emergency Management Team have been introduced to coordinate all major bushfires.

Former CFA Deputy Chief Officer, Craig Lapsley has been appointed the Fire Services Commissioner and during major bushfires will fill the role of State Controller. The purpose of the new bushfire arrangements is to support the State Controller in providing strategic leadership for the preparation and response to bushfire emergency across the state.

The new arrangements also call for the appointment of a Regional Controller, Regional Control Team and Regional Emergency Management Team, based on the eight state regional boundaries.

The main objectives of the system are to ensure there is a smooth escalation for the preparation for and response to bushfires and the activation of the command and control arrangements.

CFA Deputy Chief Officer Geoff Conway says the new command and control arrangements continue to recognise the critical role of CFA's



Chief Officer. “Our Chief, Euan Ferguson, remains central to the overall command of CFA. He also has a key role as a member of the State Control Team in support of the State Controller on matters including joint agency preparation, planning and response to major bushfires,” Geoff said.

The significant change, building on the work done last year, will be to establish and maintain a ‘line of control’ and a complementary ‘command and control’ structure. The ‘line of control’ establishes a clear and unambiguous reporting process. During major bushfires, Incident Controllers will now report up through a line of control to the Regional Controllers who will report to the State Controller.

Central to these arrangements are the eight newly appointed CFA Regional Commanders, who will regularly be required to fulfil the Regional Controller or Regional Agency Commander role. Regional Controllers will provide leadership and management across a defined geographic area within a Region or Area-of-Operations. The primary objective of the regional arrangements is to ensure clear and ultimate accountability for the command and control of bushfires within a region.

The Regional Controllers will guide, assist and mentor Incident Controllers and the Incident Management Teams. During fires, a Regional Control team will provide advice and support to the Regional Controller. There are other benefits too that will support how CFA manages bushfire. Aligning CFA boundaries with the State Regional

Boundaries will allow CFA to work more effectively with other emergency management agencies during Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery activities.

Geoff said there is little if any change that directly affects the structure of Incident Management Teams, except that the Incident Controller will now report up to the Regional Controller during major bushfire emergencies. “The Incident Controller’s role remains as critical as ever in the operational management of bushfires,” Geoff noted. “At the local level, response to bushfires will continue to be managed through an Incident Management Team, led by an endorsed Incident Controller. They should remain very confident that Incident Management Teams will get all the necessary tools, resources and support to run their operations to maximum effect. The Incident Controller will continue to work in close cooperation with municipal emergency management structures.”

Initial brigade and group response to bushfire will be managed through normal agency procedures according to Geoff. “Where initial attack fails, and an incident has the potential to escalate, the Incident Controller may be requested to transfer reporting from the Rostered Duty Officer to the Regional Controller. CFA Group Officers will continue to build capacity and capability of their brigades, and provide trained people to manage the fire ground and staff Incident Management Teams.” ■

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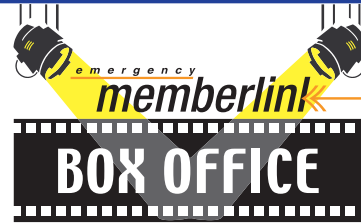
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GETTING THE MESSAGE THROUGH

BY SOPHIE JACKSON

There are many mysteries at CFA, like why isn't there a Code Two response? Is it a hooligan or a halogen tool? And what ever happened to District 1?

Some mysteries are more easily answered, like where do emergency pager messages come from? Are Triple Zero calls answered offshore? And who is the bloke on the end of the radio at Vicfire?

It's easy to assume that when you get a page, it all just happens automatically, but in actual fact there is an army of people working to get the message through to CFA staff and volunteers.

The Emergency Services Telecommunication Authority (ESTA) answers approximately 1.8 million emergency calls per year, 103,821 of which are CFA calls.

Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, the ESTA centres are buzzing with activity. The Mt Helen Centre, which covers the country area, is nestled in bushland near the University of Ballarat.

Its metropolitan equivalent, which covers Districts 7, 8, 13 and 14, is based at the Tally Ho Business Park in Burwood East, above CFA Headquarters.

But whether a metropolitan or country call, it all starts with the same people, the calltakers. At Mt Helen, ambulance, police and CFA calltakers work side-by-side under space-age looking domes, designed to absorb noise and echoes.

Customer Service Manager of the Mt Helen Centre, Peter Sharman describes the floor as the 'nerve centre'.

"The calltaker has to get it right," he says. "If they don't get it right, it affects the entire incident."

It makes for a fairly high pressure job, but the calltakers seem to take it in their stride and are happy to show me how it all works.

At any one time at Mt Helen, there is a minimum of four calltakers and three dispatchers looking after fire.

When the call comes through to them, they are responsible for finding the correct address. It sounds simple but between hoax calls, lost tourists reporting emergencies and distinguishing between four different suburbs called Hillside, it can get complex.

Peter says that improved rural addressing, and identifying local landmarks or whose property it is are just some of the ways that calltakers sort through these issues.

Each calltaker works with a dispatcher, and together they have 120 seconds from when the phone first rings to page the necessary brigades with the call details.

The dispatcher also works the radios. Currently half of the brigades across Victoria have a radio channel direct to Vicfire, which is operated by ESTA, and those that don't run their own communications and report to Vicfire via telephone.

And for anyone who has used the Incident Management System or CAD browser, the information you've read most likely comes from ESTA calltakers and dispatchers.

It's a smooth operation and like any smooth operations there are myriad support systems to keep the centre going. The complex in Mt Helen has its own training rooms, huge server room and enough car batteries to keep the centre going until a generator kicks in.

It's a fascinating place to visit and Peter says the doors are always open to brigades.

"We encourage brigades to come and visit and see what we do," he says. "It's an open door policy and we're always happy to show people through."

And just for those who are wondering about those other mysteries; Halogen is the name of the man who invented the tool, but it is called a hooligan tool because it is used to break things, a Code Two response means no lights or sirens unless they are necessary to drive through heavy traffic and is no longer used, and District 1 used to refer to the area around Ballarat; which was merged with District 15. ■

FIRE SERVICE COMMUNICATION CONTROL (FSCC)

An integral part of the ESTA centres are the Fire Services Communication Controllers.

As soon as the incident is outside the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), the FSCC steps in. They help calltakers and dispatchers with unusual incidents or making operational decisions. Some examples include bogged cars, animal-related issues or assisting ambulance.

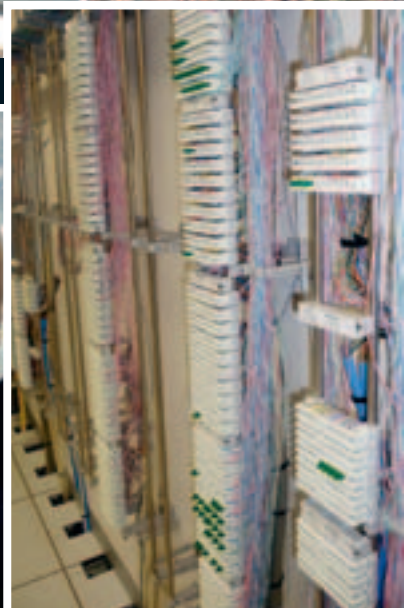
Craig Musselwhite has been a Fire Services Communication Controller for five years and a CFA volunteer for 25.

"We're the link between ESTA and CFA. We're a CFA representative and we're here to guide and assist," he said.

"We also tend to be the first and last port of call for CFA people. When people don't know who to call, they call us and we can help them." ■



The Emergency Services Telecommunication Authority, based at Mt Helen, answers approximately 1.8 million emergency calls each year



Fire Action Week

CFA GOES MOBILE

BY MARTIN ANDERSON

CFA is advancing its mobile communications with a new iPhone application that provides fire information and warnings direct to mobile phones.

