

Brigade

autumn 2015

Protecting lives
and property

cfa.vic.gov.au



▼ Hastings under threat



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COVER PHOTO: GARY SISSONS,
MORNINGTON PENINSULA NEWS GROUP

HASTINGS FIRE

07



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CHAIR

Claire Higgins



Diversity brings strength

Brigade members often talk about their CFA service as 'from the community, for the community, by the community'. It's an inspiring message of resilience and communities helping themselves.

The wider organisation also operates on this same principle. Our members come from all walks of life, backgrounds, occupations and interests. We serve communities comprising men and women, boys and girls of all ages from a broad range of ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, sexual preference and gender identification, and people living with disabilities.

By honouring the Victorian Charter of Human Rights, CFA is proud to strive for greater inclusiveness and diversity, breaking down language and cultural barriers so we can truly be representative. As our communities change, we must change to better serve them. If we are not relevant we will be left behind.

Diversity within our ranks brings a much richer culture. Having a diverse membership is one of CFA's key strengths, but we can do even better.

Our recruitment practices strive to demonstrate our relevance to a wide range of Australians. While only two women went through career recruit courses last year out of just 34 female applicants, one of these women received the Instructors' award at graduation – a first for CFA. This year, there are 126 female applicants – a dramatic change in numbers in one year. Well done to our career firefighting recruitment team.

Two recruits from 2014 have an Indigenous heritage and another recruit can speak fluent Cantonese, which is also a first for CFA.

CFA's Access and Inclusion Guidelines and other tools to support inclusion and diversity within CFA are being updated to make it easy for you to better understand the diversity of your community.

Our Koori Inclusion Action Plan will be officially launched in National Reconciliation Week in late May. It lays out actions that will ensure our structures, behaviours, culture and values reflect our respect for the Koori community, the traditional owners of the land. We recognise their connection to country and pay our respect to their land management practices and their past and present elders.

More than 60 CFA members marched in February's 2015 Pride March in solidarity with people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transexual and intersex. They were led by our Chief Officer alongside Emergency Management Commissioner Craig Lapsley and MFB Chief Officer Peter Rau.

CFA members are leaders in their communities and we are strengthened when we define our leadership role more broadly. Diversity and inclusiveness are the path to that greater strength.

ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD

In February Mick Bourke stepped down as CEO after six years of service. Mick helped CFA pull together and rebuild in a challenging period following the 2009 Victorian bushfires. With great commitment and enthusiasm, he led CFA through a period of enormous change and challenges, including the bushfires response, the Royal Commission, and emergency management reforms across the sector.

On behalf of the Board, I'd like to thank Mick for his achievements and his leadership; he leaves behind him a stronger organisation.

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If you have any queries about *Brigade* magazine, contact the editor: duncan.russell@cfa.vic.gov.au; 9262 8978

For any social media queries, contact: m.anderson@cfa.vic.gov.au; 9262 8317



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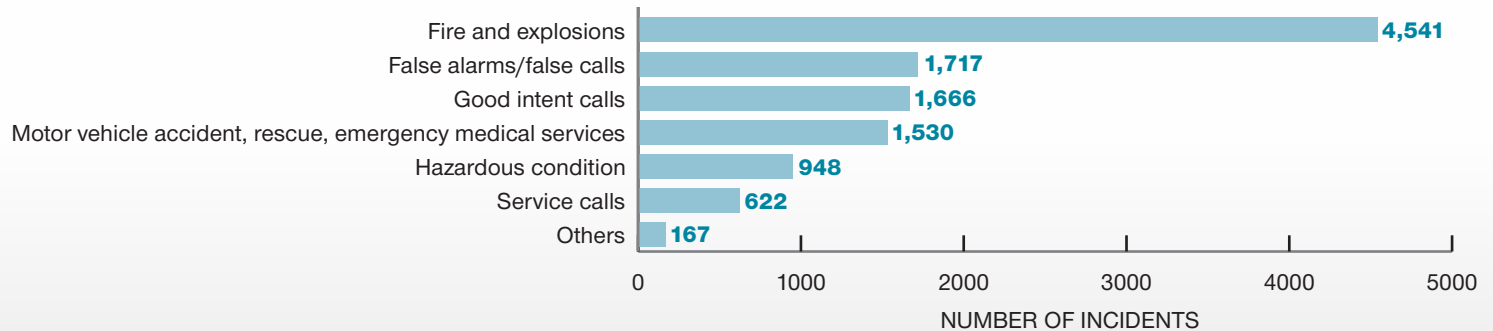


twitter.com/cfa_members

Incident summary

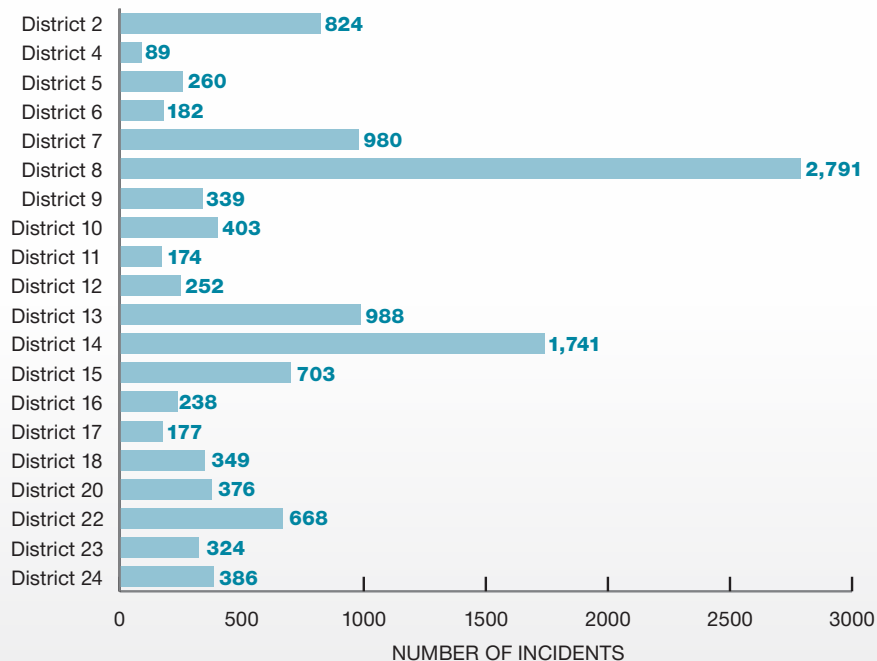
STATEWIDE INCIDENTS BY TYPE

1 October – 31 December 2014



STATEWIDE INCIDENTS BY DISTRICT

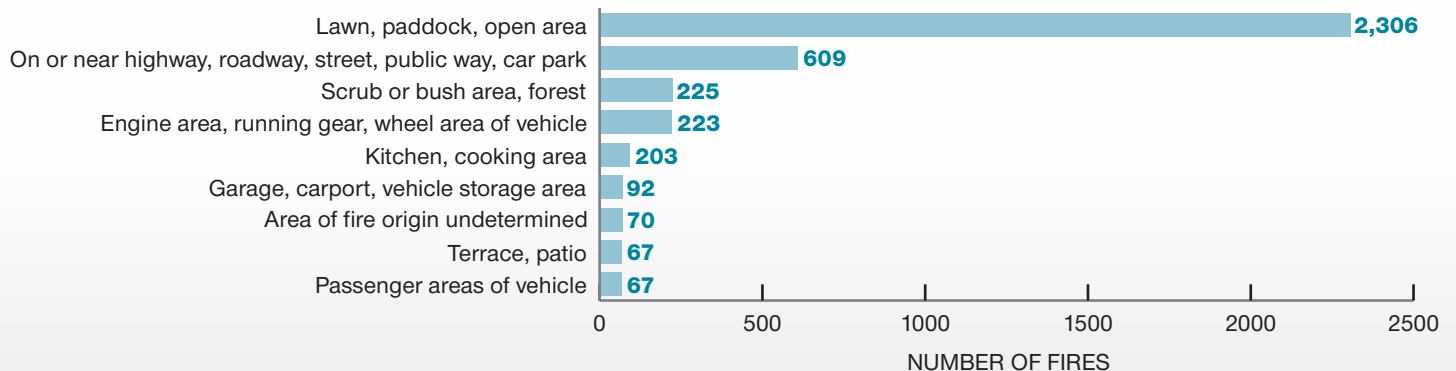
1 October – 31 December 2014



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 October – 31 December 2014



Lightning storm hits north-east



On a day of high temperatures and strong winds, more than 150 fires started on Monday 15 December in north-east Victoria. By Tuesday there were around 350 fires, most caused by an intense lightning storm. By the end of Tuesday, five Emergency Warnings had been issued and there had been more than 500 requests for assistance for SES because of wind damage. A fire in the hills above Wodonga West posed a serious threat to the town.

The two longest-running fires were the 5,500-hectare Creightons Creek fire, south of Euroa, where four houses and around 1,000 livestock were lost, and the 5,750-hectare Lake Rowan-Warby Ranges fire which destroyed one house and more than 1,700 sheep.

Chief Officer Euan Ferguson toured the north-east on 17 December. "I was extremely impressed by the enthusiastic and professional approach taken by all the CFA people I came across," Euan said. "Determination, focus and teamwork were evident in bags full.

"Many fires were kept small due to rapid, concerted initial attack. Thank you all. A truly outstanding effort that makes me feel humble."



PHOTOS: MARK SLATER

WODONGA WEST-PLUNKETTS ROAD

CFA Board member and Captain of Wodonga West Fire Brigade Ross Coyle said Wodonga had "dodged a massive bullet".

The grassfire travelled slowly easterly from Black Range Road towards West Wodonga and came within six kilometres of the town. It's the closest a fire has come to the city's edge since 1952.

"We've known for a long time that any fire that approached Wodonga from the western side would be bad," Ross said. "That's why we took it so seriously.

"In the steep hills all you can see is the urban fringe."

The fire remained out of control overnight, but a massive effort from 150 firefighters and several water bombers held the fire to its seven-kilometre perimeter by noon the following day.

Crews worked overnight in steep, dark terrain, with breakaway fires sparking on Tuesday night.

"There was a period we were sure it was going to make a march on Wodonga," Ross said. "That first night, it was burning down all the hills and we just knew if it reached the bottom and makes a run at the next one, we're gone. If we didn't hold this back, Wodonga's residential area would have been hit.

"It's not good luck, it's good work. Luck often has a bit to do with it, but this time luck was definitely against us."

Chief Officer Euan Ferguson agreed and was full of praise for firefighters' efforts. "Detailed planning and a well thought-out strategy contained the Wodonga West fire before conditions worsened."

CREIGHTONS CREEK

By the time the pager message came in for this incident mid-afternoon on Tuesday 16 December, Group Officer Graeme Seach of Euroa Group was already worried.

“There had been so many lightning strikes the day before and we had spent that day chasing one fire after another,” said Graeme.

“On Tuesday we sent a page asking crews to check on all fires from the day before which they did, but this one was a sleeper. It started in rough, hilly terrain about 400 metres from a pine plantation where it crowned.

“It was rocky so we couldn’t follow it right from the start – trucks had to go around.

“I was talking to a Longwood lieutenant on the way there and we called for tankers-15. By the time we got there it was spotting a few hundred metres ahead and we called for further strike teams and air support and an Emergency Warning.

“I got out to put my overalls on and the wind almost blew me over. It was heading in a north-east direction and swung around to the south-west soon afterwards which made it a bigger fire front from the word go.

“Maurie Brodie, Tom Brodie and I were Ardroy Control in the Longwood FCV and that wind change put us at the back of the fire.

“The smoke was so bad that even the aircraft couldn’t see the fire. We lost four houses but we saved many others. We couldn’t put trucks into some of them. You don’t risk lives to save houses.

“We stopped the front of the fire just before dark on that first day.”

