



PROTECTING LIVES AND PROPERTY | WINTER 2012

BRIGADE

**LOCAL
KNOWLEDGE**
HOW EXPERIENCE EMPOWERS
OUR MEMBERS

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NEW SIRENS POLICY

STORY GERARD SCHOLTEN

A working group has been established to oversee the implementation of the Victorian Government's new community sirens policy announced in May. For the first time CFA brigade sirens and fixed public sirens will be made available to alert communities about all emergency incidents including bushfires, storms and floods.

The policy gives clear guidelines for the use of CFA sirens for the purpose of alerting the community. Previously, sirens were intended only to call volunteer firefighters to attend the fire station for an emergency call-out.

Launching the policy at Maiden Gully brigade, Police and Emergency Services Minister Peter Ryan said it significantly built on recommendation 4.7 of the Bushfires Royal Commission Interim Report.

"This policy, which will be in place prior to the next bushfire season, will add value to Victoria's existing network of 600 community and CFA sirens which are currently underutilised. It provides an additional tool for emergency services to practically and effectively warn people about impending danger," Mr Ryan said.

Brigades in nominated locations will be consulted about their implementation and brigade sirens will continue to be managed and operated by CFA.

"The Bushfires Royal Commission made it clear that alerting and informing the community during an emergency was just as important as responding to it," CFA's CEO Mick Bourke said.

"This gives CFA brigades, with the support of their community, another tool to help protect their community." ■



KETH PHEWAM



KERRY MURPHY CHAIRMAN

A number of new members of the executive and Fire and Emergency Management teams come to CFA not only with extensive experience in the emergency services sector but, more specifically, a strong and committed background in volunteerism.

We welcome Fran Boyd as Executive Director People and Culture (who worked for the Department of Primary Industries) and David Spokes as Executive Director Performance and Strategy, who joins us from the local government sector. Mark Sullivan, the new Executive Director Communities and Communication, has more than 25 years' experience in the NSW police force and the Rural Fire Service.

This now completes the Executive Leadership Team working alongside Chief Executive Officer Mick Bourke, Chief Officer Euan Ferguson, Executive Director Business Services Michael Wootten and Executive Director Operational Training and Volunteerism Lex De Man.

The Fire and Emergency Management team is now complete with the appointment of Terry Hayes as Executive Manager of Community Capability, Joe Buffone as Deputy Chief Officer Readiness and Response and Alen Slijepcevic as Deputy Chief Officer Capability and Infrastructure.

Joe was the Deputy Commissioner at the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner and has been a CFA volunteer with Bulla brigade for the past 10 years. He has led a number of highly strategic reviews such as the 2009 Victorian bushfires and the 2010-11 floods.

Before joining CFA, Alen Slijepcevic was Assistant Chief Fire Officer

– Capability with DSE in Victoria. For seven years he coordinated all Forestry Tasmania firefighting activities in single and multi-agency environments and was a key contributor to the Victorian Bushfire Strategy with specific responsibility for the workforce and capability elements of the project.

We now have the team in place as we continue through the process of organisational change, ready to face future challenges at full strength.

Gippsland Regional Director Mark Reid was invited to address the May Board meeting held in Sale. He spoke about how vital it is to take a common-sense approach to the creation of One CFA.

Mark is a passionate advocate for what his region calls the Kitchen Table Index. The initiative is about staff getting off the phone to engage our people in their own backyards. CFA members appreciate our business being conducted using straight talk. Gippsland region works on the principle that talking over a cuppa in an environment that's comfortable for members can lead to more open conversations. Early intervention through informal face-to-face conversations can help brigades tackle conflict before it escalates.

Since the Board meeting, Mark has resigned from CFA after 33 years of service to spend more time at his boat building business and to help Pacific islands develop their fire and emergency plans. We wish him every success. ■

Read more news from Kerry in the Blogs section of cfaconnect.net.au

CFA TO LAUNCH WELLBEING RESEARCH

STORY DUNCAN RUSSELL

For the first time, CFA is conducting research with members about their experiences of CFA's welfare services. We aim to collect information about a range of important welfare issues, including:

- assessing members' mental strength and the strategies they use to increase their resilience
- discovering what members know about welfare and mental health issues
- how confident members are at identifying colleagues who need help and supporting those colleagues

■ what they think about welfare services and whether they'd use them. If they have used them, were they happy with the service?

We'll use the confidential research responses to improve our programs to better suit members' needs, and to help members gain new skills to increase their mental strength.

You'll be able to participate in this research online in spring – look out for a story on cfaconnect.net.au. If you have any queries about this wellbeing research, contact Michele Konheiser (9262 8996; m.konheiser@cfa.vic.gov.au). ■

HAVE YOUR SAY ABOUT TRAINING

STORY CHARLOTTE AZZOPARDI

An Operational Training Discussion Paper has recently been distributed to all brigades and groups, and CFA is seeking feedback to help shape a new operational training strategy. Brigades should now have a copy of the paper and an introductory DVD.

Executive Director of Operational Training and Volunteerism Lex de Man said CFA wanted to know what members would like to see for training in the future.

"Individual, brigade, group and committee responses to the discussion paper will help shape the future of training at CFA. As a large and diverse organisation, we need a strategic and coordinated approach to operational training," Lex said.

"The discussion paper responds to a number of issues raised by the recent Jones Inquiry into the effect of arrangements made by CFA on volunteers, and

also builds on a range of previous consultations across CFA."

The discussion paper is divided into six target areas: leadership, fire and emergency management service delivery priorities, how we train our people, training facilities and equipment, flexible learning delivery and training consistency.

As you read through the sections, there are questions to encourage you to consider what's important to your brigade and what CFA needs to do to improve training.

There is a template at the end of the paper to help you give feedback. The paper and online survey are available at Brigades Online.

Feedback is sought by 7 September. ■

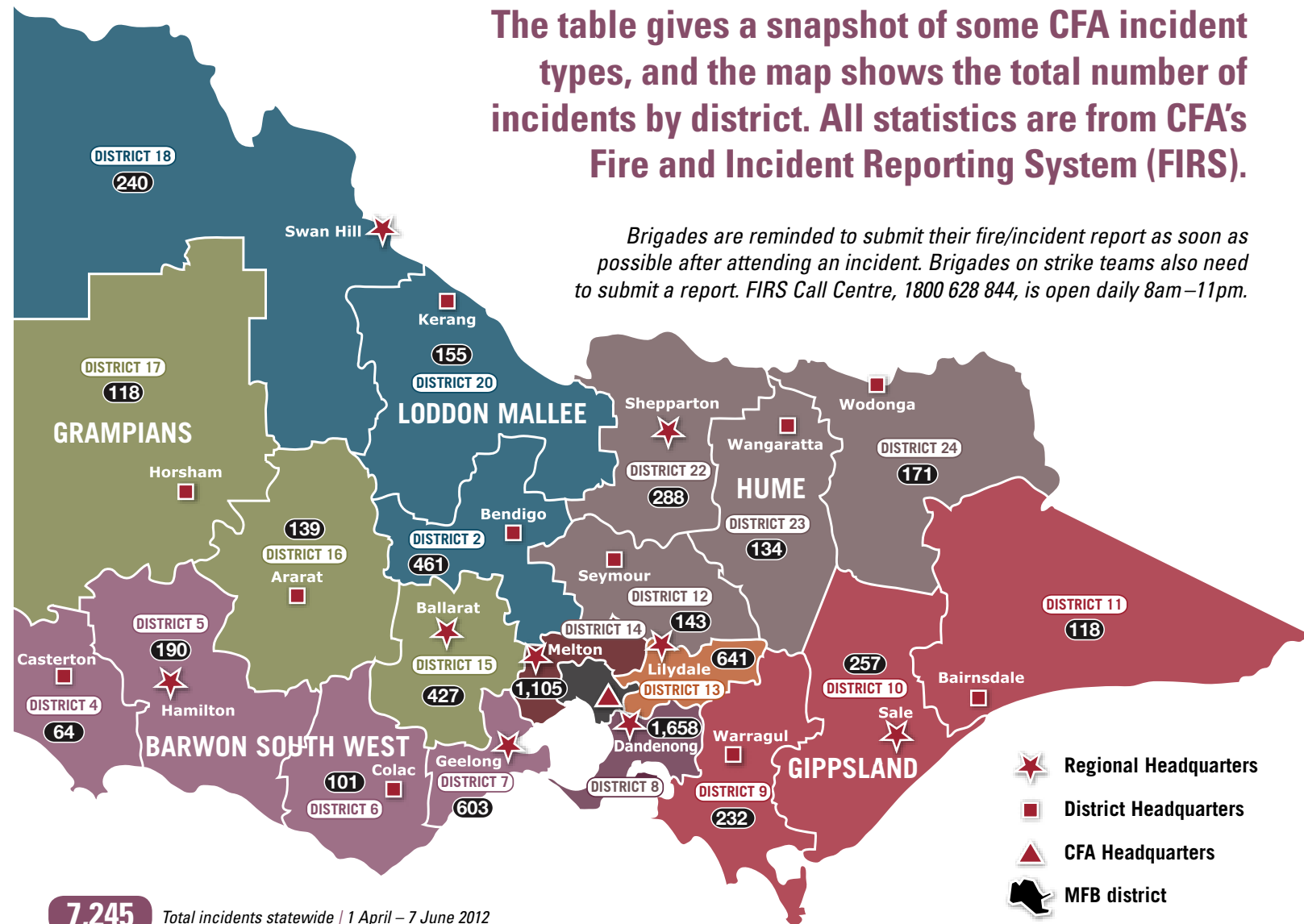
INCIDENT STATISTICS

INCIDENT TYPE	1 APRIL – 7 JUNE 2012			1 JANUARY – 31 MARCH 2012		
	Est. loss	Est. ha burnt	No. of incidents	Est. loss	Est. ha burnt	No. of incidents
Bush and forest		29	11 ^a	1,446		42 ^a
Car fires and motor vehicle accidents			877			1,275
False alarms			1,166			1,985
Grassfires		816	65 ^b	4,032		146 ^b
Hazardous materials			430			649
House fires	\$10,985,850		225	\$13,381,495		285
Industrial fires	\$6,743,200		32	\$8,874,500		66
	\$17,729,050	845	2,806	\$22,255,995	5,478	4,448

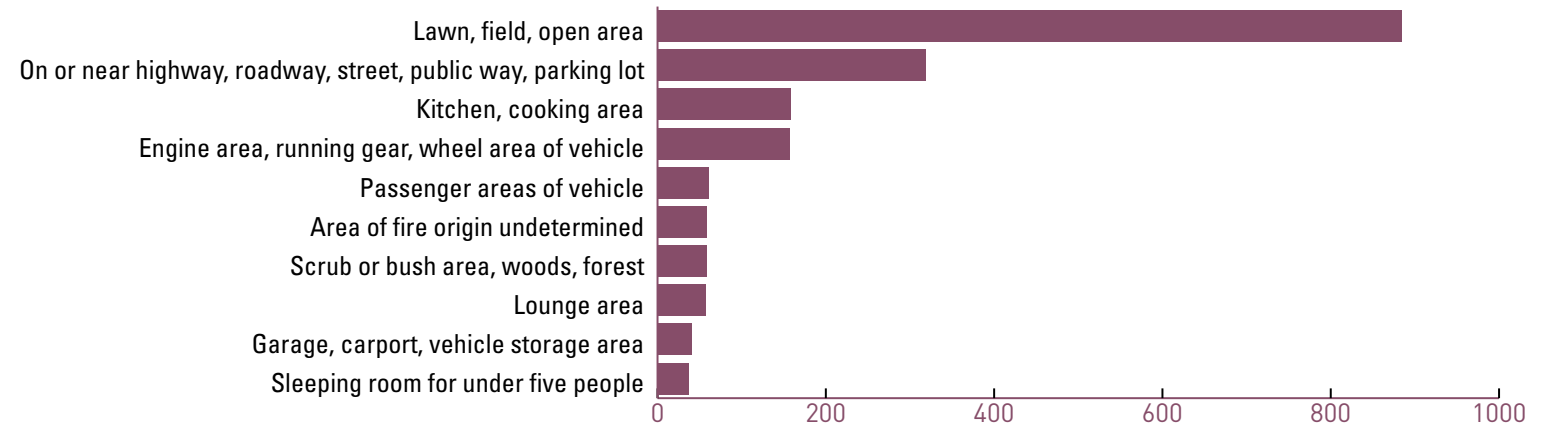
^aForest and bushfires and scrub or bush and grass mixture fires larger than one hectare; ^bLarger than one hectare

The table gives a snapshot of some CFA incident types, and the map shows the total number of incidents by district. All statistics are from CFA's Fire and Incident Reporting System (FIRS).

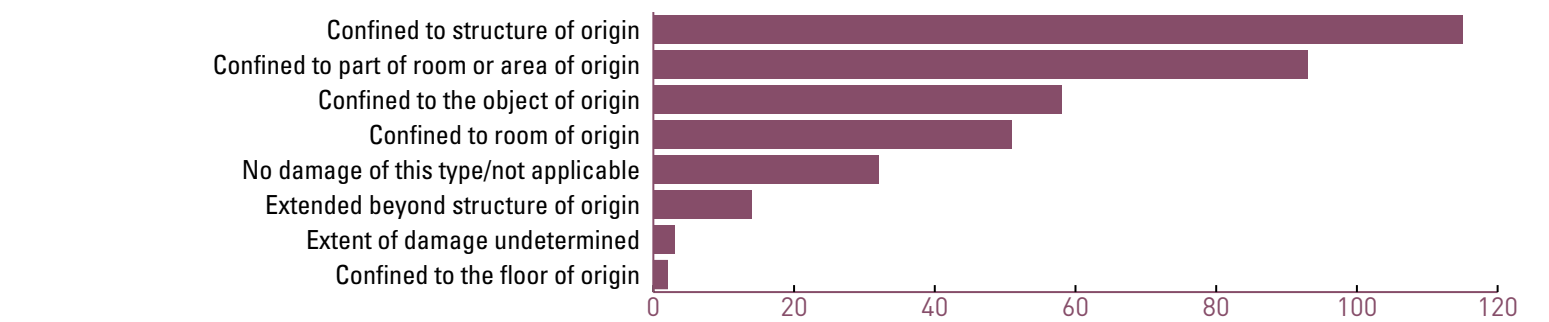
Brigades are reminded to submit their fire/incident report as soon as possible after attending an incident. Brigades on strike teams also need to submit a report. FIRS Call Centre, 1800 628 844, is open daily 8am–11pm.



