

Brigade

spring 2016

Protecting lives
and property

cfa.vic.gov.au



▼ Tackling daytime turnout



**Pre-season
Update inside**



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Tackling daytime turnout

COVER PHOTO: OMEO GROUP MEMBERS BY LEITH HILLARD

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Chair Greg Smith



This is my first column in *Brigade* magazine as the Chair of CFA. It's an enormous privilege to join an organisation with a long history of volunteerism and I'm looking forward to playing my part in furthering CFA's proud legacy.

By way of introduction, I have spent the bulk of my career at the Fair Work Commission and its predecessors, including almost three decades as a Commissioner and Deputy President of that tribunal. During my time in the Commission, I was also an adviser to the International Labour Organisation in developing dispute resolution procedures and training conciliators and arbitrators mostly in southern Africa together with being asked to conciliate a dispute at the UN.

I retired from the Commission in July 2015 and was very pleased later that year to be appointed to the Board of Ambulance Victoria and now to the CFA Board.

Clearly, I have come to the position of Chair at a difficult and turbulent time. I wish I could have taken on the role in more settled times. There is a lot to play out but I recognise that it has been a very bruising time in a highly-charged atmosphere. The Board is going to work very hard to give all CFA members the support they deserve.

The Board understands that CFA is a community-based organisation. CFA – and its future – is integral to the Victorian community and I am keenly aware of the high expectations communities have of CFA.

It's the role of the Board and CFA's management team to ensure we keep pace with our communities and continue to meet their expectations.

Currently, there are many challenges facing CFA, of which finalising the EBA is but one. There is the ongoing work needed to secure and develop a world-class training facility in the Central Highlands. There is the important strategy work which began under former CEO Lucinda Nolan that will help chart CFA's future direction.

Indeed, I'd like to pay tribute to Lucinda Nolan who has served the Victorian community for a long time and is highly respected.

I am very pleased that we have Frances Diver as our CEO on an interim basis. The Board will be moving quickly to advertise the role and appoint a permanent CEO.

I would also like to thank our former Chief officer Joe Buffone for his commitment to CFA.

All Board members are now in place and I look forward to joining with them to make a positive contribution to CFA.

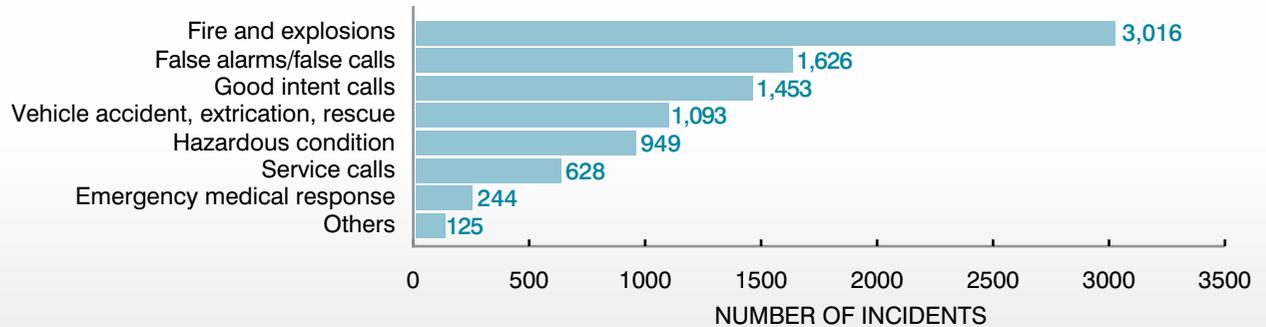
Most of all, I look forward to travelling throughout Victoria to meet CFA's highly-respected volunteers. The contribution of volunteers in communities around Victoria cannot be underestimated.

Indeed, it's hard to think of any other activity which binds local communities and makes such a positive contribution to their safety and welfare.

Incident summary

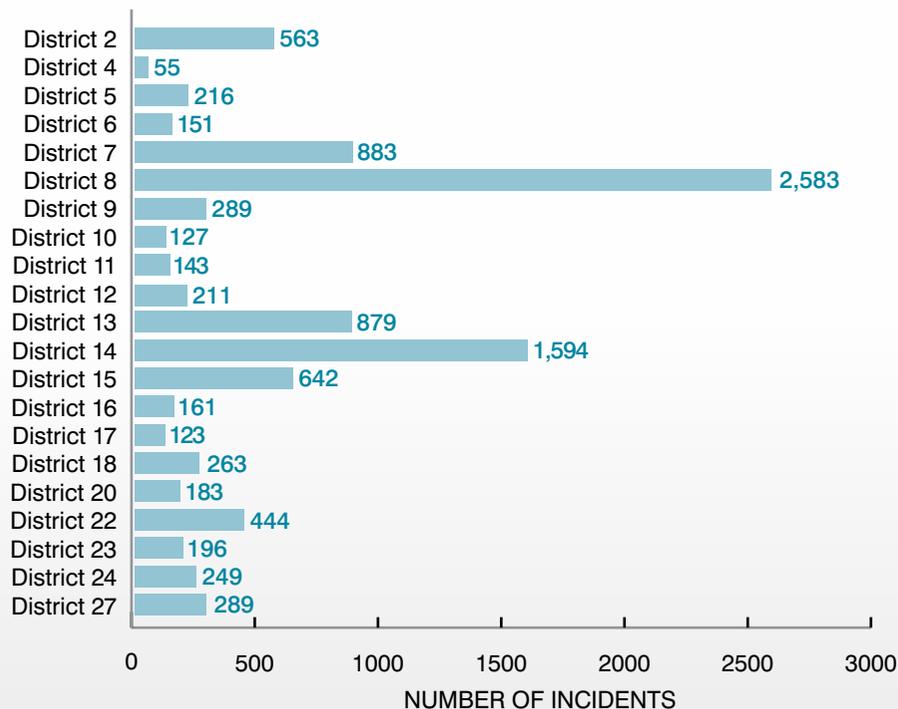
STATEWIDE INCIDENTS BY TYPE

1 April – 30 June 2016



STATEWIDE INCIDENTS BY DISTRICT

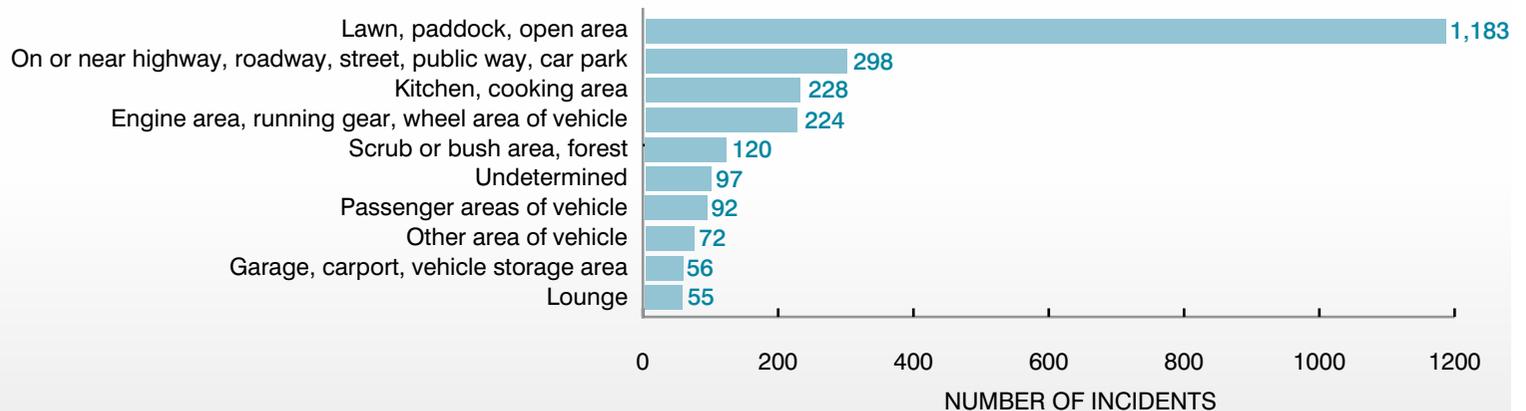
1 April – 30 June 2016



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 – 30 June 2016



Train hits truck on level crossing

There were almost 100 people on the Warrnambool-bound train when it derailed at a level crossing in Pirron Yallock near Colac after colliding with a semi-trailer.

The train's locomotive and front carriages were derailed and the truck's trailer hit a power pole, pulling power lines to the ground. Roads and railway lines were closed in the area and V-Line services and the power supply were affected.

The truck driver was critically injured airlifted to a Melbourne hospital. Eighteen people on the train received minor injuries.

CFA brigades responded to the call at 3.45pm with the incident under control at 6.50pm. SES, police and ambulance also attended.

Incident Controller Mark Billing said all emergency service agencies worked exceptionally well together.

Mark instructed two CFA crews to support paramedics while the other two crews secured the area and monitored the diesel leaking from the train.

"I was so impressed with how well everyone worked together and CFA volunteers were outstanding in demonstrating their breadth of skills from first-aid to recovery," Mark said.

"While the level of devastation was evident on scene, all emergency service agencies were incredibly organised and were able to calm the passengers quickly while getting them off the train safely."

Colac Fire Brigade Captain Scott Peschel led a crew at the incident. "Our first priority was to find out if everyone was all right," Scott said.

"We helped paramedics by assessing each passenger for injuries and reassuring them as we moved them out of the carriages.

"Everyone worked really well together and it was fantastic to see CFA volunteers showing their advanced skills."

STORY BRIE SNARE

INCIDENT: Train accident

DISTRICT: 6

DATE: 13 July 2016

BRIGADES: Colac, Cororoake, Larpent, Nalangil



Cool demeanour saves a life

A Wodonga West member has performed lifesaving CPR on a member of the public at Wodonga Plaza, earning accolades from paramedics and onlookers.

Captain of Wodonga West Fire Brigade Ross Coyle was visiting the Wodonga Plaza in late July when a man in his late 60s collapsed.

First to respond and assist, Ross immediately recognised that the man had gone into cardiac arrest and started CPR while an ambulance was called.

Despite the CPR initially working well, the patient went back into cardiac arrest. Ross continued life-saving measures until paramedics arrived.

Dean Stuart, a first-aid officer with the Australian Border Force College, also assisted, and he later wrote to CFA's District 24 headquarters to commend and recognise Ross on his handling of the situation.

"Ross continued to work the airway effectively

until we were relieved by paramedics," Mr Stuart said.

"My wife, an emergency nurse, noted Ross's calm demeanour and the effectiveness of his technique while performing his actions. Definitely an asset to your command."

Jim Reeves, a member of Ambulance Victoria, was also compelled to follow up the incident by writing to CFA.

His letter confirmed that the patient had been successfully resuscitated using defibrillation when ambulance crews arrived.

"Because of Ross's actions, this man will walk out of hospital," Mr Reeves said.

Operations Manager Paul King said Ross showed strong leadership in a situation where many others would have felt confused and unsure of how to act.

"In this case Ross has stepped up, and he has saved a man's life," Paul said.

"Although several people helped, Ross was

the first there and he led the response until the ambulance arrived.

"All those people who were there, including the man's wife, have contacted me or CFA to praise Ross's actions. Most of all, they wanted to highlight his cool demeanour and courage."

STORY SONIA MACLEAN



PHOTO: ELENOR TEDENBORG, BORDER MAIL

Moe business destroyed by fire

INCIDENT: Structure fire

DISTRICT: 27

DATE: 26 July 2016

BRIGADES: Moe, Traralgon, Newborough, Trafalgar, Yallourn North, Morwell, Westbury, Willow Grove, Tanjil



A mechanics business in Moe was destroyed by fire despite CFA crews fighting the blaze for more than two hours.

CFA responded to the call just before 1am and found a large shed full of cars completely engulfed in flames when they arrived. Twelve trucks from across District 27 attended. Rostered Duty Officer Paul Fixter said a large number of trucks was needed to enhance water access.

"Firefighters worked around a partial roof collapse and minor explosions from tins of paint and other chemicals stored in the building," Paul said.

"Crews worked to contain the fire to the 30 metre by 15 metre structure, which saved other buildings nearby."

The incident was called under control by 3.30am.

Moe Fire Brigade Lieutenant Tara Paulsen, who has been a volunteer for eight years, was the incident controller of one of the biggest incidents she's managed.

"Tara had crews working brilliantly when I arrived – I was really impressed to see how well this large incident was managed," Paul said.



PHOTO: PAUL FIXTER

Tara has been on the back of many fire trucks and managed incidents before, so she was able to draw on her experience to take control of this larger incident.

"Due to limited water supply on the property, we needed to set up a pumper relay with several fire trucks to attack the fire," Tara said.

"Crews noticed minor pops and explosions from contents overheating inside. When the roof collapsed, the building's structural integrity was compromised so I issued a red flag warning, which restricted all firefighters from entering the building.

"All of our crews across District 27 work well together to manage these challenges, so it was definitely a strong team effort to get this incident under control before it spread to surrounding areas."

STORY BRIE SNARE

The complexities of vehicle rescue



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

Over the past seven years, the number of motor vehicle accidents (MVAs) attended by CFA members has sharply increased.

The weather conditions that often lead to car and truck accidents also just happen to be the conditions that make life tough for firefighters when carrying out technical rescue operations.

That was the case on 25 July, when CFA crews battled extremely cold, wet and windy conditions responding to an MVA with a person possibly trapped on the Princes Highway in Eumemmerring.

On arrival shortly after 7pm, crews from Hallam and Dandenong brigades could see that a single vehicle was wrapped around a tree on the driver's side.

Incident Controller Josh Redfern, a senior station officer at Dandenong, said his crew unfortunately discovered that the man trapped in the vehicle was deceased which meant the incident was handed over to Victoria Police.

“Due to the discovery of a fatality, we left the scene and came back at a later time,” Josh said. “From there, our strategy was to remove the sides from the vehicle and spread the car out from around the tree.” Brigade members then carefully removed the body.

“In this instance, we are able to work more slowly and carefully and the incident was very straightforward. But in cases where we are required to extract an injured occupant there can be a lot more pressure.”

Volunteer firefighter and CFA photographer Keith Pakenham regularly attends MVAs with Dandenong. He said the wet and windy conditions that often cause vehicle accidents can also cause gridlocked traffic and poor visibility.

“On the way to the incident, different scenarios are running through your mind,” said Keith. “Callers to Tripe Zero often over- or underestimate the severity of accidents, so it’s hard to be sure what you will be presented with when you get there.”

Once on-scene, firefighters work very closely with Ambulance Victoria paramedics, and they won’t move or touch anything until a patient has been stabilised.

In rescue situations where a patient requires extraction, Keith emphasised that every second counts.

The first task for firefighters is to stabilise the vehicle, a process Keith said “can take incredible ingenuity”. Chocks may be placed under wheels, the car might be jacked up and lines may even be used to secure the car to trees or buildings.

When the vehicle has been stabilised, crews may use different techniques to cut or ‘spread’ the car. Key pieces of equipment for vehicle rescue are cutters, spreaders and rams. Most are powered hydraulically, though battery-operated units are starting to be used by some brigades.

Meanwhile, safety is paramount.

“We need to do everything to make the patient safe, but our crews also need to be safe in what they are doing,” continued Josh. “There’s always the risk that you’ll cut into something and it will spring back at you, or you’ll cut into something you thought was solid and the car will collapse.”

Accredited rescue operators undertake regular training to keep their skills up to date. With so many different models of vehicle in Australia, part of the training includes awareness of built-in features such as airbags – items that can be hazardous for firefighters trying to cut into a vehicle.

Josh said that modern cars are getting stronger, which means they are “safer to drive but harder to cut into”.