More than 5,300 people have already downloaded *CFA FireReady*, the application that allows users to view Fire Danger Ratings, Total Fire Bans, warnings and fire locations.

CFA CEO Mick Bourke said the iPhone application is just one of the ways CFA is using new technology to deliver important fire safety information directly to Victorians.

"The application makes it easy for people to access important fire information wherever they are," he said.

"One useful feature of the application is the map that displays your location and nearby fires."

Blackberry and Android versions of the application will be launched soon.

In addition, CFA has just launched its new mobile friendly website which allows the community to access critical emergency information on the go from just about any mobile phone.

Developed by CFA Technology Services, the mobile website displays key CFA pages (Warnings and Advice, Incidents, Fire Danger Ratings, Total Fire Ban, Victorian Bushfire Information Line and *Can I, Can't I*). To have a look from your mobile, visit www.cfa.vic.gov.au/mobile ■



BE FIRE READY MAKES FOR PRIME-TIME VIEWING

BY MARTIN ANDERSON

WIN TV broadcasted an hour-long special on 17 October to help viewers Prepare, Act, Survive ahead of this fire season.

Hosted by WIN News presenter Bruce Roberts, *Be Fire Ready*, spoke to some of the states top fire experts including the new Fire Commissioner Craig Lapsley, CFA Deputy Chief Officer Geoff Conway, and fire behaviour expert Kevin Tolhurst.

Other CFA guests on the special presentation include CEO Mick Bourke and Community Safety Director Lisa Sturzenegger.

The show also spoke to survivors from Black Saturday to find out their experiences of the fires of February 2009.

It performed well with a peak audience of 65,000 and an average of 21, 279 across the hour.

The special presentation was produced inconjunction with CFA and the Department of Justice to round off Fire Action Week.

Immediately following the show a panel of experts were live online to answer questions. ■

PASSENGERS GET UP TO SPEED ON FIRE

BY SOPHIE JACKSON

Commuters travelling between Pakenham and Dandenong on the V/Line Gippsland service had the opportunity to discuss fire safety tips with local experts during Fire Action Week.

The two education sessions involved CFA members from the Gippsland Region teaming up with Municipal Fire Prevention Officers from Baw Baw and Cardinia Shires.

David Baker, Manager Community Safety CFA Southern Metropolitan Region, said passengers learnt about planning and preparation for the fire season and received reading materials on fire readiness.

"The 50-minute train trip to Melbourne was a perfect time to find out more about fire safety and how to attend a FireReady Victoria activity," David said.

"We urge everyone, no matter where they live, to learn more about their fire risk and make use of the many products and services available to help plan ahead for the fire season."

The initiative formed part of Fire Action Week with all Victorians asked to prepare for the upcoming fire season.

"Every Victorian, no matter where they live, should learn about fire risk," David said.

The week was part of the whole-of-government Summer Fire Campaign, with fire agencies promoting the activities they are taking to prepare Victoria for bushfires.

CFA is hosting planning days and FireReady Victoria meetings to assist people in being prepared for this fire season. ■



CFA officers Mark Allan and David Baker with a V/Line train in Dandenong. Photo by Valeriu Campan



FIREREDY KIT RE-LAUNCHED

BY ANNE SHEEDY

The *FireReady Kit* has been revised to help people to prepare, act and survive this fire season. The *FireReady Kit* has been condensed into a smaller document with clear information on how to assess your risk, prepare your property and develop a Bushfire Survival Plan. The kit also contains two handy pull-out Bushfire Survival Plans, one for 'Leaving Early' and another for 'Defending Your Property.'

The kit details how bushfires can threaten lives and homes and contains strong fire imagery. The content focuses on the actions people need to take to be prepared and includes important checklists for people to ensure they are taking the right steps.

Important information includes the new Fire Danger Ratings, new Total Fire Ban districts and updated key messages for the 2010–11 fire season.

All CFA regions should have received copies of the kit. Hard copies can be ordered from the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667 or www.cfa.vic.gov.au

The kit is also available in a text only version on the CFA website. ■

CFA WEBSITE GETS A REVAMP

BY ANNE SHEEDY

The CFA website has been redesigned with a new look and feel. The site has been set up to make information clear and easy to find. The front page has a clean, fresher look with easy to navigate options including simplified content that highlights critical fire safety information. A special featured content section has also been created to promote topical campaigns and events.

The website contains critical tools and information that people need to prepare themselves ahead of the fire season, and features the new Fire Danger Ratings with the return of the easily-recognisable arch-shaped scale.

The new Total Fire Ban district map is central to the site and all nine fire districts are colour-coded to reflect their respective fire danger ratings. You can click on each of the ratings to find out what they mean and what action is recommended.

The updated *FireReady Kit* is available from the front page and the site also links through to other government agencies and emergency services-related websites.

The website has been designed with users in mind so why not have a look around and give us your feedback at www.cfa.vic.gov.au ■



GET FIRE READY FROM HOME

BY MARTIN ANDERSON

Victorians have been attending bushfire preparedness meetings without leaving the comfort of their own home.

CFA hosted its first online FireReady meeting for the 2010-2011 fire season on Monday 8 November and two more are scheduled for Monday 6 and Wednesday 22 December.

The live one-hour blogs provide information on what people need to do to prepare for the bushfire season, including identifying risk, preparing property, and planning to leave before fire threatens.

Victorians can put questions to bushfire experts live online and learn how to keep themselves and their family safe this summer.

CFA CEO Mick Bourke said the new initiative followed a successful trial last summer.

"More than 200 people took part in our first online meeting last fire season. The response was so positive, we've expanded our program and will be holding five online FireReady sessions before the end of the year."

CFA will run 2000 FireReady meetings across the state in 2010-2011.

"CFA's FireReady sessions have been designed to help reduce the loss of lives and homes in bushfires," Mr Bourke said.

"They are open to all members of the community and are facilitated by trained presenters. Topics discussed include bushfire behaviour, personal safety, property preparation and a review of local risks." ■

Regional boundary changes near finish line

BY DARREN GREVIS-JAMES

CFA's Regional Boundary Alignment Project is well advanced, with a further 97 brigades completing the move to their new districts under stage two of changes to Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD), Information Technology (IT) and paging networks required to support future operations.

Already more than 1,000 brigades have fully transitioned to the new CFA Regions and Districts. For most brigades there was no change to their chain of command and control arrangements for operations and administration.

There are about 200 brigades directly affected by changes to their district or region. A flow-on effect involves a further 59 brigades that need to form new groups or move to other groups.

Chris Latcham from the Strategic Planning and Area Coordination Directorate says that CFA Operations and Technology Services and the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority had worked very closely to achieve the latest milestone on 9 November. He also said adjustments were being made to ensure centralised CAD and IT arrangements are aligned with the revised region and district structure.