While Graeme moved to the local command facility (LCF) next day and stayed there for much of the next few weeks, Creightons Creek Captain John Chiswell moved from the back of the Creightons Creek truck into a command role. This is the largest fire in his patch since he became captain two years ago.

“We were just chasing it,” said John. “We never got into a position when we thought we could pull it up. The terrain made it really difficult to get an overview. When it travelled over a hill or dropped into a gully, you’d have to guesstimate what it was doing.

“Once it dropped into the Creightons Creek valley we got into asset protection for farmhouses, sheep, cattle, horse studs and hobby farms. Each truck had to make its own executive decision.

“It took off on us and three weeks merged into one really long day.”

Unfortunately, one breakaway was called in at 12.30pm on Christmas Day, causing maximum destruction to lunch and dinner plans with a large number of trucks called.

“Euroa Group and the LCF gave us great assistance that day,” continued John. “We appreciate all the brigades who assisted, especially our neighbours Longwood, Terip Terip, Upton Hill, Gooram and Ruffy.

“Our community members manned the hall and cooked and we ate there. It was psychologically immensely important. The community felt they were putting in and we could sit down for a cup of tea and share their stories. It helped ease the pressure but there’s still half of our brigade area that’s not burnt out and half of summer left.”

For Ruffy Captain John Furlanetto, the pressure started with the preceding Tarcombe lightning strike fire.

“There was a bit on,” said John Furlanetto in a classic understatement.

“We’d been at fires Monday arvo and night then early Tuesday morning. We left the Tarcombe fire for Longwood East when we saw a fair plume of smoke. The ignition point was only three kilometres from the Ruffy brigade boundary.

“The standout piece of work for me was probably the pre-planning that went into the Saturday wind change and we held the lines.

“It’s amazing how all your training gels and how the community rallies, not to mention all the time our members gave willingly. It was a terrific effort. Our two trucks didn’t miss a shift in about two and a half weeks until Region told us to have a spell.

“Since then the rains have come in really gentle and done more good than harm. We couldn’t have asked for better.”

The previous major fire through the area was in 1990 when a CFA member was tragically killed at Strathbogie. Before that was the devastating Longwood fire of 1965.

STORY LEITH HILLARD





Ararat Fire Brigade firefighters Nicole Bendelle, Sven Ditrich and Joel Hughes, and Captain Greg Taylor, saved this house despite being surrounded by fire.



PHOTOS: KEITH PAKENHAM

“How did we manage to do all that?”

The first major fire of 2015 threatened the township of Moyston, west of Ararat, at around noon on 2 January when a fast-running grassfire started 3km north of the township and travelled south-easterly.

An Emergency Warning was issued for Moyston within minutes, and then for Maroona as the fire continued. Firefighters, supported by aircraft, saved many houses and brought the fire under control the following day. However, it burnt 4,400 hectares, destroyed two houses and damaged several others, destroyed four farms and damaged around 90 others, and killed more than 3,000 livestock.

“The fire started around the town in a stiff northerly,” said sheep farmer and Moyston Fire Brigade Captain Bill Taylor. “I got the pager message and went straight to the fire. By the time I got there it had progressed about 400 metres and was 50 metres wide. It jumped the road and we’d lost it.

“Two Moyston trucks were on site and almost the second lot of appliances on scene were the large air tankers – the water bombers. They were here in half an hour which is damned good as far as I’m concerned. They put a break on the north end of town but it outflanked us on the eastern side and we went into asset protection mode. The trucks would wet down the houses and move on – they were moving all the time.”

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning crews filled every water trough they went past, with grateful stock trotting across to drink.

“The Erickson Aircrane was picking up water that’s used on the Moyston Oval which was also our staging area,” continued Bill.

“The road graders came from all over putting breaks around the flanks of the fire and excavators came in to push trees over.

“Saturday was a shocker. It raised dust and smoke and we had one major and two minor breakaways. We concentrated all our resources on the eastern flank with the fire heading to Ararat. Air attack was concentrating on the head and we were pinching it to a point with grader breaks all around.

“Euan Ferguson visited on Sunday. He said that when it came to aircraft, we were given the lot. That’s what happens when something like this escalates.

“Local ground observers were keeping ahead of the fire on high-visibility positions on the eastern flank. They were telling us where the fire was and where it was going. One of them was unfortunately a member of ours who lost a lot of sheep but saved his house. Thanks to him and his team for all they did.

“Water was an issue. Ninety per cent of our dams are dry and we had some quick fills on ones that weren’t. One of our first calls was to get water tankers from the shire and private contractors on site. Moyston township has a reticulated water system using water out of a bore in the Grampians.

“The Westmere Group had come in with a lot of appliances and we cut the fire up. Their group ran a third of the fire out of the Willaura local command facility and we ran the rest out of Moyston Fire Station.

“A rapid response team from Stawell came and did a magnificent job feeding us. If troops are fed and watered, it makes my job a lot easier. We had stragglers coming in at midnight and they were still able to get a hot meal. Now we’ve got wives of brigade members and community members rallying around for food. They’re the people who always put their hand up.

“When you sit back and talk about it, you think, ‘How the hell did we manage to do all that?’ You know the troops will put their best effort in. I can’t praise our members enough. They had to put all their training to use with flames up to 25 feet high and a howling wind behind them.

“We have 70-odd members in our brigade and you feel pretty humble when you see all the things that just get done. I’ve also got nothing but praise for all the firefighters and our control group. Max Maclean is worth his weight in gold. He was with me as Moyston Control along with Ewan Clugston and ‘Wilbur’ Wilde in the Ararat Group FCV.”

For more about the Moyston fire, see p21.

STORY LEITH HILLARD

Hastings flares on wind change

Saturday 3 January was forecast to be a bad day.

Westernport Group Officer David Gibbs has been in the role for 25 years and a local long enough to know that the local command facility (LCF) at Moorooduc needed to be staffed.

“There’s nothing worse than playing catch-up,” said David. “I looked at the charts and the isobars. It was part local knowledge and part gut feeling. All you need is a strong wind.”

That’s just what they got. With a filthy wind change moving across Victoria, fire flared in Hastings in the early afternoon and the LCF was on high alert.

“It was running along the railway line and there are factories on both sides,” continued David. “We sent our group mobile command vehicle to Incident Controller Colin Cook on the fireground, and then the fire got into the wood pile. It’s five years’ worth of stacked firewood. From there we knew it would spot into Warringine Park – a very scrubby park – which it did.”

David assumed control, requested more strike teams and received a call at 3.45pm from Operations Manager Mike Owen who wanted a prognosis by 4pm. David remembers the words clearly: “Would we be able to hold the fire and would we be able to maintain control at the LCF. Good question!”

“That’s when the fire really got running in the park and we were looking at it heading to Bittern and Crib Point. A Watch and Act had been issued, people saw the smoke plume and were getting on the only road out in some places. If the fire crossed over Woolleys Road, you have hundreds of houses in a bush environment. With that kind of potential, control was transferred to Dandenong incident control centre.



PHOTO: ELLIE TESSELAAR

“The tension was between stopping the head of the fire and preparing for the wind change which we knew would send the fire roaring into the southernmost part of Hastings.

“The balance worked out, but not without the strenuous efforts of some pumper strike teams who got a bit hot.

“The story of this fire was one of multiple saves of houses south of Hastings. Thirty or 40 had physical damage – sheds, fences, verandahs. When the firefront hit, the crews all withdrew to the street. As soon as the front had passed, they went to the backs of the houses and put out fires. It was the natural instinct of the firefighters.”

The fire was held at 128 hectares.

STORY LEITH HILLARD



PHOTO: GARY SISSONS, MORNINGTON PENINSULA NEWS GROUP



Support for Adelaide Hills fires

PHOTO: WARREN MITCHELSON

Victoria committed numerous strike teams, specialists in areas ranging from aircraft deployment to impact assessment and liaison officers to early January's South Australian fires, totalling around 240 people.

Hillcrest Fire Brigade Captain Fiona Burns has been deployed interstate several times before and was also a member of the Australian contingent responding to recent fires in British Columbia. This time she was a strike team leader based in Gumeracha, with 19 members from District 13 crewing District 4 trucks.

"We were deployed on night shifts ahead of an extreme-risk day approaching on the Wednesday," said Fiona. "Fortunately that day ended up very hot but without the predicted strong winds and there were no new fires.

"Our tasks were to provide relief to the South Australian crews, consolidate control lines, extinguish hotspots and assess hazardous trees. There were pockets of unburnt fuel and the night winds caused some extreme fire behaviour – things would be stirred up at 11pm.

"We knew that the locals would have days and weeks ahead attending to every tree and stick on fire, so it was important to give them a break. The fires would have been truly frightening on the way through and we saw some incredible saves.

"We'd spend the first hour of our shift with home owners because we were geographically challenged, then try to get them to sleep."

CFA crews extinguished trees if it was safe to do so, but many were too dangerous to be felled by hand. Members mapped the trees using GPS reference points overnight, and a Victorian-based Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning team from Port Phillip felled the trees on the following day shifts. Perhaps they could be described as 'shifts that passed in the night'.

"It was a tough gig," continued Fiona. "We were sleeping out in tents during really hot days. My hat's off to the locals. A local lady turned up and asked if we needed anything, so she and her friends drove 19 of us and our gear to the CFS training college to sleep inside on the final day. It was heaven!

"All of us were overwhelmed by the response of locals and meeting and greeting them was a highlight. It was really common to see entire families involved in looking after us with adults cooking and their children making up our ration packs. We saw the family community spirit and some of those conversations were really touching."



PHOTO: FRANK BEUKELMAN

Freshwater Creek Captain Adam Steel was a crew leader in the first District 7 strike team who drove across in their own trucks. They were based in One Tree Hill after the major fire had gone through and also experienced the unpredictable gully winds.

"It was unsettling," said Adam. "We were blacking out in up-and-down country and all of a sudden the wind and temperature would change. You don't work upwind of dangerous trees but someone 50 metres away might be working in completely different conditions to you so, safety wise, that was challenging.

"Burnt out tree stumps and roots were also a safety hazard – the ground can just give way under you.

"On the second night we conducted welfare checks on people in badly-affected areas. Everybody seemed to have running water and the electricity had come back on. They were very thankful but it also got emotional. We were talking to some people who had lost their livelihoods."

Once it got too late to doorknock, Strike Team 0720 blacked out around the main water reservoir servicing Adelaide – a meaningful job alongside one local crew relieved to have energetic backup.

Adam and Fiona both use the same word to describe their mission in South Australia: "repay".

"South Australia came here in 2009, so this was our chance to repay their generosity," said Fiona. "A community was in need and we were happy to help."

STORY LEITH HILLARD

Fighting fires in the west

A deployment of 69 CFA members were welcomed home by Chief Officer Euan Ferguson in February, after providing much-needed relief for Western Australia crews battling extremely large and serious bushfires south of Perth.

The CFA members, mostly from Gippsland, spent four days fighting out-of-control fires. They were part of a 130-strong Victorian contingent which included emergency services personnel from the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), Parks Victoria and Melbourne Water.

The Victorian contingent was tasked with staffing incident management teams (IMT) and crewing trucks working on bushfires in the Shannon National Park, about 300 kilometres south of Perth.

Chief Officer Ferguson praised the willingness of CFA members, many of them volunteers who took time away from work and family to help our colleagues in their time of need.

Assistant Chief Officer North West Region Mike Wassing was one of the IMT personnel who made the trip to the west. He supported the Interstate Liaison Unit, which ensured that all Victorian personnel were looked after and that the inter-agency coordination ran smoothly.

“Our job was to support the West Australian fire services and the community with some of their worst fires in recent decades,” Mike said.

“We were involved in two major blazes which, combined, destroyed more than 140,000 hectares.

“We had about 60 firefighters at the pointy end doing the hard yards out on the fireground alongside other Victorian firefighters from DELWP and Melbourne Water.”