ORIGIN OF FIRE 1 APRIL – 7 JUNE 2012



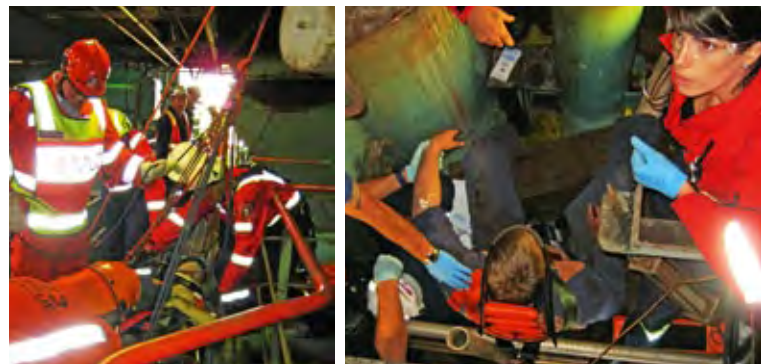
EXTENT OF FLAME DAMAGE 1 APRIL – 7 JUNE 2012



POWER STATION HIGH ANGLE RESCUE

INCIDENT: High angle rescue
DISTRICT: 9
DATE: 29 March 2012
BRIGADES: Yallourn North, Newborough, Morwell

While a workman was using scaffolding to carry out maintenance on a boiler at Yallourn W power station, he tripped, fell and hit his head on a handrail that knocked him unconscious for a short time. Members of the on-site Estate Services team assisted the worker and asked CFA brigades, Ambulance Victoria and State Emergency Service (SES) to attend. They also set up a rescue and belay line and had just about everything in place to perform the rescue. When paramedics arrived, it was decided to extract the casualty using a backboard and rescue litter. At the time he had suspected back and neck injuries. Leading Firefighters Julian Seri and Colin Corbett and Firefighter Nick Dent joined the rescue team for the set-up and extraction.

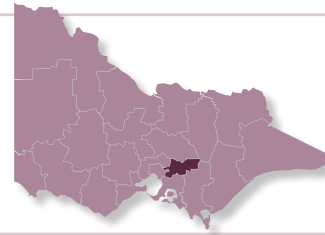


Dandenong brigade's ladder platform and field command vehicle with rope rescue equipment and rope technicians were also alerted, but the ladder platform was quickly called off as it wasn't needed, and the rope technicians also turned back when the worker was removed. The rescue took around an hour and the workman only received a sprained ankle. He was later cleared of any neck or back injuries. Overall, it was a good example of how emergency services personnel and our industry partners work well together to tackle the diverse and complex incidents in the Latrobe Valley. Ross Male is Senior Station Officer at Morwell brigade and was the incident controller.

CLIFFHANGER AT KALORAMA

STORY AMY SCHILDBERGER

INCIDENT: Rescue
DISTRICT: 13
DATE: 25 April 2012
BRIGADES: Kalorama, Dandenong, Wandin, Montrose, Monbulk



Anzac Day ended in disaster for a 19-year-old woman who lost control of her car and drove off a cliff in the Dandenong Ranges.

At around 4.30pm several CFA trucks were called to the incident on Mount Dandenong Tourist Road at Kalorama. The woman first called her father, who made the emergency call then drove up and down the road trying to find her.

When CFA crews arrived they found the woman trapped in her car that had rolled 15 metres down an embankment.

Wandin brigade's new rescue truck, Monbulk rescue unit and Dandenong's rescue team carried out a rope rescue. With light rain falling and sunlight rapidly fading, Wandin rescue crews freed the driver from the vehicle in around 45 minutes using Jaws of Life cutting equipment, while Monbulk crews set up the roping system to bring the woman to road level.

"Monbulk's rope rescue crews undertake a significant amount of training to maintain a very proficient level and are capable of completing this type of rescue within 20 minutes," said Rope Rescue Commander Daryl Owen.

"The use of rope rescue is making the rescue of patients much safer for the patient and rescuers, and is significantly safer than walking a patient up a steep, wet and slippery embankment or a ladder.



AMY SCHILDBERGER

"This incident was an excellent example of the local brigade, two CFA rescue brigades and paramedics all working well together to provide the best possible care for the patient."

The woman was lucky to receive only minor injuries. ■

To see more photos and video of the incident, go to cfaconnect.net.au/kalorama

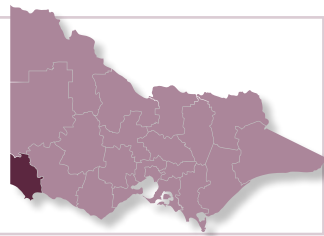
FRIDGE CAUSES SHOP BLAZE

STORY DUNCAN RUSSELL



DARREN HOGGAN

INCIDENT: Structure fire
DISTRICT: 4
DATE: 29 April 2012
BRIGADES: Portland, Ballarat City, Warrnambool, Port Fairy, Hamilton, Heathmere, Heywood, Corio



A large blaze at Daly's IGA supermarket in Portland would have been far worse had it not been for the quick reaction of local firefighters, who arrived at the store just four minutes after they were notified by police at about 4.45am.

An internal fire attack with five lines and breathing apparatus contained the damage to the front and middle of the 40-metre by 70-metre store. District 4 Operations Officer Gary Harker said it was a challenging fire to put out. Around 70 firefighters took part and several members stayed at the scene throughout the afternoon to stabilise the building.

"We got there at the right time but it was a very hot blaze above our heads," Gary said. "There was major internal damage and we had to put water everywhere."

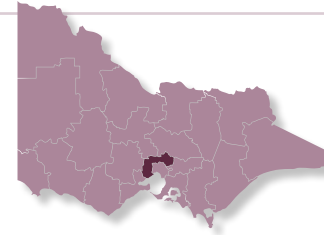
"We had to deal with a lot of small explosions as canned goods expanded and blew up. There were cans flying through the air. It took about two hours to put it out."

The fire was investigated by Steve Cooper and Stan Galewski. "It was caused by a fault with a compressor on a fridge cabinet. The compressor was at the same level as a shelf stacked with aerosol cans that went up and started the fire," Steve said. The fire then spread at ceiling level. ■

BRICK FACTORY FIRE

STORY BLAIR DELLEMIJN

INCIDENT: Structure fire
DISTRICT: 14
DATE: 12 April 2012
BRIGADES: Bacchus Marsh, Ballarat City, Sunbury, Melton, Myrning, Parwan, Coimadai, Rowsley, Ballan



Shortly after Bacchus Marsh brigade members had completed a major breathing apparatus exercise in town, their pagers went off. Several 000 calls were made from concerned residents in Grey Street in Darley after they spotted smoke and flames coming from an old brick factory.

With flames visible from Bacchus Marsh 3 kilometres away, Officer in Charge Lieutenant Tony Prowse from Bacchus Marsh brigade requested to make pumpers two and tankers five.

On arrival crews were faced with an 80-metre by 40-metre factory fully alight at the front. Fire was also travelling the full length of the building on the inside along wooden beams.

Firefighters fought the blaze inside with several hoses while wearing breathing apparatus. Due to the possibility of a lack of water in the area, additional tankers were requested to carry out a tanker relay.

Holes were cut into the sides of the building to get access to the fire in the upper portion of the building.

Due to the poor structural integrity of the building after the fire was brought under control, crews were withdrawn to a safe area. ■

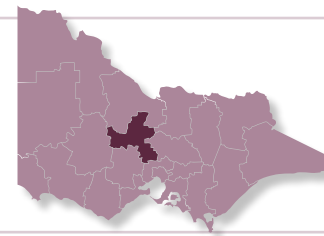


BLAIR DELLEMIJN

PLANE DOWN AT RIDDELLS CREEK

STORY DEAN ANDERSON

INCIDENT: Plane crash
DISTRICT: 2
DATE: 17 April 2012
BRIGADES: Riddells Creek, Bullengarook, Sunbury



A pilot is lucky to be alive after his ultralight plane crashed at Riddells Creek. Firefighters from Riddells Creek brigade were called to the crash after a local resident saw the plane plummet from around 300 metres and crash into a steep gorge south of Riddell Airfield. The homemade, single-seater aircraft had taken off moments earlier.

The wrecked plane was found on the south side of the gorge near Palmer Road. Accessing the crash site from the north side of the gorge was difficult so Sunbury brigade approached from the south.

Vehicle access to the crash site was also limited because of steep, rocky terrain and the likelihood that the larger emergency vehicles could become bogged in the softer ground near the bottom of the gorge. To overcome the access issues, an ultralight tanker from Bullengarook brigade joined the rescue.

"This incident highlights the challenge of responding to aircraft accidents in difficult terrain. After encountering some difficulty trying to locate the crash site, we were limited in the type of vehicles that could access the site," said First Lieutenant Martin Leitch from Riddells Creek brigade.

After being freed from the wreckage, the man was treated for head and wrist injuries and flown to the Royal Melbourne Hospital.

"This incident was a great example of how seamlessly the emergency services can work together towards achieving a common goal. In this case we had a successful result with the pilot surviving what could have been a very serious accident," added Martin.

Over the years there have been several serious aircraft crashes in the area and, as a result, a number of firefighters from Riddells Creek brigade received specialist 'Respond to aviation incident' training from CFA in 2009. ■



KRIS REICHL/SUNBURY LEADER

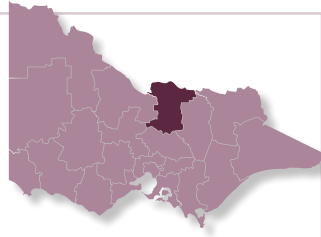
COURTESY OF SHEPPARTON NEWS



ANDREW ARNDT

HIT BY FLOOD, DESTROYED BY FIRE STORY DUNCAN RUSSELL

INCIDENT: Structure fire
DISTRICT: 22
DATE: 30 April 2012
BRIGADES: Tallygaroopna, Shepparton, Cosgrove & Pine Lodge, Drumanure, Wunghnu, Katandra, Kaarimba



Shortly after the Tallygaroopna Hotel closed at 7.30pm, CFA crews were paged to attend a fire in this historic 125-year-old building. The pub, which was well alight when crews arrived, had reopened only around a month earlier following extensive damage from the March flood.

Russell Lau, the incident controller and Mt Major's group officer (pictured above), was the first to see the flames and radioed VicFire. Half a minute later he was at the fire station.

"My wife heard an explosion, and from my backyard I could see fire coming through the front roof of the hotel," Russell said.

Crews immediately disconnected and protected a 300-litre gas cylinder that supplied the hotel's cookers. Crews also prioritised protecting a weatherboard house at risk on the eastern side.

It took crews from seven brigades almost an hour and a half to bring the fire under control, by which time the hotel was destroyed. No one was inside at the time. Brigade members from Tallygaroopna, Katandra and Mooroopna and a member of Shepparton Search and Rescue monitored the scene throughout the night. District 22 Operations Officer Peter Brereton describes Russell as "the glue in the community" and it's not hard to see why. The publicans of the hotel, Lee Razga and Michelle Emanuelli, hadn't been able to move back into the pub since the floods and they were staying with Russell. And the old homestead owned by Lee and Michelle needed renovating, so Russell organised for some local volunteers to help finish the renovations.

Russell is also working with community members, the police, State Emergency Service (SES) and Greater Shepparton City Council on an action plan for future floods.

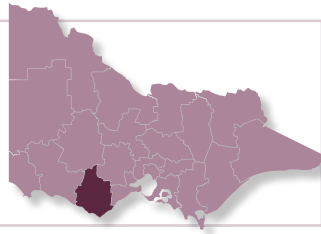
"This year's floods were the worst I've seen in 35 years," said Russell, who used his experience of the 1993 floods in the role of sector commander in this year's flood when he coordinated the response with SES.

He's been a CFA member for 30 years and was Tallygaroopna's captain for 10 years. He's run a stonemasonry business in the area for 35 years and has been president of the local golf and bowling clubs.

As for Tallygaroopna's only pub, "The township really hopes it will be rebuilt," said Russell. ■

LOST BIKERS RESCUED STORY KAYLA MASKELL

INCIDENT: Rescue
DISTRICT: 6
DATE: 23 April 2012
BRIGADES: Wye River



Members from Wye River brigade helped speed up the search for missing trail bike riders thanks to their knowledge of the area.

Just before 6pm, the brigade was called to assist in the search and rescue of eight riders from Ballarat, Melton and surrounds who were lost near Wye River.

Brigade Captain Roy Moriarty said Apollo Bay police and Wye River brigade managed to find two of the riders on Sunday night after one man in the group found emergency services while on a walk to find mobile phone reception.

"He was able to point us in the direction of where the group was. But five of the riders had left to see if they could get their bikes out, which is when they got lost in a steep ravine," Roy said.

"By this stage it was too dark and dangerous for us to search around the river." Later, an Incident Control Centre was set up at Wye River Fire Station so police and other support agencies could coordinate the search and rescue.

"We were able to assist in the way of local knowledge, which meant we could pinpoint certain areas of interest on a map which was helpful," Roy said.

"Luckily, the men were spotted on the banks of the river in the morning by the police helicopter."

Wye River brigade has been called to a number of these types of incident, but in this case Roy was concerned that the trail bike riders had to spend a night out in the area.

"It was probably lucky that they had all their gear on to keep them warm, and also that it wasn't two nights, given the weather conditions," he said. ■

BUSY TIME IN MELTON STORY BLAIR DELLEMIJN

INCIDENT: Structure fire
DISTRICT: 14
DATE: 17 April 2012
BRIGADES: Melton, Ballarat City



Melton brigade had a frenetic two days in mid April, with a number of major structure fires in the area.

One of them was a house fire in Westlake Estate, West Melton. Locals who called 000 said they had heard explosions in the garage and people yelling outside the house.

When the Melton pumper arrived, Station Officer Craig Kneeshaw found the house well alight, with fire engulfing the garage and extending into the kitchen and family areas.

Firefighters searched the house for occupants and to assess the extent of fire. Thankfully, no one was found inside – a testament to a working smoke alarm that alerted the residents to make their escape. Ambulance Victoria was called because one of the residents was overcome by smoke. A puppy was rescued from the back of the building and handed back to the owners.

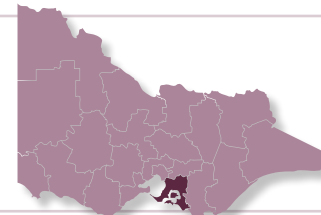
With a number of breathing apparatus being used, Ballarat City brigade's protective equipment van refilled cylinders at Melton station. ■



BLAIR DELLEMIJN

QUICK RESPONSE SAVES LIFE STORY CHARLOTTE AZZOPARDI

INCIDENT: Cardiac arrest
DISTRICT: 8
DATE: 31 March 2012
BRIGADES: Springvale



At the end of March, the Springvale Emergency Medical Response (EMR) team was first to arrive at Dingley Oval in the Melbourne suburb of Dingley Village, where a football player had collapsed.

The 39-year-old man left the field complaining of chest pain and collapsed in the car park before he could get to hospital.



ANDREW CAREW

Springvale Senior Station Officer Bernie Frawley said club trainers had been performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and firefighters took over when they arrived.

"We hooked him up to the defibrillator and analysed his heart rate," Bernie said. "The defib recommended to give him a shock, which we did, and then we continued CPR for about five minutes before the ambulance arrived."

"In the end he received four shocks and after about 22 minutes his heart rate came back and was quite strong."

The man was taken to Monash Medical Centre where he was placed in an induced coma.

Bernie said the incident was an example of how important quick response is.

"It makes all the difference in the world. The EMR program at Springvale allows us to get to an incident quickly and start working on the patient. It was fantastic for us to get a positive outcome like this one. By all working together – the trainers, firefighters and paramedics – we have a better chance of getting a good result," Bernie said.

"Supporting Ambulance Victoria and being trained in EMR has given us another tool to protect people's lives and could be the difference between life and death. It really lifts morale knowing we can do that bit more to help the community."