Onlookers can be a challenge. In these days of smart phones and social media, people will try to approach the scene, slow or even stop their cars, posing a threat to the patient’s privacy and increasing the risk of further accidents.

Responders will often try to counter this rubbernecking by putting tarpaulins or blankets over the victim, but that can also impede the personnel trying to carry out precision work inside the vehicle.

Vehicle rescue can only be carried out by a registered and accredited CFA or MFB rescue brigade or SES unit. Most CFA units are attached to volunteer brigades.

CEO COLUMN

Frances Diver

This is my first *Brigade* column since starting as CEO.

By way of introduction, my background is in health care where I began my career as a nurse and midwife until moving into roles within the broader health sector. In recent years, I've worked as a senior executive in the Department of Health and Human Services, where I had significant responsibility for hospital and ambulance services.

The past few months have been a very busy, often challenging and highly rewarding time for me in my new CFA role.

I have been out and about, talking with and listening to members on the front line of CFA service delivery. Thank you to District 8 headquarters and Edithvale, Springvale, Corio and Wangaratta brigades for taking time out of their busy days to show me around. I also had the opportunity to attend the District 7 Brigade Management Team professional development day with Chief Officer Steve Warrington.

At the time of writing, I'm also looking forward to attending the CFA-SES Community Engagement and Hazard Awareness State Forum where I'll participate in a Q&A session with Steve. (For a more about the forum, see page 18). I'm also looking forward to attending VFBV's District 9 council meeting in Leongatha.

I continue to be struck by CFA's diversity at the front line, the professionalism and pride that marks our service delivery, and the quality of support provided to the front line by everyone from BASOs to headquarters staff.

I'm pleased that Steve Warrington has accepted the role of chief officer for a six-month period. Steve is passionate about the long-term welfare of CFA and its people. As a long-standing deputy chief officer, Steve is well prepared for this position and the responsibilities it entails.

In terms of my own priorities for CFA, number one is to support Steve and his team with the resources they need to deliver services safely and to the high levels expected by communities. In the short term,



Below: CEO Frances Diver with members of Wangaratta brigade and the brigade's 1938 Dodge pumper

PHOTO: GARRY COOK

this includes doing all I can to ensure CFA stays focused and on track for the fire season.

We often talk about 'one CFA' – a united organisation that's at the heart of the communities it serves. It's up to all of us right now to instil confidence in our communities. Communities are looking to us to provide leadership.

I have absolute confidence in the organisation to pull through the challenges facing us in the current environment.

Equity and diversity review

CFA and MFB members are being invited to take part in an independent review into discrimination and harassment being carried out by the Human Rights Commission.

Anyone who has experienced or witnessed an instance of discrimination, or has a view on these issues, is welcome to take part.

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissioner (VEOHRC) Kristen Hilton said the Equity and Diversity Review team would prioritise the safety and anonymity of all participants who come forward.

She said the team wanted to hear from members about "what works and what needs to change.

"It is important we hear from as many people as possible about both positive and negative experiences," she said.

An online survey will be open until 18 November 2016. Members who would prefer to contribute over the phone or face to face can contact VEOHRC directly.

All methods of participating in the review are conducted without CFA's involvement or knowledge.

While the review is completely confidential, members will be asked to indicate their type of role at CFA. This will help the Commission to put together a meaningful report and action plan at the end of the review.

This review is being carried out in response to recommendations from the Fire Services Review. A final report will be made public in mid-2017.

To complete the online survey, go to victorianhumanrightscommission.com/EDR/CFA.html and for more information visit victorianhumanrightscommission.com/EDR.

To contact VEOHRC directly call 9032 3464 or email independentreview@veohrc.vic.gov.au.

STORY SONIA MACLEAN

CHIEF OFFICER



Steve Warrington

I feel privileged to have been appointed CFA chief officer for a six-month period. I am passionate and proud of the organisation and what CFA achieves both on and off the front line. I intend to visit as many brigades and district headquarters as possible over the coming months.

It's absolutely been a challenging time for CFA, compounded by intense media interest and a range of different views on the Operational Enterprise Bargaining Agreement, but it's important we don't let this discussion overshadow the important role that CFA has in serving the community.

Over the 2015-16 financial year, CFA attended more than 43,000 incidents. More than 6,000 of these were vehicle accidents/rescue/emergency medical response events and 14,329 were fires. Of the 14,329 fires, 3,860 were structure fires. Almost 4,000 hazmat events also formed part of this total. These statistics demonstrate that CFA is much more than a seasonal fire service. It's also timely to acknowledge that CFA averages 10,000 more incidents now than 10 years ago.

CFA needs to continue to evolve to meet this increasing demand. We've been progressing an overarching service delivery operating model that will inform our structure at the state level and meet future requirements. The model has the community at the centre with a focus on urban, bushfire, community risk and resilience, and statewide service delivery and safety.

A key program with a community focus is Safer Together. This commits the sector to a risk-based and community-focused approach to bushfire management. It sets expectations on fire and land managers to work together and in partnership with communities to tailor bushfire management to local needs. The first phase of the program during 2016-17 focuses on improving the effectiveness of the government's fuel management program by applying a risk reduction target to fuel management on public land, and working more effectively with communities to plan for delivery of our fuel management activities.

Many districts are already working with their Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning counterparts to identify priority communities under Safer Together, and districts currently have community engagement and prescribed burning plans in place. Opportunities for joined-up work are being explored, such as identifying communities of common interest.

At the time of writing, we're around 100 days away from the start of the summer season and I urge you to participate in pre-season briefings to stay connected and informed. Current predictions indicate an average fire season, and by the time this magazine is published the Southern Australia Seasonal Bushfire Outlook will confirm the outlook.

I thank everyone for their ongoing commitment and look forward to engaging with many of you over the coming months.

ACTING ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER North East Region



Ross Sullivan

As I consider my brief time covering for Assistant Chief Officer Garry Cook, I'm constantly reminded and amazed at the great work that our people, both volunteers and staff, do in the field – in this case across North East Region.

Just one example of this is District 23 Operations Officer Terry Heafield and the support team from North East Region who, at the time of writing, are about to set off on a 2,500km bike ride to raise awareness of mental health issues. This ride will see Terry and team stop at numerous fire stations across the state to discuss mental health issues in the fire service. I wish Terry every success in this very important endeavour. (See pages 38 and 39 for more information about Terry.)

I also want to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you as we continue to provide a high-quality service to our communities. Across the busy North East Region we regularly respond to communities' calls for help, whether it's education and prevention campaigns, planned burning, house fires, factory fires, technical rescue or vehicle accidents. Whatever activities you get involved in, it's a credit to you all that you just make it happen.

The recent heavy rains have seen our brigades out in the community supporting our partner agencies with response to floods. This work does not go unnoticed and it's great to see our members assisting when help is needed.

As we move towards the warmer weather, we will see an increase in our community preparedness with key community meetings and educational programs. These meetings and programs support our likely increase in operational response; we will see the need to refine, train and practise our vital skills.

Please also take this time to prepare and test your equipment to ensure you and your equipment are prepared. Most importantly, let's make sure we are there and ready to look after each other and the communities that we work with and protect.

For those brigades and groups that have recently been through the election process, I want to thank our leaders who have in the past performed these essential roles in the field. The time and effort you've given in leading our brigades, stations and groups is critical to how and what makes CFA function.

To the newly-promoted or elected officers, I wish you every success. Please remember that our district and regional teams are here for you as well.

Stay safe and look out for those around you.

ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER South East Region



Trevor Owen

Over the past five years, we've been on an incredible roller-coaster of change. CFA has continually evolved since our humble beginnings, but the pace and scale of change we've faced in recent times is unprecedented. The facts are clear: CFA is changing at a rate never seen before.

If there is ever a time when we need to be adaptive and agile to meet the demands the future expects of us, it is right now. We need to get back to basics by making complex issues simple. We need to accept the new environment in which we're operating, and have the courage to seek out the opportunities it presents. We need a shared vision that encourages strong relationships, both internally and with our partner agencies.

I'm confident that we can adapt and change without losing our identity which is an integral part of who we are as members of CFA. Our ability to inspire creativity and show initiative is something we should always maintain in our mission to protect lives and property.

In difficult times, CFA members on the front line work together to get the job done, irrespective of whether they are paid or volunteers. We work as one. I've been impressed by observing leaders in our brigades, groups, districts and region stepping up, balancing and supporting those who have found the current operating environment emotionally draining. Well done, we know who you are and we thank you!

Social media is undeniably changing how we communicate. In many ways this technology has improved the way we interact with each other, but it does have a downside. Our integrity and reputation are constantly being assessed. Therefore I ask you to follow CFA's social media procedure. Before you post, ask yourself whether it's true, helpful, inspiring, necessary or kind.

Remember, everything you do, say and post reflects on you as an individual, on your brigade and the fire service at large – including me!

There are many distractions at the moment, but we need to shift our focus to summer fire preparedness. The best-performing brigades and members are those who are well organised and prepared. Have you:

- checked that your PPC is fit for purpose?
- begun your bushfire skills maintenance activities?
- completed your firefighting vehicle and equipment preparedness checks?

Don't forget, every member must do a burnover drill in preparation for the Fire Danger Period.

Stay safe.

Twitter [@CFASouthEastACO](#)

Facebook: [facebook.com/CFAsouthEastACO](https://www.facebook.com/CFAsouthEastACO)

ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER North West Region



Gavin Thompson

I would like to thank members in North West Region for maintaining their high level of leadership and professionalism over the past few months. It's encouraging to see that across all leadership levels, CFA's values are being maintained and we continue to provide the highest level of service to our communities.

In addition, respecting the rights of individuals to express their views in a constructive and respectful manner is important. However, I would also like to remind those who wish to express their views publicly to not align CFA with any political affiliation.

I also wish to emphasise the importance of connecting with those around you during this time to ensure they are supported. CFA has a range of confidential support services to help brigades, members and their families who may be experiencing increased levels of stress. Such stress may lead to mental health and/or relationship issues, and I would strongly encourage any member who may be experiencing such concerns to contact one of the support services.

It can be hard to talk about your mental health concerns, but I strongly recommend seeking help before it starts to impact on your wellbeing, your relationships with family and friends, your work or your brigade responsibilities. See page 11 for full details.

At this time, I'm reminded of former Chief Officer Euan Ferguson and his parting words to a group of us. "I want to leave you with three enduring philosophies: Take care of yourself and others; strive to be the very best you can be every day and in every way; and stay positive." These words are more important than ever.

It's worth noting the great work done by former CEO Lucinda Nolan and former Chief Officer Joe Buffone. Although their time with us was short, they definitely made an impact on CFA and North West Region. Their commitment and passion for service delivery and community safety will live on for years to come, and their legacy will live on by us providing a high level of service to our communities.

I would like to congratulate all CFA members who received Queen's Birthday Honours. In particular, I'd like to acknowledge our very own Kyneton Group Officer John Pearce who was awarded the Australian Fire Services Medal. John has served both as a volunteer and career officer in many parts of the state. Well done and well deserved.

During these trying times, it's important to remember why we do what we do. We all have a role in supporting the safety of communities and it's important for us as leaders in our respective communities not to lose sight of that.

Twitter: [@CFANorthWestACO](#)

ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER West Region



Peter O'Keefe

Over the past 12 months, there have been many challenges and changes within CFA. The service as we once knew it has changed, reflective of the growth and the environment we now operate in.

The rate of this change has been rapid and the future will continue to be a space of continual growth and a time of many opportunities. With these opportunities comes a chance to shape and focus the organisation to build a shared view of the future CFA. This change will be challenging to some, but together we can be a strong and viable CFA, one which continues to put the community at the centre of all we do.

CFA has a strong and proud history connected to a shared vision for the future. We will ensure the CFA brand is strengthened, therefore maintaining our identity into the future. We all have a role to play in this important work.

In an operational context, our members come together to be highly effective teams delivering our mission through the front line. I'm confident that our members, with leadership from brigades, groups and districts, will continue to focus collectively to ensure the job gets done whether they are volunteers or paid members. Let's build a future around strong relationships based on our values.

Today's society is driven by technology and a desire for instantaneous access to information. Social media is a powerful medium, but if we are to benefit from its reach we must use it carefully. Once they are posted online, comments are in the public domain whether they are good, bad or indifferent. Consideration of all comments needs to take place before being posted.

As we again start to prepare for the approaching summer fire season, now is the time to consider the necessary preseason checks. Ask yourself:

- is my PPC ready for its intended use?
- am I fit for my role this summer?
- are my brigade/group vehicles appropriately stowed and ready to go?
- is my local command facility tested and ready?
- when did we last conduct an exercise to test bushfire tactics?

Now is the time to consider what we need to do together before the summer season begins. Your local district headquarters can help to ensure we're ready. If you have any questions, please contact your district operations manager.

Be safe and continue the great work you do.

Twitter: [@CFAWest ACO](#)

ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER South West Region



Bob Barry

We have seen some extraordinary events unfold in our organisation in recent times, and while the current environment impacts on everyone across the organisation, I can see that our CFA will endure, our people will continue to work together and we will again move forward.

Regardless of where individuals stand on the issues we currently face as an organisation, we are all here to serve Victoria and in South West Region our main focus continues to be delivering for our wider community.

The recent train derailment at Pirron Yallock is just one example of the exceptional work our members do in cooperation with our partner agencies. The quick work to reduce the impact of damage, ensure the safety of the public and restore order was outstanding and shows what's achievable when we all work together.

The open day on 9 July at the new Portland Fire Station is another great example of a local brigade serving its community. More than 200 people were taken on a tour of the new facilities, and there were children's activities and demonstrations from the staff and volunteers.

This event was a great opportunity to engage with the community for a bit of fun, deliver home safety education, and open the doors to potential recruits to provide a snapshot of what the career and volunteer firefighting roles entail.

A number of capital works projects continue to progress across the region, securing land for new and upgraded facilities, while recruitment initiatives continue to attract potential firefighter recruits and volunteers to our rural brigades in the south-west.

We now have a full complement of staff and a finalised structure for the office of the ACO, allowing our team to work as one, fully supported and under one common goal.

Social initiatives organised by the staff, such as the recent Christmas in July lunch, keep morale up and keep the working relationship between the district and regional staff strong.

All these projects and activities prove that, despite what's happening on a wider scale, CFA is the sum of its parts and every person, brigade, district and region has its part to play in keeping our organisation moving ahead. We must acknowledge that we are all members, whether volunteer or staff, and we collectively have a vital role to play in serving our communities.

CFA is many things to many people, but all of us are justifiably proud of our history, our achievements and the 365-days-a-year job we do to protect the community together.

Let's continue to be proud.

Twitter: [@CFASouthWestACO](#)

Crews under threat from hostile acts – new signals

In September 2014, the Australian Government raised the national terrorist public alert level from medium to high. This indicates that a terror attack in Australia is considered likely.

CFA is introducing a number of initiatives to better prepare our members for potential hostile acts.

Hostile acts are threats, attacks or other uses of force by a civilian or terrorist against first responders. This can include chemical incidents and hazardous materials involving drug laboratories, bomb explosions resulting in fire, a siege or civil and domestic disturbances.

One of the initiatives is a series of critical signals transmitted by radio. These signals are

mostly used by Ambulance Victoria and have been adopted by MFB and CFA for emergency medical response. CFA will be expanding the use of signals for all calls. The signals alert responders and agency duty officers to potentially threatening situations without explicitly defining the event. See the signals table below left.

For more details about Signal 55, watch this video www.goo.gl/nEZBU7.

We encourage brigades to play the video at their next training or brigade meeting. The other signals will be implemented throughout CFA in the coming months.

All members are reminded that their safety in these situations is the number one priority.