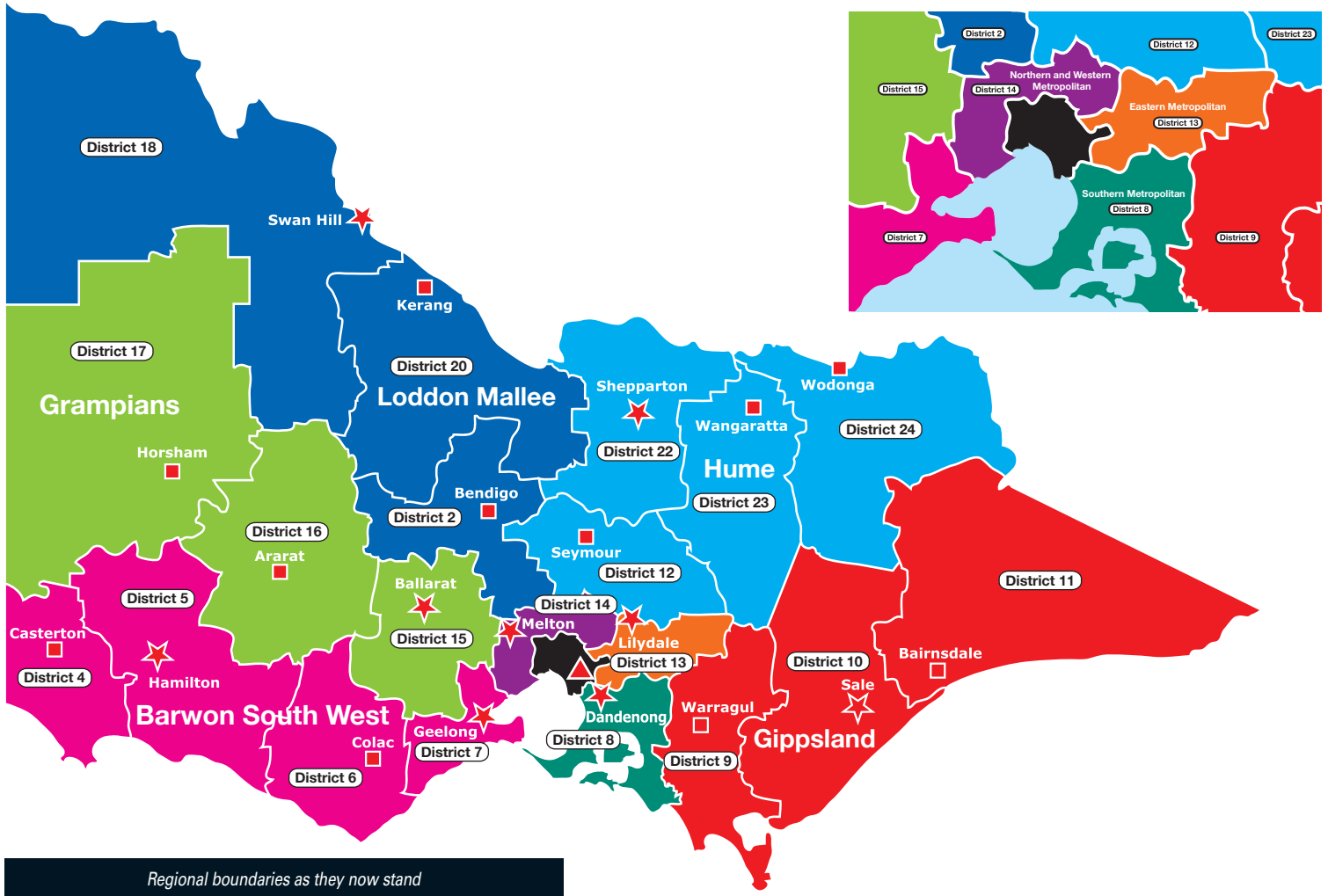
"A number of brigades require changes to both CAD and CFA's radio communications infrastructure. We achieved the bulk of these changes

over the past three months," Chris said. "There are another 31 brigades that will have similar changes made in early December, and then the remaining brigades will only be able to change incident response arrangements to their new districts after the 2010-11 fire season."

So far the two stages of changes to technology and associated computer systems have gone quite smoothly, although not without challenges. The process of transferring brigades and all their resources across districts in stage one (September) meant some brigades lost access to *Brigades Online* for several days. CFA's Technology Services staff automated the transfer for stage two and the systems were back online in less than a day.

Aligning CFA boundaries with the State Regional Boundaries will assist CFA to work together with other government and emergency management agencies more effectively during Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery activities.

Other emergency services aligning with the State Regional Boundaries include Victoria Police, State Emergency Services, Ambulance Victoria, Metropolitan Fire Brigade, Department of Justice and the Department of Human Services. ■





Hamilton Urban Fire Brigade - Sue Rondeau, Rayleigh Vandermost and Adam Young. Photo by Peter Wall

Hamilton fires up members BY ALISON APRHYS

The Hamilton Urban Fire Brigade (HUFB) has adopted an innovative concept encouraging all its members to have a written fire plan before responding operationally.

The HUFB wrote to the partners of its members and invited them to attend a Community Fireguard (CFG) meeting. This has led to the scheduling of CFG meetings and bushfire planning workshops.

HUFB worked closely with Sue Rondeau, District 4 and 5 Community Education Coordinator and Peter Wall, Community Engagement Project Officer and HUFB Secretary. Both agree that members have really got behind the project.

“We needed to get firefighters to think about their families before they turn out; they need to have it sorted at home first because their partners can get a false sense of security,” Peter says.

HUFB captain Wayne Nagorecka agrees it is a great idea and one that he is keen to see other brigades consider. He praised 1st Lieutenant Adam Young who brought the idea to the attention of the brigade.

“When Adam brought the idea to the meeting we could see that

when a fire threatens us as firefighters, we could be away from home... and even those of us with houses in town could be impacted by ember attack,” he says.

“In my job as a wildfire instructor, we do an asset protection scenario where a fire plan is part of the scenario. We ask participants ‘who has a fire plan?’” he says.

“We also point out to our members, ‘where will you be on a total fire ban day? Probably on the back of the firetruck, not at home with your family’,” he adds.

Wayne says that while the brigade felt it could not make it mandatory, members have really got behind the plan and have been very supportive.

“We put it to a motion that members were strongly encouraged to do their own fire plan and it was passed,” he says.

“We have also encouraged members to provide a copy to the brigade so that if member Joe Bloggs is out on a truck, we can look up his plan,” he says. “Everyone realised it was a good idea to help protect those that are left behind.” ■

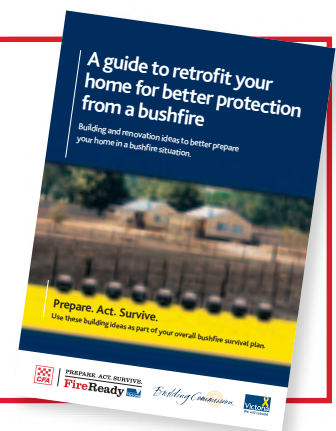
Home retrofit guide launched

The Building Commission and CFA have joined together to provide practical advice to those who wish to upgrade their existing homes to be better protected from bushfires.

A guide to retrofit your home for better protection from a bushfire was launched by Victoria's Planning Minister Justin Madden, as part of Fire Action Week 2010.

The guide contains building and renovation ideas to better prepare homes for a bushfire situation, and can be used as part of an overall Bushfire Survival Plan. ■

Visit www.buildingcommission.com.au for more information or to download the guide.





CFA Gippsland Community Education Coordinator Erin Semmens handing out prizes to students as part of the Teenagers in Emergencies project

Yarram teenagers talk emergencies

BY ERIN SEMMENS

Yarram Secondary College students have taken up the Teenagers in Emergencies project after its successful completion by Maffra Secondary College students in 2008.

Year-nine students Hannah Buys, Laura Jonston, Nicole Missen and Louise Christison are undertaking the project as part of their Community Engagement Program. It is funded through the Victorian Bushfire Recovery and Reconstruction Authority (VBRRA) and supported by Wellington Shire Council and local emergency service organisations.

As part of the project, the students attended six primary schools around the Yarram and Gormandale Districts during Fire Action Week to talk about emergencies with Grade five and six students. They also emphasised the need to plan and prepare for the upcoming bushfire season.