Springvale's EMR team is Bernie, Qualified Firefighter Kevin Ruys (both pictured left) and Leading Firefighter Greg Milne.

Brigade members trained in EMR can perform CPR and airway management, oxygen therapy, operate a semi-automatic external defibrillator and give level two first aid until paramedics arrive. They can also perform initial spinal injury and respiratory distress assessments and provide treatment to trauma victims and respond to other medical conditions. ■

STANDING shoulder to shoulder

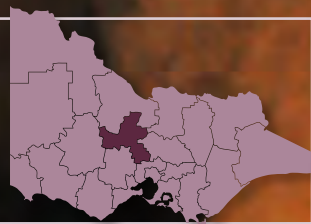
STORY LEITH HILLARD

INCIDENT: Structure fire

DISTRICT: 2

DATE: 28 April 2012

BRIGADES: Bendigo, Golden Square



The united force of Bendigo's career and volunteer firefighters at a shop fire in Bendigo led to some glowing comments from Senior Station Officer Dale Stemmer, who was the incident controller.

"He was blown away by the volunteer turnout," said Operations Officer Craig Brittain, who also attended the blaze. "We also called in Golden Square pumper and salvage unit and they're an all-volunteer station.

"This one was cooking away for a while before it broke through and everyone on scene worked extremely hard for about 45 minutes. It was a butcher's shop with an adjoining post office and very early on we knew that fire was going through the roof space into the post office. Members hauled out lots of equipment but also removed mail from the post office – that became a focus pretty quickly.

"The crews did a fantastic job in preventing further spread of the fire and protecting the area of origin, which was vitally important as forensic chemists were called in to conduct an investigation. But most of all,

retrieving mail from the post office was important because we found out later it contained some personal and irreplaceable items.

"A nice lady had something irreplaceable in a parcel in the post office," continued Craig. "She just thanked us all so much. She was just so relieved and that message was passed around to all the firefighters."

The butcher's shop was destroyed.

The procedure at Bendigo is for career firefighters to respond in the trucks, with the volunteers meeting them at the scene. "We usually get the volunteers to head off straight after incidents so we don't impose on their time too much," said Craig.

"That night, about 10 volunteers came back to the station afterwards and assisted with the restowing of the appliances to get them back online as quickly as possible. That was very much appreciated."

Bendigo career firefighters and volunteers train together three times a month. The integrated brigade is working towards volunteers delivering some of that training.

"We want our volunteers to take advantage of leadership opportunities," explained Craig. "Our senior station officers and leading firefighters have a massive amount of knowledge and skills that they can impart because it's their profession – they're here all the time. We're putting them in mentor roles with our volunteers so they can tap into that experience.

"WE WANT OUR VOLUNTEERS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES"

"It's all about finding more and better ways to work together. At the end of the day, we're all here for the same reason – to serve the community of Bendigo." ■

KEITH PACHENHAM



Wayne soars to NEW HEIGHTS

STORY LIVIA DE SANCTIS

CFA's Wayne Rigg is flying high in his new role as air operations manager. This has been on the cards since his accreditation as an air attack supervisor six years ago.

Wayne is the first CFA member to become an air operations manager, an outstanding achievement in an organisation whose members don't generally get an opportunity to spend many hours in the air.

"It's great to achieve this qualification – a lot of time and experience has gone into it. At CFA we don't get the same opportunities to clock up hours, as DSE personnel get, so it's a great example of the tenacity of Riggsy to make it happen," said CFA Aviation Officer Brett Boatman.

While fighting fires from the air is far from the crews down on the ground, Wayne believes you need solid ground skills and experience to do a good job in the air. "Aerial support is just that: support. You don't put a fire out from the air; you support the crews on the ground. From the air, you need to know exactly what you're looking at and, for that, you need ground experience. An aircraft is basically a tanker with wings."

Wayne's ground experience began when he became a career firefighter in 1995, spending a long time on station before becoming a senior station officer

and then an operations officer. Two stints as a CFA aviation officer at the State Aircraft Unit piqued Wayne's interest in aviation support and offered him wonderful guidance and mentoring from experienced people around the state.

Wayne hopes his new appointment will provide an opportunity to be part of the firefighting strategy of the future. "Our climate, our terrain, our fuel is constantly evolving. I want to be part of our aircraft suppression strategy and help guide it within CFA.

"We need to be constantly looking at what people are doing around the world, around Australia in order to meet the challenges of the future with the best approach."

Deputy Chief Officer Steve Warrington sees Wayne's achievement as an asset to CFA and a testament to the dedication and expertise of our members.

"Wayne has been a passionate supporter of aviation firefighting for some years. Over the journey he has become one of Victoria's and Australia's experts in aviation firefighting, chalking up many years of experience working at all levels," said Steve.

"We are very proud and lucky to have someone of Wayne's experience and knowledge supporting aviation firefighting in this state." ■

KILMORE EAST CIVIL LITIGATION

STORY JADE HASLAM

In February 2009, a civil class action was commenced against SPI Electricity Pty Ltd (SPI) in relation to the Kilmore East fire. In September 2010, SPI joined CFA as a defendant in the class action, together with the State of Victoria (Victoria Police), Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) and the electricity asset inspection service provider. SPI claims that CFA breached a legal duty of care to suppress the fire and to issue warnings.

In January 2011, the plaintiff joined CFA, DSE and the State of Victoria (on

behalf of Victoria Police) as defendants and made the same claims against CFA as SPI does.

To ensure CFA members were informed about the proceedings, answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs) were prepared and published on CFA Online and Brigades Online. We strongly encourage you to read this information at Brigades Online > About CFA > 2009 Fires. ■

Please call Yen Seah on 9098 8793 if you are unable to access the FAQs.


MICK BOURKE CEO

The last couple of months have given CFA plenty to do and more than enough to think about. But the good news is that it has been largely positive activity.

From an organisational perspective, we've filled the three vacant executive director roles. This provides a line-up of the Chief Officer leading Fire and Emergency Management, Michael Wootten – our longest-serving executive by a long way – leading Business Services, Lex de Man heading Operational Training and Volunteerism, David Spokes as the new leader of Performance and Strategy, Fran Boyd heading up People and Culture, and Mark Sullivan leading Communities and Communication.

This is the first time in three years that all the key executive directors have been permanently in place and I'm certainly looking forward to being part of this new Executive Leadership Team with my colleagues. You may see some of them about over the next month as we ensure they get a good understanding of CFA before they put their feet under the desk.

Significantly, the Fire Services Commissioner (FSC) has reported on the performance against his first year action plan and some solid outcomes have been achieved. We're working with the FSC to ensure we're clear on his second year plan and our role in its implementation.

CFA is awaiting the Government's White Paper on how to achieve better outcomes for communities through reform of the emergency management sector. When we know what is proposed, we will ensure you are informed.

Recently we brought together all people in leadership and key management roles in CFA, including our District Planning Committee Chairs or their delegates, and also the VFBV Chair, CEO and Executive Officer. One of the aims of the conference was to go over the three stages of our organisational change process with a focus on leadership and culture.

I found this time together highly worthwhile and feedback so far has been positive. I'm sure those who attended would be only too happy to share their experiences of those two days.

In early May, the State Government presented its budget in tough economic times. CFA was fortunate to gain additional funding for 48 new and refurbished rural fire stations and additional fleet.

The Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission recommendations have been a big part of CFA work in the past year. We've forwarded evidence of the delivery of our responsibilities and the efficacy of those programs to the Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor, Mr Neil Comrie. His report will be finalised in coming weeks and will be publicly available following its release.

It looks like the winter and early spring will again be high activity periods and we will keep you informed of the matters we're working on.

FISKVILLE REPORT ON TRACK

At the time of writing, independent investigator Professor Rob Joy had confirmed that his report about historic practices at Fiskville will be delivered to the CFA Board on schedule by 30 June.

The Board will consider the report before releasing it publicly along

with its response. I'd like to reassure our people that it will be made available to you as soon as possible following 30 June. If you have registered to receive updates from us, you'll be notified by email when the report is available to download from CFA Connect.

Over recent months Professor Joy has conducted around 300 interviews, had access to around four million records, and identified 25,000 potentially relevant documents as part of his investigation into historic practices for live firefighting training at Fiskville.

As agreed in the terms of reference, the report will:

- examine and consider the historical facts relating to the nature, acquisition and use of liquids, gases or solids for live firefighting training at Fiskville;
- identify and list any documents or reports that contain comments on or recommendations about the use and disposal of flammable substances and extinguishing agents used for live firefighting training at Fiskville;
- report on how effectively each comment or recommendation was acted upon and, where no action was taken, comment on the reasons for and implications of such lack of action;
- identify the origins of the flammable substances and report on how they were stored, used and disposed of, and assess the likelihood of the use and management of flammable substances and extinguishing agents having led to contamination of air, land or groundwater at, under or beyond the Fiskville facility;
- identify the nature and extent of exposure to the flammable substances, extinguishing agents and fire water of persons on site and in surrounding areas; and
- on the basis of available information, assess the risk that there are buried flammable substances, drums and/or other related contaminants on site.

As we've said previously, and under the terms of reference, this report will determine the facts around what happened at Fiskville between 1971 and 1999 and we expect a number of findings and recommendations to be made.

This is an important and significant first step and once we receive Professor Joy's report we will be in a better position to undertake further work that assesses potential links between past practices and members' health.

Our support for the independent Fiskville investigation and our response to the report will continue to be guided by concern for the welfare of our people, past and present, and we will let you know details as soon as they are confirmed.

If you have not already done so, I encourage you to register to receive updates and to be notified when the report is available – you can do so by emailing fiskvilleprojectteam@cfa.vic.gov.au or by calling 1800 628 616. ■

Read more news from Mick in the Blogs section of cfaconnect.net.au

BLAIR DELEMIN



Firefighter tribute at FISKVILLE

STORY KAYLA MASKELL

CFA members and their families gathered at the Fiskville Training College in early May to honour firefighters who lost their lives in the line of duty.

Following the tragic Ash Wednesday fires in 1983, CFA established a memorial wall at Fiskville dedicated to the men and women of CFA who have died while serving their communities.

Plaques mounted on the memorial wall show the name, fire brigade and date of the incident in which each firefighter lost their life since CFA was established in 1944. There are 66 plaques on the wall.

CFA Chief Officer Euan Ferguson said the plaques and the events that led to them underlined the bravery shown by all CFA members – ordinary Victorians – who year after year voluntarily

risk their lives to protect lives and property.

"It's important to recognise the men and women in our community who commit themselves to protecting the safety and welfare of our families, friends and neighbours and, often, strangers they have never met," he said.

"This work can often be dangerous, difficult and with little reward. Every once in a while, a firefighter may be asked to do something extraordinary – to think quickly and clearly, to act decisively and to provide help amid scenes of great trauma, tragedy and personal risk.

"Their willingness and dedication to serve is to be congratulated and I thank them for their service, commitment and courage." ■

IN BRIEF

ROSES ON SALE

CFA's Firestar and Firestar Phoenix roses are available again. Both varieties of bare-rooted roses can be bought only online (firestarrose.com.au) for \$26 each plus postage. \$11.50 from each sale is donated to a CFA brigade of the customer's choice. Deliveries are available until the end of August. Bloomed roses will be available later in the year.

CFA COMMUNICATIONS SURVEY

STORY JASON LEIGH

More than 1,600 CFA members completed our communications survey and the results will help to shape the way we communicate with you in the future.

Key findings of the survey were:

- most survey participants want to hear from their regional director (79 per cent) followed by the Chief Officer (62 per cent)
- 78 per cent use the internet every day
- Of the 52 per cent that use social media, Facebook and YouTube are the most popular sites
- 80 per cent get their information about CFA from *Brigade* magazine followed by brigade meetings (75 per cent), pagers (65 per cent), Brigades Online (55 per cent), word of mouth (54 per cent) and CFA Connect (53 per cent)
- In addition to general information, people are most interested in technical information about firefighting (59 per cent), the history and heritage of CFA (47 per cent) and human interest

stories about CFA members (44 per cent)

- The majority of respondents (73 per cent) prefer to receive information in print but 47 per cent would be willing to receive *Brigade* magazine by email to save costs.

The results are still being analysed and will be made public through CFA Connect, regional offices and Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria in the coming weeks.

This information will be used to reassess the strategy for producing and distributing *Brigade* magazine, including content and frequency. You'll also be hearing more from regional directors and we'll explore the use of mobile phone texts for high level messages.

A big thanks to all members who took the time to complete the survey.

Congratulations to the brigades that won vouchers: Devenish, Arthurs Creek, Bannockburn, Clunes and Mt Hotham-Dinner Plain. ■



STEVE WARRINGTON ACTING CHIEF OFFICER

REDEFINING OUR CORE BUSINESS

In Victoria in 1983, lives were lost and more than 2,000 homes destroyed in what became known as Ash Wednesday. On that day we only had 455 trucks on the road responding to all sorts of events across the state including the fires. In February 2009 Victoria again lost lives and more than 2,000 homes and, again, we only had approximately 650 trucks on the road responding to numerous incidents including fires. Clearly, during these major events, we're unable to get to every house fire, which brings into question what can be achieved through the provision of a firetruck response model and the importance of a more resilient community.

To be fair, CFA recognised the importance of a resilient community and the relationship this had to being a safer community when we established the Community Safety department in the early 1980s. At this time we were seen as world leaders in the provision of services and empowering our communities to become more self-reliant. Put more simply, we saw it as our responsibility to ensure communities became more resilient and less reliant.

Whether you realised it or not, the Community Safety department was separate from Operations. We had two distinct teams who set about to deliver services to our communities in their own distinct ways. In many cases the teams worked well together, but we could question whether the separation best served our communities. An unintended consequence has been to leave our brigades out of many of the community safety initiatives.

Saving lives and property is our core business and the best way to achieve this is through the provision of a firetruck and creating resilient, empowered communities. Creating a more resilient and less reliant

community has to be recognised as core business for CFA.

CFA has created the Fire and Emergency Management department by merging Operations and Community Safety. The next steps are to develop a model that empowers our people, including brigade members, to deliver community safety messages, products and services to our communities. Our brigade leaders need to be seen as leaders of community safety in peace time as well as when we go to war. Imagine our key messages being given to communities by their local CFA community leaders. How powerful would that be for both our leaders and our communities! This approach could potentially save more lives than our traditional service delivery model.

I recognise that some of our people will not want to be involved in joining this new movement. I understand that not everyone is able to participate, yet I also recognise that so many CFA members already do and their number is growing. Three regions have conducted community engagement forums bringing together like-minded people. There is a state forum planned for later in the year. This is not about overloading busy people. It's about thinking outside the box when considering how we can better deliver these services. Is it through brigades, community safety champions, or groups of like-minded people? Or all of the above? Do we target recruitment campaigns to attract people with these interests?

Whatever your thoughts, this is core business and CFA people should deliver core business! ■

Steve Warrington was Acting Chief Officer while Euan Ferguson was on leave.

HEALTHWATCH COULD SAVE YOUR LIFE

STORY ANNA RUZIC

The Healthwatch program provided by CFA to its volunteer members is now in its fourth year. The health checks are free, confidential and carried out at your fire station. When you have a health check, you learn about your risk of cardiovascular disease and type two diabetes. You'll have your waist circumference, blood pressure, blood cholesterol and blood sugar measured.