Signal 55 (five-five)	A hostile act, significant violence or terrorism
Signal 40 (four-zero)	Urgent police attendance requested
Signal 56 (five-six)	Police attendance required (non urgent)
Signal 83 (eight-three)	Deceased person
Signal 27 (two-seven)	CIS to be notified to contact requesting officer

STORY SALLY BOND

Support for CFA members and their families

Find out how to access these free and confidential services



Our support services

CFA has a range of support services and resources available to help members manage their mental health and deal with difficulties when they arise. These services are free, confidential and available to all CFA members and their families for any mental health or relationship issue – it doesn't have to relate to CFA.

CFA volunteers, staff and their immediate family members can access these services:

- **Peer Support Program** – trained members offering support and guidance. Contact your local peer coordinator
- **Member Assistance Program** – a 24-hour confidential and external counselling service. Phone 1300 795 711
- **Chaplaincy Program** – offering 24-hour pastoral care. Phone 1800 337 068
- **Wellbeing** – access to wellbeing services including coaching, mediation, case management support, training and education. Phone 03 9262 8409 or email wellbeing.intake@cfa.vic.gov.au
- **HeadsUP online toolkit** – information and advice about managing mental health and relationship issues. Go to cfa.vic.gov.au/headsup

Tanker crew protection research

This article discusses the 1998 Linton fire which may distress some members. CFA offers a range of support services for members and their families – see page 11 for details.

Our Research and Innovation Unit, in partnership with CSIRO, has finished a series of experimental bushfire burn tests to assess how well crews would survive an entrapment burnover situation in tankers with different protection.

THE HISTORY OF CREW PROTECTION

CFA's crew protection systems have been evolving since the 1977 Western District fires when standard tanker design and heat shielding were first used. After the 1983 Ash Wednesday fires where 12 CFA volunteers died in a burnover, the tanker fleet was upgraded. We also did research into fire-resistant materials on tankers.

Significant crew protection research began after the 1998 Linton fire where five CFA volunteers died.

The aim of the crew protection system research since 1998 has been to find a system that will protect tanker-based firefighters in a burnover entrapment during a bushfire with an intensity of up to 10,000kW per metre.

As a result of this research, we began installing systems on new-build medium and heavy tankers in 2006. A retrofit crew protection system for all CFA medium and heavy tankers was completed on 1,200 tankers before the 2013-14 fire season.

After Linton, crew protection systems installed on new tankers include personal protective radiant heat shield blankets, low-level water indicators, water deluge systems, internal cabin drop down radiant heat shielding, additional radiant heat shielding around water pump systems and vulnerable tanker components, fewer plastic materials on the outside surfaces of the tankers, metal air cleaner filters, and flame resistant hoses and cabling.

Crew training, with a requirement of Minimum Skills and situational awareness, has also been emphasised since the Linton fire.



Left: Flame immersion of ultra-light tanker test vehicle on bushfire flame front simulator

PHOTO: DAVID NICHOLS

Multiple CFA tanker entrapment and burnovers have occurred without loss of life since the initial tanker crew protection system installations in 2006.

OUR LATEST RESEARCH

Burnovers usually occur on narrow bush tracks in eucalyptus forest fuels. Often unburnt heavy fuels exist usually 80 to 100 metres between the mild to moderate fire front and the entrapment area. The burnover occurs following a sudden intensifying of the fire front caused by a change in the wind's direction or strength and/or the influence of the slope. After the wind change, the fire front moves rapidly through the surface fuels, providing an initial period of radiant heat followed by a short intense flame immersion with total flame contact of usually less than a minute. The flame front is moving fast, so the crew has very little time to prepare for the burnover. This means

any crew protection system needs to be easily and rapidly deployed.

For our most recent research, we tested crew protection systems based on the Linton fire tanker entrapment and fire burnover in 1998. The Linton bushfire circumstances were replicated using an area (Brucknell Scout Camp near Timboon, Victoria) with similar bushfire forest fuels, topographic influence and weather conditions. The conditions at the Linton burnover were typical of burnovers that have occurred in Australia.

Our crew protection systems have been researched and developed through a rigorous scientific process of structured, repeatable experiments on the CSIRO bushfire flame front simulator (see photo, above) followed by field validation experimental test fire burns in both grassland and forest bush fuel load environments. (See photos on page 13.)

Right: Wangaratta grassland fire experimental test flame front impact on ultra-light tanker test vehicle.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF CSIRO



Below: Brucknell experimental bushfire pre-fire flame front tanker impact.

Based on the Linton fire, the tests used a fire of 10,000kW per metre that built intensity over time, with a total flame immersion of the vehicle for less than a minute. The burnover needed five minutes of water coverage to protect the crew from the most intense radiant heat levels and the flame immersion phase of the burnover. We want to develop crew protection systems for ultra-light vehicles with a water-carrying capacity of less than 800 litres. Given that ultra-lights don't carry large quantities of

water, the research has focused on water-enhancing products including Class A foam and polymer gel.

Polymer gel soaks up hundreds of times its own weight in water, creating millions of tiny drops of water surrounded by and protected by a polymer shell. The water absorbent polymer forms a thermal protective blanket over the surface to which it is applied. After being used to protect a vehicle, it can be washed off with no damage to the vehicle.

The water-enhancing products were tested on ultra-lights at the flame front simulator. The delivery system of the polymer gel product underwent validation testing at a grassfire burnover scenario test as well as at the Brucknell forest fuel validation test. The delivery system for the Class A foam product was also tested at Brucknell.

A medium tanker with the current crew protection system, a polymer-gel-protected ultra-light tanker and a Class A-foam-protected ultra-light tanker were compared at Brucknell. The average fire intensity of the experimental fire was 19,000kW per metre with 31,000kW per metre at the peak intensity when tankers were impacted.

Exposure criteria in the fire tanker cabin during the burnover experiments were:

- tenability – can the crew occupy the cabin for the burnover period without experiencing non-tolerable irritation, significant loss of alertness, or irreversible health effects?
- survival – can the crew occupy the cabin for the burnover period without loss of consciousness or loss of life?

All three tanker crew protection systems provided adequate crew tenability and survivability during this test, so we're confident we can produce a protection system for ultra-lights that will protect crews in a burnover. More tests will be done to ensure delivery systems meet our requirements.

STORY DAVID NICHOLS



QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY HONOURS

The 2016 Queen's Birthday Honours give national and formal recognition to Australians who've made a significant difference to their communities. Six CFA members were honoured this year. Don Duffus and Terry Burgi received the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) and Greg Kennedy, Max Cox, Gregg Paterson and John Pearce received the Australian Fire Services Medal (AFSM).

DON DUFFUS, OAM

Don Duffus's 42-year history of volunteering spans three states and many organisations including CFA. He received an OAM for his service to veterans, their families and the community.

Don spent 13 years with CFA, including time as Churn Creek brigade captain and a lieutenant with Healesville brigade. He also helped rescue CFA crews trapped on Ash Wednesday while working as a Melbourne Water inspector. "They were safe and had even managed to save structures in the area while they waited," said Don.

"Volunteering just runs in your blood. If my place was threatened by fire, volunteers would turn up and put it out. What are you going to do when it's your turn to help them? You're part of the community."



MAX COX, AFSM

From brigade captain to Euroa group officer to his current, long-time role as Longwood brigade president, Max Cox has earned the respect of his peers through his leadership and outstanding operational abilities honed over 63 years.

"I'm absolutely rapt and truly humbled to now be receiving this medal. Everything I've done over the years has been a team effort so I look at this medal as ours, not mine," he said.

In the late 1950s, Max recognised that vehicles could be used for communications during fires and he facilitated the sourcing and fitting out of vehicles. Field command vehicles are now widely used today.

After the 2009 fires, Max used his knowledge of farming and heavy machinery, and his exceptional people skills, to lead ground teams quietly and effectively during this difficult time.



TERRY BURGI, OAM

Terry Burgi's family has been farming in the Yarra Valley since the 1860s and volunteering with CFA is another long-standing family tradition. He received an OAM for his service to agriculture and the community.

The Gruyere orchardist has been a CFA member since 1968 and the satisfaction he's received from more than 48 years of service with CFA is far more important than his OAM.

"It's given me so much: friends, a sense of achievement from helping people, knowledge and skills, and a lot of hard work on days like Black Saturday.

"It's been good to see the recent surge in 20-somethings joining up and a massive jump in diversity. The gender divide is almost 50:50 at Gruyere now."



GREGG PATERSON, AFSM

In his current position as regional commander in South West Region, Gregg Paterson has demonstrated exceptional performance in fire service operations, management and administration.

He's successfully managed several major fires, including Ash Wednesday and February 2009 fires, major programs and events, and the development of fire service policy, procedures and memorandums of understanding.

But, for Gregg, the highlight is the people he's met and worked with along the way.

"For me, it's the people in the organisation, the career staff and volunteers. I have met some amazing people through my journey," he said.

"The way we fight fires these days is different, but what hasn't changed is the mateship side of the organisation."



GREG KENNEDY, AFSM

From mentor, safety campaigner and firefighter to leader, Greg Kennedy has taken on many CFA roles. Greg received an AFSM for his 32 years' dedication to protecting his community as a South Warrandyte brigade member.

Greg strongly believes in community involvement when it comes to fire safety education. He has led a range of initiatives, most notably the 'Be Ready Warrandyte' campaign

launched in 2011. Drawing on his broad experience, Greg was also instrumental in creating a set of essential tips to better prepare the area for bushfires.

"'Be Ready Warrandyte' has succeeded in building awareness and knowledge about fire preparedness among the community," Greg said.

Greg has also designed innovative programs for recruitment, training and development of members.



JOHN PEARCE, AFSM

John Pearce, a CFA member for more than 40 years, is described as an exemplary leader. He is both a member of staff and volunteer.

John has held many positions at CFA including regional officer, chief superintendent, instructor at Fiskville, officer-in-charge (OIC) CFA headquarters operations, staff officer to the chief officer, OIC of regions 5 and 9, and he had a stint as acting deputy chief officer.

In 1996 he moved to Kyneton and became a member of Kyneton Fire Brigade where he is now group officer.

In 2011, his strong belief in the multi-agency, multi-hazard approach prompted him to encourage SES to deal with major flooding using a joint-agency approach.

"This was a highlight for me, of inter-agency cooperation, working together in a major crisis. And this relationship is one that still exists," he said.



Brigades making the most of Facebook



The past three years has seen a huge surge in the number of brigades using Facebook and that's only likely to increase.

Ryan Vanderhorst works at CFA's Burwood headquarters to support brigades and districts with social media. He also looks after CFA's Members Facebook page and the public Facebook page.

"At the moment there are 420 brigade Facebook pages that we are aware of. At the same time last year that was 260 and two years ago it was probably half that again. More brigades are now setting up their own Twitter and Instagram accounts as well," explained Ryan.

"It's a big deal. Brigades now have a very immediate way to engage with their communities and are absolutely maximising that opportunity.

"Even at state level, the level of engagement on our public Facebook page has been absolutely unprecedented. If you add up all

the comments, likes, tags and so on, the figure comes to 1.5 million over a 12-month period. And CFA has the largest Facebook audience of any fire service in the world."

Ryan, who earlier this year developed a new *Guide to Social Media* (available on Brigades Online) for CFA members, said the main consideration in starting up a community-focused page was the time commitment rather than the technical side of things.

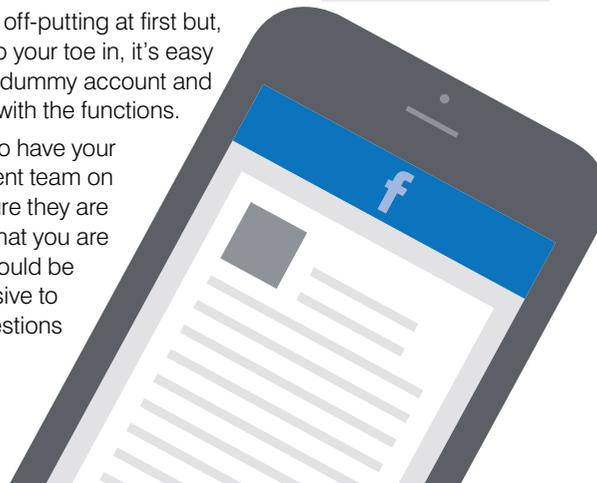
"The jargon can be off-putting at first but, if you do want to dip your toe in, it's easy enough to set up a dummy account and familiarise yourself with the functions.

"The main thing is to have your brigade management team on board and make sure they are comfortable with what you are doing. Also, you should be reasonably responsive to comments and questions that come in."

Ryan, a volunteer with Upwey Fire Brigade, also manages his brigade's Facebook page. He says social media is good for conveying information but also good for giving emergency service organisations a personality.

"If we are engaging with people in the community when times are good, they are more likely to listen to us during an incident or on a spike day."

STORY SONIA MACLEAN



Migrants' experience of natural disasters

If you or someone in your community has migrated to Australia, you can help with an important PhD study at the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC.

Gretel Evans is investigating how migrants' experience of natural disasters contributes to a sense of identity and belonging within the community and the Australian landscape and environment. Gretel is looking for participants who've migrated to Australia and have faced a natural disaster, particularly a bushfire.

Participants can be CFA members or anyone else in the community. If you know someone who might be able to help Gretel, please pass on her details below.

The study is part of Gretel's PhD thesis at the University of Melbourne, and will form part of a history project to investigate and document migrants' memories of natural disasters in Australia. Participants must be willing to take part in a recorded interview.

Although this PhD mainly focuses on the bushfire experiences of migrants, Gretel is also interested

in stories about floods from across Australia, not just in Victoria.

To find out more information about participating in the study, email Gretel at gretel@student.unimelb.edu.au.

A key goal of the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC is to build the capacity and capability of the emergency management sector to carry out high-quality research. Gretel is one of more than 70 PhD students currently being supported by the CRC.

STORY NATHAN MADDOCK

Brigade open days

Open your doors to the community between September and December. Open Day is a great way to show your community what your brigade has been up to, introduce new members, raise some much-needed funds and, most importantly, prepare your community for the fire season.

It's a chance for Victorians to have fun with CFA members and for brigades to unite. Last year, more than 240 brigades took part. Register online at cfa.vic.gov.au/openday.

Need signage for your next event?



CFA's **Event Materials Booking** system is a resource for all members. You can access a wide range of CFA-branded equipment to make your next event a success.

Things you can borrow include:

- Marquees
- Signage
- Flags
- Display pod
- Tables and cloths
- Plasma TV
- iPad
- Trailer

You can access the booking system via the Template Toolkit  at cfaonline.cfa.vic.gov.au or email cfaevents@cfa.vic.gov.au for more information.

Pick up and drop off from Burwood East headquarters or the State Logistics centre in Knoxfield.



Youth power rocks forum

The discussion was lively and lucid. The solutions proposed were carefully thought out and practical. Commitment to community was absolute.

Welcome to the Young Members Forum 2016, a formidable mind fest held at Victoria University in late May, which was hosted by CFA. It brought together members from across Victoria wanting to discuss issues that matter to them and strengthen the voice of youth in CFA and Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria.

More than 130 CFA members were joined by volunteers from St John Ambulance, Red Cross, SES, Life Saving Victoria, Coast Guard and Ambulance Victoria.

For 27-year-old Eaglehawk Fire Brigade Captain Hayden Allen, the call coming from the forum was one for change and, with it, the pace of change within CFA.

"Some brigades love having young members, for others it's a taboo. So how do we balance this within CFA?"

"Young members need to understand that some things can't change quickly. Older members need to understand that some things need to change – the use of social media, for instance."

Hayden underscored "the pace of getting things done" as a challenge for young members. "People ask, 'Why does it take four to five months for a brigade transfer to come through?' As a captain, my message is don't give up. Just be persistent."

For Bittern Fire Brigade's Ally Smith, 26, the forum confirmed that "youth needs to be represented and have its voice heard in CFA.