The project also required the students to liaise with local emergency agencies, such as CFA, SES, Victoria Police, Volunteer Coast Guard and Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) to gather up-to-date information and guidance – particularly in regards to the creation of their booklet, Arson Awareness for Teenagers.

The students also held an Emergency Expo at Yarram Secondary College in November, involving 150 students as well as local emergency service organisations. Throughout the day a number of interactive activities were undertaken by the students which included scenarios relating to fire, floods and other emergencies. ■

Dairy toolkit shares lessons learnt

BY SOPHIE JACKSON

Dairy Australia and CFA have joined forces to help Victorian dairy farmers prepare for fire threat on their farms. The pilot project has resulted in the Preparing your dairy farm for fire threat toolkit, which provides a comprehensive checklist to protect farmers, their families and all other areas of the business. It also includes recovery tips to reduce disruption to the dairy business after fires.

The project has come about thanks to the willingness of Gippsland's dairy farmers to share their lessons learnt during the 2009 fires.

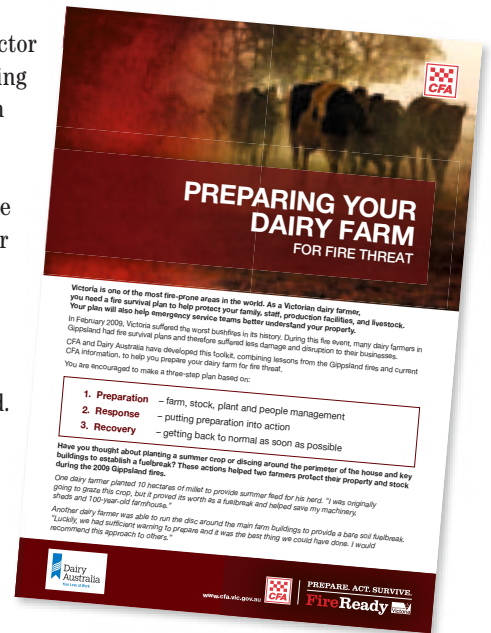
Their experiences, and current CFA information form the basis of the toolkit, designed to help dairy farmers develop a plan that considers preparation, response and recovery.

All Victorian dairy farmers have been sent a copy of the toolkit, which has involved extensive collaboration with GippsDairy, Baw Baw Shire Council, the Lions Club, Department of Primary Industries, dairy manufacturers and United Dairyfarmers of Victoria. A short video, which takes dairy farmers through planning tips step by step, has also been created to accompany the toolkit and can be viewed at www.cfaconnect.net.au

CFA Community Safety Director Lisa Struzenegger said according to research conducted through the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre, farmers and agricultural workers were some of the least likely to leave their property during a bushfire.

"The research showed us we needed to equip dairy farmers with the right information and advice for their needs," she said.

"Victoria is one of the most fire-prone areas in the world and Victorian dairy farmers need a bushfire survival plan to help protect their family, staff, production facilities and livestock." ■



FireReady Roadshow on the move

The FireReady Roadshow will be visiting over 40 community events around the state from December.

The roadshow's truck will set up in the 52 most at-risk townships until 12 February 2011, providing the community with one-on-one 'face time' and the opportunity to ask questions and get localised information.

Events will give people the chance to chat with CFA and fire agencies and will be quite informal.

As well as local advice and information materials, the FireReady Roadshow will provide a sausage sizzle (conditions permitting), slushy machine, giveaways and children's activities at each event.

The FireReady Roadshow is a whole-of-government campaign coordinated by the Department of Justice (DOJ), and should give people a better understanding of the role each agency performs around bushfire preparedness, response and recovery. ■

Calling all potential juniors

BY SOPHIE JACKSON

The call-out from CFA's Junior Volunteer Development Program (JVDP), encouraging young Victorians to join up has attracted much media attention since it was issued in August. The program, which has more than 2,500 members participating across 250 brigades, is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year.

Acting Youth Programs Manager Roz Long says the program provides a range of safe, enjoyable and challenging activities for young people such as learning practical firefighting skills, participating in the Junior Championships, fundraising and community service involvement and practical camps, and helps strengthen links between brigades and the community.

Mark Gravell has been a Junior Brigade Support Officer at Yarrambart for more than five years. "It's not as much about recruitment for us as making better people and teaching the kids about volunteering. But you do find once they've had a taste of CFA they're hooked and if you get a senior firefighter out of it, that's a bonus," he said.

Mark said that after the Black Saturday bushfires the junior members were a great support. "They love the brigade and CFA and most of them will be associated with CFA forever." ■



CFA's Junior Volunteer Development Program is seeking more junior members. Photo by Keith Pakenham



CFA feels mercury rise

BY SOPHIE JACKSON

For many CFA members and emergency services around the country, the morning of Tuesday 24 August began with shootings in Adelaide, frenzied police activity in Mole Creek and a suspicious package in the Australian Capital Territory.

This elaborate series of events was only the beginning of Mercury 10, a national terrorism exercise, which involved emergency services and government departments from six Australian states and territories and New Zealand.

When CFA was called to action, more than 50 staff and volunteers were ready to respond at the State Control Centre in Melbourne and the Incident Control Centre in Geelong.

As the day progressed, the situation escalated and an improvised explosive device was detonated on top of a fuel tank at the Midden Refinery in Corio.

Operations Officer Craig Brownlie, who was involved in writing the exercise and worked as exercise control at the SCC, said the key objective of the exercise was to test the high-level decision making ability of CFA, other agencies and Government.

"I think the exercise was a great success. It highlighted CFA's ability to plan and respond to major incidents and there were lots of lessons learnt on how to communicate across agencies," he said.

This was the first time CFA had been heavily involved in a terror exercise of this scale. ■

Communities awarded

BY ANN MOODIE

The 2010 Fire Awareness Awards (FAA) held on Wednesday 27 October recognised communities across Victoria for being fire aware and fire ready.

A fire awareness and preparation program on Raymond Island in East Gippsland was awarded the major prize.

"I would like to thank and congratulate the overall winner of the RACV Insurance Award for Excellence – the Raymond Island Bushfire Preparation Committee – which set a new standard in fire preparation with their Bushfire Awareness Program," Environment and Climate Change Minister Gavin Jennings said.

"The committee established a six-month program of activities and publicity to make locals aware of their bushfire risk and help prepare the community and visitors for fire." ■



The winners of the 2010 Fire Awareness Awards. Photo by Keith Pakenham

Other winners included the Kinglake Youth Group which received a \$10,000 grant from RACV Insurance to run programs such as art therapy and music workshops to help young people who have been affected by fires.

Grants of \$2000 were also awarded to Benalla College for a project involving students travelling to fire-affected areas to fix damaged fences and the Rotary Club of Moorabbin for making and sending new picnic tables to fire-affected towns across Victoria.

The Education Award went to Yarraville West Primary School for a clay-mation short film about the recovery of children in a fire-affected community and the Bendigo Urban Bushfire Rehabilitation Project received a Community Award in the Recovery category. ■



CFA volunteers on the MCG at the Westpac Community Cup. Photo by David White

A night at the 'G

BY MARTIN ANDERSON

CFA members were treated to a thriller at the MCG on Saturday 21 August as Collingwood and Adelaide battled right to the final siren for the Westpac Community Cup.

The Collingwood Football Club and Westpac joined forces to pay tribute to CFA and its 60,000 staff and volunteers.

Hundreds of free tickets for seats in the Collingwood members stand were provided to CFA members via *CFA Connect*, and the Collingwood players wore a CFA logo on their shirts throughout the game.

"What better thing could you do than offer a country-living, Collingwood-supporting, CFA volunteer free tickets to a Collingwood match while they are on top of the ladder?" said Adam Glasson of the Mooropna Fire Brigade.