Bright brigade member Derek Butler said the health check saved his life. Prompted to visit his doctor after discovering he had a slightly elevated cholesterol level, he had a number of standard tests for a man in his sixties – including a prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test even though he had no symptoms. Derek was told he had prostate cancer that was successfully treated.

If your brigade hasn't taken up this invaluable opportunity for free health checks, please contact the Healthwatch team on 9262 8846. ■

For more information search for Healthwatch on cfaconnect.net.au, or visit CFA Online and look under Health and Safety.

eGOVERNMENT AWARDS FOR CFA

STORY DUNCAN RUSSELL

At the Australian Government ICT Awards in May, CFA won the 'Excellence in eGovernment' award and Digital Media Manager Martin Anderson won the 'Government 2.0 Innovator' award for CFA's work to integrate social media into Victoria's emergency communications.

CFA's social media channels have been integrated into a 'one source, one message' system that allows warnings to be posted automatically as soon as they are issued, 24 hours a day, on official social media channels. CFA's 24/7 media team then posts additional incident information and updates during significant emergencies.

This work also included the development of intelligence gathering capabilities via social media and the CFA FireReady mobile application, and the establishment of two new social media positions within the emergency management structures of the State Control Centre.

A presentation by Martin about the integration of social media into emergency service procedures can be viewed at <http://bit.ly/CFAsmem>. ■

CELEBRATING VOLUNTEERISM

STORY EMMA MCDONALD

Leading up to National Volunteer Week in May, CFA Facebook members were encouraged to post messages and poems that included the words 'Thank you CFA volunteers'. Some of these messages were displayed in Melbourne on Federation Square's big screen (pictured right) and atriums.

Federation Square's Multimedia Program Coordinator Kelli Keating said, "CFA's photo/slide contribution to our screen program was a lovely additional way for us to support CFA volunteers and show our appreciation to the community."

National Volunteer Week is an annual recognition event celebrating volunteers and volunteerism across Victoria.



They don't get paid by the hour
But by a person's smile
They don't get company cars
But we all make way if we see them coming
We all see them as heroes, a light in the dark
A face through the fire, a voice if we're lost
They see themselves as just doing their job
And to do it well
But it's more than that, they can save lives
One day it could be yours
Thank you CFA volunteers.

Felicia Yeoman Richards

With determination and a quiet passion
They push forth in heroic fashion.

Helping those they may never meet
While the ground burns beneath their feet.

Standing proud in yellow and black
Spraying the flames so they don't come back.

Our CFA volunteers, our local heroes,
Fighting the fires till we're left with zero.

Kellie Rowlands

Thank you all CFA volunteers
for all your help throughout the years
May God look down on you with pride
For all the things you take in your stride.

Margaret Nutting

Valuable is the work you do
Outstanding in how you always come through
Loyal, sincere, and full of good cheer
Untiring in your efforts throughout the year
Notable are the contributions you make
Trustworthy in every project you take
Eager to reach your every goal
Effective in the way you fulfill your role
Ready with a smile like a shining star
Special and wonderful – thank you CFA
volunteers that's what you are!

Scott Iskov

What would you do if fire was descending
on you?

I know what I would do, and do without
overwhelming fears

I would thank God and sing thank you
CFA volunteers.

Donna Hamill

To the entire CFA members: thank you for
putting out fires for our country and saving our
environment. I hope that no one else gets hurt
from the fires, but I bet they won't because
you're really good at putting out fires.
And please keep it up.

Matthew Moore, aged 11

These brave men and women rush to the aid
of people in despair
While the rest of us stand shaken and in total fear
They reassure us; never fear for CFA is here!

Melissa Apiata

Dirty brown sky and sweltering heat
Thick socks and heavy boots on our feet
Plugging down drains and sweeping away leaves
waiting for a change in the breeze.

Hours of phone calls as day turns to night
The valley glowing red like a volcano in flight
Little did we know that further in the bush
The kind of hell the fireys were trying to push.

Using their resources as best they could
Spraying and trying to kill the blazing wood
Risking their lives to save us from the burn
Working in a job where respect's hard to earn.

Despite the horror that many went through
As mortals they did the job we could never do
Every day, somewhere, this still goes on now
Firebugs, lightning and wiring blowing out.

We give them praise when they save our homes
But others get angry if they can do no more
They are only human like you and I
You should be grateful that they even try.

Some are paid and some are not
Either way they deserve a hell of a lot
So next time a blur of red flies you past
say a prayer of thanks for the fireys cast.

Emma Louise



LUCY PARRIS/INSPIRASY DAIRY

FIREYS SAVE MAN, THEN DOG

STORY PETER LUCAS

Firefighters in Mildura became the unexpected foster carers of a cute puppy after coming to the aid of a sick man. In early March, Mildura firefighters were waved down by a group of people who saw a man collapse on Deakin Avenue. While the firefighters successfully resuscitated the man, the little dog remained by the man's side. After the man was taken to hospital, the fireys took care of newly-named Smoky at the fire station. But a few hours later it was revealed that the dog was not the man's pet. Smoky quickly won over the Mildura firefighters, laid claim

to a section of the station and accumulated doggy toys. He was transformed from an abandoned pup to one lavished with attention and with the biggest kennel. He was transferred to Sunraysia Animal Rehousing Group which tried to find his owner. After eight days he was adopted by a local family. "I was lucky enough to get to meet the little fella at the fire station and was amazed at how placid he was for such a young pup. He's going to make his new family very happy," said Sunraysia Animal Rehousing Group volunteer Carolyn Dufty. ■

Above: Smoky with Mildura Firefighter Darren Cogger, Leading Firefighter Ken Walker and Senior Station Officer Mick Sporton

CFA'S TV STARS

STORY CHRISTINA BUCCI

It looks like even Dr Nina Proudman from Channel Ten's hit TV show *Offspring* needs a little help from CFA. In the first episode of this year's season that aired mid April, crews from Craigieburn and Dandenong brigades made a special appearance on the show to douse the flames of Nina's burning apartment. Although our fireys were reluctant stars, they were naturals on the set when filming took place last November. They worked with the show's stars with the utmost professionalism and scrubbed up well on screen. Participating in the show were Ken Houston, Ivan Reale, Steve Povolito, Chris Gray and David Wolff from Craigieburn brigade, and Adam Small and Luke Findlay from Dandenong. ■



COURTESY CHANNEL TEN

IN BRIEF

Nangiloc brigade's new station officially opened in early May. Thanks to funding from the State Government's Rural Fire Station Replacement Program, Nangiloc's old shed has been replaced with a new building that has meeting and training rooms and a kitchen. "All they had was a small tin shed when they started here 42 years ago," Loddon Mallee Regional Director Pat O'Brien said.



KAYLA MASKELL

FIREYS IN JOB SWAP SUCCESS

STORY KAYLA MASKELL AND LEITH HILLARD

Six Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board (MFB) and six CFA career firefighters have swapped jobs for up to two years in a new secondment program. The scheme is a first for both services and is an excellent example of the two agencies working more closely together to further improve interoperability and understanding. We asked two of the participants – MFB's Ken Walker and Greenvale brigade's Jason Miller – for their thoughts. According to Leading Firefighter Ken Walker, the program has been a great success. Seven months ago he exchanged outer metropolitan life in Epping for a career with Mildura brigade. This MFB firefighter is now proud to call himself CFA.

"I arrived with my wife knowing no one, and was welcomed with open hands. It's a very close-knit service up here and they socialise a lot with each other and the other emergency services. There have been barbecues and a ball. It couldn't have been a warmer welcome. "It's been like starting a new job. The standard operating procedures are different. The water supply is different. The resourcing is different. Here we do hazmat, high angle rescue and trench rescue. I've done all of that with MFB but here we have to be a lot more self-sufficient. Everyone does more than one job at a call-out." Ken has been most surprised by the sheer size of the area CFA

covers. It's a big change from working in an urban area, turning out twice a day on average to car accidents and for emergency medical response. Ken has been joined in Mildura by MFB Senior Station Officer Colin Holmes and, together with the rest of the crew, they're helping to train two new recruits to the career fire service. "We're helping them get their skills up," explained Ken, "but it's also just as much for all the rest of us. Twice a week we train with the 40-odd active vols. There's no time to get bored, that's for sure."

IMPROVING INTEROPERABILITY

"Just because something is done differently, doesn't mean it's being done wrong," said Jason Miller about working for another fire service. "It's about coming into it with the right mindset – I think that's why I've got so much out of the experience." Jason has switched from being a Leading Firefighter at Greenvale to a number of MFB stations in the northern suburbs of Melbourne. "The reason I did it was to assist in breaking down some of those barriers that can exist between the two fire services – I'm a strong believer in interoperability. "There's been a lot of interest in the program. I'm always getting calls from CFA members asking what it's like, what's involved and how they could get involved, which is great if the program continues," he said. Jason said the two organisations had more in common than most people think. "At the end of the day, the skills you need are all the same. We're all firefighters, there's that same camaraderie around the station and we're all there for the same reason – the community." Jason said one of the most valuable experiences was being trained in emergency medical response (EMR). "EMR is now being adopted more and more in CFA which is fantastic for the community." ■

Above: CFA's Jason Miller (standing third from left) with an MFB crew

Below: MFB's Ken Walker and Colin Holmes





MEMORIAL FOR FISH CREEK

STORY JASON LEIGH

Members of Fish Creek and District brigade have built a memorial garden for members who dedicated their lives to protecting the Fish Creek community and have since passed on. The garden features a large commemorative rock that holds plaques for the 35 past members who served in the brigade since it was formed in 1944.

Deputy Premier and Minister for Police and Emergency Services Peter Ryan visited the station in May to officially dedicate the memorial as well as take a tour of the brigade's renovated station, which includes a new divisional command point as well as a kitchen. Captain Mick Dorling said the brigade was honoured to have the minister visit on such a special occasion.

"It was great to have the minister here to help us acknowledge the memories and hard work of the men and women of the Fish Creek and District Fire Brigade.

"He took a tour through our new facilities, such as the new divisional command point, which will bring local command and control closer to the fireground with state-of-the-art technology.

"We also used the opportunity to acknowledge and present some service awards to our auxiliary members who have done an outstanding job fundraising for the memorial as well as renovations to the station," Mick said. ■

YELLINGBO KEEPS COOL

STORY ALMA COLLIER

A small Yarra Valley fire brigade is leading the way to reduce members' injuries and illnesses when they respond to emergencies.

With the generous support of the community, Yellingbo brigade has built a specialist support vehicle to help firefighters recover from their strenuous work and prevent heat-related illnesses.

Yellingbo brigade Captain Paul Spinks said while the insulated personal protective clothing gave excellent protection from radiant heat during a firefight, it can also lead to people overheating and suffering dehydration.

The protective clothing stops the body expelling excess heat, causing the body's core temperature to rise.

"Whether we're attending to a house fire or bushfire, we noticed the gear that is designed to protect us can also increase the risk of heat stress," Paul said.

The specialist rehabilitation support unit carries cooling chairs that let firefighters rapidly cool down by submerging their forearms in ice. This brings their core temperature down.

Research has shown that the most effective way to combat overheating is to rest, hydrate and submerge your forearms in water.

A core temperature above 39°C is considered dangerous. Symptoms of heat-related illness include heat rashes, cramps, headaches, vomiting and exhaustion. In severe cases it can cause death.



KEITH PAKENHAM

Yellingbo's support vehicle also carries marquees to protect against the elements, a large quantity of bottled water and electrolytes to mix with the water to help hydrate firefighters, hot and cold washing facilities, fans, small first-aid kits and ration packs.

It also has a light tower, plenty of perimeter lighting and the capacity to carry two breathing apparatus sets and storage for up to eight cylinders.

The vehicle is expected to be used in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne as well as the Yarra Valley. ■

IN BRIEF

OUTSTANDING SERVICE AWARD

Neil Williams and Chas Hall from Torrumbarry brigade were awarded CFA's Outstanding Service Award in early March. With almost 100 years of combined service with the brigade, they were taken by surprise by the presentation at the official opening of Torrumbarry's new station.

KAYLA MASKELL



WARM WELCOME FOR CHIEF'S VISIT

STORY KAYLA MASKELL

It wasn't what you'd call a warm May day but Chief Officer Euan Ferguson was warmly welcomed when he visited CFA brigades in the Northern and Western Metropolitan region.

Starting at South Morang Fire Station, Euan met with a number of the brigade's volunteers over lunch, before taking a tour of the area with Whittlesea/Diamond Valley Group Officer Lindsay McHugh and Regional Director Greg Esnouf.

The Chief was shown various points of interest during the tour relating to urban growth and the future impact it will have on local volunteer fire brigades. This includes South Morang and around Mernda and Doreen.

Given his local knowledge of the region, Lindsay also took Euan up to Eagles View in Mill Park Lakes. Lindsay pointed out that this gave a great view of the area, particularly the urban growth corridors in the northern suburbs that will affect CFA areas including Craigieburn and Epping.

"It won't be too long before a lot of these areas that are now paddocks will be filled in," Lindsay said.

Driving through Mill Park Lakes, Lindsay explained how the area had been transformed from open land to a large residential estate in only 12 years.

"There's a lot of planning going on behind the scenes in terms of urban growth, but I think this was a great opportunity for the Chief Officer to see first-hand how the area looks now compared to what we will see in five to 10 years time," Lindsay said.

"It's also fantastic for our members to be able to meet our Chief Officer in person so I thank Euan for taking this time out of his busy schedule to visit our volunteers.

"I also thank those brigade members who have taken time out of their day to come and meet the Chief."

As part of his visit to the region, Euan also met with members of the Mernda, Whittlesea, Doreen, Yarrambat and Plenty brigades. ■

Above: Euan Ferguson with Group Officer Lindsay McHugh (left) and Regional Director Greg Esnouf

Left: The stage display from Maldon's Saturday night dinner

MALDON CELEBRATES ITS 150TH

STORY PETER BEATON

Maldon brigade celebrated its 150th anniversary with a torchlight procession, family day and members' dinner in mid May. More than 200 brigade members participated in the torchlight procession.

"Brigade members enjoyed themselves and the celebrations were well supported by other brigades," said brigade secretary Neil McKnight.

Saturday's open day at the fire station attracted hundreds of people who loved the display of old fire appliances, including horse-drawn and hand-drawn machines. There was also a tent with community information and giveaways.

The anniversary dinner was attended by 120 people including CFA Chief Officer Euan Ferguson and Fire Services Commissioner Craig Lapsley. ■



PETER THOMPSON

IN BRIEF

NATIONAL MEDALS FOR CARISBROOK

CFA Chairman Kerry Murphy presented three of Carisbrook brigade's hardest workers with their National Medals at the brigade's annual dinner in mid April: Captain Ian Boucher, First Lieutenant James Herd and Fire Equipment Maintenance Officer Alex Stoneman.

NEW STATIONS FOR NEIGHBOURS

STORY ANNIE HERITAGE

Two brigades near Colac, Yeodene and Yeo and District, recently celebrated the opening of their new stations.

State Member of Parliament for Polwarth, Terry Mulder, opened the stations in late March. Each station accommodates two trucks.