"Right now," Ally said, "youth equals inexperience which equals no voice. In a lot of brigades, it's a case of waiting your turn. In my brigade, most people have 20 years on me so I won't be in my youth once I've waited my turn. When that happens, you miss out on the youth perspective."

Forum organiser Sherri McKerley, diversity leader in Learning and Volunteerism, was taken aback by the response to one question asked at the forum.

"They were asked, 'Do you think it's easy to get into leadership?' Sherri said. "Not one of the 150 people in the room put up their hand.

"This group loves CFA. That's why they want to fix the things they see as not working. However, the lack of opportunity to get into leadership roles is a real barrier. And this is a generation that isn't used to waiting around to get things done."

With that in mind, forum members will soon share thoughts on pressing issues and recommendations from the day with CFA management and VFBV. The top issues raised were:

- develop more tertiary and secondary school-based programs
- create tailored recruitment
- develop flexible volunteering models
- improve inductions
- give young people a voice in their brigade/the organisation
- create leadership development programs and opportunities
- support youth networking
- embrace technology and innovation.

Ally Smith is hoping to see one initiative in particular put forward. "Our group had the idea of a new brigade management team [BMT] position – a youth engagement officer to give the BMT a younger perspective.

"We absolutely need the older generation and their experience, but who's going to lead when they are not there? CFA needs to grow and grow with a changing community."

STORY PAUL HUGGETT

PHOTO: BLAIR DELLEMIJN



2016 State Forum



PHOTOS: BLAIR DELLEMUN

What a great turnout. Around 500 people travelled to the surf coast in early August to attend the 2016 CFA-SES Community Engagement and Hazard Awareness State Forum at Lorne. When this many CFA members were last in town, in December 2016, things were a little different!

Now in its sixth year, and the second year we've joined forces with SES, the State Forum is firmly placed as Victoria's premier community safety event.

Formalities kicked off with a traditional Welcome to Country from local Indigenous community member Greg Edwards, followed by a video presentation from Emergency Management Commissioner Craig Lapsley.

The supporter's address from Ryan Calvert, a local IGA store owner and CFA member followed.

With the opening addresses over, the joint MCs – Jamie Devenish (CFA's Team Leader Service Delivery, Collaboration and Partnerships) and Stefan Delatovic (SES Manager of Media and Communications) – introduced the first keynote speaker. Dr Brian Cook from Melbourne University delivered an informative and entertaining piece on new approaches to community engagement.

Over the next two days our members, together with interstate and other emergency services personnel, heard about the many ways we are all working together to build safer communities.

With more than 40 sessions including presentations, workshops and keynotes, our forum attendees were spoilt for choice. Sessions were delivered by some of Australia's leading community resilience specialists from Monash and Melbourne universities, Emergency Management Victoria, Neighbourhood Houses Victoria, Red Cross, St John Ambulance and local government.

Several grassroots sessions were delivered by community safety members from SES units and CFA brigades – Tawonga, Clunes, Selby, Diamond Creek and Macclesfield brigades were all represented. Presentations from CFA and SES headquarters staff about community safety programs and tools available rounded out the program.

Across the weekend, attendees could also visit trade stands to get a better understanding of current community engagement directions. Stands included community-based emergency management; how to create a community engagement plan; resources for culturally and linguistically diverse communities; and Property Advice Visit Service (PAVS).

The outdoor display, featuring CFA, SES, Coast Guard and St John operational and community engagement vehicles, was also extremely popular with our members and the local community alike.

'Brigade and Unit Initiative' posters were also on display during the forum. These posters celebrated the successful activities and great initiatives developed and delivered at a local level across the state.

The State Forum was not all work and no play. After sessions had finished on Saturday, Twilight Games – outdoor chess, mini golf, croquet and tennis – were all on offer. Despite some competitive natures, the main thing was to participate and have some fun.

The fun times continued into the forum dinner on Saturday night. Members were dressed to impress for a sit-down buffet. With music by the Royce Twins, the evening was a great opportunity for members to get to know their peers in a more relaxed setting.

Breakout sessions continued throughout Sunday, with a highlight being an inspirational call to arms by former AFL football player and coach Kevin Sheedy, which focused on how to develop a grassroots movement and bring people along on the journey. These are important skills for members delivering community safety.

The State Forum has come a long way since 135 members got together in Macedon for a chat in 2011. We now have over 500 members from across agencies and borders attending sessions showcasing excellence and the latest developments in community safety. By these measures, the forum was a great success. However, the true measure of its success is how each and every attendee uses the knowledge, resources and skills gained to better prepare their own community for emergencies.

STORY DARLENE PENTLAND



Fireys help stomp out brain cancer

Stadium Stomp MCG, Australia's biggest stair climbing challenge, took place in late June at the MCG, and members of Werribee and Wallan brigades took part in full turnout gear and breathing apparatus.



The annual event, now in its fourth year, challenges participants with more than 7,300 steps around the grandstands of this great stadium.

"Last year a small group of us took part in Stadium Stomp MCG for the first time, but to make it a little tougher we decided to wear our structure firefighting ensemble and BA," said

Tim Benetti, second lieutenant at Wallan Fire Brigade.

"This year we wore the gear, the BA and carried hoses as well. I found the extra weight made it pretty tough, so we'll need to do some extra training for next year when we give it another crack.

"We've chosen to raise money for the Cure Brain Cancer Foundation after one of the firefighters from our station and a great friend of mine lost his father-in-law last year to brain cancer," continued Tim.

"A fire station is like an extended family and just like we respond to help the community in their time of need, we do the same for each other."

The event attracted more than 3,500 participants and helped raise over \$75,000 for charity, \$40,000 of which was raised for the Leukaemia Foundation.

Plans are in place for another Stadium Stomp MCG in 2017, with the date expected to be released in late December. Visit stadiumstomp.com.au to find out more.

STORY DARREN SAFFIN

Left: Jesse Nagy from Wallan Fire Brigade

PHOTO: COURTESY OF SUPER SPORT IMAGES

Vols wanted for Equitana

The loss of a much-loved horse can be a devastating consequence of bushfire. But there are things you can do to keep them safe.

CFA will be spreading this important fire safety message at Equitana Melbourne, the largest equine show in the Southern Hemisphere, which is being held at Melbourne Showgrounds in November. This year, CFA is the event's community partner so we will receive a percentage of the ticket sales.

Horse safety has been a focus in recent times, with some brigades staging information sessions on preparing horses to survive a bushfire.

CFA has also supported an equine project called the National Equine Database, developed by CFA volunteer Jenna Kelley. This database links horse owners with property owners who have the capacity to temporarily house animals during bushfires and other emergencies.

Fire services have also had an historical association with horses, with horse-drawn pumps used in the 1800s at country fire stations such as Sandhurst (now Bendigo) and Ballarat.

With more than 50,000 people expected to attend Equitana with its mix of competitions, entertainment, education and exhibitions, the event is the perfect place for CFA to give people information about how to prepare horses for bushfire.

CFA will have an exhibition stand and truck display and will run two workshops about horses and bushfires.

Held over four days (17 to 20 November) we are looking for horse



PHOTO: COURTESY OF EQUITANA

lovers who would like to volunteer to spend time on the CFA information stand.

Morning and afternoon shifts are available, with the first shift starting at 8.30am and the afternoon shift finishing at 6.30pm.

If you'd like to help, email Project Coordinator Melanie Causer: m.causer@cfa.vic.gov.au.

STORY AMANDA BOLCH

Learning from incidents



PHOTO: BRIAN SCANLON

Tanker rollover at Inglewood

SUMMARY

In Inglewood located in the Shire of Loddon, an unplanned power outage was affecting the town when a B-double petrol tanker crashed and dislodged two power lines. It then rolled on to its side and stopped in the front yard of a property, partially blocking the Calder Highway.

Brick pillars from the fence of the property tore open the fuel tank and more than 40,000 litres of petrol and diesel spilled on to the Calder Highway and into the surrounding drains.

Emergency services were called and responded immediately to the incident. Twenty-eight people were evacuated from their homes. Around 600 households in the area were left without electricity for 24 hours. Although there wasn't a fire, the potential for ignition was significant during the emergency.

INCIDENT OVERVIEW

On 6 April 2016 at 7.45pm, emergency services were responded to a reported motor vehicle accident with possible people trapped. The first crews on scene reported that the incident was actually a fuel tanker which had rolled and ruptured, leaving significant amounts of fuel on the highway and spilling into the surrounding drainage system. Police, Ambulance Victoria and Inglewood and Bridgewater brigade crews were on scene within minutes. By 7.50pm, the driver was seen out of the truck and needing medical attention.

Environment Protection Authority, Powercor and SES were also requested because, if the power came back as scheduled at 8.30pm, the result would have been catastrophic. At 7.55pm, Powercor confirmed power would remain off until the area was safe.

The rostered duty officer was quickly notified by the incident controller and as a result an operations officer was sent to provide support to the incident controller. Specialist resources were requested throughout the night and into the next day. They included MFB's bulk B-class foam POD and ultra-heavy pumper, Scoresby brigade's hose layer, Corio brigade's heavy hazmat with AreaRAE monitor, Shepparton brigade's heavy hazmat, Ballarat brigade's hazmat, Golden Square brigade's field operations vehicle, CFA District 2's B-class foam trailer and private recovery operators.

A total of 11 brigades attended the incident which lasted throughout the night. CFA operations concluded at 7pm the next day.

LESSONS IDENTIFIED

Pre-planning The brigades' planning, ongoing training and experience from past events all helped at this incident. The brigade had previously participated in exercises to consider the consequences of such an incident. The power outage in Inglewood resulted in a number of complications, such as the station door needing to be opened manually so that the trucks could be dispatched without delay. The pre-planning in this situation was invaluable.

First attack The crew was tasked to contain the spill with B-class foam to reduce the risk of ignition. It was identified that further training and familiarisation in the use of B-class foam in response to large fuel spills, including method of containment, would give crews a greater understanding in the use of foam equipment in similar situations. Training would have helped those first on scene to apply the foam faster to the affected areas. As practical training in B-class foam is currently unavailable in CFA because of the environmental impact, brigades will need to rely on theoretical training. A practical training program is currently under development and will be available soon.

Hazmat template warning The use and requirements of the hazmat warning template were essential in this incident in order to alert the community. Given the limited number of hazmat calls, it's vital that warnings and advice officers are familiar with the specialist templates.

Speciality equipment AreaRAEs were used to remotely measure explosive mixtures in the atmosphere. These took some time to be established because the equipment is limited to major cities. In remote areas, it's vital to make an early request for specialist equipment.

Establishing a staging area The staging area was established early. However, there was also a need for a staging location for the responding vehicles in the immediate area. Due to the size of the incident, numerous vehicles responded and there were many roadblocks in place. This caused difficulty in diverting large vehicles. The potential for mass convergence is often overlooked in planning for major events and should be carefully considered.

Catering Food services were set up early and close to the staging area for both the crews on scene and for the evacuated residents. Many people from Inglewood Lions Club and the local community cooked and served food. The Loddon South Group's pre-plan for catering is a perfect example of pre-planning and coordination working well.



PHOTO: BRIAN SCANLON



PHOTO: SHANE ADDISON

Effects of power outage on warnings With the extended power outage, the residents were not prepared for an emergency. Warnings were ineffective at times as the residents' mobile phone batteries became flat during the incident.

Communication There were a number of issues regarding communication which are often experienced in multi-agency events. MFB couldn't talk to VicFire because their own frequencies were out of range and they were not fitted with CFA radios. Local command facility radios failed because the backup power system eventually drained because of the length of the power outage.

Community The community expected that all properties would be door knocked during the incident to inform them face-to-face about what was happening. This wasn't possible because there weren't enough emergency services personnel. The decision was made to keep residents who were not in danger in place, based on the assumption they were receiving community messaging via various media.

Community members in immediate danger were evacuated to a safe location. These people were very thankful.

Inglewood has a Victorian Fire Risk Register rating of extreme, so there have been many community education sessions held in Inglewood over the past five years focusing on bushfires. Also, a Community Information Guide (CIG) has been produced which includes information specific to bushfires. However, the affected community didn't make the connection between the CIG emergency for bushfire and the tanker rollover incident. It was also clear during the public meeting that most residents weren't aware of the CIG. This is a concern and a new approach needs to be developed to get communities involved in local emergency planning before incidents occur. This approach needs to be driven by the community for the community, with support from agencies.

The initial meeting, on the day after the accident, was attended by all agencies involved and 125 residents. It was clear there was a lack of community understanding of what to do during the incident. There was little understanding about how they could get information while the power was off and many residents' mobile phones were flat. It was clear during the public meetings that the majority of residents weren't aware of the community information guide even though there had been many community education sessions in Inglewood over the past five years.

An Inglewood community engagement day was held on 16 April 2016. Both CFA volunteers and staff attended every household in Inglewood, talking to residents and handing out emergency information from Red

Cross, CFA and other agencies. CFA also set up an issues register so residents could pass on their comments after the incident to the agencies involved. This was well received by the community.

The Environment Protection Authority ran a project about their actions and the impact of the incident on the environment. The community appreciated this project.

There was a series of community meetings on the days following the incident to update people on the progress and steps towards recovery. Communities rarely understand how potentially dangerous these types of incidents are and they would benefit from participating in a broader range of sessions.

Community lessons

- Incident leaders shouldn't assume that community warnings will reach the affected community or that residents will know what to do.
- The incident controller must consider using community meetings, particularly when the incident is complex, long in duration and the outcomes will have an ongoing effect on the community.
- Catering, such as tea, coffee and light meals, needs to be considered for the community when residents haven't had power for a long time.
- People will engage strongly in emergency management planning and information when they are directly affected. This presents a huge opportunity to get key information to affected communities immediately after the incident, and engage them on a personal and emotional level to build knowledge in their community.

CONCLUSION

This incident could have been much worse for the community if the power had been on when the truck crashed. The brigades' and district's pre-planning, along with effective initial response, early size up and the timely request for specialist support, ensured early containment of the incident, leading to the safety of the community.

STORY OPERATIONS PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT TEAM

To download a training exercise presentation on tanker rollover go to <http://goo.gl/BDqtuu>

Alternatively, if you have a smartphone you can watch the video using the QR code, right. First, download the free QR Code Reader from Google Play or the App Store. Open the app and point your phone's screen at the QR code and the video will start.



Chemical suicide – hydrogen sulphide

SUMMARY

Sometimes in life, events occur that fracture the very foundations on which we stand and our life is forever changed. The act of a person intentionally causing their own death (suicide) has always been a prominent public concern.

A relatively new method of suicide in Australia is the use of toxic gases generated by the combination of consumer products or common household chemicals. The two most common toxic gases used are hydrogen sulphide and hydrogen cyanide.

This method of suicide is on the rise and, unlike other suicides, is a serious threat to responding members of the public and emergency personnel, so it's important to understand this type of incident.

INCIDENT OVERVIEW

In 2015 Belmont Fire Brigade responded to an incident involving a suicide in a car inside a garage. The brigade was initially paged Code 3 for a carbon monoxide poisoning which many brigades will have unfortunately experienced. However, upon arrival the crew found Ambulance Victoria already attempting to resuscitate the person and requesting assistance from CFA. During these attempts, the crews were alerted to the presence of hydrogen sulphide in a nearby vehicle. Emergency services personnel immediately stopped CPR and evacuated the scene.

The person died and 12 people (eleven emergency services personnel) were taken to hospital as a precaution.

WHAT IS HYDROGEN SULPHIDE (H₂S)?

Hydrogen sulphide is a colourless gas which is toxic, highly flammable and explosive. It has a characteristic foul odour of rotten eggs. With continuous exposure to the gas, a person loses the ability to smell it even though it may still be present. Hydrogen sulphide can affect the body if inhaled at low concentrations. Higher concentrations cause rapid unconsciousness and death by respiratory paralysis and asphyxiation which can occur in less than four minutes.