Mike said the fires were well away from communities but difficult to control.

“The fire activity was intense and driven by strong winds and, in fact, two of the fires our crews were working on doubled in size over a 24-hour period.”

Mike said a Victorian fire crew had a “very near miss” when, without warning, an enormous tree fell on the back of their truck, completely crushing it.

“We’re very relieved to have all our firefighters home safely.”



PHOTO: TEAGAN KNIGHT

CFA’s Health and Wellbeing Officer Peter Langridge also joined the WA deployment, leading a health monitoring team on the fireground for Victorian and West Australian firefighters.

“Part of our role was to set up at the staging area to test for carbon monoxide levels, dehydration and general health monitoring of crews,” Peter said.

“One of the first things we did was ensure there was a hygiene station in the staging area near the catering facilities, as there wasn’t one when we arrived.

“We tested an average of 30 firefighters a day and found cases of people exhibiting the early signs of dehydration which was able to be treated on the fireground with fluids and electrolytes because it was detected early.

“We found that the bulk of people volunteered themselves to be tested – and really appreciated the service we were able to offer on-site.”

The WA crews were so impressed by our health monitoring team that the WA Department of Fire and Emergency Services contacted Peter while he was in WA, wanting advice on how WA could set up its own on-site health monitoring.

STORY ANDREA MASON



PHOTO: ADRIAN HEM

Mick Bourke farewells CFA

PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM



After six years at CFA, Mick Bourke has stepped down as Chief Executive Officer, “to give someone else a go at the top job,” Mick said.

Mick started at CFA in September 2009 and helped CFA pull together and rebuild in a very challenging period. He steered CFA through the complex implementation of the recommendations and initiatives that arose from the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission. His influence over this work set the foundation for major strategic and organisational changes across CFA during his time as CEO.

Six years on, we have in place better warnings and advice for our communities, our people are safer through measures such as crew protection in all our tanker fleet, and our firefighting capability has been boosted.

Mick came to CFA after heading up the Environment Protection Authority and, before that, he spent several years in senior

management roles in Victoria's regional and metropolitan water authorities.

A business administrator by profession, Mick was raised in Quambatook and brought to CFA a well-developed appreciation of volunteerism and leadership in rural communities.

During his term as CEO, Mick administered the introduction of a range of new operational resources and programs including the Regional Radio Dispatch Service and around 250 new rural fire stations.

In the fire and emergency management sector, Mick has been a forthright campaigner to support the state's objective to improve cohesion and interoperability of the fire and emergency management agencies' response and recovery in times of major fires and flood. Mick also introduced administrative and management reforms across CFA including the restructure of CFA into five regions and the establishment of five assistant chief officers.

“Mick helped CFA pull together and rebuild in a challenging period following the 2009 Victorian bushfires. As well as leading the organisation through significant change and challenges, Mick is also very well-respected for his work within the emergency management sector as a leader and a professional. I have enjoyed working with Mick who demonstrated a commitment and enthusiasm to working with CFA and its people.”

CFA Chair Claire Higgins

“Mick will be greatly missed at CFA. He leaves behind a strong and committed leadership team, and we know there is more work to do.”

CEO Michael Wootten

“Mick has left a lasting legacy of excellent leadership. His reformation of the senior leadership team and engagement with the field was much appreciated by the assistant chief officers and before that the regional directors. He began the introduction of distinct CFA organisational values – something that we really need and that is continuing to progress.”

Assistant Chief Officer Bob Barry

“My appreciation to Mick for his dedication, leadership and participation in the cultural change which has occurred in CFA over the past few years. That cultural change has made a big positive difference to my life. You might think that an ordinary firey doesn't notice these things, but I want to make it clear I also appreciate very much Mick's standing up and standing in at critical times during the major emergencies.”

Volunteer Ed Adamson

“Mick, as a 45-year vet I thank you for your grassroots expertise and as you step down please take with you the respect of the vols as you have led us through some difficult times and you leave with your head held high.”

Volunteer Craig Hunt

CEO

Michael Wootten



In February I took on the role of CEO of CFA, a position that's both a privilege and a challenge. CFA is a large and busy organisation, with almost 60,000 members across 20 districts and five regions. As Mick Bourke said when he took on the job of CEO six years ago, we will continue to grow and improve. I want to thank Mick for leaving behind a committed leadership team and a stronger organisation.

As I said recently, my immediate priority is to do more to connect with staff and volunteers – and I'm keen to hear your ideas and issues. At CFA we have one mission, to protect lives and property, but sometimes we have different priorities and it can be easy to lose connection with each other. So, over the next couple of months, I'll be visiting each Regional Leadership Team to start to get closer to our field-based people. I'll also be running monthly CEO forums, visiting our integrated fire stations, and attending the volunteer championships. If you see me out and about, please come and say hello.

My other priority is to bring the Creating Our Future Together program to a formal close, and finalise the few remaining elements that still need attention. There are five parts of this program: strategy, culture, business improvement, leadership and structure. In all these areas we will transition to business as usual.

On **strategy**, we have developed four strategies that outline our priorities on People, Assets, Finance and Service Delivery. We are finalising our fifth strategy on Volunteerism after extensive consultation and engagement with members. Our next steps are to help you all understand each strategy and how your work contributes to them.

On **culture**, you told us in two recent surveys that we need to do more to improve our culture. We've heard you, and we have since focused our efforts on developing organisational values that will provide a common standard of agreed acceptable behaviours across CFA. We couldn't have progressed this work without your input.

On **business** improvement, we've made progress on many small and bigger initiatives such as the new online rostering system, which is being used across a few districts, the development of a self-service member portal, which will allow members to manage their details such as availability and personal gear in one place, and direct email to our members which, along with other communication tools, helps us reach our people quickly.

On **leadership**, we are now able to set out the expectations of leaders at all levels through the CFA Leadership Framework. Our focus on building our leaders' capability has been carried at corporate and grassroots levels, for example through the Captain's Peer Mentor Program.

And finally, on **structure**. Changing CFA's structure has been a big undertaking. We've seen the creation of five regions, the establishment of the assistant chief officer positions, and a new model for delivering support to the front-line. But, as with any change process, this has not come without challenges. For many of you, it's been a long and frustrating process, and I thank you for your patience. We know there is still work to do here.

We are still working through the proposed structures for Finance, OT&V and F&EM. I want to make clear that my priority is to finalise these changes as soon as possible.

I'll keep you all updated on progress over the next few months, and I look forward to meeting more of you as I travel around the state.

Thank you for the work you do for your community and CFA.

Help with research into hoarding

CFA and MFB have joined forces to carry out the first statewide study into hoarding and squalor.

Hoarding is the persistent accumulation of, and lack of ability to relinquish, large numbers of objects or living animals resulting in extreme clutter in or around premises. Hoarding presents a significant increase in fire risk for the occupants and to firefighters attending.

Squalor is an unsanitary living environment as a result of prolonged neglect. It poses a serious health and safety risk to the occupants and others in the community. Examples include rotting food, accumulated rubbish, human or animal waste, and vermin infestation.

While at turnouts, many firefighters will have seen living conditions in residences that have concerned them but, at the time, they haven't been able to record their observations.

We're asking you to cast your mind back to 2012 and consider the period from April 2012 up to and including April 2015, and send details about cases of hoarding or squalor to Station Officer Greg Abramovitch (g.abramovitch@cfa.vic.gov.au). Greg is collating this

data to help build a picture of the extent of the hoarding problem across the state.

Please send Greg the date or incident number and the following information (do not include the name of the affected person): gender, approximate age, number of occupants, any visible disabilities, a rating of the level of hoarding (see photos on our website at <http://tinyurl.com/kq56eey> or contact Greg for a poster of the clutter rating scale for your station) and whether the hoarding was inside or outside. With incidences of squalor, was there rotting food, rubbish, human or animal waste, or vermin infestation?

Thanks you for your help with this important research.



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM



AUSTRALIA DAY 2015 HONOURS

The Australia Day Honours, announced by the Governor-General, provide national and formal recognition for Australians who've made a significant difference to their communities. Congratulations to the seven CFA members who received the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) and three who received the Australian Fire Service Medal (AFSM) for their work in emergency services.

MEDAL OF THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA LES RIDD

Les Ridd is the driving force behind an annual event which has raised more than \$200,000 for at least 20 different charities, organisations and emergency services.

The Molesworth Easter Bazaar and Auction was started by Les, the secretary/treasurer of Molesworth Fire Brigade, as a way to raise money to fix up a run-down community hall. Still going strong 37 years later, it has become a community institution.

"It's the one day of the year that brings the whole community together," said Les.

The quietly-spoken beef and sheep farmer said he can only accept the medal on behalf of his wife, children and organising committee. "It's fantastic, but everything I've done has been so dependent on the work of others."

Les no longer goes out on the truck but he remains a core part of the brigade. "Every election that comes up I say, 'right, time for someone else to have a go', but they like that I know how to do it."

GEOFF BROUGHTON

"I'm blown away," said Geoff Broughton. "I didn't think I was worthy of such an honour. Very chuffed."

Like many who dedicate their life to serving the community, Geoff is a master at juggling his time on his farm with his family and firefighting (both paid and voluntary) as well as various other community service roles.

He works for the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning as a seasonal firefighter in summer. But as soon as he gets home and takes off the green overalls, he's on standby as the captain of Branjee Fire Brigade.

He's also one of Victoria's 60 fire tower observers, a role he has done for the past 22 years. "That's a true community role," he said. "Whether it's a fire in paddocks, bushland or someone's house, quite often we're the ones who see it first and call it in."



PHOTO: WARREN MITCHELSON

▲ HELEN KENNEY

Helen Kenney wears many hats in the St Andrews community, but it's her work with emergency services that earned her an Australia Day honour.

She held several elected positions at St Andrews Fire Brigade, including lieutenant and communications officer, which prepared her for her ultimate test as captain. Her four-year stint as captain encompassed Black Saturday.

She's now the manager of community safety for the Nillumbik Group, and acts as a liaison between the group and the district, as well as other agencies including Victoria Police and local government.

Her volunteering extends to other aspects of community work including the St Andrews Community Bushfire Recovery Association. She also takes a keen interest in local history groups and is a founding member of the St Andrews/Queenstown Historical Society.



▲ IAN COOPER

Ian Cooper's mates recruited him as a member of Traralgon Fire Brigade in 1957 and since then the 79-year-old hasn't looked back.

As well as being an active firefighter, Ian has held many roles within CFA including member of an operational support team, first lieutenant, brigade foreman and apparatus officer, as well as coach and leader of the discipline squad. He's also a judge at the CFA State Championships.

Ian's time with CFA has given him lifelong friendships. "I like the camaraderie, particularly within my Gippsland region. I've made heaps of friends along the way. Even though we might see each other only two or three times a year, we use that time to catch up."

"It certainly has made me a better person, working with and helping others, and doing something for the community."

WAYNE BASS

Wayne Bass has dedicated his personal and professional life to working with young people and disadvantaged youth to help them do the best they possibly can.

"I'm passionate about working with kids and young people, seeing them grow and make something of their lives," said Wayne who's the treasurer of Port Albert Fire Brigade.

Wayne and wife Debbie (who's also a member of Port Albert brigade) are part of a team that manages local incident control centres and local command facility communications to ensure they are kept in a functional state and can run at a moment's notice if an incident threatens. Wayne also regularly turns out to incidents.

Wayne and Debbie established the Port Albert Junior Fire Brigade because "there wasn't much constructive for kids to do around this area," said Wayne.

"A lot of the kids we see from around this area come from disadvantaged backgrounds, so it's about pushing them and helping them see where they go and something to work towards."

ALAN STUART

Alan Stuart has been recognised for his decades of service to CFA and his community, including a 10-year stint as captain of Mount Taylor Fire Brigade and, most recently, heading a volunteer recovery group that helps fire-affected landowners with the arduous task of getting back on their feet after a major fire.