On the night, Adam and his son, along with other CFA members got a great reception from the crowd as they took to the field to represent all the 'trained, skilled and dedicated' members across the state.

"I was finally standing on the grass of the MCG, the grass that had blood and sweat spilt on it, grand finals had been won and lost on it and here we were standing on the same grass and rather disappointingly it looked just like normal grass," Adam later wrote on *CFA Connect*.

The captain of Kinglake Fire Brigade, Craig Lawless had the honour of tossing the coin before fans were treated to a tight game with Collingwood just managing to squeeze ahead in the last quarter to win by three points. ■

CFA on show BY ALISON APRHYS

The Royal Melbourne Show is over for another year and the CFA stand generated a lot of attention from anybody who came near.

According to Nancy Thompson, CFA's Marketing Relationship Coordinator, the stand offered something for everyone.

"The CFA stand had a lot to offer patrons, including the kid's corner where kids could play interactive CFA firefighting games and "Little Lex" the helitak 13 helicopter which was a huge hit with kids," Nancy says. "Plus the activity table is always full with children and parents' colouring-in Captain Koala pictures and books."

Nancy explains that parents were also provided with the opportunity to view their homes via Google Earth and assess their own fire risk by looking at surrounding vegetation and relevant access points in and out of the property.

"In addition, the leave early message has been relayed quite strongly to people via the new FireReady for 2010 action list and the promotion of an example Relocation Kit," she says.

Nancy says that after so much planning it was great to see the stand come to life. The GIS mapping DVD also created interest with patrons who were quite keen to see fire mapping technology and spreading for some of Victoria's major bushfires. She added that the members who staffed the CFA stand were a key part of the display's success. ■



CFA at this year's Royal Melbourne Show. Photo by Martin Anderson



Learning about CFA at Community Safety Day. Photo by Blair Dellelijn

In the name of safety

BY JENNA CLARKE

You could be forgiven for thinking something was amiss at Melbourne's Docklands on Sunday 24 October.

CFA was joined by Victoria Police, Metropolitan Ambulance Service, MFB, Life Saving Victoria, SES, Red Cross, St John Ambulance as well as other emergency and safety agencies for Community Safety Day.

The event is held annually and gives the general public the opportunity to meet the people who work and volunteer to protect the community.

Career and volunteer firefighters from Dandenong brigade were in attendance along with their Heavy Duty Pumper and Bronto 42m Ladder Platform, and Captain Koala also made a guest appearance. There were live demonstrations throughout the day to show how the agencies work together during an emergency, and displays providing education and promotion of how every Victorian can take an active role in community safety. ■



Members of Christmas Hills Fire Brigade

Tis the season...

BY DIANNE SIMMONS

What better time to profile Christmas Hills brigade than the December edition of *Brigade*. Christmas Hills Fire Brigade extends from the Kinglake foothills in the north to the Yarra River in the south. The area is mostly bushland with some large areas of cleared farmland adjacent to the Eltham–Yarra Glen Road.

Christmas Hills was registered in February 1941, although there is a record of a brigade meeting held in the Mechanics Institute Hall in 1939. Aside from Black Saturday, the other major fire of note was in 1962 when a fire started by rabbits in Christmas Hills burned north to Kinglake, then from Kinglake to Heathmont in a day. The 1962 fire burned all of the brigade area, and many houses were lost (including those of brigade members).

Christmas Hills is a community of residences dispersed through areas of bushland, with no public buildings other than a derelict hall which is about to be reconstructed, and a primary school.

It has a strong focus on conservation and environment with the Bend of Islands community known for its mud-brick houses and a concentration of people with an artistic bent. Sugarloaf Reservoir, and the associated Winneke Water Treatment Plant, a major hazard facility, are also prominent features on the landscape.

The brigade plays an important role in providing a focus and location for community events. Its motto ‘Red Truck...Green Heart’ neatly summarises the ethos of the brigade.

In the early 1980s, the brigade area was split in two by the construction of the Sugarloaf Reservoir. Compulsory acquisition of the land for the reservoir disrupted the community severely and several older residents had to sell and move away.

This resulted in a major change in brigade membership from farmers to ‘new style’ residents with a strong interest in environment. Even though construction of the reservoir disrupted brigade membership, the community rallied and today the brigade and local residents form an active, cohesive and effective community.

A second station was built in the Bend of Islands (the southern part of the brigade area) to house one of the brigade’s tankers, and a new station was opened in October 2008 in the northern part of the brigade area. Both stations continue to provide a focus for the community. Christmas Hills responds to over 30 calls per year (including to Winneke Water Treatment Plant) and has a 3.4 and 2.4 Isuzu Tanker, and a Nissan Ultra Light unit.

The brigade also has regular social events that are well-supported by the community and serve as fundraisers for the brigade. These events are an opportunity for locals to get together in an area where there is no township and few opportunities to meet other local people. ■

Meringur and Werrimull work hand in hand

BY LEITH HILLARD

Meringur: 25 operational members; one station; one truck

Werrimull: 25 operational members; one station; one truck

Meringur/Werrimull Ultra Light housed at Lake Cullulleraine

Meringur might be the furthest brigade from CFA headquarters, but it does not stand alone. Head 27 kilometres along the Millewa Line Road and you come to Werrimull, its close operational partner.

“We call ourselves one brigade with two trucks,” says Meringur Captain Dave Schilling, “and group exercises help you feel that even more. It’s only the two of us on the radio channel and nine times out of 10 we get a joint pager message. We back each other up.”

Kevin Lynch is the Werrimull brigade captain and runs the Lake Cullulleraine store 18 kilometres away with wife Megan, who doubles as the brigade’s communications officer. Their shop counter has been the frontline during the drought years when community members need to share their story.

Lake Cullulleraine presents significant risk – it’s the most populated community in the area with about 60 residents and 2000 extra during the holidays but no CFA brigade, and until recently, no firetruck.

“It wasn’t being covered,” agrees Kevin. “There’s also a constant stream of traffic between Adelaide and Sydney travelling past the store with driver fatigue striking in our area. With Meringur, we came up with the idea of leasing a shed at Cullulleraine and our new joint Ultra Light is stationed there.

“We respond all the way to the Murray and the trucks can’t always get in along the river, but now we’ve got this lighter quick response unit. Our group also has a Forward Operations Vehicle (FOV) stationed in Mildura.”

Success is all about relationship building – from Mildura in their Sunraysia group area, down to Hattah/Kulkyne and Murray-Sunset National Parks with Parks Victoria (which also has a depot in Werrimull) and across the border to both South Australia’s Paringa Country Fire Service (CFS) and New South Wales’ Wentworth Rural Fire Service (RFS).

District 18 Operations Manager Bill Johnstone is impressed with the energy of both brigades. “They’ve provided a lot of strike teams over many years. There have been some hard circumstances for those two brigades but still they step up. The fact they don’t think of themselves as separate is critical to their long-term viability.” ■



Members of Meringur and Werrimull work together. Photo by David Schilling



Tungamah members at their 6th annual joint exercise

Tungamah trains up

BY AMANDA CONNOR

With about 70 millimetres of rain falling in the lead-up to the group's sixth annual joint exercise, it's fair to say the folk at Tungamah were a little worried.

With 18 CFA trucks, a handful of CFA support vehicles, DSE appliances, police vehicles and an ambulance lining the outskirts of Tungamah Oval, it was clear this would be no ordinary day.

Jeff Nunn, event coordinator and Deputy Group Officer for Yarrawonga brigade, has had the exercise in the group calendar for the past year.

Jeff welcomes me warmly upon arrival and talks through the day's activities.