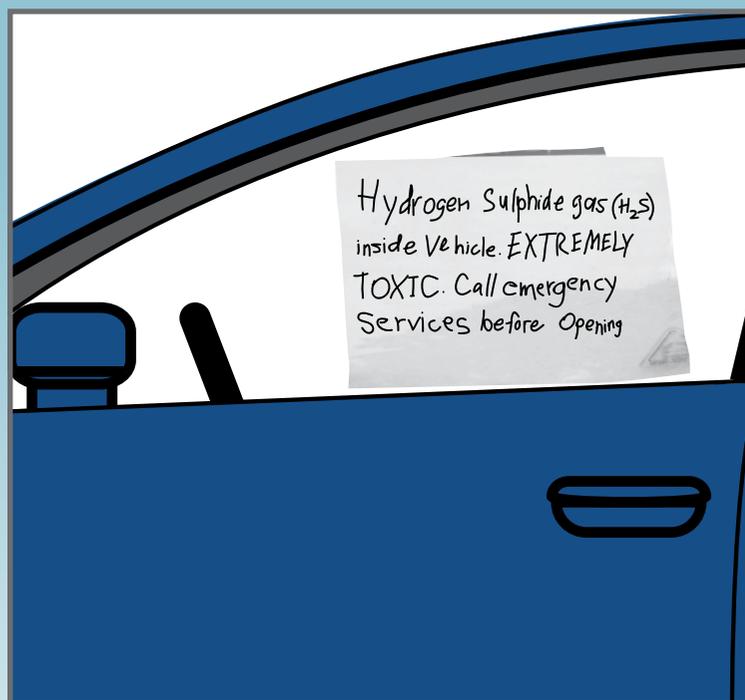
Possible indicators that a person has carried out chemical suicide may include:

- tape over vents, doors and windows
- the person appears unconscious and unresponsive
- a suicide note or note on a window warning emergency services that H₂S is present. Warning signs may not always be present
- the presence of buckets or containers containing chemicals
- empty containers of chemicals in or around the vehicle/room
- the smell of rotten eggs.

LESSONS IDENTIFIED

Incident code The incident was initially paged as Code 3, but en route further information was passed on and the brigade crew upgraded to Code 1. When attending suicides, try to get as much information as possible while en route, because every detail will help a crew decide how to approach and handle the incident.

Assumption of carbon monoxide If the presence of H₂S or chemical suicide had been relayed to the responding crews, it would have altered how they handled the incident from the initial response. When



emergency services personnel were alerted to the presence of H₂S, they stopped CPR, evacuated the scene and closed the roller doors of the garage to isolate the product, as per hazardous materials operational protocol and procedures.

Size up Responding crews identified that a thorough size up was essential in this type of incident. When they arrive at the scene, crews should take some time to assess the situation. Such information is vital to help decision-making. CFA has at its disposal a range of chemical and gas detection equipment, and crews should consider using this resource.

Breathing apparatus (BA) As with any incident where gas is present, using BA and/or compressed air breathing apparatus (CABA) are essential for the responders' safety. In a chemical suicide scenario, never attempt to break a window or open the door without wearing CABA.

Liaising with experts It's important to get prompt, accurate advice and guidance from the scientific officer so the gas can be neutralised. In this case, crews were advised to use soda ash.

H₂S Operations Bulletin CFA had an existing Operations Bulletin (001/2010) outlining suicide involving exposure to H₂S. Following this incident, the Bulletin was immediately reviewed and updated in consultation with key stakeholders. The updated Bulletin is on cfaonline.cfa.vic.gov.au > Docs, forms, manuals > Manuals > Fire & Emergency manuals > Operations Bulletins.

Coordination of emergency management team The EMT was not as effective as it could have been in the early stages of this incident. At the scene, CFA's rostered duty officer identified this problem and helped to make sure all agencies were united in their approach. It was identified there was a need for agency commanders in this situation to brief and support the EMT and provide a link within the EMT without taking on the role of incident controller.

Positive outcomes Considering the unfortunate incident, there were many positive outcomes that highlight the strength of CFA's service delivery:

- There was effective transfer of control
- Appropriate response escalations

- Effective and efficient team communications
- Immediate isolation of the identified hazards
- Timely and accurate information relayed to the hazmat crew en route
- The experienced and proficient hazard response
- Rostered duty officer on scene quickly and providing strong support and leadership
- The use of protective action zone (PAZ) sheets
- Effective notification processes undertaken
- Genuine concern shown for CFA personnel welfare at all levels.

CONCLUSION

Chemical suicide using H₂S is increasing in Australia and it poses a serious risk to first responders. Although the intent of responders is to attempt to save the casualty, a thorough size up is needed before carrying out a rescue, because the area will most likely contain enough chemical residue to significantly harm or kill responders.

If this content has raised concerns for your wellbeing or the wellbeing of someone you know, contact Lifeline or CFA welfare services:

Peer Support Program – trained members offering support and advice. Contact your local peer coordinator.

Member Assistance Program – a 24-hour counselling service. Phone 1300 795 711.

Chaplaincy Program – offering 24-hour pastoral care. Phone 1800 337 068.

Wellbeing services – access to wellbeing services which include coaching, mediation, case management support, training and education. Phone 9262 8409 or email wellbeing.intake@cfa.vic.gov.au.

HeadsUP – online information and advice on managing mental health and relationship issues. Go to cfa.vic.gov.au/headsup

STORY OPERATIONS PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT TEAM

Roof collapse

Recently there have been a number of incidents where firefighters have entered burning buildings made from lightweight materials, either to fight the fire or carry out search and rescue. These buildings have then collapsed and exposed responding crews to a level of risk which may not have been anticipated.

Collapsed roof

An Epping fire started in a bedroom of a single storey construction attached to the rear of a double-storey house. The fire spread horizontally through the roof void above the bedroom to where the single-storey pine roof trusses abutted a void between the ground and first floors of the dwelling. The void was created by the Posi-STRUT floor construction and

allowed lateral fire spread above the kitchen. The first floor also contained a kitchen with heavy timber furniture.

Two crews fighting the fire had advanced lines to the centre of the home (the ground floor kitchen) using a thermal imaging camera due to a lack of visibility. The crews heard a crash one to two metres in front of them and crouched lower to the floor. The entire ground floor kitchen ceiling had collapsed on to the kitchen island bench with remains of the Posi-STRUTs still attached. The Posi-STRUTs had failed so only the sheet flooring (which was significantly deformed) was holding the first floor kitchen and heavy furniture. The failing of the Posi-STRUTs without warning in a low-visibility environment was a near miss for crews.



Left: Collapsed roof in Epping home

Above: Load bearing beam collapse

Collapsed sub floor and walls

A Torquay house fire started in the garage of a two-storey building and spread to the first storey through the ceiling/floor and wall cavities. The construction consisted of high-span ply I-beams which let the fire spread from one end of the structure to the other. The wall cavities allowed the fire to progress to the first floor ceiling space and the burning progressed via the ply inserts in the timber I-beams.

Firefighters were in danger when the internal walls and the floor of the master bedroom (shared by the ceiling of the garage) collapsed despite very little impact from fire. The main bedroom was completely unburnt. The collapse was caused by the lightweight construction beams and the gang nail fixtures becoming compromised and allowing the bedroom construction to fall apart.

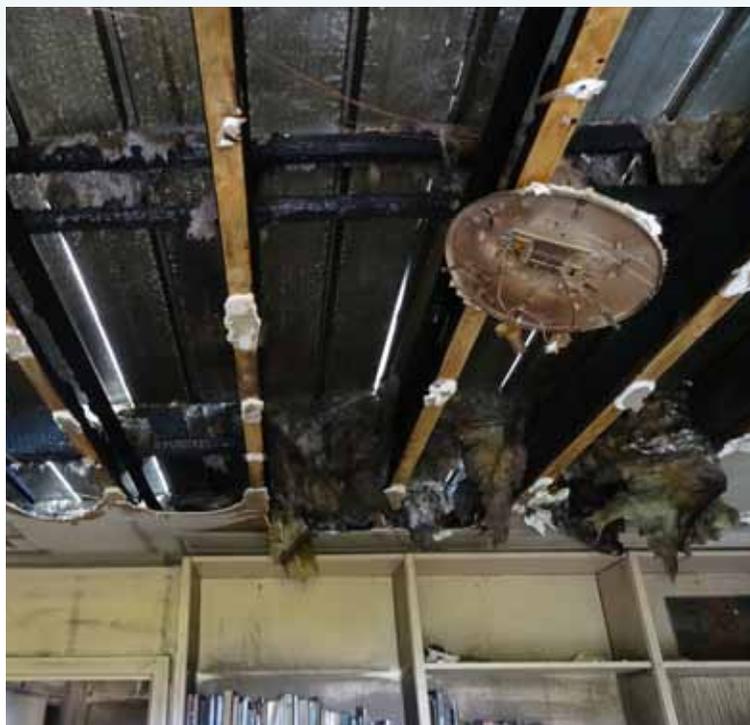
Following the collapse, the fire rapidly impacted the upstairs living area next to the master bedroom where two firefighters in breathing apparatus were conducting a primary search. Fortunately, the firefighters maintained their escape route and exited down the stairs to safety.

This incident was reported as a near miss and was investigated. As a result, several new initiatives are being developed by the Training and Community Safety teams.

There were also lessons learned about the ducted heating and cooling systems in this style of home. When the ceiling-mounted ducting (reinforcement wire) burns, it drops from the ceiling to the floor and can become tangled with firefighters' breathing apparatus and clothing.

The main areas of concern in these two examples are:

- the integrity of high-span structural supports Posi-STRUT and ply I-beams in a fire)
- the lack of fire separation between an attached garage and the house
- the rapid fire spread through the walls, floors and ceiling space in concealed areas
- the unexpected building collapse
- the use of these construction materials puts occupants and firefighters in danger.



Signs of structural failure

Buildings and their individual structural elements can fail in a variety of ways. Structural collapse may be imminent when:

- cracks or bulges appear in brickwork
- a floor or roof moves
- ceilings are concave
- floors are concave
- walls are out of alignment
- unprotected steel distorts
- there is prolonged burning
- there is intense fire and loud noise.

Actions to take at structure fires

Firefighters attending incidents involving multi-storey domestic buildings should take into account the following:

- Refer to Dynamic Risk Assessment (DRA) to identify and manage risks associated with the intended 'plan of operation'.
- Establish collapse zones (approximately 1.5 times the height of a wall) around areas in which wall collapse may occur. Barrier tape should be used to identify the collapse zone.
- Appointment of a safety officer to monitor signs of building collapse and firefighter movements during the fire fight.
- Look for signs of fire or smoke issuing from points remote from the fire indicating rapid spread through internal voids.
- Assume that the pre-fabricated truss system has been compromised by the fire.
- Remain alert to the possibility of floor collapse (spongy or bouncy floors).
- Where possible use thermal imaging equipment to determine fire location and spread through a building.
- Restrict non-essential work and the number of firefighters entering the structure.
- Determine breathing apparatus control procedures early in the fire.
- Immediately withdraw to a safe location when any movement, sagging, cracking, spalling or any other signs of building or wall collapse are noticed.
- Conduct internal firefighting operations, where necessary, as close as possible to an exit and determine your escape routes.
- Always wear the appropriate protective clothing and equipment.
- Request expert advice such as from a municipal building surveyor.

Conclusion

Structural collapse is happening more often because of lightweight construction, so it's vital that firefighters are aware of the signs of structural failures and take appropriate action. Firefighters should keep up with modern designs of buildings and the potential impacts on their safety.

Firefighter safety must be given priority over all fire suppression considerations and activities.

STORY OPERATIONS PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT TEAM

Left: The ply burned away and fire travelled to the furthest point in the structure

Twenty-one years of alpine firefighting

Falls Creek Fire Brigade is proud to celebrate 21 years of operations this year. The brigade protects Falls Creek village from fires throughout the year and supports other brigades to fight bushfires nearby and further away.

Currently, the brigade has 23 year-round volunteers. Brigade members turn out every week of the year to train. Having to leave a warm home mid-winter in temperatures often below 0°C, shows how committed they are to the brigade and the village.

To celebrate its 21st birthday, the brigade organised several events in June.

At a formal community event held during the Falls Creek ski season opening weekend, Stuart Smythe, CEO Falls Creek Resort Management, acknowledged the brigade's achievements.

"All great communities have at their core a group of volunteers whose service to that community usually goes unheralded," said Mr Smythe. "Community-based volunteer emergency services are essential, and Falls Creek CFA and its members are a key part of that front line and have a tremendous track record of bravery and service."

District 24 Operations Manager Paul King and long-serving Falls Creek firefighter Rock De Marchi then took part in the official ribbon-cutting to open the 2016 ski season.

At a successful station open day, past and current members, Falls Creek visitors and community members visited the station and shared a barbecue.

The alpine pumper and brigade snowmobiles were on display. Falls Creek's alpine pumper was the first of its kind in Australia, and pumpers used in other ski resorts in Australia are based on this vehicle. It has a pumping capacity of 4,000 litres a minute and has a Perkins turbo diesel engine. Its tracks enable it to access all areas of the village and ski fields.

Falls Creek village has been threatened by two major fires, the worst being in 2003 when CFA crews saved the village and the adjoining ski field infrastructure right at the boundaries. Snow-making equipment was used to create a water/fog barrier that helped stop the fire from taking the village. The team that saved the village was considered heroic.

Support for fighting fires at Falls Creek dates back to 1956 when the State Electricity Commission of Victoria (SECV) was building hydroelectric facilities in the area, but this support came from Mount Beauty, 30 kilometres down the mountain. Falls Creek locals were concerned by this, so used six available hydrants and a canvas hose to fight any fires on the mountain.

Orry Frueauf, a lodge owner at Falls Creek at that time, said alpine firefighting was difficult.

"Equipment would rot easily or be used by builders to make concrete during summer, covering the hoses in cement and in turn rendering them useless for the winter season," Mr Frueauf said.

In 1964 the SECV gave the village a trailer which could be used with both wheels and skis for summer and winter operations. But this trailer only lasted two years. In the early 1970s, the village was given a 2,000-gallon Ford Blitz 4WD truck, and additional equipment was quickly acquired by the village including a new locally-constructed trailer with a pumper unit.

In the 1990s, a change in land status meant the Falls Creek area became the responsibility of CFA. This status was formalised in 1995 by a public meeting that formed Falls Creek Fire Brigade.



Congratulations to Falls Creek brigade members who volunteer their time. They provide an essential service for local residents and the many thousands of people who visit this beautiful mountain.

STORY JOY NOWAKOWSKI

Below: (left to right) Operations Officer Mark Owens, Gary Thornley, Kristy McGrail, Jamie Jansen, Joy Nowakowski, Jayne Behrendorff, Rock De Marchi and Operations Manager Paul King



Joel Borgelt Nhill Fire Brigade, District 17

faces of
CFA



PHOTO: ROB SCHNEIDER

What are your CFA roles?

I'm the captain of Nhill Fire Brigade and the group communications officer. I joined the senior side of the brigade at 16 and two years into that I stepped in as third lieutenant. I moved through the lieutenant ranks and became captain three years ago.

Why did you join?

A friend took me along to Juniors at age 11 for the competition side and I loved it. I continued on with the senior running team but I also really enjoyed the people and brigade training. I took on the role of Juniors coach when I was about 17 and did that until, unfortunately, our Juniors finished up in 2011. There are too many sports competing for the kids' attention in a town this size.

What was the first incident you attended?