"The new Yeodene station will ensure local firefighters have up-to-date facilities in the event of an emergency," Mr Mulder said.

He said Yeo and District's new station replaced a 30-year-old building. "This new station represents an investment in community safety and will ensure the brigade is better equipped to continue providing its essential emergency services for many years to come."

Yeodene brigade Captain Arie de Leeuw said the new Yeodene facility was three times the size of the old one.

"This is a fantastic shed," said Arie. "Hopefully it'll outlast me. It's so good that, if Yeodene didn't have a hall, we could use this as a hall."

Yeo and District brigade Captain Daryl Cobbledick also expressed his appreciation for the new station.

At Yeo and District's opening, Operations Officer Brian Brady handed out service awards adding up to 535 years of service, and said it was an outstanding effort. ■



ANNIE HERITAGE



WENDY BATH

WALLINGTON'S DAY OUT

STORY WENDY BATH

In mid March Wallington brigade launched its 12th annual 'strike team' to Adventure Park in Wallington.

To mark the end of the fire season, Wallington brigade hosts this event for its neighbouring Bellarine Peninsula and Geelong brigades. It's a way to celebrate its friendship with fellow firefighters and to enjoy a family day for its members and supporters. This year around 100 people had an excellent day out.

Enjoying the water were brigade members from Drysdale, Queenscliff, Leopold, Mannerim, Geelong City, Belmont and Lara as well as Wallington.

In keeping with previous years, the hotly contested canoe races were a great drawcard for brigades, and they entertained a great number of onlookers. It's a good thing we fight fires and not try ocean rescues!

Wallington Captain Rhys Esler said, "This is always an excellent way to finish the summer fire season with our fellow brigades, and start to prepare for our winter response as we all support each other on the Bellarine."

Rhys also took the time to thank Ron Salmon, the owner of Adventure Park, and his staff for hosting the brigades and allowing them the freedom of the park. Mr Salmon charged brigades a reduced entrance fee and all the money raised was donated to Wallington brigade. ■



SAN REMO'S BIG NIGHT

STORY SCOTT HAMILTON

San Remo brigade members and the community gathered in early May for the official handover of two new vehicles.

The Member of Parliament for Bass, Ken Smith, along with Bass Coast Shire Mayor Veronica Dowman and Southern Metropolitan Regional Director Peter Schmidt, joined firefighters from San Remo and neighbouring brigades to celebrate the handover of a new light pumper and field command vehicle (FCV).

San Remo brigade is responsible for the communities of San Remo, Newhaven, Cape Woolamai and Surf Beach on Phillip Island. The brigade is the gateway to Phillip Island and protects around a quarter of Phillip Island's area.

The light pumper, which replaced a 25-year-old pumper, was obtained through CFA's vehicle replacement program. The FCV was obtained through the support of the State Government's Volunteer Emergency Support Equipment Program (VESEP) and replaced an 11-year-old support vehicle.

Ken Smith also announced that funding had been allocated to build a new satellite station in the Cape Woolamai area to help with busy traffic conditions, particularly during the peak tourist season.

Regional Director Peter Schmidt commented on the fantastic work of the brigade, along with the others in Bass Coast, in protecting the huge holiday population that visits the area each year. He also paid tribute to the brigade's efforts in community engagement, which was evident on the night by the presence of several community groups.

This certainly was a night that San Remo brigade will talk about for years. ■



SCOTT HAMILTON



TENNYSON'S NEW STATION

STORY LEITH HILLARD

Tennyson residents officially welcomed their new fully-equipped fire station at the end of April.

Captain Thomas Harry was enthusiastic about both the warm welcome from the community and the brigade's future. "It was a fantastic night," he said. "We laid out about 80 chairs and there must have been about 110 people there. We invited the captains of all the neighbouring brigades and they all attended."

"Some of the members' wives did the catering and it got them all involved in the brigade. Now my wife Liz is going to join and my son is joining the Juniors where they meet up with Rochester."

It's a new lease of life for the 81-year-old fire brigade. Membership currently stands at 50 with 26 operational members. "But now, with the new station, we're getting a lot of younger ones," said Thomas. "They're coming in with ideas. I think the new place shows them that we're moving ahead. That's working out really well for us."

"It's a great facility for the community as the meeting room is open to any community group."



TARMI A'VARD

Above: Secretary Graham Taylor, First Lieutenant Vic Sammut and Captain Brett Lacco with the new vehicles

Left: At the station opening, several Tennyson members received 55-year service medals

"It's also an asset for other brigades close by. We're already doing more training here with wildfire and driver training coming up. We're also going to have a social night once a month. We've had a barbecue donated so we'll get a lot of use out of that."

Loddon Mallee Regional Director Pat O'Brien was at the opening ceremony to hand out many service medals. ■

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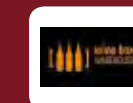
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THE VALUE OF local knowledge

STORIES LEITH HILLARD

Many CFA members have lived in their areas all their lives and use their knowledge and experience to deal with emergencies – whether it's spotting a wind change by the coast or passing on vital local information to communities. Here are some of their stories.

Look at THE FIRE



Above: Bill Bubb

Left: Great Ocean Road on Ash Wednesday

FROM THE CECIL FAMILY COLLECTION

Anglesea brigade has a rule: in the event of a local bushfire, crews have to go to a hill and *look at the fire*.

Bill Bubb, an Anglesea member for 49 years, explains the thinking. "Slow down and look at the smoke. Is the fire building? What's the fuel loading? What's the colour of the smoke? Is it where the burns have been done? What sort of bush is it in? A messmate fire runs faster than a blue ash fire. Where is it going to run to? The fire will tell you everything it's going to do.

"We got it off the forestry people and we've done it for years. I put fire behaviour at the top of the tree. It's more important than map reading."

This observation method works for Anglesea because the brigade has established ways to pass local knowledge on to the next generation. It works because brigade members have been taught to critically interpret what they are seeing. Without that, it's all just smoke and hot air.

Bill is the primary source of much of this Anglesea local knowledge and he's pure bush pedigree. "I've lived in Anglesea all my life," he says. "There was a fire when I was three weeks old and I was taken to the beach and dug into the wet sand.

"I got dumped with my grandfather and taken into the bush. He taught me the leaf test. Light a leaf and if it burns down real quick it means the moisture is really low.

"Us kids would ride our bikes into the bush. If the fire siren sounded to get the crews to come to the station, we were to come home.

"The bush was part of us. There aren't too many gullies I haven't been into."

It's in these gullies that Bill now passes on his local knowledge. "We charge the truck battery by testing out the different roads," he explains. "It's where we

drill into them that you never drain the trucks. We never leave a fire without a quarter of water still in our truck, then we go to get water. Most of our brigade members are sea changers so this is all new to them."

Speaking of sea change, a local like Bill knows exactly what a wind change looks like as it comes along the coast when a fire is running. "You see the fog encroaching and the cloud moves in a different direction to the smoke which will drift to the east. You see the ripple of the white caps coming. Humidity drops and the flame becomes brighter.

"We run our fires on 15-minute cycles. Where will this be in 15 minutes? We mentally plot it up. Each of our trucks has sector points assigned in town and we designate people to go to those sectors."

Anglesea is one of the most burnt-out towns in Victoria, including the loss of 132 houses on Ash Wednesday in 1983 when Bill was captain of the fire brigade. "We were all screaming for trucks but no one could reach us," says Bill. "What's really stayed with me is the explosive power.

"When I'm on a strike team, I always look for an old timer who's a local. In the New South Wales fires, I looked for forest officers. They've observed fire over time. I want to hear their local knowledge. If you don't use it, you're in trouble."

Bill is currently Deputy Group Officer of the Coastal Group and a Level Two incident controller. "But I'm more use in the bush than behind a computer," he insists. "I've got to smell the smoke." ■

Join the forum discussion about the value of local knowledge at cfaconnect.net.au/knowledge

COURTESY RUSHWORTH P-12 COLLEGE



PASSING ON LOCAL KNOWLEDGE

The CFA Advance program has been running for 11 years at Rushworth P-12 College. It's taught by members from Colbinabbin, Stanhope, Murchison and Rushworth brigades who give up their Wednesday mornings to pass on skills and local knowledge.

Brian Wright (pictured second from right) is the coordinator, and his enthusiasm is typical of the six members involved. "We have 16 Year 9s this year," he says. "It's more than putting them through Minimum Skills.

"I think the local knowledge aspect is introducing them to CFA. It gives them that awareness of their local environment and community. It's a great way for brigades to promote themselves to young people and we've got some good new members out of it."

More than 150 students have passed through the program over 11 years and up to 30 of them have joined brigades.

What started out as a community involvement program now also has a leadership component to it. "We have four crews each with a crew leader and, over the course of the program, everyone takes a turn in this role," continues Brian. "We spend a session in the state forest where they do mapping and radio work. We send trucks to four different points then give coordinates for the next point and they have to give directions to the driver. It's a real-life experience."

Brian is impressed with the way local knowledge passes between the students and volunteers. "I've been a bit staggered by how switched on the students were," he says. "There's motor skills development; there's teamwork; there's mutual respect between the generations.

"We draw on our own practical experience but we're also passing on knowledge that we've been given by others. Some of our members go back to the time of using beaters against a fire.

"This program gives us the chance to get to know them and, when the kids are responsive, you can see the volunteers relating to them better over time. We're proud of them." ■

WATCHING THE VOLATILE WINDS

Local knowledge means having the ability to deal with the community and any incidents in the most efficient way possible," says Tawonga's Bruce Vine (shown below with his wife Lorice). "It's about being socially connected. Our road to the north gets cut by flooding so it's knowing the farmer and calling him. If community members want local information, they know who to get in touch with. They can trust the person giving the message because they know you.

"We have a Mount Beauty community radio station with a CFA-focused slot once a week, year round. When the Beechworth fire was going in 2009, I got a call from a local captain at 3am on 10 February who told me it was burning into Mudgegonga. We opened up community radio at 4am and gave regular updates that were timely, accurate and relevant.

"Community engagement is a two-way thing. Another time we had flooding and needed sandbags filled. We put out a request on the radio and you wouldn't believe the number of people with shovels."

The Tawonga/Mount Beauty area was also in the eye of the firestorm in the 2002-03 and 2006-07 campaign fires. The former fire was started by lightning 20 kilometres down the valley and threatened Bruce's property.

"There was the classic roar of a dozen freight trains," says Bruce. "It was all in the forest. When it came out we could deal with it. We had strike teams in the area for six weeks and a lot of long-term members who weren't operational anymore but wanted to help. They sat in strike team leaders' vehicles and it worked like a pilot system.

"They know how conditions react to the environment. We have very volatile wind conditions in our valley – the wind swings around. There are nooks and crannies that funnel the breeze and steep slopes. The locals know all that. The role they played was vital." ■



KETH PAKEMAN



KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY

The CFA radio was a monstrosity in Nevyn 'Don't Call Me Neville' Jones's childhood living room. The crackling information monitored by his parents Bill and Bette gave him a sense of community connectedness that's never left him. Today, Moorooduc Fire Station (where he's the captain), Nev's home and his workplace are only 50 metres apart.

And what constitutes local knowledge on the urban/rural border of the Mornington Peninsula? Nev doesn't hesitate. "It's all about knowing your community – that's the core principle. Just knowing the geography isn't enough. You have to know the people you're trying to protect. You have to know what they want and expect."

After the exhausting weeks of response out of their brigade area in February and March 2009, the brigade arranged a community meeting. "I thought it was very important that we talked to the community," says Nev. "All my members who fought the fires had experienced so much. It was important that they pass on their knowledge."

"Sometimes we underestimate the knowledge that's built into a brigade. They can relate very well to your community if you've already got that connection and, in our case, we do. There was still a lot of nervousness and we wanted to connect with our neighbours, allay some of their fears and start to take them through the journey of recovery."

But the information that Nev and the brigade got back from the community took them all by surprise. "I was amazed by the local knowledge we discovered when we talked about what people here would actually do in a fire. Would they leave the night before? Did they have a plan?"

"One of the biggest learning curves for me was that people move to a place like Moorooduc for the lifestyle and they weren't just going to abandon that. A lot of people had worked all their lives for the opportunity to buy property

and to have animals. They value that lifestyle and it's a lot more complicated than just leaving the night before."

The sobering lesson for Nev and other Moorooduc members was that people in their community would stay.

"It changed our interactions with the community," continues Nev, "but our brigade *wants* that reality check. We do want people to work on their plans according to their true intentions. The reality is that different communities will react in different ways and here we think animals are the clincher. We've got horse studs, agistment, alpacas – every animal known to man – and families involved with animals won't leave."

Against that community background, Moorooduc brigade also looked at what it had learned from the 2009 fires. "A lot of knowledge was passed on from Ash Wednesday," says Nev, "and any member since Black Saturday will constantly reinforce what they saw, what they did, what they could and couldn't achieve."

"It was a hard thing as captain to send the trucks off to those fires and I'm still in awe of what was achieved and the level of expertise. The crews that stayed at home were just as important as crews on the front line."

There have not been many large fires in the Moorooduc brigade area but there have been a lot of significant fires on the peninsula. Moorooduc has grown as a significant support brigade and has a proud tradition of strike team duty with Nev Jones as the first ever strike team leader.

"Members might come and go," says Nev, "but we always strive to keep knowledge in the brigade. I try to get involved in training where you can pass on your knowledge. It's about reinforcing long-held standards and striving for excellence. To serve your community, your foundation has to be strong."

"Staying connected to your community: that's the key." ■

LEITH HILLIARD

INFORMATION IS POWER

Senior Station Officer Dave Abbey was one of the first appointed officers of Hoppers Crossing when the integrated station opened in 2002.

"I've paid a lot of attention to the development of the area because of CFA but also because I grew up here," says Dave. "Because of CFA pre-planning and training, we inspect a lot of the larger facilities. We tend to be inquisitive. In incident management, information is power. It allows us to manage situations in a methodical manner."

"It's not often I have to pick up a Melways. Once we establish the area of an incident, I generally know the best travel routes so we're able to provide an efficient service. Managing an incident is learning more about your community."

The population of the City of Wyndham – split between CFA and the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board (MFB) – is 184,000 and the brigade's main risks are structural.

"Local knowledge is about knowing what the risks are so you can make informed decisions," continues Dave. "Our partnerships with local government also give us local knowledge. They tell us about new road access or closures. We have municipal fire prevention meetings and formulate strategies for the fire danger period."

Fast moving grassfires are the greatest wildfire risk. Northerly winds are usually strong during summer, while the westerly wind change tends to arrive late in the afternoon and comes in strongly because the land is so flat and unprotected. The country is littered



LEITH HILLIARD

with volcanic rocks so the brigade is likely to use indirect attack.

"Some of the best people to learn local knowledge from are our volunteers," continues Dave. "The key thing is building a network of people so you know who to turn to. You can draw from their life experience outside CFA."

"We've got volunteers who are paramedics and police and some are involved in construction and industry. You can bounce ideas off them to increase your knowledge base."

"CFA is about engaging with the community and our members – that's how we learn." ■

Above: Dave, far right, with Hoppers Crossing colleagues

COASTAL CHALLENGES

The Longford Gas Plant lies in the middle of the Stradbroke Group of brigades, near Sale. But for First Deputy Group Officer John Gerrand, the greatest local challenge is mentoring a new generation to become decision-makers.