"We have three exercises set up for today. One is a 'what if' scenario, a house fire which has the added hazard of a clandestine lab inside. It is designed to test the crews on the pressure of a real-life situation that could pose potential health risks," he explains.

"The second is a pumping and draughting exercise. Pretty much bread and butter firefighting."

And the third? "An entrapment exercise. They will be required to place themselves in a scenario whereby a fire is approaching, but a tree has fallen over the road and has trapped them with nowhere to go."

In conjunction, the Tungamah Level 2 Divisional Command is being run to ensure it is prepared for the upcoming fire season.

After a quick breakfast, the 150 or so personnel are set to work. It's a big effort from the Berrigan and Howlong crews, who have travelled an hour to be here after sandbagging following recent floods.

The idea behind the interagency exercise is to bring all the local emergency services together to improve their skills in firefighting techniques and emergency management.

The agencies participating in this year's exercise included Tungamah CFA Group, Yarrawonga CFA Group, CFA Districts 22 and 23, Parks Victoria, NSW Rural Fire Service, Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, SES, Moira Shire and the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

The day goes off without a hitch and everyone rewards themselves afterwards with a barbecue lunch provided by the Lions Club of Yarrawonga.

A few weeks later I call Jeff for a debrief.

The feedback is good. "I was stoked we got so many brigades there. It shows how much everyone is dedicated to developing their skills and keeping up with their training," Jeff says. ■

All revealed at Shell

BY ALISON APRHYS

CFA members from Corio, Lara and Geelong West joined their colleagues from Victoria Police and participated in Exercise Reveal, a combined refinery and emergency management scenario at The Shell Geelong Refinery in Corio on 21 October.

The CFA crews worked closely with Shell's refinery emergency response team (ERT). The scenario involved a forklift running into a small-bore fitting which released Hydrogen Sulphide (H₂S) of approximately one per cent entrained in LPG at 18 Bar. H₂S is a colourless, highly toxic, flammable gas often referred to as 'rotten egg gas'. In the scenario, the accident resulted in one fatality and injury, as well as illness to multiple casualties.

Shell designed Exercise Reveal to test its new Pre-incident Plan (PIP) as a practical emergency scenario run in real-time using the weather conditions of the day. The scenario was designed so that the emergency would escalate to a major alarm resulting in the Incident Control Centre (ICC) being activated. Initially the ICC was staffed with Shell personnel before CFA arrived with Incident Management Team (IMT) personnel to integrate in with the teams that were already established.

Shell's Emergency Exercise Program dictates that one Practical Major Response (PMR) exercise and one Incident Control Centre (ICC) exercise shall be conducted each year.

Shell's observers and facilitators were onsite during the field monitoring events, adding input where required and passing information as to what was occurring back to the simulation room. Communication between the scene and ICC, and the units within the ICC were also monitored by exercise observers and facilitators based there and in the exercise simulation room.

According to Wayne Noble, Shell's Emergency Response Trainer, it was a success.

"It was a great opportunity for those who would respond to a major incident at Shell, to work together and build better working relationships," he said.

CFA's Operations Officer Ian Beswicke says he was impressed by Shell treating the exercise as a real emergency. "They should be congratulated that they treated this as a real incident and involved the whole plant including the administration people," he says.

Members from Geelong City Fire Brigade were stationed at Corio during the exercise in case the brigade was paged to an incident. ■



Firefighters at a scenario at the Shell Geelong Refinery



Robinvale members brushed up on their firefighting skills

Rising early in Robinvale BY TIMOTHY HUGHES

On Sunday 3 October around 40 CFA volunteers in the Mallee rose early for a day filled with pre-fire season skills training.

Members from Robinvale, Wemen, Annuello, Kooloonong, Manangatang and Chinkapook brigades congregated for a series of exercises that they may face in the upcoming fire season. Special attendees included BASO Carla Howard and 1st Lieutenant District 18 Headquarters Brigade David Proctor with the district's Staging Area trailer. David and Carla provided valuable insight for the crews in the set-up and operation of staging areas.

Activities on the day included a session with Manangatang's Road Accident Rescue vehicle, a hazardous materials exercise, a pump relay exercise utilising Robinvale's new Big Fill Unit, and a run down on the group's new 12,000 litre collar tank draught system. The day's activities also focused on map reading skills, with the strike teams relying on grid references to make it to and from each exercise.

Throughout the day, crews had a chance to test their vehicles off-road in the Wemen and Annuello bushland, giving members an idea of the working conditions for the summer ahead.

The day finished with a barbecue provided by Ivan McPherson and Ian Grant from Manangatang, who did a stellar job feeding all of the hungry members. ■

Coasting through pre-summer exercise

BY ALISON APRHYS

Nearly 100 members from Districts 6 and 7 participated in a significant pre-summer exercise held in and around Torquay in October.

The exercise included firefighters from Aireys Inlet, Angelsea, Barwon Heads, Connewarre, Drysdale, Grovedale, Highton, Lara, Leopold, Ocean Grove and Torquay.

At the Incident Control Centre (ICC) situated at the Torquay Fire Station, Exercise Director Fabian Crowe gave members their scenario briefing while the Incident Management Team (IMT) set-up. Coastal Group Officer Morris Grove then thanked everyone for giving up their Sunday afternoon to train.

In the staging area at the rear of the ICC, members were ready to be deployed on firetrucks, slip-ons and command vehicles. The exercise commenced around 11.30am and involved deploying members to a number of locations including a vineyard and Torquay Airport. Facilitators were also out and about in the field to supervise and mentor members. At 2.30pm the exercise was declared over and crew leaders, strike team leaders, IMT members and facilitators returned to the ICC for a debrief.

"I want to thank all of the people from Districts 6 and 7 and the volunteers who put their heart and soul into the exercise which makes it all worthwhile," said Fabian. ■



A coastal emergency exercise in Torquay

Working with water again

BY JENNY POLLARD

On Sunday 10 October in a great start to Fire Action Week, the Charlton group conducted a refresher training exercise based around water-draughting techniques.

With the replenishment of water supplies thanks to the recent floods, the brigades worked through a range of exercises aimed at familiarising themselves with a number of water accessing techniques. These took place at locations across the southern portion of the group's area.

Techniques included filling a collar tank, accessing water using an electric transfer pump, accessing water using a hydrant on the rural pipeline and draughting water from a static water source at the Charlton Weir. Familiarisation of adjustments on the Protech Nozzle was also incorporated into the exercise.

The training morning was well-supported with a good turn-up of members. Participating brigades included Charlton, Buckrabanyule,

Glenloth East, Teddywaddy and Yeungroon.

Group Officer David Pollard was pleased with the response, saying it was an opportune time to run the exercise in the lead-up to the 2010 – 2011 fire season.

"Because we haven't had static water sources for a number of years, and the rain and floods have replenished much of these, it was a good chance to brush up on some skills," he said.

The exercise concluded with a barbecue lunch at the Charlton Fire Station. ■



A water-draughting exercise at Charlton

Eltham welcomes station announcement

BY KRIS PERKOVIC

Eltham brigade is celebrating after it was announced in October that \$9.6 million had been allocated for the future construction of a new Eltham Fire Station.

Eltham Fire Brigade Executive Chairman Brian Sandlant said the announcement was fantastic news.

“The brigade and CFA have lobbied hard and to finally get this news is just sensational. It’s not only great for our members but great for the community, who will be the main beneficiaries,” he said.

“The existing station at 909 Main Road has outgrown its present location. The engine bays are small for today’s modern appliances, parking is limited and as visitors would know, access to the station is via a side lane, which is not preferable as the station is also used for training and meeting purposes.