Alan leads an army of 100-plus volunteers who donate their time working to repair or remove destroyed fencing on fire-affected properties in East Gippsland.

"People are under a lot of stress after a big fire has just gone through their properties and affected their livelihoods, so you can't just come in and say we're going to do this and that," Alan said.

"It's not as simple as going in with an axe and wire cutters. You've got to be diplomatic about it and remember you're dealing with traumatised people."

VIV WILLIAMS

Selby Fire Brigade member Viv Williams received her medal for her significant contributions to animal welfare and protection and to fireground catering and support.

As a member of the Dandenong Ranges Auxiliary, Viv prepares and serves the food that sustains hundreds of people through a firefight. It's a critical and often overlooked role.

"We see them come back absolutely exhausted," Viv said. "I've got so much admiration for the guys who go out on the trucks."

Viv is a former president of the Australian Animal Protection Society and member of numerous other protection and ethics committees.

"I always encourage the animal rescuers to do 'Maintain Safety' [basic accreditation course for entry to a fireground], and a lot of them have actually got it now," she said. "They go in after a fire to rescue wildlife and to leave food and water."

**AUSTRALIAN FIRE SERVICE MEDAL****◀ JAMIE MACKENZIE**

Jamie MacKenzie has a passion for training and developing leaders in the fire services sector. He has played an integral role in developing training materials and resources that take into account how people operate, how decisions are made under pressure and why mistakes are made.

"We have always had good programs that teach people how to put out a fire but it's about drilling down to the next level," he said.

Jamie is also keen to point out that the work he does with local brigades is just as important as higher-profile projects. For example, helping brigades to pinpoint their values and focus on how they communicate.

One of the courses that has struck a real chord among CFA volunteers over the past decade is Fireline Leadership. Jamie was instrumental in bringing this training to Victoria and modifying it for our emergency services.

◀ IVAN SMITH

Ivan Smith has led operations at major fires since 1973 and is an accredited Level 3 incident controller. This paved the way for him to champion the Australasian Inter-agency Incident Management System (AIIMS) and its introduction to CFA and other agencies.

He was a deputy group officer with the Pakenham Group on Ash Wednesday and was the equivalent of what is now known as an incident controller, leading operations during the Beaconsfield fire.

"I was right there, talking to a crew from Narre Warren who were dying," he said.

"You never lose that feeling or the memories. I was the captain of Narre Warren North, their neighbouring brigade, and I knew them all. Since 1983, and being so close to the crew that died, I made the decision that yes some mistakes were made, and I'd never lay down until we ironed those things out."

GARY HARKER

During his 47 years of service to CFA, Gary Harker has earned a solid reputation as a great supporter of his peers. He is often called on for advice and mentorship by people in CFA and has been described as a great influencer.

He has an innovative approach to problem solving in the area of fire suppression methods and strategies in the coal industry and the use of Class A foam.

His knowledge and expertise were called on during the Hazelwood mine fire last year where he took a lead role in developing and implementing a successful suppression strategy.

He reckons competent and committed people are essential parts of an effective fire service.

"I really have to thank Dave Staple and Morwell Fire Brigade for all the work that we did in experiments with Class A foam for fire suppression in the coal industry."

The relationships he's made at CFA have played an important role throughout his long service, beginning as a Junior in 1968.

"It's the friendships within CFA, both with volunteer and career staff, which I enjoy about the organisation."



CHIEF OFFICER www.cfa.vic.gov.au/chiefblog

Euan Ferguson

Encouraging safe farm firefighter units

Fundamental to CFA and the notion of 'shared responsibility' is the use of farm firefighters. Farm firefighters may or may not be CFA members. The term describes property owners who own large tracts of land and who own firefighting gear. This gear is designed to deal with fire starts on their own property and on their neighbours'.

I often hear the view that CFA is shunning and discouraging farm firefighters. This shouldn't be the case. CFA strongly encourages the participation of farm firefighters. In the early stages of a fire, there may be five to 10 farm units to every CFA tanker. However, farm firefighters present some risks. It's important that their operations are safe and coordinated. Farm firefighters are protected as 'casual firefighters' under the CFA Act.

The critical value of planning and preparation equally applies to farm firefighters. Farmers are a great source of local knowledge and there are a number of things that collectively we can do to maximise this relationship.

In 2014 the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) and CFA launched a trial of grain harvesting guidelines. These guidelines helped harvesters and contractors know when the risk of harvesting was too great. The trial is currently being evaluated, but initial feedback is extremely positive. The harvesting trial brought farmers, contractors and CFA more closely together.

A side benefit is that farmers and contractors are paying more attention to their fire units. They are much more conscious of having a unit in the paddock and ensuring their gear is ready and operational. If brigades take the time to engage with local farm firefighters, we can improve their understanding about how we fight fires and ensure the farm fire units are working safely and effectively. We need to recognise and respect that many farm firefighters don't like the perceived bureaucracy associated with being a CFA member and undertaking minimum skills training. But they do want to help in times of fire.

An example of CFA adapting its traditional volunteer model to better cater for the needs of casual volunteers is BlazeAlert, a network of local farmers established by Kevin Butler (of BlazeAid fame). Kevin has registered local farmers and organised them to activate in a concerted and coordinated way and to work with the local CFA brigade. Kilmore Brigade Captain Dave Williams and Operations Officer Justin Dally have worked hard to guide and integrate CFA with Kevin and BlazeAlert members.

Based on the positive relationship established with VFF over the past two years, CFA and VFF are keen to look at how we can better use farm firefighters in the future. Two areas include developing guidelines for burning off on farms and guidelines for safe farm firefighting. We'll look to capitalise on similar guidelines that exist interstate.

On a final note, I wish to recognise the excellent work of former Chief Executive Officer Mick Bourke in leading the organisation. He will be missed.

ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER South East Region



Trevor Owen

At the time of writing, our bushfire season locally has been relatively quiet, with the exception of a notable grass and scrub fire in Hastings on 3 January. Thankfully, due to the good work of our firefighters at the front-line, there were no serious injuries and no houses were lost. A job well done as praised by the local community who were extremely grateful for CFA's efforts.

Further afield we have provided significant assistance to our interstate colleagues. Our members travelled to South Australia in January to protect the Adelaide Hills during a very difficult period. In early February, our members joined other emergency services personnel from the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Parks Victoria and Melbourne Water to support Western Australia in a variety of incident management and fireground roles.

To immediately respond to the call for interstate help and be deployed away from family, friends and employment for over a week is an amazing effort. I am regularly impressed by members in South East Region who answer the call for assistance from our interstate brothers and sisters, many of whom are experiencing their worst fire season conditions in many years.

Erica and District Fire Brigade member and CFA Pride Ambassador Russell Wright led CFA members in the 2015 Pride March held in St Kilda on 1 February. I was proud to be part of this historic event which recognises and supports the LGBTI members in the community.

The march was well attended by more than 60 CFA members, including our chief officer, deputy chief officers, assistant chief officers and other senior CFA leaders. I commend Russell for his enthusiasm, passion and vision in organising this event, and his role in paving the way to encourage recognition of diversity within CFA. Great leadership Russell!

The Government has reaffirmed commitment to the standalone District 27 based on the Latrobe City municipal footprint. The project team is positive about the progress made to date, and the framework that is being developed to implement the necessary improvements to our response capability in the Latrobe Valley.

I became assistant chief officer in South East Region four months ago and, as I reflect on this period, I am pleased with the teamwork occurring between the five districts that make up the new South East Region. The dialogue and communication among our members as we continue to build strong relationships, and work as one across the region, is truly inspiring.

Well done team. Keep up the great work!

Twitter: @CFASouthEastACO

ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER North West Region



Mike Wassing

As I sit here in Perth as part of an interstate liaison team supporting Victorian firefighters and incident management team (IMT) members deployed to major fires in Western Australia, I reflect on the camaraderie of emergency services across Australia.

The 142-strong Victorians are here to help our peers in WA. Yes, there are differences in fire behaviour, our equipment, our plans and strategies and even parts of our language, but we are united in our efforts to support communities and each other.

So what relevance does this have to CFA's North West Region (NWR)? Well, we are a new region with enormous differences in risk and needs, but we are part of a new team. Everyone is part of multiple teams which, in our case, means four districts, 30 groups, 248 brigades and more than 11,000 volunteers and staff. Every one of us is part of more than one of these teams and, of course, the CFA team.

To be part of a great team means to be giving of yourself to others and using your individual knowledge, skills and attributes to contribute to established goals. This requires trust, equality and loyalty as some of the core values.

I have been proud to witness such contributions throughout NWR in so many ways. We have again experienced significant fires in multiple areas, including Mystic Park in District 20 and Kyneton, Pastoria and Mia Mia in District 2. The readiness of NWR, other emergency services and the community has been outstanding and ensured such emergencies were limited in size. More importantly, this readiness lessened the impact and consequences for local communities.

We have supported SES in major flash floods in Bendigo and we respond daily to offer assistance to other organisations.

We continue to work with local government, other agencies and government departments and, most importantly, communities, to ensure they are aware of their risks and what they can do to prevent fires and other emergencies.

We train, practise and learn to make sure we are better every time we do our job, whether that is engaging with the community, running a schools program, on the back of a truck, at Group HQ or part of an IMT.

We make sure we are compliant with government policy and our statutory needs as well as providing advice and setting standards for fire safety regulations for others.

And we ensure we act in a manner that reflects the professionalism of CFA and its respect within the communities we serve.

ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER West Region



Peter O'Keefe

The start to the fire season has certainly seen some periods of very busy operational activity, with the Moyston Fire in District 16 on 2 January causing concern and burning under significant weather conditions. However, this fire was rapidly contained with a great overall result.

The western part of the region has also been continually busy with a large number of fires occurring both in bushland and open grasslands with lightning being one of the most common causes. It's always a challenge for brigades and groups to maintain the momentum to deal with high volumes of fires occurring in a relatively short space of time, but brigades in District 17, along with DELWP, did a great job to minimise the impact from these fires.

District 15 has also been busy with a number of fires on the urban fringe of Ballarat, and has supported other areas of West Region and into adjoining regions with incident management capability, ground observers and strike teams. It's been a great team effort by all. The remaining weeks of the season will still present challenges and it's important we stay focused.

The rain across the region has given us the chance to rest and review the activity to date, and all debriefs have now been held at brigades, groups and districts. This ensures that all the lessons learned and opportunities for improvement have been captured. Our task will now be to ensure we make the most of this, to reflect on these opportunities and turn feedback into action. I have every confidence that the district teams, with everyone's support, will not miss this opportunity.

Over the past months while travelling around the region, the subject of viability and how we shape the future always come into the conversation. At a recent DPC, I was heartened to hear a presentation from two of our younger CFA members who had just completed the CFA Challenge Program. They both spoke very modestly about the experience which has provided them with a unique and valuable opportunity to reflect, develop and focus on their future. They have clearly gained significant benefit from this opportunity. To build a viable and diverse CFA, that truly reflects the community and places us well for the future, I ask you all to consider whether we have the right mix of skills, background, gender and balance in our membership. Can our younger members help us on this journey?

My ongoing priorities are to continue to be ready and focus on the mission; ensure we look after our people; and support continual improvement and the opportunity for progressive change in line with the Fire and Emergency Management restructure. Stay safe.

Twitter: @CFAWestACO

ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER South West Region



Bob Barry

South West Region looks to the future by focusing on social media and IT technology to support our service delivery. We are using 'computer-mediated' tools to allow our staff, volunteers and the community to exchange information and interact in order to pursue mutual interests, safety messages and organisational goals.