John's father was both the first captain of Stradbroke brigade and a local councillor, so John learned a lot of local knowledge from the sidelines of childhood. He has now been a CFA member for 54 years.

"I learned by doing," says John. "Being so close to the coast, the big issue for us is the sea breeze. It's very hard to forecast. You get to know when the change is going to come. You know it will be a bit slower coming on a bad fire day. You get to know the fuel loadings and where the power lines and the water points are."

"Lightning has a history of starting a lot of fires here. The first fires from the 2002-03 campaign started about 6am here from a lightning storm."

"Once I know the location of a fire, I have a fair idea of exposures. I think about what time traffic leaves the gas plant and when the school buses are on the road."

John is operational but is also now "further up the command

chain. I have a remote radio at home and I'll take calls from tankers and order up more trucks. You need someone on the tanker who knows the roads but you *really* need people in a control centre who know the area, and I'm a good strategic thinker."

As for the passing on of local knowledge to other brigade members, John is enthusiastic about tactical exercises without troops (TEWTS).

"We use toy cars and look at things like boggy or light sand tracks, changing the scenario every time," says John. "We encourage people to come up with solutions they haven't thought of before."

"What we say is that two heads are better than one. Have a talk before making a decision but understand that any decision is better than no decision. That means you're making the best decision at the time based on the information available."

"Someone needs to bite the bullet and decide but then you also have to be flexible. Fire is a dynamic thing and you might have to change your plan." ■



BUILDING A LOCAL NETWORK

District 13's Pat Bigham married into CFA with husband Don a member for more than 50 years. Pat joined 35 years ago and received the Australian Fire Service Medal for her distinguished service to the peer program previously known as Critical Incident Stress.

What part does local knowledge play in her role? "I know most of the players in District 13," she says. "They know me. I'm a straight shooter and they know I'm passionate about the job."

"Local knowledge means networking to empower people to gain control of their lives. CFA will pay for some sessions of financial counselling, marriage guidance or with a psychologist, and we always use local people."

"One of our courses for peers is about networking. We tell the peers to visit their local Relationships Australia office, for example. Did you feel welcome?"

"If a family is struggling with an autism diagnosis or someone in the family has multiple sclerosis, we have people they can talk to."

Pat emphasises the do-it-yourself nature of the peers' support for families. "We need the person in trouble to make the first call, otherwise they're not ready. We don't make decisions for people. The value comes from people telling their story to someone not connected with the issue, but it's not a passive listening process. People want a solution."

"We say, 'Have you thought of this or that?' It's an information line. We support them down an avenue that can help them, then they make any appointments. They choose the help and we'll go along with them if they want."

The peer program sits under the operational arm of CFA and under logistics in an incident control centre. The work directly and personally achieves the CFA mission to protect lives and property.

"We've come such a long way," says Pat. "Now we're teaching self care and resilience to our brigades and new recruits, and people are so much more aware."

"It's called the peer program but, really, it's a family. We are One CFA." ■

Any member and their family members can access support.

Call the CFA Welfare line: 1800 628 616



LEITH HILLARD

EXPERIENCE IN AN ICC

Having been involved with CFA for more than 50 years (30 of them in Ensay), Mack Stagg has built his experience in a variety of roles including captain, deputy group officer and group officer.

When major fires hit the area in 2002-03 and 2006-07, Mack took his local knowledge to the incident control centre (ICC). "All the locals have the knowledge," he says, "but the excitement is on the truck. You have to have a local high enough up the command chain taking that knowledge into the ICC and they have to have authority."

"The terrain close to home is mountainous with steep tracks. It's no good having a strike team in big trucks. Local knowledge will tell you whether you have to revert to a slip-on."

"You could knock ideas on the head that you knew weren't going to work. The terrain dictates the distances around here and timing goes awry. Outsiders could say that something would be in place in 20 minutes but you know you can't get down that road; you can't turn around; the creek is impassable."

"In 2002-03, we didn't involve the local group in the strike team line-up. We kept them loose to be guerilla fighters. I could call up the local captain and they could whip out for an hour to take care of something on Joe Blow's farm."

"It wore them out but they were able to freelance in the area they know. I was criticised for that but I hold that it was the best use of local resources."

Mack sees the local knowledge expert in an ICC as a conduit. "When you have local fires, you've got to deal with the public," he says. "Problems come up and you have to be aware of what the public is doing. People don't want a fence cut so can we use a grader to grade the fence line instead. You have to manage that, otherwise there are bad feelings at the end." ■

THE CHALLENGE OF STEEP HILLS

Colin Coyle was recently re-elected Wodonga group officer for the tenth year. He's been in the brigade for 49 years and his father, George, 98 years old, has been a member for more than 70 years. Their knowledge has been passed on to Colin's son Ross.

The family, which runs sheep and cattle on 4,000 acres, lived through the 1952 fire that burned from Rutherglen and the 2003 Eldorado fire that rained ash down on Wodonga.

"Wodonga is in a valley and we have big exposure to the west of the city," says Colin. "The fear is a howling north westerly on a bad day."

Local knowledge is incorporated into familiarisation drives during brigade training. "And storytelling is very important," says Colin. "Les Boyes tells how he survived the 1952 fire in a concrete tool shed. My father says, 'If it's a bad day like 1952, get out of its bloody road!'"

"The principles we apply are Minimum Skills but they're also based on things we've experienced. We had a fire that crept down a gully and then had an uphill run. It burned under our truck but they managed to get away with hoses dragging behind. That was a lesson they'll never forget."

"A lot of our firefighting is done in steep hill country. We take trucks along the ridge lines and run canvas lines down the hill. Of course, you have to do a risk assessment because it means you're uphill, but it's often the only way to get to them."

"Local knowledge means you can safely put people into a going fire."

"We had one in Huon Hill during the drought years. It was



obviously going to reach the hilltop. We knew the fuel load. It did exactly as we expected. We anticipated it. Some extremely good firefighting held it on the hill and we put it out without any major damage. It was very satisfying." ■

Above: Colin Coyle with his son Ross

THE VOICE ON THE RADIO

"I was born and bred south of Kaniva," says Jacci Rabone.

"My parents were CFA through and through. Dad was captain of Lawloit, Mum did the catering as the captain's wife and I was the tomboy of the family. We had our own private unit that had quite a few saves under its belt."

Jacci met her husband Harry through her father through the fire brigade, and the couple are both members of South Lillimur brigade. Six years ago, Jacci was elected Group communications officer of Kaniva Group. (Actually, "they asked Harry and he said, 'Yeah, she'll do it!'")

Jacci is glad her father knew about her new role before he died suddenly. "He was really proud," she says. "He knew he'd trained me well. I've inherited Dad's tenacity. He was like a dog with a bone and so am I."

And she's a strong communicator. Who better to be the voice on the radio than someone with local knowledge and connections deep into the community?

"What I don't know, it's not hard to find out," says Jacci. "Our members are butchers, truck drivers, mechanics, farmers and town folk and everyone knows someone else. Netball, football, hockey, pubs – it's a cross-hatched network."

"If we've got a fire, I find out whose place it's at so the brigade can go there directly. Usually I wait for the trucks to call

in. Someone will give me a situation report once they see the smoke and we get resources in if it's a bad day. They yell if they need hand-helds, food or more foam."

"The boys will ask me for a wind change and I look up Weatherzone and broadcast it. Everyone can hear me because I'm on the hill. If something is told to me, I'll repeat it back and it gets to all the listening sets."

With Kaniva Group's weather coming from South Australia and Jacci equipped with CFA and South Australian Country Fire Service radio as well as UHF, the members can rely on an up-to-date view of conditions. ■



LEITH HILLARD

CREWS BURN PRINCES HIGHWAY

STORY ADAM TOWNSEND

In late March around 80 people from CFA and Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) carried out a 279-hectare fuel reduction burn at Providence Ponds, Fernbank, 30 kilometres west of Bairnsdale.

The burn had an approximate 80 per cent burn-out rate, which was a surprise to some people present because of recent rainfall and flooding in parts of Gippsland.

DSE had success using hand-held drop torches along the burn edge and only needed the helicopter drip torch to light a small area that didn't burn out.

District 10 Operations Officer and Burn Officer in Charge Wayne Petford said, "The work involved in preparing the burn plan was a credit to Chris Lewis, Gippsland vegetation management officer. The area at Providence Ponds is a fauna and flora park and aspects needed to be checked for cultural and historical importance."

The burn was carried out by CFA crews from Munro, Maffra, Avon Group, Stratford, Briagolong, Newry, Coongulla, Macalister Group, Hillside, Lindenow South, Stradbroke Group and Loch Sport.

Wayne thanked all the volunteers for their time and commitment, especially as the burn-off was conducted midweek.

Visibility on the Princes Highway for the 1.5 kilometre stretch of the roadside burn was limited at times, and crews ensured that safety principles were applied. Traffic management signage and personnel were brought in as part of the burn plan.



ADAM TOWNSEND

"This burn allowed for some of the younger and less experienced CFA volunteers to get an appreciation of fire activity as well as the chance to work with DSE crews," said Wayne.

Thanks also to DSE for their ongoing support and partnership in planning roadside burns. ■



SHARON MERRITT

FUEL BURN NEAR DANDENONGS

STORY SHARON MERRITT

Four brigades in District 13 – The Basin, Montrose, Ferntree Gully and Macclesfield – and Melbourne Water carried out a successful fuel reduction burn in Kilsyth South in mid March.

The site had an extreme fuel hazard rating (38 tonnes per hectare) that was a fire risk to neighbouring houses.

The 2.5 hectare burn took two years to plan and involved extensive consultation with Maroondah Council, the Department of Sustainability and Environment, Trust for Nature and Melbourne Water.

Opposite the site are the only remaining Kilsyth South spider-orchids, and the burn area will hopefully become a new habitat for this rare orchid.

Trust for Nature, which manages the land, attended the burn and used the opportunity to carry out some experiments using terracotta pots to protect small plants from high temperatures. An environmental consultant was also on site.

During the burn, 44 pallets of house bricks wrapped in plastic had to be protected, as well as timber fence posts and a small creek.

Melbourne Water land abuts the site and Melbourne Water firefighters also helped with the burn.

The burn was very successful and was kept within containment lines with an 80 per cent reduction in fuel. ■

Challenge YOURSELF

STORY SARAH BLACK



SARAH BLACK

It's not a race and it's not a competition. CFA Challenge is a highly-valued personal development and leadership course and, as the name suggests, is definitely a challenge.

What if you could overcome your debilitating fears that create havoc in your everyday life, lead your CFA team or be a world leader? Forty CFA members from 16 years old to 50-plus found out through CFA Challenge.

Volunteers go on an 11-day journey of emotional and physical challenges that quite simply transform lives and futures, both personally and within CFA. I had the privilege of being a participant this year.

The first three days were spent at Fiskville Training College, challenging our minds, emotions and perceptions during an intense personal development course run by Life Performance. Here, during a series of inspiring lectures and hands-on exercises, we were given an extraordinary tool box of skills to begin to overcome our limiting self beliefs and fears, as well as tools to manage, understand and inspire people.

"I HAVE FOUND ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS I HAVE SEARCHED FOR ALL MY LIFE"

We all began to realise we're capable of so much more than we ever imagined. Three days at Fiskville felt like a month and was the perfect preparation for our expedition with Outward Bound Australia.

What followed in the Snowy River National Park was a week of adventure and challenge – rafting, caving, rock climbing, abseiling and hiking. It was an invaluable chance to use the tools we'd learned. The Snowy River became our classroom for the next five days. Each day it took teamwork to break camp, securely load rafts, then set up camp again on the riverbank, cook, dig a toilet, and sit around the fire to debrief and reflect.

After almost five days paddling into a headwind for 60km, we emerged from the water to hike 8 kilometres through stunning forest to do some difficult caving.

The entrance was a tiny gap between rocks in a paddock. The only light was from our head torches. This was no walk through a cave. It was wet, muddy and very, very narrow in places. But it was beautiful, with classic stalactite and stalagmite formations. A number of options were presented to us, allowing us to push ourselves as far as we wished. This is where I learned I can achieve the seemingly impossible. Being stuck in a passageway no wider than my hips was terrifying until I decided I would find a way. I focused, relaxed, and wormed my body imperceptibly 1 millimetre at a time to freedom. I still get goosebumps reliving the moment.

The following days were spent challenging ourselves to time alone in the bush, abseiling and rock climbing.

Chief Officer Euan Ferguson reminded us that positions of leadership require people who can dream, who can believe in the possibilities of their dreams, who know anything is possible. CFA Challenge draws out the dreamer in us all. And CFA not only needs leaders but also people at all levels of the organisation able to face challenges, both emotional and physical, and work to create a successful team. This is the philosophy behind CFA Challenge – and it succeeds.

For me, CFA Challenge was a privilege and a gift. I have found answers to questions I have searched for all my life and I have found those answers myself as a result of the course: I wasn't handed them. I overcame debilitating fears and gained a whole new confidence in myself. There are no problems, only solutions.

CFA Challenge provides a safe place to fail and a brilliant, supportive place to succeed. That my future now looks so different, in 11 days, is simply remarkable.

Challenge 2013 is from 5–16 January 2013. To apply you need to obtain a copy of the application guidelines and application form from your regional training department or from the Challenge page on Brigades Online. Applications must be completed and submitted to your brigade captain by Friday 27 July. ■

To see more photos from Challenge 2012, go to cfaconnect.net.au/challenge

SASHA RED



HAZMAT EXERCISE AT WINNEKE

STORY KAYLA MASKELL

CFA and Melbourne Water led a multi-agency exercise in May to test emergency response to an incident at the Winneke Water Treatment Plant at Christmas Hills.

The exercise included brigades from Northern and Western, Eastern and Southern Metropolitan regions, Melbourne Water, Victoria Police, Salvation Army and St John Ambulance.

Leading Firefighter Troy Lowther, who coordinated the training, said the exercise evaluated and reviewed the planned response arrangements for an incident at the facility.

He said the exercise was held in real time and tested Major Hazard Facility Regulations that CFA brigades have to meet when responding to this type of incident.

The scenario followed a routine Tuesday morning at the treatment plant while a chlorine delivery was in progress. A road tanker containing 13 tonnes of liquid chlorine was transferred by air padding and a liquid transfer hose. During this process, a failure in the transfer hose created a Level 3 chlorine leak. Responding crews were required to isolate and contain the leak and rescue any casualties.

"The exercise was a huge success with more than 100 people taking part," Troy said.

"It was a fantastic opportunity for CFA, Melbourne Water and other agencies to ensure they are in the best position to respond to this type of incident at the Winneke Water Treatment Plant."

Troy said participants were tested in areas of command and control, and how they followed standard operating procedures (SOPs) throughout the exercise. ■

AVON GROUP'S TEWT TRAINING

STORY NOEL MCWILLIAMS

Brigade members from the Avon Group gathered at Stratford Fire Station on a bright Sunday morning in May for an incident management team exercise.

Firefighter and Ex-Group Officer Ken Baxter gave the crews information on the roles they were to play. He also suggested that on a bad day the group may need to have the capacity to manage a growing Level Two incident if the incident control centre at Sale was too busy to take control of an incident.