“Eltham Fire Brigade offers a vital service. Its career firefighters provide 24-hour fire protection to the town and support into neighbouring areas, and its volunteers support the career fireys and go on strike teams every fire season.”

Eltham CFA Officer-in-Charge Justin Justin said it was a great day for the brigade and the local area.

“I would like to acknowledge the tireless advocacy of District 13 Regional Manager Lex De Man in pushing for a new station and the lobbying efforts of Eltham State MP Steve Herbert.” ■



Eltham members are excited about their new \$9.6 million station



Napoleons Enfield's new station. Photo by David Mounier

Napoleons Enfield opens its doors

BY SHERENE MOUNIER

On Sunday 24 October the Napoleons Enfield Fire Brigade officially opened its new fire station.

Over a hundred people attended including brigade members, Grampians Regional Manager Don Kelly, Operations Officer Archie Conroy, and official guests Geoff Howard MP Member for Ballarat East, Golden Plains Shire Mayor Jenny Blake and Councillor Geraldine Frantz.

The afternoon tea was catered for by the local historical society and enjoyed by members and guests.

The new station replaces the old building that was rebuilt by CFA in 1982 on the original brigade site. The new station has been built with a meeting room, office area, kitchen and health and safety facilities which will cater for the brigade’s current and future needs.

The new station will improve the safety and service of Napoleons Enfield Brigade and provide members with a more enjoyable and modern base from which to work.

Napoleons Enfield Fire Brigade was formed in 1932 and has been running for 78 years.

The brigade currently has 92 members, 70 active, 13 juniors and nine probationary members. ■

New recruits jump aboard

BY SOPHIE JACKSON

CFA welcomed twenty-five of its newest recruits on a rainy Friday in October, at the Fiskville Graduation Ceremony.

The recruits’ friends and families were joined by Parliamentary Secretary for Police and Emergency Services Danielle Green, CFA Chairman Kerry Murphy, CEO Mick Bourke, Acting Chief Officer Steve Warrington and Fire Services Commissioner Craig Lapsley to celebrate the end of their 16-week training course.

Mr Murphy said it was time for new recruits to accept and embrace the responsibilities which belong to them.

“You have agreed to experience CFA as career firefighters, and now CFA will experience the benefits of having you on board,” he said.

“This recruitment experience will bond you both individually and as a team, and importantly with the great organisation you have joined.” ■



CFA's new recruits graduate in Fiskville. Photo by Keith Pakenham



Boolarra was able to finance the redevelopment of its station. Photo by Michelle Birkbeck

Boolarra houses new station thanks to donations

BY DAVE O'BRIEN

Approximately 250 people turned out for the official opening of the redevelopment and extension of the Boolarra Fire Station in November. As a result of donations totalling over \$150,000 after the Delburn Complex fires, the brigade was able to finance the redevelopment of the existing fire shed.

The new station includes a large motor room, turn out area and communications room, new kitchen and toilet facilities. The former shed section has been redeveloped into a modern meeting and training facility. Varied equipment such as pro-tech nozzles, beacons, generators, GPS units, and a large plasma television have also been purchased with the donations. Impressive displays of historical brigade photographs spanning over 60 years are also on permanent display in the new facility.

A special presentation was made to local resident Rick Teychenne from the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) for the assistance he gave to Boolarra brigade during the Delburn Complex fires. Rick assisted in arranging DSE slip-on units and also manned a CFA tanker when fires were threatening Boolarra. While Rick was fighting the fires and defending the town, his own house was destroyed.

Boolarra captain Todd Birkbeck unveiled a plaque and all brigade members simultaneously cut the red and white ribbon, formally opening the new station. ■

ICC boosts CFA regional operations

Ferntree Gully is home to a new state-of-the-art fire incident headquarters that will service the Mount Dandenong Ranges and Knox regions to provide even greater protection to those communities in times of bushfire.

Emergency Services Minister Bob Cameron and Member for Monbulk James Merlino opened the new \$800,000 Ferntree Gully Incident Control Centre in October as part of Fire Action Week.

"The new Incident Control Centre is a major boost to regional CFA operations. The centre will help ensure residents and those in surrounding areas have the best information and warnings should fire threaten the region," Mr Cameron said.

Mr Merlino said the new Incident Control Centre (ICC) includes improved access, parking and accommodation, providing a modern and safe facility for staff and volunteers. The ICC will be used to train personnel, upgrade and improve bushfire warnings and intelligence gathering, and work with communities so they can be better prepared for the bushfire season. ■



Graeme Armstrong, Operations Manager of District 13 and Bob Cameron, former Emergency Services Minister at the ICC opening. Photo by Kate Murphy

Making 'Milesy' proud

BY JODI BUTLER

The new \$1.4 million station at Inverloch was officially opened on Saturday 23 October.

The opening was attended by around 200 guests, including politicians, volunteers, family and members of the community. The Red Cross catered for the event and did a wonderful job of supplying plenty of refreshments and food.

The day was an emotional one, as former captain of 38 years Allen 'Milesy' Miles, the driving force behind the building project, sadly passed away earlier in the year and never got to see the outstanding facility that Inverloch now has. Captain Allan Williamson gave a moving speech, paying tribute to his colleague and mate. The brigade incorporated a memorial to Milesy in the new meeting room with his captain's helmet



Inverloch's new station

and an assortment of photographs depicting his involvement over the years. Former District 9 Operations Manager David Sherry revisited the area to help celebrate the day and gave a touching speech about the men and women of CFA, not just the vehicles, equipment and buildings. "Without the members, what use are those things?" he said. ■



Ouyen brigade members with their new pumper

Ouyen welcomes modern appliance

BY LOUISE MCGILLIVRAY

Operations Officer David McBain was pleased to present the keys of a new Light Pumper to Captain Trevor Mills of the Ouyen Fire Brigade on 22 October.

The vehicle, worth \$250,000, replaces the previous pumper which had reached the end of its lifespan as an operational appliance.

As part of the CFA Pumper Replacement Program, the vehicle is an example of the small urban appliances being designed to replace aging appliances, while keeping pace with new developments in firefighting appliance design and technology.

This vehicle will enhance CFA's pumper response capability within the Ouyen Group and District 18. The nearest similar appliance to support Ouyen and the surrounding communities can be up to an hour away. This appliance will ensure that CFA can provide support to those communities.

Ouyen is a strategic location within Fire Control District 18 sitting at the junction of the Mallee and Calder Highways. These major transport routes together with Ouyen's isolation make CFA reliant on the Ouyen Fire Brigade to store specialist equipment and provide a first response capability over a very large area. A Memorandum of Understanding with the Country Fire Service (in South Australia) could see Ouyen providing specialist response into South Australia for hazardous materials type incidents when required.

After presentation of the keys and an opportunity to view the truck, members went on to attend the brigade's annual dinner and awards presentation. ■

Community pitches in for a new ULT

BY STAN GALEWSKI

In a flood of support, the Heathmere community has helped its local brigade secure a Community Safety Emergency Support Program (CSESP) grant and a brand new Ultra Light Tanker.

Over recent years, a change in the brigade management team resulted in an increase in operational members, and initiated a drive to get a second tanker into the station.

However, the brigade was \$8,000 short of the amount needed to apply for a grant, so members Stephen, Lea and Pete formed the Heathmere fundraising committee.

After a letter drop around the area and a brigade open day where the local community had an opportunity to view a tanker similar to the one the brigade was fundraising for, Heathmere received a flood of donations.

In less than two months its fundraising goal was reached and passed, with a final balance of nearly \$13,000. The first application for a CSESP grant in the 2008/09 round was unsuccessful. The brigade tried again the following year and received a grant for a new Ultra Light Tanker.