This season South West Region has begun trialling a region-specific social media program. To date this has included the development and implementation of a Facebook page and will soon be complemented by additional social media such as Instagram, LinkedIn and Google+. Our trial has focused on fire prevention activities, individual preparedness and engaging with the community in a two-way dialogue prior to and during extreme days.

In particular, in the days leading to the Extreme Fire Danger Rating on 2 and 3 January the Facebook page concentrated on disseminating information, alerting the community to the fire danger (particularly given the region encounters significant tourism during New Year) and highlighting actions that the community can take to prepare, and explain the actions CFA was taking.

During the first week of January, the South West Facebook page was accessed 213,019 times and saw an increase of almost 50 per cent in 'likes'. CFA posted 72 times with 22,160 clicks for further information and had 4,072 interactions (comments, likes or shares) with the online community.

It has been interesting to note the enhanced local, specific engagement we've been able to achieve through social media. The community has been interested in what individual brigades are doing as well as what CFA more broadly is doing. Similarly, the community has actively got involved in a two-way interaction with CFA – posting on Facebook, asking preparedness questions and also providing highly-localised information, such as temperatures, wind, storm activity and rainfall during the extreme days.

South West Region intends to do further work in the social networking area to further enhance the different ways we engage with our communities and to assess how we might be able to use the information supplied by the community.

Our Regional Leadership Team is very keen to explore other avenues of social media that will allow us to engage with our community. We are very fortunate to have the support of Communities and Communication Executive Director Mark Sullivan as our senior mentor and we will be seeking his further support and guidance to build our social media profile.

Social media is quickly becoming a powerful interactive and marketing medium and it will give us the ability to directly communicate with a wide range of stakeholders at a low cost.

Look for us on Facebook – CFA South West and my page at ACO Bob Barry.

ASSISTANT CHIEF OFFICER North East Region



Garry Cook

This summer has seen some significant and dramatic events across the region. In late November and early December, a number of fires were already testing us. That culminated with the events of 15 and 16 December as we sustained 16 hours of constant lightning activity stretching from the border into the top end of District 13. Despite some great work stitching up many fires, three got going and resulted in some major losses. Thankfully, no lives or significant injuries were sustained.

Mother Nature continued to test us and our communities with sustained heat resulting in both heat events and heat health alerts. Then, in early January, compliments of a tropical moisture flow from the north, we had flood warnings and widespread rainfall. There was welcome respite for some weary firefighters, particularly in the Euroa Group, but it was a further challenge for emergency services personnel and our partner agencies, who had to switch focus from one hazard to another in a short timeframe.

The key to successfully rising to these challenges is working as one with all the agencies, having access to good information and intelligence, using that to make decisions and then rapidly communicating the decisions to both our community and our people using multiple channels. Have we got it all perfect? I'd suggest not yet, but we have come a long way in this space and we are determined to pursue that goal.

Vale former Benalla Group Officer Lindsay Sessions and Benalla Fire Brigade Captain Bill Polwarth

During all the activity mentioned above, we lost two of our great fire service figures from the Benalla area in District 23 in late December and early January. Lindsay Sessions AFSM served as Group Officer of Benalla Group for 28 years and was a great servant of the volunteer movement as president of the Victorian Rural Fire Brigades Association Region 23 Council. His passion also included the Rural Championships and he was an active member in that field for decades.

Bill Polwarth was the serving captain of Benalla Fire Brigade when he passed away suddenly on Christmas Eve. Bill was a highly-respected member of the brigade and Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria. He had a strong passion for the Urban Championships and the development of Juniors.

It's fair to say the fire brigade dominated the lives of both these fine leaders and they will be sadly missed but not forgotten. Our thoughts are with their respective families and friends.

New medium pumper almost ready

The prototype of the next generation medium pumper is visiting every district in the state until the end of March so that CFA members can give valuable feedback. The journey to upgrade the medium pumper began in August 2012, when the project team assessed the current medium pumper's strengths and identified features which could be improved.

When developing the specifications for the new medium pumper, the project team considered a number of areas such as the overall size, the design of the rear pump instrument panel, the position of the side delivery outlets, pump arrangement, stowage equipment and type of hose reels. The team also consulted with a working group of district mechanical officers (DMOs) to assess maintenance issues. The DMOs looked at improved maintenance access to the rear-mounted fire pump, pump plumbing, Class B foam system and electrical wiring.

The prototype has a Scania P280 CrewCab chassis and a Godiva Prima rear-mounted fire pump. SEM Fire and Rescue was responsible for the build-up of the bodywork and supply of stowage equipment.

The prototype's improved features include:

- two breathing apparatus sets within the rear seats of the crew cabin
- changes to the height of the emergency beacons and the beacons and hazard emergency lights flash all blue, then all red
- new red and yellow block reflective striping on the side of the crew cabin and the top of the bodywork above the roller shutters
- fitment of a rumbler system (new warning sound system)
- white searchlight on the roof of the cabin with remote control
- new rechargeable torch and hand-held torches in cabin and bodywork
- new location for the suction hoses at the front of the bodywork
- better access to ceiling hook, and foam pick-up stick and line at the front of the bodywork
- side delivery outlets located in the middle of the bodywork at the rear so that firefighters don't need to bend down to connect delivery hoses
- simplified rear pump instrument panel with upgraded pump governor and manual throttle control knob
- larger electronic water tank level indicators located on the pump panel and both sides of the bodywork



PHOTOS: KEITH PAKENHAM

- new triple extension ladder and upgraded ladder gantry arrangement
- direct injection Class B foam system located within the forward delivery outlets (both sides)
- two dead hose reels complete with 38mm extruded rubber hose with external lug couplings located in lockers
- a range of new and upgraded stowage equipment within the crew cabin and bodywork.

In late December 2014, the prototype was displayed at CFA headquarters for staff to have a look, and in early January 2015 it began travelling around the state to give all CFA members the opportunity to comment on the features. At the end of March, this feedback will be collated and reviewed to finalise the specification of the medium pumper.

STORY KEN HARE



Fiskville firefighters' health study

The Monash University Fiskville Firefighters' Health Study has left some people who worked and trained at Fiskville from 1971 to 1999 feeling angry and upset, and not knowing what comes next.

The Monash study examined rates of cancer for people who worked full-time on the Fiskville hot fire training ground (PAD workers and full-time instructors), people who worked part-time as instructors (volunteers and regional staff), and trainees who attended recruit courses at Fiskville between 1971 and 1999.

The study found that people who worked full-time on the hot fire training ground during that period developed melanoma and

testicular cancer at higher than expected rates, and part-time instructors experienced higher than expected rates of brain cancer. The trainees who attended recruit courses experienced lower overall rates of cancer than expected.

If you think you or someone in your family may be in one of these groups, please contact CFA's Health Surveillance Coordinator Andrew Dudley on **9262 8836** or a.dudley@cfa.vic.gov.au to join the Voluntary Health Surveillance Program, which includes access to medical checks.

Members and their immediate families can also access free and confidential counselling services by calling 1300 795 711.

The Monash study is the most recent in a number of inquiries and studies commissioned by CFA, including Professor Rob Joy's *Report of the Independent Fiskville Investigation*.

There will also be a Parliamentary Inquiry into Fiskville this year.

Remembering the February 2009 fires



In February, we remembered and honoured the 173 people who lost their lives in the state's most significant natural disaster, as we marked the sixth anniversary of the February 2009 bushfires.

For many of our members and the communities affected by the fires it can be an extremely difficult time of year. The anniversary can bring back memories and emotions associated with those fires.

As we reflect on the anniversary, it's important to acknowledge the courage and resilience shown by the local communities who were impacted by the fires. We also want to recognise our members who worked so tirelessly for their communities. Our crews did an outstanding job under the most challenging of circumstances.

Six years on, we continue to be encouraged by the ongoing strength of local communities, CFA members, their families and brigades who have been impacted by these fires. However, some of our members will still need support and we must do everything we can to look after each other. All CFA members and their families can access a number of services for support:

- Contact your local peer coordinator through your district headquarters
- Call the Member Assistance Program on **1300 795 711**
- Chaplains can be contacted directly or through Converge International on **1800 337 068**

Above

The memorial seat at St Andrews
PHOTOS: KAYLA MASKELL

CFA joins Pride March

More than 60 CFA members marched along the streets of Melbourne on 1 February in the 2015 Pride March. The annual march is designed to support and recognise Victoria's lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and intersex (LGBTI) community.

CFA Chief Officer Euan Ferguson marched alongside Emergency Management Commissioner Craig Lapsley, MFB Chief Fire Officer Peter Rau and CFA Assistant Chief Officers Trevor Owen, Bob Barry and Mike Wassing.

Euan described the march as a great opportunity to embrace and be proud of the diversity within CFA.

"Freedom of expression and freedom of association are a vital part of being Australian," Euan said. "Australian women and men have fought and died to gain this as an inalienable right for all people, irrespective of gender, race, skin colour, class, faith and preference.

"Among these freedoms is included the freedom to express our own sexual orientation. It's important that we respect all in CFA as equals and as valued members of one team.

"This is about CFA recognising that we need to encourage diversity within the organisation – and we're really proud to be here."

Russell Wright, a firefighter from Erica and District Fire Brigade, was the driving force behind CFA's participation at the 2015 event.

"Taking part in the march means a lot to the LGBTI community and volunteers such as myself," Russell said.

STORY ANDREA MASON



PHOTOS: TAMARA BUSH

Listen live to radio dispatch feeds

Members can tune into regional radio dispatch traffic from anywhere in the state by using the free website broadcastify.com.

The website lets you listen to live audio of ESTA dispatching trucks to local incidents or emergencies.

"This is a great outcome for our members. It's free to access and it will give members access to the same audio as their scanners or listening sets," Chief Officer Euan Ferguson said.

To access CFA's radio feeds, members need to click on the 'Listen' tab, then search by country and location. Members should select the feeds with the red star icon, which shows it's an official CFA feed. When you've chosen a feed click the 'play' button.

The website is mobile friendly and there are a range of free and paid apps available to download on smart phones and tablets.

"Members don't need to subscribe or sign up to listen but, as with any live streaming, it does require data and members are reminded to check their usage limits with their internet provider."

A beep sounds every 60 seconds to let you know the feed is working. This also reminds you that you're still downloading the stream even when there's no radio traffic.

"As part of the project, we consulted with our members, including the VFBV, to ensure this service best suits the needs of our people.

"The website gives members an immediate way to listen to dispatch traffic while we put a supply contract in place for the new digital listening sets," continued Euan.

CFA is currently reviewing the tenders for the digital listening sets and will announce a decision when a supplier has been chosen.

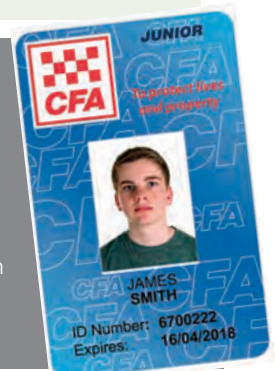
STORY HOLLY LITTLE

New portal for members

A new website for CFA members is on the way. Over the past few months, the project team has been working with members from both volunteer and integrated brigades to ensure the portal meets your needs. It should be up and running by June, will be accessible on smart phones and tablets and will give you easier access to services that let you better manage your personal details including availability, training and PPC.

New Juniors' card

CFA has launched a Juniors' personal identification card, which will allow them to formally identify themselves as Junior members of CFA. The blue card, which is a similar design to the existing member ID card, will be used to identify Juniors when participating in CFA-related activities including championships. You can apply for a card through Brigades Online (cfaonline.cfa.vic.gov.au) by choosing Brigade > Brigade Administration > member ID Cards.



CAFs comes to CFA

PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM



After compressed air foam tankers (CAFs) deployed from interstate during the Hazelwood mine fire proved their worth, two 4.4R tankers have been modified for CAFs operation. They will be stationed at Churchill and Traralgon South brigades in the Latrobe Valley.