Not everyone was experienced in the incident management system and during the main exercise Stratford brigade Captain Mike Sears gave his crew some instruction in the form of a local tactical exercise without troops (TEWT).

The exercise began with a developing fire to the east of Stratford. Lieutenant Donna Missen was given the job of crew leader and incident controller for the initial response and soon had the highway closed by police and requested 10 tankers. Under the watchful eye of Lieutenant Heather Hamment, Donna set her team to work looking at the fire location, local issues, access to the area and the weather forecast. After sectorising the fire, the call was made for



NOEL MCWILLIAMS

20 tankers and the Planning and Logistics sections went to work supporting the fire and making plans for what may happen.

It was a great day, a lot of lessons were learned and new ideas to think about. ■

IN BRIEF

FOLLOW LEX ON TWITTER

CFA's Executive Director of Operational Training and Volunteerism is now on Twitter. Find out his latest thoughts: @LexdeManOTV.

ALEX CAUGHEY



TERROR ATTACK AT WINTON

STORY CHARLOTTE AZZOPARDI

When CFA brigades arrived at Winton Raceway following reports of a gas leak, firefighters were faced with some injuries among the crowd attending an event at the raceway.

But as the incident progressed it was determined there was a terrorism threat.

That was the scenario facing the group who attended the counterterrorism desktop exercise in mid April.

Thanks to the exercise, fire brigade members in District 23 are now better prepared to respond to major events.

Former CFA Deputy Chief Officer Geoff Conway led the exercise, set against a scenario that affected large crowds at a regional event.

Keeping the details of the incident intentionally vague so the exercise could be run again, Leading Firefighter James Wong said there was a lot to be learned from the session.

"It showed the importance of agency interoperability, which must incorporate communication. This must occur from the local level to the incident management team level, and all the way to the emergency management team level," he said.

"There also needs to be significant consideration of broader community consequences with respect to preparedness, prevention, response and recovery."

As well as CFA members, the exercise was attended by Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, the Environmental Protection Agency, representatives from Winton Motor Raceway, Benalla Health and Benalla Rural City Council.

James said the exercise also highlighted the need for timely, accurate and relevant public information, especially with the widespread use of social media and online reporting. ■

SECTOR COMMANDERS' MOUNTAIN TRAINING

STORY SONIA MACLEAN

Putting in control lines on a fireground is not always a straightforward task – the capability of machinery, welfare of operators and rehabilitation requirements all come into play.

And as 33 sector commanders discovered at a training day in April, the job becomes harder when you factor in the steep slopes and environmental challenges presented by an alpine environment.

The training at Mirimbah at the base of Mt Buller focused on the safe and efficient use of plant machinery such as graders and dozers.

Corey Payne and Ben Kipping – both specialists from Mansfield company Alpine Civil – led the group through various exercises designed to update and hone the skills of already experienced participants.

Andrew Payne-Croston, a senior training adviser who facilitated the course, said CFA was fortunate to be able to draw on their experience.

"These guys are experienced operators on the fireground and used to dealing with this environment.

"I've seen people from out of the area come in and say, 'You can't take a dozer down that hill'. And nine times out of 10 these local guys will turn around and say that it is actually possible," said Andrew.

The sector commanders who participated in the training are upper level volunteers with an average of 20 years' experience at CFA.

"In my view this is one of the most important field positions at a major job. They are a key lynchpin who oversee up to five strike teams in a sector while keeping up the flow of information back to Operations," he said. ■



ANDREW PAYNE-CROSTON

RECRUITS GO UNDERGROUND

STORY TIM HOLLAND

CFA recruit firefighters doing the January 2012 recruit course recently completed a day of search and rescue with breathing apparatus (BA) at Bendigo's Central Deborah Gold Mine.

The 25 firefighters, along with five instructors and recruit course coordinator Senior Station Officer Mark Owen, spent around seven hours underground at depths between 65 metres and 95 metres.

Wearing full structural personal protective clothing and donning their BA sets and masks, the recruits descended one by one using the original, narrow mine shaft ladders.

The training aimed to enhance the recruits' knowledge, skills and abilities in BA search and rescue in adverse conditions including confined spaces and minimal visibility.

The day also allowed the recruits to experience some of the complexities of mine rescues.

The hospitality of the staff at Bendigo Fire Station was greatly appreciated for the hot showers and barbecue. The recruits were provided with a tour of the fire station as well as some having the opportunity to experience Bendigo 37 metres above ground in the Bronto ladder platform.

The day could not have run smoothly without the assistance of Fiskville hospitality staff, Fiskville PAD Operator Andrew Brophy, Huntly Training Ground PAD Operator David Priest, and the staff at Central Deborah Gold Mine. ■



BRAD FODDIN



WAYNE CHARLTON

SOUTH EAST GROUP ROUND ROBIN

STORY WAYNE CHARLTON

Banholme campus was buzzing with activity at the end of April when 50 members from eight of the South East Group brigades in District 8 carried out a round robin exercise.

This biannual event brings together brigades for a day of hot fire drills that focus on the key aspects of basic firefighting, incident command and control and interbrigade operations.

The day involved four one-hour drills: two drills focused on structure fire attack and search and rescue, one used the gas practical area drill (PAD) and the final drill simulated a service station bowser fire.

The team of instructors had a wealth of knowledge and experience. Running the drills were Group Officer Darren McGrath, District 8 Instructor Andy Wood, Firefighter (and Northern District Training Ground Supervisor) Frank Beukelman

and Edithvale Firefighter Rob Trace.

This team was backed up by career members Leading Firefighter Josh Redfern and Firefighter Simon Caswell from Dandenong brigade, and Operations Officer Greg Christison.

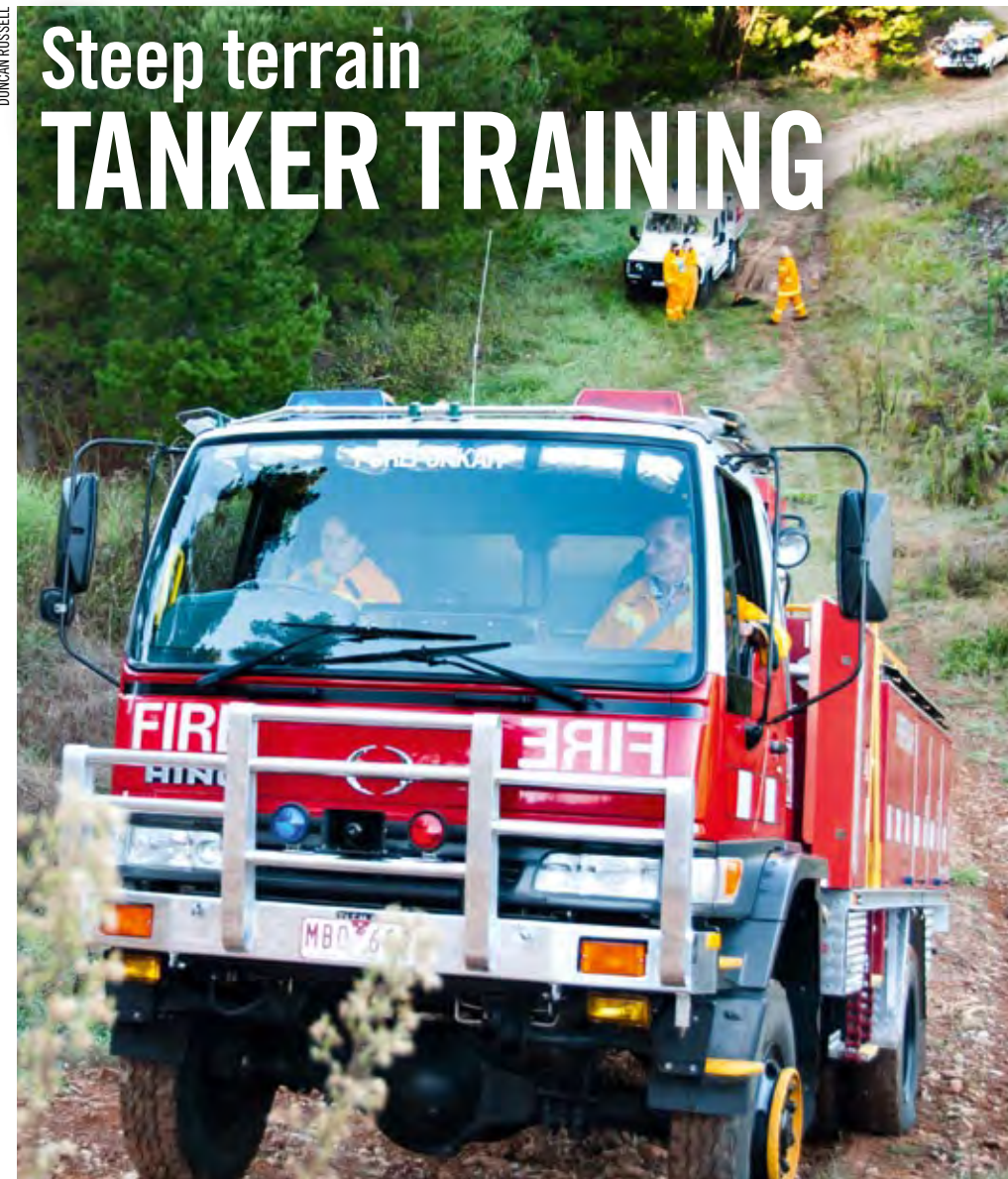
A fortnight before the exercise, crew leaders attended a crew leader information night. Taken by Senior Station Officer Josey Sensi from Springvale brigade, the session gave current and prospective crew leaders some simple skills for the command and control of small incidents. It was evident that these skills were used on the day of the exercise.

A big thanks to all those who participated. ■

Wayne Charlton is Deputy Group Officer for South East Group

Steep terrain TANKER TRAINING

DUNCAN RUSSELL



STORY SARAH BLACK

Early on a cool but sunny late March morning near Bright, surrounded by pine forest and under the granite faces of Mt Buffalo, a handful of Porepunkah volunteers look in disbelief as the tanker is parked at the base of a steep, rocky fire track. This is the day's training ground.

Training Officer Ed Rozitis recognises the responsibility volunteers have driving tankers, especially in steep, rocky and potentially hazardous alpine terrain. We're not professional drivers, but we must be proficient and, vitally, we must be able to recognise our limits and know what to do when we reach or accidentally exceed them.

Driving a fully-loaded tanker up a 55° rocky slope, stalling, restarting and reversing down is an important skill, and one that can only be learned by doing. It's also an exercise only to be undertaken with very competent instruction and supervision.

Two of Porepunkah's women tanker drivers step up to the challenge and I'm one of them. With a grin of nerves and excitement and a total trust in my calm instructor beside me, I coax the tanker up the slope, amazed by its capabilities. The easy part over, I now settle my thumping heart, slow the flow of adrenaline, stall the tanker, stop, breathe, relax and reverse the 14-plus tonne beast back down to flat ground.

Determined to make the sequence of actions second nature, overriding the natural instinct to use the clutch, I repeat the exercise a number of times. Each time the grin of satisfaction grows.

As CFA volunteers, learning new skills, challenging ourselves, gaining a sense of achievement and enriching our lives is a wonderful reward for protecting and helping our communities. ■

ON-THE-ROAD RESPONSE

STORY CHARLOTTE AZZOPARDI

Geelong City brigade will be better equipped to respond to incidents after an intensive road rescue training course.

Six career firefighters from Geelong, one from Belmont brigade and two from Dandenong spent two weeks in April learning and developing the skills needed to lead and perform road rescues.

The training course is practical and theoretical, with firefighters learning the best way to cut people out of cars and the safest way to remove a patient to protect their head, neck and spine.

During the first week, Paramedic Rick Kehoe from Ambulance Victoria talked about the best way to remove people trapped in vehicles.

"It's important for us to learn the process of taking someone out of a vehicle so they're protected as much as possible," Road Rescue Training Coordinator Mathew Kneebone said.

Connections with the Geelong community mean firefighters get the most

up-to-date knowledge of new vehicle technology.

"We work with local wrecking yards so we get experience cutting up cars and can practise the process," Mathew said.

"Ford allows us to spend a day at the Ford Proving Ground to provide us with latest model cars. Vehicle technology is always changing with more airbags and stronger metals being used.

"The Ford Discovery Centre allows us access to learn about vehicle construction and the evolution of motor vehicle construction."

The trainees also spent two days at Fiskville to train in similar realistic scenarios.

"After the intensive training, candidates will return to shift and focus on tool knowledge and driving to complete their road rescue training.

"Not only will firefighters be better equipped to respond to road rescue call-outs and protect the community, but it means more shift flexibility for brigades," Mathew said. ■



ANDREW OUBROV

A FIRST FOR GIPPSLAND STORY JASON LEIGH

Around 50 of Gippsland’s most enthusiastic volunteers attended the inaugural Gippsland Community Engagement Forum in Sale at the end of May.

The forum was an opportunity for members already involved with community engagement to network and share initiatives with like-minded people.

“It was fantastic to have these passionate volunteers in the same room and we want to expose more CFA members to this in the future,” said Gippsland Manager Community Safety Mark Potter.

“Everyone walked away with a fairly positive view of what we need to do and what needs to happen next.”

Callignee Captain Ian Ewart and Secretary Graham Bolton showcased the work of their brigade that deals directly with the local community to deliver the Community Fireguard program and strong results.

Warragul Firefighter Daniel Eshuis’s workshop on social media allowed people who had never used it to get a better understanding of its potential, while those who already use it learned more about what was available.

Former CFA Chief Officer Brian Potter described the culture he witnessed among the Japanese fire services, where there was almost a feeling of embarrassment when attending a fire as it was seen as a failure of the system to prevent the fire.

Acting Chief Officer Steve Warrington gave an inspiring presentation about the future of community preparation, and compared the power of a \$10 smoke alarm with a \$500,000 firetruck.

Mark Potter said the forum gave some real direction about how Gippsland region can better support its members and brigades to educate the community.

“The number one thing that came out of the forum for me was the importance of local people delivering local information,” Mark said.

“Donna Missen from Stratford brigade gave a great presentation about their successful approach to local engagement. They have a real sense of ‘we live in the same community as you and we will be experiencing the exact same thing’ that’s been important in getting the message out.

“This really reinforces the position we’ve held for some time – that the best person to educate the community is someone from within the community. It’s definitely something we’ll be working on and incorporating in our programs over the next six to 12 months.

“There was also a strong message that our volunteers are looking for more community education focused training, so we’re definitely looking to fill that space.”

The success of the forum resulted in a firm commitment for it to run again next year with a wider range of attendees.

“This is a network we need to support and build. A number of attendees plan to keep catching up outside the conference to share ideas and we’ll be providing the group with email updates on a regular basis,” Mark said.

The forum was also attended by Police and Emergency Services Minister Peter Ryan, Danny Buttler from Media Edge Communications and Captain Koala. ■



ANDREW OUBROV



COURTESY OF MFB

BEEPA STARS IN CAMPAIGN STORY SONIA MACLEAN

Beepa the smoke alarm had a busy week at the end of March, visiting a primary school and Melbourne’s Flinders Street Station for the launch of the annual smoke alarm campaign.