We're along a bad stretch for truck accidents and one of the first incidents I remember was an MVA; a fatality. I was the youngest person in the crew so I was given the job of pump operator and kept a bit away from the scene. We had peers and chaplains come along afterwards for a crew debrief just as we do now.

What incident has had the greatest impact on you?

When I was 17, I went to Mt Beauty on my first strike team deployment. We were on night shift in Bogong village putting out fires around houses and it was eye-opening. We'd see one house burnt to the ground while the next one was still standing even though it was unprepared.

We took a rest on the side of the road early in the morning. It was pitch black and you could see the glow on the mountainside. It was a very eerie feeling. We could hear rocks falling but then some of them, including boulders, began landing on the road only metres away from where we were sitting, so we soon got out of there.

The risks for us here are grass and stubble fires and we can generally pull them up fairly quickly unless it's a really bad day, but Mt Beauty's terrain was just so different.

What CFA training have you got the most out of?

Being the first course, it would have to be Minimum Skills, but you're always learning. It doesn't matter if it's a CFA course, brigade training or an incident.

Who have been your CFA mentors?

Ex-captain Warren Beer was the Junior running team coach and he brought me along to the senior brigade. He nominated me as third lieutenant so he really gave me a go.

Operations Manager Dale Russell and our ops officers over the years are always there to help and have a chat with us any time.

What are the benefits of volunteering in CFA?

The biggest benefit is the people you meet not only in your own brigade and group but across the district and the state.

As with all people in the emergency services, we get people stopping us in the street and telling us that they value what we do. We're always going to keep doing what we do to protect the community.

What has been the highlight of your time in CFA?

Stepping into the captain's role. It's an honour to be voted in by your peers. We've had a succession plan in place for 15 years so I already know who'll be stepping up after me. You want to keep things moving along and bring fresh ideas into the brigade.

INTERVIEW BY LEITH HILLARD

Bahgallah back from the brink

Bahgallah's captain and first lieutenant visited Regional BASO Victoria Pullen earlier this year to discuss the brigade's viability. Casterton Group Officer Jeff Black also attended and saw two members "banging their heads against the wall".

"They felt like they were carrying the load," explained Victoria. "They were thinking of merging with Corndale, their nearest neighbour." While the District 4 brigade was high risk for sustainability, its brigade area of farmland with absentee owners plus plantations is high bushfire risk: a dangerous combination. They average five incidents a year including support. "At a glance, one third of brigade members were no longer operational, one third had left the area and one third weren't engaged," continued Victoria.

That doesn't leave many people for the truck! "There were 38 houses in the brigade area but who was living in the houses people had left? Did locals know that the brigade was having trouble turning out? Was there something they felt they could contribute?"

"The direct approach is always best, so I drove down every driveway. I spoke with about 28 people and everyone wanted their brigade and

truck to stay. There was some concern that, if they become Corndale-Bahgallah brigade, the truck could be moved.

"I asked brigade members what it would take to get them back. They wanted training to be meaningful: get in on a Sunday morning, do the training, go home."

Two weeks after Victoria's drive around, the brigade's annual general meeting hosted 24 people when meetings had previously failed to achieve a quorum.

"A lot of members came back," said Victoria. "We talked about sharing the load to free up the firefighters and every position in the brigade management team was filled. The people who had felt all this pressure could now see that the community really did care."

"The doorknock worked a treat," agreed new Captain Vern Elmes. "Once people were made aware of the issues it gave them a jolt, and now we have three or four going through the recruit course."

In June, Group Officer and Corndale Captain Jeff Black took about 18 members through a radios and mapping refresher.

"It was good to see some in their late teens and early 20s," he said.

"We went through re-engaging our members five years ago at Corndale when we were battling to get the truck out the door. Every household but three in our area has a brigade member in it and it was important to engage the whole family. We have a family barbecue once a year and include a bit of training."

A vital part of this re-engagement process was the brigade making that initial approach to the local support team with Jeff's encouragement.

"People are more invested if they initiate," said Victoria. "We don't tell the brigade what to do – there's no ownership that way. They tell me what the issues are, how they think it might best be resolved and from there it's, 'How can I help? What support do you need?'"

It's still early days for the new-look Bahgallah. The members are being mentored by the deputy group officers. They haven't ruled out a merger with their neighbours, but for now they have some breathing space.

"Now it's about keeping that engagement going," continued Victoria. "It takes a community to run a fire brigade."

STORY LEITH HILLARD

PHOTO: SUPPLIED BY JEFF BLACK



Tackling daytime turnout

STORIES LEITH HILLARD

Responding to an emergency during business hours from Monday to Friday challenges brigades across the state

Getting out the door in Omeo Group

Locals describe Swifts Creek as “below the gap” at the foot of the Great Divide, while Omeo 26 kilometres away is “above the gap” on the Great Divide.

“We call them other things on the footy ground,” said Omeo Captain Graham Symons, “but actually there’s a very tight community spirit and we’d drop everything to go to their aid. That’s what you do.”

The other thing they do in this part of the world is turn the fire truck out during the week with no trouble. So, what’s their secret?

“It all comes down to local employment,” insisted Graham who runs an engineering workshop 150 metres from the fire station. His ‘captain’s pick’ is that his apprentices have to join the brigade. Carpenter and First Lieutenant Brandon Betts works only 100 metres from the fire station, and around 75 per cent of the membership is self-employed.

“We’re very fortunate to have some great young people,” continued Graham, “and often they’re the next generation in community-minded families. When Brandon joined we ended up with about five of his mates who’ve all found work in the district, so young people do a good job headhunting for us.

“You give them a purpose so they’re not just sitting in the back: give them leadership opportunities or encourage them to take out the slip-on. The brigade gives them a sense of achievement.

“Brandon went to fires in DELWP territory last fire season and did good work with knapsacks and rake-hoes. That all helps our good working relationships with DELWP and Parks [Victoria].”

Omeo has a population of about 250 and CFA is just part of the community conversation in the pub, at the petrol stations and on other community committees.

There are also a number of small communities within a 30-kilometre radius including Cobungra and Bundara, both Omeo satellite fire stations with vehicles. The Cobungra vehicle was donated by Mt Taylor brigade whose members spent a lot of time assisting around Omeo after the 2003 fires.

“That donation has blown us away,” said Graham. “We hold Mt Taylor and Sarsfield brigades in very high esteem. To get out the door, you have to have trucks in the first place.”

Graham also gives full credit to his partner Ronda Manhire who, as group secretary, has not only been a fundraising dynamo for brigade vehicles but also recruited for local involvement by community members at the local command facility.

Sarah O’Brien is one of two operational women at Swifts Creek, turning out when she’s home from university in Ballarat. Her father Stephen is the captain and she’s seen her share of local bushfires

Top: Omeo First Lieutenant Brandon Betts and Captain Graham Symons

Bottom: Swifts Creek Captain Stephen O’Brien and his daughter Sarah



PHOTOS: LEITH HILLARD

“I love being in CFA,” she said. “I joined because I want to protect my community but it’s a really great network.

“The practical skills weren’t hard to pick up. Being farmers, we watch the weather closely and wonder about our prospects.”

Sarah remembers bushfire reaching her family’s farm in 2003 although their house was saved. In 2007, the family’s house again survived bushfire but all their fences were lost.

Still, she has no doubt about where her heart lies.

“You take pride in being from the country and I’m definitely staying rural.”

Montrose recruiting through social media

“Daytime response is the Achilles heel of every CFA brigade. That’s where you’re vulnerable.”

We don’t have to run a straw poll to know that Captain Rob Waters from Montrose Fire Brigade speaks for hundreds of CFA captains.

With an average 225 callouts a year, this progressive Yarra Ranges brigade took an online approach to responding to nine-to-five emergencies by funding a sponsored advertisement on Facebook.

“It allowed us to target people between the ages of 18 and 50 who live within two kilometres of our fire station,” said Rob. “We were inviting potential firefighters to an information session. We had engaging photos with a clear-cut message: ‘Do you have what it takes?’”

“The post reached more than 9,000 people with 24 interested in attending the session. We cancelled the subscription after three

weeks because it had been so successful. Those interested were sent reminders and 16 ultimately attended with 11 of them joining up, four of them women.”

The result is a weekday bonanza. The new members include someone whose workplace allows working from home and university students with days off. The furthest from the fire station is only four and a half minutes away.

“To other brigades recruiting online I’d say engage with your audience,” continued Rob. “When someone likes your post, invite them to ask questions or pass on your contact details. Always follow up and make sure your responses are positive.

“Now we’ve got the excitement of those new members and the whole brigade is buzzing. They bring new ideas and a thirst for learning and they’ll be given plenty of time and support to gain operational skills.”



PHOTO: COURTESY OF MONTROSE FIRE BRIGADE

No reason to wine in Milawa

Brown Brothers Winery in the King Valley town of Milawa is a significant local employer only three minutes from Milawa Fire Station. Quite a few of those employees double as CFA members who are still paid if they attend callouts during business hours.

As Brown Brothers Chief Operations Executive Aaron Haw explained it, “If we look after the local community, the local community will look after us.”

Bobinawarra Captain Shane Wilson is an engineering supervisor at Brown Brothers and works alongside five other CFA members.

“If the pager goes off, we just tell colleagues that we’ve got to go,” he said. “I used to go to Milawa if a call came in, but now that I’m captain I always go to Bobinawarra. If it’s a bad day, we basically know that we’re available.”

Materials Team Leader Robert Green is the Taminick and North Winton captain and quickly delegates tasks when the pager goes off.

“I’ll respond 100 per cent of the time,” he said. “I probably left three times during work hours last year. I cop a bit of flack from some of our full-time farmers for being paid when I’m at a fire call!

“Not long after I started at Brown Brothers, I took time off to fight fires in the nearby Greta area. We had come in through the back of a vineyard and helped defend it. One of my crew asked if it was a Brown Brothers vineyard and I said, ‘I doubt it’.

“Sure enough, we exit out the front gate and there is the Brown Brothers sign!”

What goes around comes around when it comes to the vagaries of bushfire.



Above: (left to right) Robin Behrendt, Shane Wilson, Lawrie Chalmers, Peter Davis, Adrian reginato and Ken Redfern

PHOTO: SAMANTHA WATSON



Recruiting at events

Heywood Group members took advantage of the estimated 15,000 to 20,000 people attending February's Heywood Wood, Wine and Roses Festival to mingle. Could there be some potential new members in such a big crowd?

"We established a presence with the MEBU [mobile education bus] and there must have been about 400 people through," said Group Officer Darren Hoggan. "We also had specific brigade leaflets about each southern catchment brigade which included a brigade member's contact details. Members from a lot of our Heywood Group brigades were ready to answer questions if anyone was thinking about joining."

Also keen to talk were Southern Catchment Operations Officer Gary Harker, BASO Leanne Munro and Regional BASO Simone Kinross. And never underestimate the pulling power of a giant koala in a turnout suit. Yes, Captain Koala was there too.

"It was chit chat all day and people would say 'congratulations' and 'well done,'" continued Darren. "It generated interest and when I say we got at least five new members, you often get their friends and relatives tagging along."

"Our group is 16 brigades and a boat which is Portland Coast Guard. We have a strong group identity and train together every month. Portland brigade is recruiting all the time and they offer a lot of training, but turnouts during the week can be difficult for the rest of us so we have to look for new members. We're small farming communities and the bluegum plantations are a sign that locals have sold up and moved on."

"Strangely enough, we probably find it easiest on a bad day when it's all hands on deck. If the stuff hits the fan, we turn out extra trucks and people come out of the woodwork."



PHOTO: SUPPLIED BY LEANNE MUNRO

Liz a linchpin responder

Three and a half years ago, new Warburton resident Liz Rogers got in touch with her local brigade to get informed about local bushfire risk.

The friendly response at the fire station encouraged her and partner Martin to join the brigade and now they're part of the group critical to Warburton's daytime response.

"We're hard workers and we took to it like ducks to water," said Liz. "We got into Minimum Skills straight away and also went to brigade training to reinforce what we were learning. I do better with hands-on than theory."

"I'm a team player so I just want to know how I can help. If you want me on the back of the pump, I'm there."

Martin has his truck driver's licence while Liz has a background in nursing which enables her to approach motor vehicle accidents with professional calm. She now works two minutes from the station running her own beauty therapy business.

While she generally thinks that "a dirty job is a good job," she's been known to turn out with hair and nails done and in full make-up because that's the life of a beauty therapist firefighter.

Liz's flexibility and keenness led to Warburton naming her Rookie of the Year. She's also the brigade's events and community safety coordinator.

"The ongoing training and encouragement to try new things are contributing factors for a long-term commitment," she said. "The brigade is our second family."

Her first family is about to expand with Liz due to have her first child in January. She's still turning out.

"The brigade has been very supportive," she said. "As long as my turnout gear fits and I have medical clearance to be active, there are multiple roles you can fill. We get allocated to our strengths."



PHOTOS: MARTIN MARRAN

Fireball fundraising quick-step

It was a scorcher on 9 February 2014 when fire broke out near Warrandyte and Quinton's IGA supermarket locked customers in as ash rained down outside.

Two days later, local brigade members were still on the fireground and supermarket owner Julie Quinton was wondering how the community could thank them.

"I remembered that, the day before the fire, North Warrandyte brigade had a fundraising barbecue outside our store to raise money for a new truck," said Julie.

"I thought the community should be more accountable and the greatest way we can thank them is to do their fundraising for them."

Momentum quickly built to organise a major local CFA fundraiser and the result was the first Fireball in 2014, a gala ball that raised money for Warrandyte, South Warrandyte and North Warrandyte brigades.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF FIREBALL COMMITTEE

We're not talking loose change. The profit of \$57,000 was handed over with the three brigades agreeing that the local priority was a new medium tanker for North Warrandyte, topping up a VESEP grant.

Two years later, it's time for the next Fireball. This year's October event has moved to the Park Hyatt in Melbourne where 400 guests will enjoy a three-course dinner, with Wonga Park now the fourth brigade beneficiary.

"We're aiming for \$85,000 net profit," explained Jaime Noye, one of ten members on the Fireball Committee.

"It's very motivating for us to have something tangible to fundraise for and this year it will go towards a new slip-on to be housed at Warrandyte."

STORY LEITH HILLARD

Captains' Forum in Shepparton

The sun was out when 35 CFA captains and group officers gathered for District 22's first Captains' Forum at the end of July, but the message was to think flood before fire.

With paddocks across the district already heavily waterlogged, Operations Manager Stuart Broad said flooding was a real possibility.

"Whether it's fire or flood, you play a big role," he said to the captains. "Some of you have an SES unit in your community, but for most of you, in your community you're it."

Stuart encouraged captains to start thinking about forming emergency management teams in their communities, together with SES, police and other agencies.

The inaugural forum was an opportunity for members in the demanding captain role to network, put faces to names, and gain a better awareness of the key go-to people at district headquarters.

In addition to operational updates, district staff talked about a variety of topics from fire investigation through to VESEP grants.

The captains also heard a different perspective from guest presenter Diana Ferguson, captain of Bayswater brigade, who talked about some of the practices Bayswater has put in place for leadership succession planning.

Diana, who also spoke to *Brigade* magazine last year about running a brigade like a small business, said although smaller brigades would run differently to a brigade like Bayswater, some of the principles were the same.

"Part of our job as captain is to maintain

morale, and that challenge will take different forms depending on whether you're a quiet or a busy brigade," she said.

"When you get an enthusiastic individual that comes in, you need to think about how you can harness and sustain that."

STORY SONIA MACLEAN

Right: (left to right) David Hamilton (Strathbogrie brigade), Rob Hopkins (Marraweeny), Anthony Delahey (Kelvin View), Michael Stubbe (Gooram)

PHOTO: SONIA MACLEAN



New FOV packed with features

A new field operations vehicle (FOV) built for CFA's Westernport Group has full CFA network connectivity and incorporates visual feeds from three types of cameras – including a four-metre extendable 'mast' camera.