In August 2010, Heathmere finally received its new tanker and held a barbecue to thank the community and brigade members in early October. ■



Members of the Heathmere brigade with their new tanker. Photo courtesy of the Portland Observer

St Arnaud pumped with new pumper

BY LEITH HILLARD

St Arnaud brigade's new light pumper sits alongside its Hino 3.4C tanker and brigade-owned Nissan Patrol Forward Command Vehicle (FCV).

"We've been very lucky," says brigade secretary Simon Burge. "We got various equipment through Region 2 and then the new station in 2005. They treated us very well. Now we've moved to District 16 and we're certainly very well-equipped this fire season."

St Arnaud is home to 3000 and stands at the meeting point of the Wimmera and Sunraysia Highways. The brigade has 53 members and turns out about 50 times a year.

"We're the most northerly of the 52 high-risk towns due to the amount of forest around town," says Simon. "Our risk comes from the St Arnaud Range National Park and other nearby reserves. There's a DSE office and depot in town and two of our members are project firefighters in the summer crew. They're operational now." ■



St Arnaud brigade has a brand new pumper. Trevor Baldcock receives the keys from Candy Broad MP. Photo courtesy of North Central News



Gayle Tierney MP hands over the keys to Gora West Captain Henry Compton.
Photo by Brian Jenkins

A perfect 10 at Gora West

BY FIONA JENKINS

It was a historic day at Gora West Brigade last October.

On the morning of 10 October, Gayle Tierney MP officially handed over the keys to a 600-litre Nissan Patrol fully equipped Ultra Light Tanker, and a new 1200 litre Fire Tanker, to Gora West Captain Henry Compton.

"Having these new vehicles, 'Old Bertha' our 3000-litre Hino Tanker, and all our vehicles now equipped with A-Class foam, we will undoubtedly have faster, safer and more effective response times within our designated region," Captain Compton said.

The Ultra Light replaces the outdated Landrover Slip On and was fully funded by the Victorian Government. The 1200-litre tanker was obtained through the Community Safety Emergency Support Program (CSESP). Gora West had to raise a minimum of \$20,000, a seemingly huge target to such a small community, but with the generous support of the locals and businesses, and with the additional funds raised from a large CFA auction held in April 2009, the brigade managed to raise \$60,000 towards its goal.

During Ms Tierney's speech she thanked and commended the firefighters and their families. "Gora West Fire Brigade has a long and proud tradition of providing a vital service to the local community in keeping it safe from the threat of bushfire. We recognise the extraordinary skills, dedication and community mindedness of our CFA volunteers and the families that allow them to fulfil this necessary community service year after year," Ms Tierney said. ■

Yarra Glen says thanks

BY SOPHIE JACKSON

As the mud squelched and the punters gathered at the Yarra Glen Racecourse on Saturday 23 October, a group of proud CFA volunteers and local business leaders got together to admire the brigade's new 2.4C tanker from the sidelines.

The day was the culmination of twelve months of hard work and generous donations from individuals and businesses in and around the Yarra Glen area to purchase the \$250,000 tanker.

"It's a great asset to the community," Yarra Glen Captain Bill Boyd said. "We're very grateful for the help we've been given, especially from IGA, Richmond Seafood Tavern, Tom Carson and his winemaker friends, Healesville Rotary, Yarra Glen Freemason, Bendigo Bank, the Yarra Valley Racing Centre and members of the community who contributed."

The donors were equally enthused. Local winemaker Tom Carson, who raised over \$40,000 dollars for the brigade by selling wine made from excess grapes, said they were eager to help following the February 2009 fires.

CEO of Ritchies IGA Fred Harrison said that the vast majority of customers had nominated the local brigade for the Community Benefits card program, where a percentage of customers' shopping bills go towards a club, school or charity of their choice.

"If we can contribute in a small way and put in the money, and they can contribute the grunt and muscle power to turn it into that truck, let's do it and do it again," he said. ■



Yarra Glen brigade members. Photo by Bill Boyd

A Newry Ultra Light Tanker

BY SANDRA HEATH

The keys to a brand new Community Safety Emergency Support Program (CSESP) Ultra Light Tanker have been presented to the Newry Fire Brigade.

Newry Fire Brigade Captain Rod Greig and Secretary Jackie Mitchell received the keys from Operations Manager Allan Rankin on Sunday 19 September at a brigade function to present service awards.

The acquisition of the new tanker will dramatically improve the brigade's response capability.

The brigade received significant funding for the tanker through the CSESP. The brigade also conducted extensive fundraising and had the support of the whole Newry community to raise its share of the funds. ■



Newry members with their new tanker. Photo by Doug Steele

Melton celebrates

BY BLAIR DELLEMIJN

Melton Fire Brigade marked its 75th anniversary with a weekend of celebrations in October.

Brigade members, past and present, came together to reminisce about old times over both days. Organised events included the unveiling of a book about the brigade, which details its beginnings and how it came to prosper over the years.

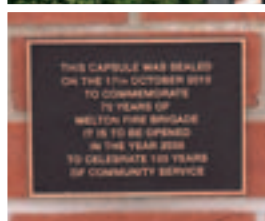
Brigade members also enjoyed some footage of the brigade at its first rural demonstration in the 1960s, as well as at an official handover of the new station in 1975. The brigade has been located in three different places over the years with the newest location being a multi-million dollar home in Henry Street, Melton.

The next day, Sunday, saw the brigade come together for a parade in the rearyard of Melton Fire Station. With help from the Fire Services Museum's International Front Mounted Pumper and music played by the 'Clans o' the West Highland Pipe Band', relatives of the late James Coburn and former Captain Stephen Hirt AFSM, John Dodemaide AFSM, and Ben and James Gilbertson (the two longest serving members and also the two youngest serving members of the brigade) travelled to the old Melton Fire Station to collect a 25-year-old time capsule from the grounds and deliver it to the current site. The time capsule was opened and a new capsule was placed in a monument of the current fire station, to be opened in another 25 years when the brigade celebrates its 100th anniversary.

Copies of the brigade's historical book can be purchased from the Melton Fire Brigade for \$30. Please contact the Duty Officer at Melton Fire Station on 9743 6403 to obtain a copy. ■



Melton Fire Brigade celebrated its 75th anniversary in October



A new fire services museum has opened in Huntly. Photos by Blair Dellelijn



Huntly hosts fire history

BY ALISON APRHYS

CF members interested in the equipment used by firefighters years ago will be delighted to learn of a new museum in Huntly that will preserve central Victoria's historic firefighting equipment, some of which dates back to 1890.

The Central Victorian Fire Service Preservation Society (CVFSPS) raised almost \$40,000 over 18 years to construct the five-shed museum.

The museum is located on Caellis Road, Huntly and is open by appointment only. Anyone wanting to visit the museum can contact CVFSPS president Tim Rosewall on 0409 333 232. ■



A PHOTOGRAPHIC DIARY OF A CFA BRIGADE

THROUGH THE AGES

GEELONG CITY



COMPILED BY KEITH PAKENHAM



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A long day

"This photograph was taken during the tail end of the 2009 season. We were on a Strike Team from District 7, sent up to Healesville, to help the Department of Sustainability (DSE) and Melbourne Water protect Melbourne's water supply. This was taken during the third day, after we'd been working hard tackling a few spot fires and a lot of blacking out work, dragging horses back and forth over some very rough ground. "Everyone had been working long hours, starting at around 12 noon and finishing around 12am. James Eastwood of Leopold brigade sat down on the step of Torquay 2 and I snapped this shot."

Photo taken by Allen Gray, a volunteer with Lovely Banks Brigade in District 7