The friendly new smoke alarm character got right into the action, receiving cuddles, high fives and photo requests from many of the hundreds of commuters who watched as CFA and Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board (MFB) firefighters abseiled down the main clock at Flinders Street Station.

According to Beepa the reaction from kids and adults alike has been fantastic.

“People seemed a little overwhelmed at first to see such a gigantic white object coming towards them, but after a few minutes they all wanted to give me a big hug and give my test button nose a press,” he said.



VASSIE MACQUARRIS

“A lot of kids were curious to know my age – the answer is just over one year old. And yesterday I had my first ever battery change! My good mate Captain Koala was kind enough to buy me a 9-volt alkaline battery so I can be sure it will last through the whole year without a hitch.

“In April I was flat out reminding everyone to change their batteries when they changed their clocks for the end of daylight savings.”

Students at Wilmot Road Primary School in Shepparton were the first to meet Beepa. Kids were grinning from ear to ear at the chance to meet the mascot – and none more so than Cheyanne Cooper (pictured above with Beepa) who was delighted that her suggestion was selected from more than 300 entries in a competition to name the smoke alarm. ■

For more photos and video, visit www.cfaconnect.net.au/beepa

MOVING INDOORS STORY RUTH JELLEY

Winter’s well and truly here – heaters around the state have been cranked up and we’re spending more time indoors cooking. Along with winter comes a 15 to 20 per cent increase in the risk of residential fire.

CFA and Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board (MFB) are asking all Victorians to take responsibility for their home fire safety this winter. Last winter, CFA crews attended 583 residential fires, of which 32 per cent started in the kitchen and a further 31 per cent started in the lounge or bedrooms.

Residential fires can have devastating consequences – something the family of five-year-old Famke Biesheuvel knows all too well. When she was two years old, Famke received burns to her legs and feet when a faulty heater ignited.

Famke and her family were at the Royal Children’s Hospital (RCH) on 22 May with Minister for Police and Emergency Services Peter Ryan, MFB Chief

Executive Officer Nick Easy, CFA Chief Executive Officer Mick Bourke and CFA Deputy Chief Officer Steve Warrington, to launch the 2012 Winter Home Fire Safety Campaign. Famke’s parents told the media about their terror when they heard Famke’s screams and rushed into the room to find her pyjamas alight.

Famke endured a year of treatment at RCH and two skin grafts. She will need two more skin grafts before she turns 18.

If your brigade can help spread the home fire safety message this winter, contact your community education coordinator at your regional or district office to get a brigade information pack. The pack has information about the Winter Home Fire Safety Campaign, including key messages, localised statistics and other useful material. ■



HENRIKZ BHOOAH

Breaking down BARRIERS

STORY ROBERT BLAIR AND GAVIN FITZGERALD

Above: The local community erects the Karen totem pole

Right: The Bridges out of Poverty forum

Corio Fire Brigade held a cultural awareness session for its members and supporting brigades as part of Cultural Diversity Week in March.

More than 60 CFA people attended the evening from District 14, Noble Park, Burwood headquarters and members of District 7 Operations.

Organised by Leading Firefighter Gavin Fitzgerald, the aim of the evening was to share with members the brigade's initiatives with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities in Corio, and to identify communication challenges in our community.

As a community-based organisation, it's important that we know our community, understand its needs, and break down barriers and misconceptions.

"Corio and Norlane now lay claim to one of the largest regional settlements for people from a refugee background and the availability of essential services and affordable housing means this is only going to increase as a direct result of federal policy," Gavin said.

"Of the 13,750 refugees that Australia takes annually, Geelong's northern suburbs settle approximately 200 a year, primarily Karen, Congolese and now Afghani."

Corio brigade runs a range of fire safety education sessions with people from a refugee background. It also recently organised a fundraiser to provide timber to a local Karen community for a sacred spiritual ceremony. The timber was part of a totem pole that's used to create peace and harmony. It now sits 150 metres from Corio's station.

BRIDGES OUT OF POVERTY FORUM

Around 50 stakeholders from CFA Fire and Emergency Management and community safety departments from headquarters and across

the state met at the end of May for a workshop about engaging with vulnerable communities. Called 'Bridges out of Poverty', the program was driven by the Corio team and has gained enormous momentum and support.

The program is supported by the local council, Barwon Health and the local multicultural agency, who all attended the forum. Members of the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board (MFB) community safety team also attended.

Corio brigade's Officer in Charge Barry Thomas said, "This is part of the Corio business plan: to build relationships and a network in our immediate community. We needed to adopt a 'place-based approach' that fits our needs and that of the community. Our people have employed a unique direction that is grass roots, and we see it being sustained into the future."

"This type of program can initiate change on how we do business in the future," said CFA's Manager Community Resilience Gwynne Brennan. ■



GORDON GUEST-SMITH

KNOX APPLIANCE DAY

STORY IAN ATHERTON

Knox Group's multiagency specialist appliance display held at Knoxfield in late April was an outstanding success.

With nine emergency service agencies represented and around 60 appliances on display, there was something for everyone to explore and, in many cases, dream of owning.



KEITH PACEHAM

From multiple rescue and medical aid units, lighting and salvage units, to a wide range of communications and command vehicles to suit a multitude of incidents, the display had it all.

Many a desiring eye was cast over CFA's Volunteer Coast Guard and its very fit-for-purpose rescue vessel – that would also be a great way to spend a weekend out on the bay.

Practical displays of appliances and equipment filled the day and the arrival of Firebird 302 water-bombing helicopter was a particular highlight.

The Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board's (MFB) new breathing apparatus van was a shining example of what can be achieved with clear thinking and a strong sense of purpose, and would be a standout in any fire agency throughout the world.

The event certainly achieved its main aim of providing a unique opportunity for emergency services personnel and their families to familiarise themselves with the huge range of resources available for response to incidents. Hundreds of people took advantage of the fine weather that bathed the display site.

The cooperation between all agencies on the day was outstanding and the attendance of Fire Services Commissioner Craig Lapsley, CFA Deputy Chief Officer Gregg Patterson and MFB Deputy Chief Officers David Youssef and Lou Mele certainly showed there's strong interest in, and support for, this type of initiative.

Planning is already underway for the next Knox display scheduled for April 2014. ■

Ian is deputy group officer (group training) with Knox Group

FIELD DAYS A HIT

STORY MAIREAD BILTON-GOUGH

The East Gippsland Field Days drew record crowds this year, with thousands enjoying the sunshine and exhibitions.

Community education coordinator for Gippsland region, Nicole Cooper-Warneke, said CFA's exhibit was a hit with both young and old.

The stall, which focused on the *On the Land* publication, had "great big displays and visual tools to reinforce messages," Nicole said.

Integrated fire management planning was also high on the stall's agenda, showing how CFA works together with the Department of Sustainability and Environment, and the Wellington and East Gippsland shire councils.

The colourful and inviting marquee used a range of ways to encourage members of the community to take on board important information. One section was aimed at volunteers who wanted to speak with their Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria representatives, one showcased the Fire Ready app on iPads, and another let people find their house on a map to learn about their fire region.

However, the biggest attraction was Captain Koala, who was brought to life by Bairnsdale Brigade Captain Les Beechey. "I'd never done it before. It was a really great day and the kids loved it," Les said.

Vegetation Management Officer Chris Lewis, who was on the Field Days' organising committee, praised Bairnsdale brigade members for their exceptional work on the day.

NICOLE COOPER-WARNEKE



Left: A pump fittings dexterity test was popular

A pump fittings dexterity test, made by the District 11 operations team, attracted crowds and prizes were given to those who put the fixtures on the quickest.

"With hundreds of giveaways, such as show bags, hats, stress balls and publications, the goal of engaging and interacting with the community was well and truly achieved," said Nicole. ■

THIS YEAR'S champs

STORY JENNA CLARKE

This year the Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) State Championships travelled across Victoria to the regional towns of Horsham, Mooropna and Colac. These Champs involve competition in traditional and current fireground practices, designed to build fitness, practical firefighting skills and a strong sense of teamwork and camaraderie among CFA volunteers.

The Urban Junior Championships in February were a great success, bringing over 900 competitors and almost 1,000 spectators to Horsham for the weekend.

Next up were the Urban Senior Championships in Mooropna, held every year over the Labour Day long weekend. Due to the floods surrounding Shepparton at the time, certain ceremonial aspects of the weekend were scaled down or cancelled. However, VFBV and CFA were careful not to deny Mooropna such a valuable tourism event, and all the track and running events continued as planned.

Finally, the Rural Junior and Senior Championships in Colac on 31 March and 1 April went off without a hitch. The new community market alongside the corporate exhibition was a great addition to a top class event.

"Each of these events went exceptionally well due to superb planning and teamwork. Championships are a very important part of the CFA calendar. They form part of the culture and spirit of CFA and they have a strong future. Well done to all," said Chief Officer Euan Ferguson.

The CFA on Display corporate exhibition featured at Horsham and Colac this year and was a fantastic opportunity for CFA members to discover the latest information about CFA volunteer and community safety programs and initiatives.

URBAN JUNIORS RESULTS		
Dry Aggregate		
1st	Maffra A	23 points
2nd	Tatura	21 points
3rd	Melton A	17 points
Wet Aggregate		
1st	Moe A	21 points
2nd	Tatura & Wendouree A	17 points
Under 14 Years Aggregate		
1st	Moe A	29 points
2nd	Tatura	28 points
3rd	Melton A	27 points
Under 17 Years Aggregate		
1st	Maryvale A	32 points
2nd	Wendouree A & Esperance A	22 points
Grand Aggregate		
1st	Tatura	38 points
2nd	Maffra A	36 points
3rd	Maryvale A	32 points

URBAN SENIORS RESULTS		
Dry Aggregate		
1st	Kangaroo Flat	22 points
2nd	Maryvale	20 points
3rd	Mandurah	15 points
Wet Aggregate		
1st	Bassendean	62 points
2nd	Golden Square & Morwell	46 points
A Section		
1st	Bassendean	66 points
2nd	Maryvale	46 points
3rd	Wendouree	41 points
B Section		
1st	Golden Square	53 points
2nd	Morwell	52 points
3rd	Sunbury	42 points
C Section		
1st	Mornington	55 points
2nd	Sorrento & Hallam	38 points

RURAL SENIORS RESULTS		
Division A Aggregate		
1st	Napoleons/Enfield A	58 points
2nd	Greta A	50 points
3rd	Napoleons/Enfield B	42 points
Division B Aggregate		
1st	Greta B	44 points
2nd	Connewarre A	30 points
3rd	Springhurst B	28 points
Division C Aggregate		
1st	Eldorado A	58 points
2nd	Pearcedale B	27 points
3rd	Research A	27 points

RURAL JUNIORS RESULTS		
11 – 13 Years Aggregate		
1st	Greta A	36 points
2nd	Moyhu A	30 points
3rd	Ascot A	28 points
11 – 15 Years Aggregate		
1st	Greta A	36 points
2nd	Irrewarra A	28 points
3rd	Dunrobbin/Nangeela A	22 points
Champion Team		
1st	Greta A	72 points
2nd	Napoleons/Enfield A	40 points
3rd	Willaura A	36 points



Above: At the Urban Seniors

Left: Competitions at the Rurals



Below: At the Urban Seniors



Above: A competitor hits the target at the Urban Junior Champs

Right: At the Urban Seniors



Right: Competitions at the Rurals





BLAIR DELLEMIN

Above: The money is counted at Etihad Stadium

Left: CFA and MFB members in the 24-hour relay in Melbourne

RECORD COLLECTIONS

STORY **CHRISTINE UNSWORTH,**
RETIRING DIRECTOR GOOD FRIDAY APPEAL

A huge thank you to the many hundreds of CFA members who raised a record amount of \$1,255,356.15 for the Good Friday Appeal on 6 April.

The contribution from every dedicated CFA collector helped to deliver another record-breaking total for the Royal Children's Hospital Good Friday Appeal of \$15,820,640.78.

Throughout Victoria and southern New South Wales this year, a record 225 regional fundraising managers coordinated their armies of volunteers, including the tireless CFA brigades.

In 2012, we saw many more brigades register to be volunteer collectors on Good Friday.

I'm honoured and privileged to have been part of this iconic

event for 16 years and for many years before that working within the Royal Children's Hospital.

Victorians and Australians are rightly very proud of the Royal Children's Hospital and the amazing work it does and this is reflected in their generosity to the Good Friday Appeal. The efforts of our CFA friends bring home to us the significant support in rural and regional areas.

The dedication and commitment of CFA members is unparalleled. We're extremely grateful to each and every one for their involvement and support.

Brigades have been helping collect money now for over 60 years, with CFA collections totalling over \$22 million. ■

THROUGH THE AGES Colac



BLAIR DELLEMIN

SARAH BLACK

COMPILED BY KEITH PAKENHAM

FACES OF CFA

ED ROZITIS POREPUNKAH BRIGADE, DISTRICT 24

How long have you been with this brigade?

About 40 years.

Why did you join CFA?

When I left the army I missed the teamwork and camaraderie. CFA was different, but it came as close I could get in 'civvy street'. I missed that part of army life. A mate asked me if I'd like to join CFA so I signed up.

I wouldn't have been able to volunteer without my wife Jennifer doing everything at home that I should have been, instead of being out chasing fires. We couldn't do it without the partners. There is never any mention of them in the newspapers when we get given all the glory.

What was the first incident you attended?

It would have been a bushfire. I've been to so many. I was with Yackandandah brigade then. We had petrol engine Austin trucks. The fuel used to vaporise in the heat. Yack is in a hollow with hills all around – any road out of town is up. We would put a piece of two-by-one under the bonnet to let more air in to stop the fuel vaporising. If you switched the engine off at a fire, there was no way it would restart. And the old crash gear box is another story!

What is the most memorable incident you've attended?

Campaign fires have been very memorable – 1992 Mulwala, then 1994, 2000-2001, 2003, 2006 and Black Saturday in 2009. In 2009 I was closer to Melbourne for a time, and what sticks in my mind is Marysville. A whole town wiped out. There was a fire station there, but no buildings to provide a service to. The first weekend after the fires, the town was a crime scene, with no one allowed in or out, and we had to sleep there. It was like living and sleeping in a cemetery. All we could see was chimneys, standing in rows looking like gravestones.

Normally firefighters never go back to an incident scene. We check that everything and everyone is OK, put the truck back in the shed and wait for the next. This was the first time I actually went back. People were rummaging through the remains of their properties and wanted to talk about their experiences. It was difficult but a good experience.

After a hard day firefighting, what's your favourite meal?

Plain Aussie food. A nice steak, a couple of eggs. No fancy food.



What do you listen to in the car on the way home from an incident?

I put on ABC classic FM. I'm a Beatles fan and like upbeat music, but after an incident I'm running on adrenaline and want to get down. Unwinding with some good classical music calms me down.

What have you done to protect your property?

Keep the gutters clean. Keep the lawn green (I have a rainwater tank for that purpose). And I help the neighbours with their fire preparations.

What positions have you held within CFA?

Lieutenant, captain, crew leader, strike team leader, trainer/assessor.

What do you like about being a training officer/assessor?

I have learned more about the subjects by teaching it than being talked to about it. CFA has given me the opportunity to pick up so much experience and knowledge, and it would be selfish to not pass it on to others. ■

Interview and photo by Sarah Black



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