At an informal launch, Chief Officer Euan Ferguson expressed gratitude to the dedicated Ferntree Gully members, familiar with their own 4.4R Iveco, who developed the operating manual.

Euan paid tribute to the CFA members going back to the 1990s who experimented with CAFs. He singled out current Officer in Charge of Portland Fire Brigade Gary Harker who, when stationed in the Latrobe Valley as a fire officer, hired a big air compressor and tested the CAFs concept on the mine's brown coal.

"CAFs was the game changer at the mine fire," said Euan, "bringing together technology and innovation".

Leon 'Alfie' Smith from the Tasmania Fire Service began as a firefighter and is now the manager of Engineering Services, where the first of our trucks was modified. He has been involved in CAFs through research and development going back 10 years.

"The mine validated CAFs' capability," he said.

"CAFs is a suppression and protection medium with wet, medium and dry CAFs, and it's an art to identify which one to deliver. We've always matched water flow rates to fire intensity and you match the finish of the

CAFs to the fuel type. A fine fuel grassland fire might take 300 to 500 aspirated litres a minute. If you're wrapping up a structure to protect it from embers, that might take 80 litres of dry CAFs a minute.

"Volume and pressure are the biggest considerations. The truck holds 4,000 litres of water and 90 litres of A Class foam concentrate. We use 20 litres of foam for every tank of water which means five turnarounds of water to one foam tank. That's better knockdown capacity with less water and product. CAFs is 10 times more effective which basically gives a 4,000-litre tanker a 40,000 litre capacity."

District 27 Operations Manager Bill Johnstone agreed that CAFs is effective in coalmine firefighting. "But it's bigger than that," he said. "It gives us the capability to deal with other A Class fires, haystacks, peat and rubbish tip fires which are traditionally very difficult to put out and they burn for long periods."

While Tasmania is still experimenting with the product options to get a bigger compressor and mixing system, members in the Latrobe Valley are now being trained.

"Hats off to CFA," said Alfie. "I'm proud as punch you've had the faith in us."

And the final word from the Chief: "These trucks will help us work out how we integrate CAFs into our operational fleet. I look forward to not seeing them being used very much in the mine."

STORY LEITH HILLARD

Learning from incidents

Learning through case studies

A case study is an explanatory story based on a real-life incident that looks at what happened and why it happened. The aim is for people to learn from the case study so they improve their decision making in time-critical situations.

MOYSTON FIRE 2015

INCIDENT OVERVIEW

Friday 2 January 2015 was a Total Fire Ban day and incident management teams were in place, air and ground observers were on standby in the field. Early that morning the rostered duty officer (RDO) activated a hot day response and four fixed-wing water bombers were on standby at Stawell airport. The weather was 35°C, relative humidity of 9 per cent, and there was a 28km/h northerly wind gusting to 50km/h.

At 11.52am the first call came in over the radio of smoke sighting in the Moyston area. The Big Hill Stawell fire tower confirmed smoke showing and building rapidly, and a request was made to the State Air Desk for all four water-bombing aircraft to respond. A few minutes later, Moyston Captain called "make tankers 10", which was followed up eight minutes later by the Ararat Group Officer, now known as Better Route Rd Control, asking for 20 tankers and an Emergency Warning to be sent out for the Moyston township and surrounding area. The fast-moving grassfire was about to impact the township.

Soon after Moyston Tanker 2 was at the scene, the fire had already travelled over 3km, which made initial size up difficult. The topography and fuel loads made the suppression challenging. Within the first hour, five strike teams had responded and a further nine requested from outside the district. A strike team was requested to cover Westmere Group, but it was deployed direct to the fire at the request of the fireground.

The forward rate of spread was stopped at 5pm, by which time the fire had travelled 21km in five hours and reached a size of 4,454 hectares with a 64-kilometre perimeter. The next day, a strong south-westerly wind impacted the fireground. As a result of the great work by crews, no breakaways occurred.



DEBRIEF DETAILS

On 21 January, CFA District 16 Operations Manager Chris Eagle organised the Moyston Fire debrief, which was facilitated by Deputy Chief Officer John Haynes. John discussed the relationship with Emergency Management Victoria and the concept of a 'no-blame' culture. Emergency Management Victoria is currently implementing a lessons management project which will include governance, processes, roles and an IT system to capture, analyse and implement lessons in Victorian emergency services organisations.

'Just/fair' culture, also known as 'no-blame', is where organisations accept that people may make mistakes, but those who participate in reckless behaviour should be held accountable.

Debrief participants identified good practice and areas for improvement, including what members would do differently next time.

What worked well?

Aircraft Eleven aircraft including two large air tankers (LATs) substantially helped to minimise the losses from the fire. Although the aircraft didn't extinguish the fire, the initial drops of the LATs north of Moyston prevented the fire from entering the township.

Food Being well fed helps to reduce fatigue on the fireground. Food services were set up early and close to the staging area so it was quick and easy to access. There were plenty of people serving food and they were well resourced. The Rapid Relief Team and Moyston Auxiliary did a great job. Opportunities for improvement include serving food that caters to a wider range of diets and having food available during mopping up when the fire was out.

Private Firefighting equipment This is used extensively around Moyston because of the number of farming communities. It can be a recipe for disaster because of the possible lack of communication to the units. But at the Moyston fire everyone had a lot of situational awareness and used common sense, with the majority of the private firefighting equipment being driven by well-practised brigade members.

Division Command The role of Division Command was established through local initiative and was a team effort. It was originally located in vehicles then moved to a local fire station. It was run by five qualified people who were very busy, which reinforces the need for a Division Command. The district and group were well prepared and used lessons learned by people who went to Gisborne the week before.

Public Information The public information and warnings unit worked extremely well in providing timely warnings to the community. EMV carried out an evaluation on the warnings and information provided to the community, focusing on specific issues identified during the incident or through standard monitoring processes. It's important to note that the evaluation excluded contact with the incident control centre, public information officer or warnings officer, so situational issues are not considered.

Overall, there were a number of other good practices identified, such as timely warnings, access to water tankers, the use of graders, ground observers getting timely information to the ICC and good leadership on the fireground.



Procedures 2.03 Incident Management Team – Readiness Arrangements for Bushfire. Although Ararat ICC didn't have the resources for a Level 3 IMT at that time, it should still be used to assist the fireground and create workarounds to get the ball rolling in the initial few hours, then move the Horsham IMT to Ararat ICC.

Resourcing Resourcing is a major issue for Ararat ICC. Training for Level 3 IMT roles is an ongoing activity that takes significant time and effort. The time of year also impacted on ICC staffing in the region and the region didn't have any additional people. It was agreed that the development of IMT capability will be a future priority for all agencies.

Connectivity of information In the short term, the Ararat area is going to concentrate on getting to know key players in the Horsham and Ballarat area. In addition, the people who work in the ICCs are going to get to know the local people to avoid some of the communication issues experienced during this incident. Personal acquaintance, along with mobile phone numbers, would go some way towards mitigating these issues.

In addition to the improvements discussed above, there was also discussion about identifying approved plant operators and machinery available in the area, and the regular real-time practice of pre-plans and exercise scenarios by agencies to uncover communication problems, allowing for early resolution, and reduce the problems encountered during incidents.

CONCLUSION

The impact of the Moyston fire was dramatically reduced as a result of the interoperability, ingenuity, initiative and quick thinking of those involved. The debrief was beneficial, with discussions highlighting areas that worked really well and exploring areas that still need some work.

Discussion questions:

- Are there any lessons that have been identified from this incident that you have experienced in your own patch?
- How can you apply these lessons to your emergency management role?
- Is there any action you can take to continue to improve incident management operations in your own patch?

If you have any observations or initiatives you would like to submit from your own experiences in emergency management, visit the Observation Sharing Centre:

<http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/1449131/observation-sharing-centre>



What could we improve?

Fatigue The first responders were mainly retirees and they worked for over 12 hours before relief arrived. There were also some issues with traffic management points which meant some relief crews were delayed. Heat stress was a critical issue on the fireground. It's important that health and fitness are taken into consideration when preparing for hot days and on the fireground to ensure the safety of all members. Hydration and fatigue management are critical.

First-aid There were many incidents that required first-aid, including incorrect footwear causing sprained ankles, heat-related problems and chest pains. Crews are given first-aid training, first-aid kits and, in some cases, a defibrillator. Until Ambulance Victoria is on

the fireground, skilled crews should attend to first-aid. Incidents must be correctly reported (which wasn't always the case) and the incident controller must be made aware of them.

Communications There were a number of issues regarding communication, particularly between the different control locations and the ICC. The main issue with communication was the ICC being co-located at a DELWP work centre where the phone lines and voicemail defaulted to the normal business lines at the work stations when not answered. This created a lot of uncertainty about whether messages were getting through to the right people.

Stepping up brigades This fire required a lot of brigade support, with around 39 District 16 brigades committed to the initial firefight. This meant some townships had minimal resources for local incidents. The need to step up brigades created confusion and it was identified there needs to be clarity about the procedure.

Some other areas for improvement were the importance of local knowledge, using roles instead of individual names, realistic timeframes when planning for evacuation and the importance of fuel reduction and preparedness activities.

What would you do next time?

Local facilities The key issue identified in the debrief was the arrangement to use Horsham ICC instead of the local Ararat ICC. This was due to the limited capacity to fill IMT roles across the region and meeting the arrangements in the *Joint Standard Operating*

Regional Code Red workshops

In November and December 2014, Regional Code Red workshops were delivered by members of Emergency Management Victoria (EMV) in each Emergency Management region to members of emergency management agencies and organisations, municipalities and other key organisations.

The aim of the workshops was to explore and confirm the responsibilities of emergency management agencies and organisations, municipalities and other key service providers involved in response and recovery in readiness for when there is a Fire Danger Rating of Code Red in all or part of Victoria. More than 180 representatives attended the six workshops, with a particularly strong representation from municipal councils.

The report about the workshops includes an analysis of discussions held in the workshops and an analysis of feedback received in a post-workshop questionnaire.

LESSONS IDENTIFIED

Collaboration To effectively deliver these workshops within the required timeframes needed collaboration among key stakeholders and a unified approach.

Extensive workload A lot of time was needed to research and develop the relevant documentation, plan for the workshops (including venue sourcing, catering, etc),

travel and delivery of the workshops, develop, distribute and analyse the questionnaire and write the report.

Local knowledge Regional EMV personnel provided valuable and extensive local knowledge, particularly regarding the venue and catering.

Communication Links with key personnel at a regional level were critical to the success of these workshops.

Relationships Having existing relationships with other agency personnel helped in the sharing of resources for facilitation.

Discussion It was identified early on that there would be a greater benefit by circulating the first component of the workshop questions (which were based around individual agency actions and expectations) to participants in advance of the workshops. We adapted our approach to incorporate this and found the workshops generated greater discussion.

Subject matter experts Fire agency representatives proved to be a valuable resource at the workshops.

Evaluation Although initially overlooked, a comprehensive evaluation was included which provided insight into the effectiveness of the workshops.

Information sharing There was a strong desire from most participants to continue to share information and knowledge about emergency management, in particular the changing areas and topics of high importance.

The report, which also identifies a number of key observations, insights and lessons identified, has been sent to the Emergency Management Commissioner and agency chiefs for noting and action.

Incidents of interest

EMV has recently released a series of 'Incidents of interest' documents. These contain a snapshot of observations and insights about a specific incident, collated by regional controllers in conjunction with their regional control teams, incident management teams and front-line personnel.

Incidents of interest are published immediately after events to share this information quickly. Providing real-life stories, the information is intended to help others when they undertake emergency management roles in the future. These documents are available on the EM Portal (<http://portal.em.vic.gov.au/functional-units>) > EMK > Reviews-Lessons > Learning Products.

