

History of the CFA

In which year was the CFA formed?

The Country Fire Authority was formed in 1945.

How did the Country Fire Authority form?

Community volunteer-based fire fighting services started up in the early 1850's on the gold fields, in Ballarat, Bendigo and Creswick, out of the necessity to protect their homes, buildings and surrounding areas. Fires were put out through the use of a human water chain, with buckets of water being passed along from person to person. The person on the end would throw the water on the fire. Young children often collected the empty buckets and returned them to the water source. Fires in the bush were put out using wet bags or green tree branches.



Next came the Hook and Ladder Brigades, where long hooks were used to pull down buildings next to the fire to stop it from spreading. All of the equipment was carried to the fire by hand-pulled carts.



As towns became wealthier, hand-operated pumps were bought. Later more modern pumps were bought and used. Sometimes these pumps were so big they needed 40 men to pull the cart to the fire. Each town organised its own brigade.

During the 1890's the Country Fire Brigades Board was formed -funding was given to the Volunteer Brigades from the government and insurance companies. After the disastrous bushfires in 1939 and 1944, which caused many deaths and huge property damage, the Country Fire Authority was formed to co-ordinate the different brigades and to try and prevent large damaging fires occurring.



Today CFA is a modern organisation with a range of fire appliances capable of dealing with various fires and emergency incidents. Computers are used to predict and report weather conditions around the state. Equipment now used in fire fighting includes: breathing apparatus, gas suits and observations aircraft.

How is the CFA structured?

There are over 1,200 brigades in outer metropolitan Melbourne and country Victoria, and they are responsible for the prevention and suppression (putting out or controlling) of fires in Victoria.

These Brigades are organised into 141 Groups to provide backup for each other when needed. Brigades and Groups are organised into 20 CFA Regions, which are co-ordinated by career fire officers and report to the Chief Officer or Deputy Chief Officers at CFA Headquarters in Burwood.

How many volunteer firefighters belong to CFA?

CFA is one of the largest firefighting forces in the world with approximately 58,000 volunteers. Volunteer members are supported by more than 400 career firefighters and officers, and over 700 career support and administrative staff.

Each volunteer belongs to a local brigade, which is part of a network of over 1,228 brigades around the state, in both outer metropolitan Melbourne and country Victoria.

Does CFA work closely with any other organisation?

CFA works closely with everyone in the community. This means working together with the Metropolitan Fire & Emergency Services Board, Victoria Police, Ambulance, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Local Government, State Emergency Service, Weather Bureau, Red Cross and many other organisations which can assist in emergencies. CFA attend more than 34,000 emergencies each year.