The vehicle, which was built by Bell Environmental, also features an enhanced design for its satellite dish and stabilisers, and an awning to measure wind speed and weather conditions.

To simulate summer fireground conditions, part of the performance testing took place under extreme temperatures at Australian Defence Force facilities.

Westernport Group Officer David Gibbs and CFA's Specialist Response Officer Craig Brownlie did a final inspection of the vehicle in late May before it was delivered to the District 8 group.

Craig said the Westernport FOV was the eighth vehicle of this style CFA had built and, although the overall concept had stayed the same, huge improvements had been made over the previous model.

'We've taken the previous seven, and we've learned from how they've worked in the field,' he said.

"There have been a whole heap of operational improvements to make sure these vehicles are contemporary."



PHOTOS: SONIA MACLEAN

With so much technology on board, Craig said the final touches and testing needed to be done with care. "There are a lot of moving parts that need to work."

Westernport Group has worked closely with CFA to design this next-generation vehicle, which will be used as a communications and control hub at fires and other incidents.

David said he was excited about the vehicle's capability to provide a rapid flow of information to incident control centres (ICC) and the community.

"In the past, our field operations vehicles have been primarily focused on fireground communications," David continued. "We are now flipping that around to put more emphasis on getting information out to communities."

David said the type of technology and capability being incorporated into the FOV would give firefighters more flexibility and rapid information flow, and help bridge the gap between fireground and ICC.

This capability is especially important in the early stages of a serious incident. Fires that move quickly and rapidly become a threat are of particular concern to brigades serving the Mornington Peninsula area, with its high rate of urban growth and large tracts of urban interface land.

"The Peninsula area is unlikely to see the kind of campaign fires that burn for days or weeks, but the fires we do have are likely to hit fast and have high impact," David said.

The FOV was built thanks to a VESEP grant and is expected to come into full service by October at the latest after undergoing final checks and the development of training materials.

To watch videos about the FOV's features go to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bU_mNXN1bcQ and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ro4cbe7K-YA>

STORY SONIA MACLEAN



Ouyen's battery-change champ

It's been three years since Ouyen Fire Brigade member George Strickland stopped turning out on the fire truck for health reasons "unless I'm close to the station or they're really stuck for numbers".

He looked around for other ways to give back to the community and now changes the smoke alarm batteries of all senior citizens in the town. It's a service that's keenly supported by both District 18 headquarters and the brigade.

"[Captain] Trevor [Mills] puts in a request for batteries to District 18," said George, "which gets them as part of a partnership with Duracell. I get through at least 100 a year and if we run out our brigade buys more ourselves.

"We also have some smoke detectors on hand. I replaced eight this year that were more than 10 years old, all at no charge to the residents."

He begins three weeks before the end of daylight saving and takes between one to three weeks to complete the job in between his

rotating roster as a bar attendant at the Ouyen Club.

"When I'm in the mode I can do up to 20 or 30 houses in a day. I might go to a house up to four times to find the resident at home and always leave a card with a call-back number.

"I work from a list of senior citizens that I build on every year. I also get talking when I'm working at the club and find out if there are any new people who need a smoke detector."

The positive feedback received by George naturally also becomes good brigade public relations.

"People are really surprised that this job gets done and really pleased that someone will go out of their way," said George.

"It's a pleasure to do it and great that it's something that's added to the town that people don't have to worry about."

STORY LEITH HILLARD



PHOTO: NOELA BARKER

South Warrandyte on the move

South Warrandyte Fire Brigade volunteers recently made the move from their former base at South Warrandyte to a bigger and better station in Park Orchards, where they'll be supported for the first time by career firefighters.

To mark the occasion, volunteers drove fire trucks in convoy from the old station to the new one, just in time for the first shift which started at 8am.

"The new location and the introduction of career firefighters will enhance the brigade's ability to service the Warrandyte community and the State of Victoria during major fires and emergencies," Officer in Charge Jamie Hansen said.

"Just over two years ago, South Warrandyte volunteers recognised the benefits of an integrated model and put forward a proposal to CFA to expand the brigade, which brings us to where we are today.

"Career firefighters have also undertaken advanced first-aid training, which allows them to attend emergency medical response incidents, in addition to a range of other emergencies including house fires, accidents and hazardous materials incidents.

"Having career firefighters based at the station 24 hours a day will take the pressure off volunteers, their employers and, most importantly, their families.

"This new facility will also mean better training and development opportunities for members of South Warrandyte and surrounding brigades," Jamie added.

This state-of-the-art fire station features three engine bays to house three trucks and measures around 1,200 square metres, spread over two floors. With the addition of South Warrandyte Fire Brigade, CFA now has 35 integrated brigades where career firefighters work alongside volunteers. These stations are in high-growth areas, provincial centres or areas with a risk-based need.

STORY BRIE SNARE



PHOTO: TOBY WARD, WARRANDYTE DIARY

Car fire interrupts open day

Lights, sirens and thick black smoke interrupted Portland Fire Brigade's first open day in its new Percy Street fire station.

By mid-afternoon around 400 people had looked at the fire station, crowds were dying down, and the brigade was thinking about winding things up after a highly successful day. Then thick, black smoke started billowing up into the sky, coming from a car fire just a few blocks away. Pagers went off and visitors hastily made way for the responding fire truck.

Mandy Maglaras, who captured the brigade turnout on video, said it gave the visitors a sense of just how quickly the brigade gets trucks out the door.

Mandy, a community liaison officer with South West Region, spent the day talking about fire safety. She said the level of interest was huge for both home fire safety and bushfire 'leave early' information.

"They were really interested in learning more, especially about home escape plans."

Leading Firefighter Natalie Brindle said the open day was a great success. "It was a very positive event, well attended and I think the public were very impressed by the new station," Natalie said.

The open day activities gave visitors an insight into a whole range of brigade operations. The public also had the chance to look over trucks and check out a rope rescue display that used a training platform attached to the station's roof, pictured right.

"There were show bags for the kids and we also had those 'knock 'em down' targets with people using hoses running off one of the pumper's," Natalie said.

The new facility allows the brigade to introduce 24-hour staffing in the future. The city is home to Australia's largest port and associated industries, so has a unique risk profile.

STORY SONIA MACLEAN



PHOTO: MANDY MAGLARAS

New station for French Island

While koalas are a familiar sight in the trees surrounding the new French Island Fire Station, members are more interested in keeping out another form of local wildlife – the snakes that sometimes took up residence in the old station.

However, it's the station's remoteness that's a greater concern. French Island is just 60 kilometres south-east of Melbourne but, with no mains power, no mains water, no police, no ambulance and no bridge to the mainland, its residents can't rely on outside help in an emergency.

In fact, the local CFA brigade is the only permanent emergency service on the island,

with firefighters sometimes called upon to provide first-aid until the Air Ambulance arrives.

"It takes a minimum of one and a half hours to get on-ground assistance and that's if the tides and weather are right," said French Island brigade Captain Glenn Seymour.

The new station will help French Island brigade's 39 members respond to emergencies far into the future. It features two truck bays, a toilet, washroom, kitchenette and improved storage.

In the absence of mains electricity, the station is powered by a large bank of solar panels on the roof.

"The solar panels provide enough power for an incident control centre if and when we have a large emergency on the island," continued Glenn.

Construction was complicated by the need to ferry all the building materials to the island.

Already equipped with a tanker, the brigade officially received a slip-on at the ceremony, which previously belonged to nearby Dalyston Fire Brigade.

STORY CHRISTOPHER STILL

Below: The new station was built next to the old one

PHOTOS: SCOTT HAMILTON



Bravery awards for firefighters

It started as a normal call out for Greenvale Fire Brigade as MFB requested support at a car fire in August 2015. Fifteen minutes later a nearby house and another vehicle were on fire, and Greenvale and MFB crews were under attack from a man carrying an axe and a petrol container.

CFA and MFB crews retreated but the hooded man kept coming, poured petrol inside the front driver's side of the MFB pumper, set the vehicle alight and walked away.

Senior Station Officer Roy Griffiths directed his crew to put out the truck fire but the man quickly reappeared, axe in hand and "unhappy that crews [had] extinguished his 'handiwork'," as one witness put it. Leading Firefighter Matthew Kent directed his hose stream at the man who swung at Matthew's leg, tripping him up but not injuring him. He then chased Roy before disappearing as police arrived.

The Greenvale crew put out another car fire while Matthew used the thermal imaging camera to spot a figure behind a fence. The



Left: (left to right Firefighter Brendan Edwards, Leading Firefighter Francis Grech, Senior Station Officer Roy Griffiths, Chief Officer Steve Warrington and Leading Firefighter Matthew Kent

PHOTO: BLAIR DELLEMIJN

police dog squad subdued and arrested the man who violently resisted.

Fast forward to early August 2016 when Chief Officer Steve Warrington presented Roy Griffiths, Leading Firefighters Francis Grech and Matthew Kent and Firefighter Brendan Edwards with the Chief Officer's Unit Citation for Courage.

The citation reads, "The offender subsequently... threatened firefighters with an axe ... The firefighters ... took extraordinary actions to protect life and property throughout

what was a dynamic, volatile and dangerous situation."

"It was a unique event," said Greenvale Officer in Charge David Harris. "Our people were aggressively pursued while doing their job. In spite of that, they not only protected the community but each other.

"When one of our guys was attacked, the others didn't hesitate to come to his assistance. You don't train for that, but it was instinctive."

STORY PAUL HUGGETT

Secret makeover stuns member

"I'm flabbergasted, touched and absolutely blown away," said Narre Warren Fire Brigade member Paul Little. While in hospital following a serious knee injury, 20 members of his brigade gave up a Sunday to do some much-needed maintenance of his house and garden.

All in a day's work, Narre Warren firefighters covered off not just one but several items from the Little family's 'to do' list: building a gate, replacing pickets, taking scrap items to the tip, interior painting and fixing flywire and sliding door tracks.

A 20-year volunteer with 3,000 fire calls under his belt, Paul (or Tiny as he's better known) also works full-time for CFA as a brigade administrative support officer.

While in hospital, Tiny filmed a heartfelt video message on his phone which he then posted to Facebook: goo.gl/WJwj25.

Captain Paul Hardy said this was Tiny's second operation on his knee requiring a long-term hospital stay, and the idea came up to hold a working bee to help until he could get back on his feet.

"We passed the hat around and people put in, and things went from there," he said, adding the brigade even employed an electrician to run some wiring out to the shed.

"They are a really good brigade, a grouse brigade, very community focused," he said. "Not just the firefighters but the auxilliary, the catering team, the Juniors and the broader membership.

"If you could just bottle how this brigade works, how good would that be..."



PHOTO: PAUL HARDY

STORY SONIA MACLEAN

Mia Mia's Big Sing

After the 2009 fires, Mia Mia Fire Brigade was 'adopted' by Melbourne Soufflé Sisters Community Choir. Paula Curotte, the choir's manager, organised a multi-choir bushfire benefit concert in Melbourne to raise funds towards a community-owned tanker for Mia Mia.

A few weeks later, the choirs visited Mia Mia for a thank-you lunch. Community members dropped in for a sing along and The Big Sing annual event became a regular fixture on the Mia Mia calendar.

The 2016 Big Sing in late June saw the return of three choirs: the Souffle Sisters; the Homebrew Verandah Singers (also from Melbourne); and Bendigo's Women of Note.

The all-male Homebrew Verandah Singers are a bunch of guys who enjoy getting together to share the pleasure and



power of combining their voices in song. While singing tender broken-hearted love songs, Elizabethan drinking songs, Georgian rugby songs and gospel songs, they capture the raw energy of men singing in the shower or bellowing over the roar of a two-stroke. They sing about identity, social history and a 'fair go' ethos, but most of all they sing to celebrate life.

Anthony Ryan, who retired as Mia Mia brigade captain at the end of June, was the barbecue chef for the Big Sing. He welcomed the growing number of attendees at the event.

"Everyone enjoys the harmony and the humour of these wonderful choirs," Anthony said. "They are versatile musicians and the program includes songs from many sources. It's wonderful to sit in the hall and listen to their beautiful voices."

STORY KATE HICKS

PHOTO: COURTESY OF MIA MIA FIRE BRIGADE

Mooroolbark station renovation

Over winter, Mooroolbark Fire Station was transformed into a larger and more modern building, thanks to \$286,000 in community donations.

"Mooroolbark Fire Brigade remained focused on responding to fire and other emergencies during the renovations and response was not affected by the works," said District 13 Operations Officer Tim Holland.

"The extension and refurbishment of the station will modernise the building to meet the growing needs of the community and ensure our volunteers have a station that will establish them for at least the next 20 years."

The west side of the existing building was extended to include a new purpose-built space to store equipment including turnout gear, hoses and breathing apparatus. It also houses a cleaning area and workshop for minor maintenance.

The back of the engine bay area was also extended to create a safer space for firefighters to move around fire trucks. The meeting room was also refurbished and includes a new kitchen, amenities and an office.

Mooroolbark brigade Captain Tony King welcomed the extension and refurbishment of the station.

"We're very grateful to all community members who have donated towards this redevelopment, particularly through the local Bendigo Bank branch, and to our brigade members who have been tirelessly fundraising to get this project off the ground," he said.

"The donations we've received so far have been phenomenal, but we still have a bit more to go to complete renovations, so there are plans for more fundraising later in the year."

STORY BRIE SNARE

PHOTOS: TONY KING



Water boost for five brigades

Blocked nozzles, an unconnected toilet and the potential to drain a town's water supply are now in the past for some of the brigades which benefited from a generous donation by water tank manufacturer Kingspan Water.

Locksley, Carranballac, Springhurst, Christmas Hills and Boneo brigades now all have new 60,000-litre steel water tanks to enhance firefighting capacity.

Locksley Fire Brigade previously relied on a 3,000-litre tank and had to source water from dams or travel to nearby fire stations to fill up, which could result in nozzles becoming blocked.

At Carranballac, in one of the 10 most drought-affected shires in Victoria, the dam that used to fill the tank has dried up.

With winter rains already starting to put water into the new tank, the brigade is better positioned for the fire season and can finally connect the station toilet.

In Springhurst, there's no doubt North East Water will also be happy with the brigade's new tank.

"We almost drained the town water supply about three years ago," said Fifth Lieutenant Kevin Atteridge. "This will allow us to be 100 per cent self-sufficient."

The donation was inspired by a chance meeting between Kingspan Water's rural manager and CFA members manning a stand at Farm World 2014.

"We have a responsibility to support organisations such as CFA which, despite limited resources, play such a critical role in protecting and preserving life and property," said Kingspan Rural Manager Russell Jamieson.

STORY AMANDA BOLCH



Left: Carranballac brigade members with their new water tank: Simon Chirnside, Leigh Maxted, John Fay, Steve Elliot, James Hinton, Luke Fay and Peter Liston

PHOTO: COURTESY OF CARRANBALLAC FIRE BRIGADE

Get help with building work

The Volunteer Emergency Services Equipment Program (VESEP) minor works funding helps brigades considering alterations or additions to their existing fire stations.

Since it began in 2013, the program has helped 119 brigades complete a range of projects including extensions, new kitchens, alterations to motor rooms, meeting rooms and turnout areas, upgrading toilets and installing generators.

As well as helping brigades through the planning and building process, CFA's VESEP team helps CFA fulfil its responsibility to provide a safe workplace, ensure all works comply with

planning and building codes and government guidelines, and ensure all modifications are included in maintenance schedules.

Noojee Fire Brigade desperately needed more parking space in front of its station, so applied for a VESEP minor works grant last year. Its application for a third of the cost to redevelop the land to increase parking was successful, and the work was carried out in February and March this year.