Regional readiness and response - period of extreme fire danger

The period 30 December 2014 to 4 January 2015 was another uniquely challenging time for emergency management in Victoria, particularly for the South West, West and North West regions. Weather predictions for 2 to 4 January, particularly in South West Region, were considered to be among the worst since Black Saturday 2009. Across the north-west, central and north-east of the state, it was predicted that conditions could lead to rapid, high-intensity fires in bush and grasslands.

During this period, regional controllers and emergency management teams (EMTs) from the state's three western regions successfully dealt with a number of emergencies and the main challenges can be categorised as:

- **Competing incident management team (IMT) resourcing** Given the forecast conditions, there weren't enough people to achieve either *Joint Standard Operating Procedures 2.03 Incident Management Team - Readiness Arrangements for Bushfire* requirements or a desirable level of personnel in some incident control centres (ICCs).
- **Transfer of control** Two fires during this period were close to ICC catchment boundaries and in one case near the border of three ICC catchments and two region boundaries.
- **Multiple hazards** As well as extreme fire weather conditions in Victoria's north-west, severe storm activity was expected with the change as it moved across the state on 3 January. The weather also initiated a number of Heat Health Alerts. The North West Regional Control Team had to consider the best way to ensure effective control during this dynamic weather.





LESSONS IDENTIFIED

A number of lessons were identified from the three challenges.

IMT resourcing

It was very difficult to fill a number of positions in ICCs during the period, so regional controllers had to come up with alternative arrangements. But, despite requesting people from other locations, there were still competing demands.

Case 1 After resourcing three of the five ICCs in the region, the regional controller was faced with the situation of only being able to adequately resource one of the remaining two ICCs. The seriousness of the forecast conditions (including potential lightning activity), area fire history (particularly where lightning was predicted), and risks and consequences led to discussions in the regional control team (RCT). The RCT decided to resource the ICC in the location with the greatest likelihood of fires and highest risk if fires started. This departure from the *Joint Standard Operating Procedures 2.03* requirements was communicated to the state response controller (SRC) and was approved by the SRC and emergency management commissioner (EMC). Sufficient resourcing was achieved to operate the fifth ICC as division command point.

Case 2 Resourcing the public information officer, warnings and advice officer and aircraft officer could not be achieved at one of the three ICCs in the region. The regional controller discussed this within the RCT and decided that any warnings and public information would be issued by one of the other IMTs if necessary.

Both cases illustrate a comprehensive appreciation of the circumstances and an agile and collaborative approach to developing effective solutions.

Transfer of control

Fires on or near the boundaries of ICCs always present the challenge of deciding where and when to transfer control from the field to an ICC.

Case 1 A fire originated in the footprint of one ICC, but if first attack failed it could quickly spread into the neighbouring ICC catchment. Unfortunately, the neighbouring ICC didn't have all IMT positions filled because of resourcing issues on the day. With help from excellent on-ground intelligence, local knowledge, input from the incident controller of the first ICC (which was already shadowing the fire) and confidence in fireground personnel to develop an effective division command structure, the regional controller determined that transfer of control

should go to the initial ICC for more effective control, even though the fire was moving out of its catchment area.

Case 2 A fire originated near the boundary of multiple ICC catchments and two regional boundaries. This fire was within the catchment of ICCs which were already managing existing fires. The adjoining regional controller, having an appreciation for the situation developing in the neighbouring region, immediately contacted his regional counterpart and agreed that if transfer of control was necessary it would be to an ICC in his region. This would significantly reduce the workload of the already-committed IMTs. However, because of an aggressive first attack and local management of the fire, transfer of control wasn't necessary.

Both these cases illustrate that ICC catchments provide a guide to the location where transfer of control should be undertaken. However, the most effective location may not be within this catchment for the purposes of effective control and command. Maintaining situational awareness of activities in neighbouring regions and timely communication between the regional controllers meant a suitable solution was agreed.

Multiple Hazards

One region was presented with multiple hazards as a result of the predicted weather. Extreme fire weather, severe thunderstorm potential and high temperatures leading to Heat Health Alerts all combined over a relatively short time on 3 January 2015. The RCT held discussions on 2 January and agreed to maintain a single regional controller during the period, with key links to fire agency commanders, Health and Human Services and SES for non-bushfire hazards.

The regional controller, RCT and regional emergency management team planned for response to all three hazards and maintained a common operating picture through regular communication with regional and state levels. The outcome of the decision to maintain a single regional controller was overwhelmingly positive, with clear and coordinated public messaging and no confusion in the control and command arrangements.

This is yet another situation where the decision challenged previous thinking in the emergency management sector and illustrates the enormous improvements which have been made over the past five years. It also shows that regional controllers and other emergency management personnel are now far more agile and capable, regardless of their background, and can apply their experience and lessons learned to any hazard.

Koori Inclusion Action Plan unfurls

PHOTO: ANGELA COOK



Shane Charles delivering the Koori Cultural Awareness program in Lake Tyers

As part of CFA's Koori Inclusion Action Plan, Koori cultural awareness sessions are available for brigade groups and districts with a significant Koori involvement. The aim is to increase knowledge of Aboriginal culture and history, helping CFA forge ever stronger working relationships with traditional landowners.

'Welcome to country' or 'acknowledgement of country' have now been given at some CFA events. A 'welcome to country' can be made only by a Koori traditional owner of the land on which the event is held. An 'acknowledgement of country' can be made by anyone, giving recognition to the traditional owners of the land on which the event is taking place and paying respects to their past and present elders.

Deputy Chief Officer Steve Warrington delivered such an acknowledgement recently in front of the assistant chief officers.

"As CFA leaders, we are proud to be inclusive," said Steve. "It brings a much richer culture and makes us so much stronger as an organisation. We're not just talking the talk; we're walking the walk."

Chief Officer Euan Ferguson is also proud to be taking that walk.

"Respecting the traditional landowners is an important way to acknowledge a people who have occupied this land for generations prior to Europeans," said Euan. "Despite the science we use in land management, we are no match for the way Aborigines cared for the environment. Fire is central to their culture and livelihood. This establishes a special relationship between fire management agencies and traditional owners with our mutual respect for fire and our attempts to exercise control over it."

STORY LEITH HILLARD

Check out these useful videos

CFA members have access to a growing list of online videos about bushfire research. A number of short clips and webinars were produced as part of the Bushfire CRC's 'Research to drive change' online forum series.

Topics covered include community safety and education, human behaviour, next generation fire modelling, firefighter health and safety, ecology, incident management, legal and policy, mapping fire in the tropical north and economics for decision-making.

The series was held throughout 2014 to conclude the research of the Bushfire CRC and to share the findings from the final three years of Bushfire CRC. These important resources will remain accessible through the new Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC and can be viewed at bushfirecrc.com.

The live forums were a practical approach that allowed participants from Australia and overseas to be involved in interactive discussions. The series was well received, with CFA showing the forums on large screens so that many people could watch.

Each forum featured leading researchers and people from industry discussing the research findings, what each finding meant and answering questions from the audience. An insightful documentary also accompanied each forum.



There are other videos that will interest CFA members, including *Mercury Rising: Extreme Bushfires*. These videos feature a panel of Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC researchers discussing in depth the science of extreme fire weather, extreme bushfire behaviour and community behaviour in the face of fire. *Mercury Rising: Extreme Bushfires* is available at bnhrcr.com.au.

STORY NATHAN MADDOCK

Above

RiAus Director Dr Paul Willis with CRC researchers Dr Mika Peace, Associate Professor Jason Sharples and Dr Josh Whittaker

PHOTO: BUSHFIRE AND NATURAL HAZARDS CRC

PHOTO: JOHN DUNN



Violet Town's award winners Captain Andrew Anderson, Robbie Rae and First Lieutenant Mark McDonald

Violet Town's community award

Violet Town Fire Brigade has been recognised in Emergency Management Australia's Resilient Australia Awards for a community safety and engagement project.

The 'highly commended' award in the not-for-profit category was presented to members of Violet Town brigade and the Making Violet Town Safer Committee for their Red Bucket Program and Know Your Neighbours project.

Second Lieutenant John Dunn came up with the Red Bucket Program as a way to inspire residents to think about their fire risk. Brigade members doorknocked the community and gave them a red bucket – a symbol of their firefighting tools. The bucket contained fire safety information and preparation guides.

John said doorknocking was an effective way to reach community members who may never talk to CFA and who may not think about their fire risk.

"The red bucket is their fire truck, because in the case of a grass or bushfire there will not be a fire truck at their house," John said. "They should see and use the bucket as a reminder for action on fire safety."

"In the second phase of the program we sat with residents and filled out a simple fire plan, consisting of one page for bushfire and one page for house fire."

The Know Your Neighbours initiative is "about getting people talking to those around them – neighbours on either side and across the road. It's about encouraging people to talk to each other about fire and other hazards," John said.

To see a video of the brigade's initiative go to <http://bit.ly/1poVbJA>

STORY ANGELA VALENTE

Fire safety education in schools

With the Victorian school population inching up to one million, how can CFA ensure that fire safety messages are reaching those masses?

Community Development Coordinator Matt Henry believes the key is supporting the state's 41,500 teachers by providing them with resources and lesson plans aligned with the national curriculum and professional development to teach the material.

Matt hit the road in 2014, visiting all secondary and P-12 schools on the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR).

"We went to schools and asked teachers what they wanted," said Matt. "In consultation with a number of schools, CFA then developed materials badged as 'fire safety education' covering disaster resilience."

From Mallacoota to Murrayville, seven schools took part in a Term 4 pilot, taking the lessons to their students. A survey conducted before the pilot found that only two of those teachers – both CFA volunteers – had previously taught a fire safety lesson.

Matt gave all teachers in the pilot and a majority of those in the BARR schools face-to-face professional development. Teachers could then incorporate fire safety lessons into curriculum area content strands such as geography and science. Almost all schools on the BARR that weren't included in the pilot also received the resources.

A survey conducted after the pilot expressed the teachers' appreciation of the miles travelled by CFA. Of those who returned the survey, all had taught at least one fire safety lesson.

"We broke some ground," continued Matt, "and the principals welcomed it with open arms."

STORY LEITH HILLARD



PHOTO: FIONA NOONE

Updated community guide

A new edition of CFA's *Your Guide to Survival* is now available. It includes an illustration of a well-prepared property and updated information about survival options.

Since its launch last summer, the Guide has proved popular with volunteers because of its handy format and the easy-to-digest presentation of information. These features make the Guide especially useful as a community engagement tool and handout.

To order copies of *Your Guide to Survival*, contact your community education coordinator.



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

Rosebud hosts fire safety event

In school holidays, thousands of visitors troop into the Rosebud district of the Mornington Peninsula to camp by the bay. Rosebud Fire Brigade's B platoon and brigade volunteers placed a special emphasis on safeguarding camping areas and educating holidaymakers about summer fire dangers in foreshore regions.

"We made regular visits into beachside camping areas, talking to campers and noting particular risks, access points and potential water supplies," said Rosebud brigade Qualified Firefighter Nick Sharp.

"Using this information, we mapped out a plan of action which could be implemented if faced with a fire threat in and around the Rosebud foreshores."

The brigade held its third annual community safety event in early January at Rosebud

Foreshore Reserve. Around 1,000 people enjoyed looking at a display of emergency vehicles, watched kitchen fire demonstrations and found out about fire safety in CFA's mobile education bus.

There were competitions, giveaways and a free sausage sizzle to keep the kids and parents entertained.

It was a multi-agency event with CFA, Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria and the SES working together with the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council. Staff from the Rosebud Foreshore Reserve camping office also helped put on the event.

Rosebud brigade Second Lieutenant Ian Dickson (pictured) really grabbed the attention of the locals when he showed what happens when a small cup of water is poured on to a saucepan of burning oil or fat – a scenario which might occur on a typical kitchen stove. Only a small amount of water will make the fire flare up dangerously.

