

Profile of CFA

Brief history

The *Fire Brigades Act* 1890 created two boards, a Metropolitan Fire Brigades Board for the metropolitan fire district, and a Country Fire Brigades Board (CFBB) to embrace the nine country fire districts. The Act gave CFBB extensive powers and responsibilities for fire brigades based more than 16 kilometres from Melbourne CBD. The CFBB officially came into being on 1 January 1891.

In 1926, following serious bushfires, the Bush Fire Brigades were formed. Made up entirely of volunteer members, they were administered by the State Forests Department. They had only scant power to carry out fire prevention measures and received little or no financial assistance from the Government.

In 1939, the Stretton Royal Commission was established to investigate the devastating and disastrous Black Friday bush fires across Victoria. The report made a number of significant recommendations, including the need for a single firefighting organisation for country Victoria. The devastation of the 1944 bushfires emphasised the urgency of better coordination of country fire services. Legislation was enacted to establish a single country fire authority and the Country Fire Authority (CFA) began operations on 2 April 1945.

CFA today

Over the past 58 years, CFA has evolved from these informal beginnings to become one of the world's largest volunteer-based emergency services and provides a diverse range of risk reduction and fire suppression services to minimise the impact of fires and other emergencies on the community.

Under the *Country Fire Authority Act* 1958 (CFA Act), CFA is the responsible agency for 'taking, superintending and enforcing all necessary steps for the prevention and suppression of fires and for the protection of life and property in case of fire ...' This includes bushfires and structure fires, as well as incidents involving hazardous materials, road accident rescue, and rescue in areas of diverse risk, including high-risk industries such as petrochemical and gas.

CFA operates within the Victoria State Government portfolio of the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, administered through the Department of Justice.

CFA serves a population of approximately 2.6 million people in more than one million dwellings. Its geographical area includes the rural, provincial, and metropolitan communities of Victoria outside the district served by the Metropolitan Fire & Emergency Services Board (MFESB) and excluding areas of publicly owned land managed by the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE). CFA also provides support to other fire and emergency services agencies within Victoria and interstate for significant emergencies that may arise.

In 2002/03, CFA attended 35,092 fire and emergency incidents in Victoria, involving almost 65,000 turnouts by CFA brigades.

CFA's operations rely on the skills of an integrated force of volunteers and career personnel. CFA people are dispersed throughout Victoria, united through a commitment to create safe communities and protect life and property. They have forged very strong strategic relationships with their local communities and provide not only fire suppression expertise but also assistance with fire prevention and mitigation through educational programs and close working partnerships with local municipalities and industries. Volunteers in many areas contribute to the social cohesion of their local communities.

CFA is funded through insurance levies (77.5 per cent) and by the Victorian State Government (22.5 per cent).

CFA's structure

CFA delivers service to the community through 1,240 brigades located throughout Victoria, including rural, urban and metropolitan areas. Neighbouring brigades cooperate together, forming 142 groups which ensure that mutual support and shared resources are available and effectively used.

These brigades are supported by nine Area headquarters which provide direct operational support through 20 Regions. Career and volunteer personnel share a range of administrative, planning and operational management roles at region, group and local level.

CFA's corporate headquarters in Melbourne provides strategic support, administrative and management services to each Area, as well as centralised coordination of resources during significant incidents.

CFA services

CFA provides statewide fire and related emergency coordination, including:

- wildfire suppression
- structural fire suppression
- transport related fire suppression
- road accident rescue
- hazardous materials transportation and storage incidents
- technical rescue
- forest industry brigades
- industrial accident response
- other emergency activities, including flood assistance
- technical services, including building code related inspections and post incident investigations
- fire safety input planning for major community risks
- fire prevention
- land use planning at municipal level
- community awareness, education and safety programs.