Second Lieutenant Dave Blacker said the brigade was very grateful to VESEP Project Manager Bruce Rowley.

"Bruce looked after us very well," said Dave.

"We didn't have a clear idea of where our property boundaries were, so our original plans didn't work.

"Bruce was very flexible given the change in our circumstances and what we could do with the land, and he sorted out the survey and planning application to council.

Dave's advice to any brigade thinking about applying to VESEP for minor works is to "get out there and have a go.

"Think through what you want and write a good-quality application."

STORY LES MENGONI

PHOTO: DAVE BLACKER



Epic ride to combat depression



Left: From left, Bendigo Fire Brigade's Stuart Laing and Luke Kneebone riding with Terry Heafield

PHOTO: LEITH HILLARD

Below: (left to right) Shepparton Fire Brigade QFF Sean Murphy, Terry Heafield, Shepparton SSO Michael Masters and Wangaratta Fire Brigade Firefighter Tom Maher

PHOTO: SUPPLIED BY ROB PUISE

Even riders in the Tour de France have rest days, but Operations Officer Terry Heafield had none when he rode 2,500 kilometres around Victoria over three weeks. Winning for him will be helping just one person to recognise they are suffering from depression and seeking help.

From Beulah and Hopetoun to Shepparton and Lismore, Terry was led into towns by fire trucks including an aerial pumper. He was fed lasagne, carbonara and barbecues by brigades and treated to pub dinners. Operations officers, career firefighters, volunteers and members of the public rode alongside him as he spread the word that depression is an illness and help is available if you just ask.

"That man is an inspiration," said Hopetoun West Captain John Webster. He had a good conversation with Terry over two 25-kilometre stints in the saddle.

"I have huge appreciation for people seeking help if they need it," continued John. "I've dealt with peer support personally and through the brigade and I've also put other people in that direction.

"Terry is saying don't be afraid to press the button. It's no shame to say that you need help. The biggest step is admitting it and the next step is getting the help you need and it's available through CFA."

Shepparton Station Officer Rob Puisse was just as impressed by Terry's mission.

"As men, we're good at not showing our emotions but PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] hits so many of us. I feel the same way and here's Terry raising awareness.

"Fourteen of us at Shepparton were at his talk and there was some sharing of stories. Terry is from the ranks and he shares a magnificent account that's very personal, and that's something I haven't experienced before.

"He talked to us about the services provided to help and he's got a real interest in getting those services more integrated into the way we operate.



All the recent media attention has taken a big toll and people are looking for help.

"Before we rode with him I looked at his eyes, and it's clear that he's determined to follow this through. It just felt right to be riding beside him."

Bendigo Senior Station Officer B Platoon Craig Houllahan drove the support vehicle from Charlton to Sea Lake during the first week of Terry's ride. He also saw Terry's determination up close.

"The guys from Bendigo rode with him and they're pretty fit," he said, "but there was a point at 80 kilometres when Terry was pushing them. He's pretty focused."

When Craig started in the fire service 22 years ago he saw depression around him, but it was perhaps more likely to be covered up by excessive alcohol consumption.

"Depression was never spoken about but now we're more aware that it's an illness," he continued. "It's not something that should be hidden. There's assistance and support out there and Terry's ride is bringing the conversations out into the open. He's being upfront and proactive – that's his message and it's only going to be positive for career firefighters and vols alike.

"We've got support in place in CFA, but it's not until one of our own talks about it and tells a story we can all relate to that the story sinks in. When you've got that connection, you listen.

"I think this is heralding a change in the fire services. Terry's actions will probably save more of the lives of our own people than we do by pulling people out of buildings.

"He's the champion for highlighting mental health and depression. He's doing what all fireys do and that is *helping people*, but this cause is *helping us*."

Brothers in adversity

There is no guidebook when depression emerges undiagnosed in a family member.

Terry Heafield's two brothers – Geelong City Firefighter Noel and Corio Senior Station Officer Tony – willingly admit they were completely in the dark.

"We didn't know we were looking for clues," said Tony, pictured left in the photo below. "It came to us as grumpiness which was very unlike Terry. He became almost un-fun and was talking about work too much. There always seemed to be something to be annoyed about – things like personality clashes that I thought were minor.

"He was taking himself so seriously and that's what we missed."

Noel, pictured right, below, agreed that the grumpiness had a masking effect.

"I banned him and Tony from talking about CFA," he said. "We'd tell him, 'Stop being moody.'

"He'd get argumentative and it would be 'poor me' but we just thought it was work and life stresses.

"When you ask if he's okay and he says yes, where do you go from there?"

On top of that were Terry's nine years in Wodonga when the brothers didn't see him often. Noel and Tony had also never been aware of depression in their family: it simply wasn't on their radar.

The family consensus is that Tony is the hands-on practical one, Terry is the academic one and Noel is the laid-back all-rounder and, according to him, "the youthful one with the most hair".

More than that, though, Noel also recognises that Terry was always more compassionate; he always cared more.

"He was always the middle ground and the conscientious one."

"We were close growing up and we'd always knocked about and been rowdy with each other," said Tony. "We'd push Terry pretty hard and tell him to toughen up.

"When you push them and they're annoyed, it's a win."

"We've been competitive our whole life with footy and cricket," said Noel.

"We've always been able to deal with everything and everything we've done we've been good at: identify an issue and work out how to fix it."

The brothers spent time together after Terry had an operation, and Noel can now see that Terry was planting hints about the depth of his dark moods. (His depression had still not been diagnosed.) Terry's wife Kylie was also passing on information.

"I look back and see missed opportunities to talk," continued Noel. "We saw him in hospital but we still didn't talk. I put it down to blokeyness, 100 per cent."

In fact it was conversations between Kylie, Noel's wife Rachael and Tony's wife Diane that really brought the issue of depression to the brothers' attention. They both agree: listen to your wives. That's where the real information was being exchanged.

For the past three years, the brothers and their families have gone camping together.

Noel can see that Terry has changed for the better.

"He's enjoying his life more and sport is a good outlet," he said. "The fire brigade can take over your life and you need an outlet that's not fire-brigade related."

For 2,500 kilometres and three weeks, that outlet was cycling.

"What concerned me was is he going to get better," said Tony. "Have I lost my little brother? Doing this ride is pretty awesome. To go public is a pretty brave thing.

"I think depression is becoming more common and Terry's ride brings it out in the open more. That makes it even more worthwhile.

"The fire brigade recruits alpha people and everyone on shift is competitive. Around 1,400 apply and 30 get through so you're pretty elite. You're the invincible ones, but actually openness and talking honestly is so important and that's something I've had to learn."

Noel readily agreed. "You're not always 10 foot tall and bulletproof."

For details about CFA's mental health support services, see page 11.



PHOTO: LEITH HILLARD

Upgrades to training grounds



PHOTOS: CHARLIE SEXTON

In the state government budget earlier this year, CFA was given funding to improve how we manage training water at our regional training campuses. When training water is discharged off site, it will meet our statutory and environmental requirements.

We want to ensure the updated water management systems improve how we capture, retain and treat the water that we use on the PADs and props during training, so we can continue to run hot fire training and other activities to support our operational needs.

HUNTLY

New paving will be installed at some of the existing PAD areas, along with upgraded drainage systems that will include water treatment filters and interceptor traps to

remove solids and other products. A new water treatment system will be installed so the training water will be the same standard as drinking water. The stormwater catchment systems will also be redesigned and reshaped to retain more rain. In addition, the water storage capacity will be expanded by building larger dams or additional storage tanks.

Thanks to other state government funding, Huntly is also getting a new fire investigation PAD area, which will enable us to deliver fire investigation training for CFA members and other emergency services organisations.

WANGARATTA

The paving of the existing PAD area will be completed, including bunding of the perimeter to ensure all training water is captured. It will also provide more flexibility in where training scenarios can take place. There is also a plan to upgrade the drainage system so that all training water is collected, tested and then discharged off site appropriately.

Connection to the sewerage system for both management and discharge of waste water is the other priority at Wangaratta.

WEST SALE

Some of the paving and drainage at West Sale dates back to World War II, so some of the older paving will be replaced and more paving added to PAD areas. Works will also include replacing and upgrading some of the existing drainage systems. New water filters and interceptor traps will be installed along with a water treatment

system that will raise the quality of the training water to that of drinking water.

The existing small dam will be replaced with a larger water storage dam to capture all the training water and the run-off from the PADs, before it is treated in the new treatment system and then discharged off site.

LONGERENONG

New tanks have recently been installed at Longerengong. New concrete paving and improved drainage will also be installed across some of the PAD areas. A water treatment system will be put in place and the existing dam will be reshaped.

BANGHOLME

Some new paving and upgraded drainage will be done shortly, followed by further paving and drainage later. New water filters and interceptor traps will be installed as well as a new water treatment system. The current water storage and reticulation system will also be upgraded.

PENSHURST

There will be new paving and drainage installed in the PAD area of the campus. The small existing dam will be replaced with a significantly larger lined dam with sufficient capacity to collect the additional water from the new paved PAD areas. Additional water storage will also be installed. In line with other campuses, Peshurst will get new water filters, interceptor traps and a new water treatment system.

STORY DARREN MCGRATH



Juniors' red hot training

Juniors from Traralgon Fire Brigade tried their hand at hot fire training at VEMTC West Sale in early June.

Following a safety briefing, the Juniors were given a refresher on fire extinguisher theory and the internal workings of an extinguisher.

The group then split into two, with one heading to the extinguisher PAD and the other to the search and rescue building. On the extinguisher pad, the Juniors had the opportunity to use different types of fire extinguishers to put out fires in a well-controlled environment.

In the search and rescue building, Juniors donned black-out goggles and went in search of casualties. They encountered low doorways, tunnels, stairs and small rooms like a maze, with low-to-no visibility. With left and right hand searching underway, they were quick to find the missing victims and remove them. Unfortunately, the casualties were fast to re-enter the building and the Juniors had to search again – but this time without goggles. They did a fantastic job.

We then headed outside in the rain to fight the fires that had been set up by the PAD operators at the petrol station. Each member put out the car fire operating the branch, with support from our career staff and volunteers. As the session went on, we slowly increased the size and intensity of the fires, and the Juniors did a great job keeping the fires under control and putting them out.

"It was very educational," said Junior Jordan Smith. "There were challenging parts of the training but all the Juniors overcame these



PHOTO: STATION OFFICER CHRIS LOESCHENKOHL

challenges using teamwork and persistence. The best part of the day was the flammable liquids PAD, because we tackled a hot fire head on."

Thanks to the career firefighters, who gave their own time, and West Sale training ground PAD staff.

STORY JO LOESCHENKOHL, BRIGADE JUNIOR LEADER

D13 Officer Development Program

The Officer Development course in District 13 came about thanks to the foresight of Operations Manager David Renkin, who believed there was a need to develop brigade leaders and revamp an old local program.

He enlisted operations officers Tim Holland, Mark Kennedy and Andrew Booth to develop the program material. Fiona Martin from Learning and Development and Aleks Wakeham from the Brigade Support Team also played important roles in developing and managing the courses.

The programs are run by experienced volunteers and staff, assisted by CFA's Wellbeing Team and peer coordinators, and courses are overseen by an operations officer. The course has nine sessions over three weeks with a formal dinner at the end.

The objective of this program is for members to gain skills in leadership, day-to-day running of a brigade, operations skills, team dynamics, and an understanding of cultural and skill



PHOTO: ALEKS WAKEHAM

differences. The first part of the course is mostly classroom based, while the final stages are hosted at VEMTC Bangholme, with tactical exercise without troops (TEWT) and PAD-based activities.

The program has three levels – basic, intermediate and senior. This ensures we cater for all levels with course material covering standard operating procedures, legislation and basic fireground practices, through to management of a brigade, people skills, leadership styles, mentoring and human resources. Other topics include:

- where does my brigade fit in?
- where does my authority come from?
- leadership across the brigade
- fire suppression and operations
- principles and use of AIMS
- wellbeing
- communication skills
- crew briefings
- rural TEWT
- practical fireground drill.

The first basic program was run last year, and it was such a success that many members have returned to complete the intermediate course.

STORY ANDREW BOOTH

Through the ages – Berwick





Emergency Memberlink



Your Emergency Memberlink program is a way for us to recognise your commitment and contribution to emergency services and Victorian communities.



By using Emergency Memberlink, you can receive discounts and benefits on a wide range of products and services in Victoria and interstate.

Details of the offers are in the Emergency Memberlink Guide, which is posted with all new Memberlink cards, and are also on the emergencymemberlink.com.au website.

To get a Memberlink card, phone 1800 820 037 or register online at emergencymemberlink.com.au.

The Memberlink team welcomes feedback about the Memberlink Program and your suggestions about new benefits you think would be of value to you, your family and your colleagues. Phone the team or leave a message on the Facebook page – facebook.com/emergency-memberlink.

POPULAR OFFERS

- No application fee for any home or personal loan with **Firefighters Credit Union** plus a contribution of up to \$1,000 to the Credit Union's legal fees incurred on the settlement of a home loan.
- 10% discount on Cellar Door & Rae's Restaurant in the Yarra Valley's **Balgownie Estate Vineyard Resort & Spa**.
- Discounted rates and reduced insurance excess with **AVIS** car rental.
- Discounts on pre-purchased **Gift Cards** including Woolworths, Coles, Myer, Kmart, Target, Supercheap Auto, Rebel Sport, JB Hi-Fi, Ray's Outdoors and BCF.
- Exclusive discounts and offers through the **JB Hi-Fi Family & Friends Program**.
- **Choice Hotels Australasia** offers government rates at Ascend Hotel Collection, Econo Lodge, Comfort, Quality and Clarion hotels.
- 20% discount on **Luna Park Melbourne** ride tickets.
- 10% discount on all standard tours and other activities at **Mayday Hills Lunatic Asylum, Beechworth**.
- Commercial prices through the **Good Guys Commercial Division**.
- Save 40% on **AIG Travel Insurance**.
- Discounted passenger fares on **Spirit of Tasmania**.
- **Powerbuy** provides cashbacks and coupons on IT brands such as Lenovo, HP, Dell, Alienware and more. Save up to 15% on laptops, desktops and tablets.
- 10% discount at **The Athlete's Foot**.
- **Mantra Group Departure Lounge** offers up to 50% discount on accommodation at Peppers, Mantra and BreakFree properties throughout Australia and New Zealand.
- Free medium soft drink, medium orange juice, standard espresso pronto or small McCafe coffee with any purchase over \$3 at **McDonald's** restaurants in Victoria.
- **Thrifty** offers exclusive rental rates and a reduced liability fee on all cars, trucks, buses and 4WDs.
- **Searoad Ferries** offers 10% discount on ferry travel between Sorrento and Queenscliff.
- \$5 off per new tyre, \$5 off per new battery and \$40 for front wheel alignment with purchase of two new tyres at **Tyrepower's** Victorian stores.
- 10% off best available accommodation rates at **Best Western Hotels**.
- \$50 off your next booking when you spend over \$1,500 at **Flight Centre**.
- **Driver Dynamics** offers members \$20 off its defensive driving course.
- Save 15% on flowers and gifts from **Petals**.
- Members have access to 30% off RRP on **Icebreaker Merino** apparel.
- 10% off a manufacturer's handbook service at **UltraTune Auto Service Centres**.
- 20% discount on day admission tickets at **Moonlit Sanctuary Wildlife Conservation Park**.
- Save money on pre-purchased **movie tickets, theme park and attraction** tickets.
- Exclusive access to trade prices on audio visual, whitegoods, kitchen and home appliances through **Harvey Norman Groups & Associations Division**.
- Save up to 10% on **Experience Oz** tours and attractions around Australia and New Zealand.
- Buy plants and garden products at wholesale prices from **Plantmark**.

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