STORY KEITH PAKENHAM

Students teach fire safety to their families

Anglesea Primary School students became fire aware through a partnership with their town's fire brigade, and then shared their knowledge by running workshops for their families.

The 12 grade 5 students spent the past year working with Anglesea Fire Brigade members to learn bushfire behaviour and to familiarise themselves with the station, field weather instruments and radio communication.

The students explored burnt and untouched bushland surrounding Anglesea where they learnt about fire and its relationship to weather and the landscape. Experts from the community were involved along the way to complement their learning, including staff from the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.

Making connections is a key part of the program and the students interviewed locals who'd experienced bushfire, in particular Ash Wednesday. They also interviewed two key brigade members from Arthurs Creek about their experiences on Black Saturday.

In mid-December, the students held workshops with their families and some people who work in fire management and community resilience, including Emergency



Management Commissioner Craig Lapsley, to pass on their learning. The students also plan to present a revised and enhanced program to members of the community.

STORY EMMA TAUNT

Above

Anglesea Primary School students with (from left) Senior Leadership Instructor and Anglesea brigade volunteer Jamie MacKenzie, Emergency Management Commissioner Craig Lapsley and Anglesea brigade Captain Andrew Rankin

PHOTO: REBECCA HOSKING

Ian Hamley, Portland Fire Brigade District 4

faces of
CFA



PHOTO: WILL JOHNSON

What is your involvement with CFA?

I'm the second lieutenant at Portland but before that I was at Raywood. I'm a deputy group officer and trainer of the Heywood Group, so I'm actively involved in leadership roles in the brigade and group. I'm also currently employed by CFA as a Forestry Industry Brigade [FIB] project officer.

What was the first incident you attended?

It was in 2000. I drove the truck and took a wrong turn. It was a piggery fire and a bit of a horror scene. I'll never forget it.

What incident has had the greatest impact on you?

There were a few train versus car crashes at Raywood and Mitiamo. It was very open plain country on flat ground and we couldn't understand why the cars couldn't see the train. To me a bushfire is a natural event but here were lives that didn't need to be lost.

What does your FIB role involve?

The primary focus is to effectively integrate FIBs into CFA brigades and groups across the south-west and provide support at state level. I advise FIBs on training, competency requirements and operational performance, coordinate FIB training, manage and coordinate registration and deregistration of FIBs and prepare documentation for the Minister's Appointed Plantation Committee.

What's the relationship between FIBs and CFA?

FIBs are very valuable and underrated and we encourage integration. They cover 300,000 hectares across Districts 4, 5, 6 and 17 with 809 firefighters, 48 heavy tankers, 87 slips-ons, 17 FCVs and eight bulk water carriers so they're a huge resource and benefit.

CFA and FIBs also have a productive relationship with South Australia's Country Fire Service so there's good cross-border cooperation.

When FIBs harvest the plantations they burn the residue of bark and limbs or leave it to rot down. CFA might do a line scan with a FLIR [forward looking infrared] so we can identify any hot spots, but we also have access to their mapping data. That not only shows us where they've harvested but also the location of their holdings which can be hard to access.

Heywood and Dartmoor groups do joint training with FIBs. On high Fire Danger Rating days, FIBs have trucks and crews on stand-by at CFA fire stations. One example is with PF Olsen which sits at Digby Fire Station.

They do their job without too much fanfare.

What CFA training have you got the most out of?

The Chief Officer's Leadership Program was eye opening. We looked into our abilities and inabilities. I can work under pressure but this course inspired me to take more time out to reflect. We looked at knowing what you don't know then seeking out the expertise. As a crew leader you're making a lot of decisions. You have to be flexible and adaptable, not getting hooked on one tactic. Ask others for their input and take on their views with due diligence. You'll become broader in your thinking.

What are the benefits of volunteering in CFA?

Working in a team towards a common goal; working as one for the community.

What do you do in your spare time?

I enjoy Portland – I wish we'd moved here 20 years ago. We have an 11-acre block with dogs, cats, koalas and tiger snakes. Also, I've never been a big reader but the Chief's Leadership Program changed that. Now my favourite book would have to be Peter FitzSimons' *Ned Kelly*.

INTERVIEW BY LEITH HILLARD

Tracking weather for the BoM



A Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) initiative 10 years ago to gather more accurate weather readings close to going fires has led to the strategic long-term placement of three portable automatic weather stations (PAWS) with fire brigades in Hazelwood North, Horsham and around Wangaratta North.

They are manned by a range of members, the majority of them long-time volunteers. Ray Beaton has been a Hazelwood North member for 35 years. This retired control systems instrument maker has the technical nous so valuable in PAWS crew members. Ian Murray is a 40-year member who helps man the unit usually stationed at Wangaratta North. He has been a farmer and a maintenance man so he knows how to systematically go about a technical job. "You have to be computer savvy too," he insisted.

As for Kevin Bolwell, a member for 42 years and one of the Horsham PAWS crew, "Farm training is the best in the world to operate the PAWS trailer. Every hour of our working lives is influenced by the weather and we have the practical knowledge to keep machinery going in the paddock."

A PAWS trailer comprises two independent weather stations, a solar-powered tripod and battery with a computer system to record temperature, humidity, dew point and rainfall, an aerial to record wind speed and direction and an iridium phone to transmit data to the BoM. From arrival through full assembly to first transmission takes around 90 minutes. The PAWS might then be left in place for days at a time and monitored remotely.

And it's not all about fires. "We deployed to Kerang to monitor wind direction during a locust plague so they could determine where the plague was likely to move to," said Ian.

"Spot weather reading is where the PAWS comes into its own," continued Kevin. "It's essential when planning a back-burn because it can give a specific reading from a single area. We generally deploy close to a fire and are given free rein to select a site that won't give false indications. We look for an open, flat spot where the wind has consistency."



Deployment requires extensive communications because all incident managers need to know that the crew is on the fireground.

"We also talk a lot to DELWP," said Ray, "because they have intimate knowledge of the lay of the land. We also get fantastic cooperation from farmers – they need a pat on the back. Our guys always seem to know somebody somewhere to negotiate access.

"It's an excellent way for retired chaps like me to keep on as active brigade members."

Initial PAWS training was conducted by Senior Meteorologist Kevin Parkyn who also conducts annual assessments involving assembly, erection of the aerial, fault finding, advising the BoM of the location and disassembly. He is proud of the work done by the crews.

"Weather intelligence from the fireground improves situational awareness and increases firefighter safety," he said. "PAWS units are an ideal way of getting regular, consistent and high-quality weather readings to everyone involved in the firefight."

Above left

Hazelwood North brigade members

Above right

District 17 HQ brigade members Len Hawker and Kevin Bolwell

PHOTO: DICK GILL

STORY LEITH HILLARD

Brigades making Facebook work



The rise of social media such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, is giving canny brigades the chance to reach more people. The benefits range from passing on vital fire preparation and safety information to communities through to recruiting new members.

There are currently 246 CFA brigade, district or region Facebook pages and some have built up a steady following with their strategic mix of fun, solid information and pride building.

Tim McNeilly has been a member of Golden Square brigade for 15 years and started the brigade's Facebook page three years ago.

"We are very nestled in suburban Bendigo," said Tim, "and there was the perception that everyone in the community was covered by career firefighters. We identified that as an issue and decided to increase our community profile.

"We wanted a professional image and made the good decision that only two of us can post content. We try to be strategic and polished, building a feel-good feeling in the community around our brigade and generating high interest and reaction."

Strong examples of this strategic approach include the posting of a New Year's Eve photo of members back at the station after turning out to a job as the clock ticked over to 2015 with a caption, "With each other looking after the community".

The brigade also posts information about turnouts, but doesn't post fire updates because it can't guarantee consistency.

For the past two years, Facebook has been the brigade's only recruitment method, with a "now taking applications" posting. A marketing push including paid Facebook advertisements brought in five new members.

"The media is always monitoring Facebook," continued Tim. "We regularly get calls from the Bendigo Advertiser and WIN News to follow up what they've seen on our page."

Upwey Fire Brigade is fortunate to have a volunteer who also runs his own social media marketing business, and Ryan Vanderhorst makes sure the brigade's Facebook page follows the number one rule: be engaging.

"If you want the community to listen to you even once a year, you need to have their attention all year," he said. "The community needs to be already paying attention when the Fire Danger Period comes."

Upwey's Facebook page reaches between 6,000 and 10,000 people every week. The brigade also gives live updates of its turnouts on Twitter and has 1,700 Instagram followers.

A large part of their success rests on the regular features on the Facebook page. 'Faces of Upwey' profiles a different brigade member each week, while 'Throwback Thursday' presents historic brigade photos and detailed captions. They're compelling examples of online community building.

"When you have a rich history, talk about it," said Ryan. "The message underlying all this is, 'have fun with us, share with us but also listen to us'.

"We sent a strike team to the Hastings fire and posted a photo of our members resting on the back of the truck. It received 398 likes, reached 8,000 people and the comments from the public thanking the crew for their effort were fantastic."

Back at Golden Square, perhaps one of the greatest benefits is all the messages of appreciation seen by members.

"It's great for member morale," said Tim who gathers positive Facebook messages and distributes them to all members. "The more we give back to the members in terms of showing them that the community respects their work, the better."

A 500-strong Facebook social media managers group provides members who administer CFA pages with a virtual networking space where they can brainstorm and share ideas. If you think Facebook could work for your brigade, phone the Digital Media team on 9262 8317 for tips.

STORY LEITH HILLARD



Somerville's purpose-built support vehicle

When Somerville brigade members wanted to replace the rear locker system of their Iveco dual cab Salvage, they decided the best approach was to design a new modern rear end.

The truck's gross vehicle mass is 4,200kg, so the design needed to take this into account. The brigade met with a number of vehicle builders and considered both sheet metal and fibreglass. Sheet metal was chosen because it's lighter and cheaper to design without having to create a new mould. Switching the rear end cost less than \$70,000.

The upgraded truck's new features include:

- four batwing locker doors (provide shade/rain shelter)
- room for strike team bags
- open storage area at the rear for wet hoses
- LED locker lights, four portable LED tripods and LED lighting tower
- Slide-out trays for PPV fan, 3kW generator, quick-fill pump, wet/dry vacuum and fridge for cold drinking water
- barbecue with two tables and urn
- deep cycle dual battery system to constantly power fridge and warning lights
- dual-purpose ladder 1.8-3.3 metres.

STORY KEITH PAKENHAM



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

Emerald brigade's fire safety success



Emerald Community House Coordinator Mary Farrow and Childcare Coordinator Carly Crocos

A new fire safety policy developed by not-for-profit organisation Emerald Community House (ECH), with support from Emerald Fire Brigade, received the highest accolade at the 2014 Fire Awareness Awards held last December.

The team took home the \$10,000 RACV Insurance Award for Excellence as well as the Community Preparedness Award for their outstanding effort to develop compulsory fire safety workshops for the parents of young children attending ECH's licensed childcare programs.

Phil Cuthbert, a volunteer at Olinda Fire Brigade, ran the majority of the three-hour workshops at ECH. "We used the generic CFA program and tailored it to young families in the Emerald community, addressing local risks," said Phil.

"The good thing is we are getting through to people. The workshops gave families a practical list of what to do in the face of an emergency."

ECH Coordinator Mary Farrow said the group hoped others would be inspired to start similar programs that would have the same positive impact.

"We have a role to play here in the community and we are so happy to have won our category," said Mary. "This project is about inspiring other childcare programs and community groups to do the same.

"The bushfire planning workshops are a condition of each child's enrolment. Parents in Emerald want to participate and they want to come out of each workshop with a bushfire plan.

STORY INEKE NEESON

Local businesses support brigades

Each year, CFA is fortunate to receive support from businesses around Victoria, which helps brigades keep communities safe. Two stories that came to light in late 2014 are good examples of businesses that put in extra effort to support local brigades and district-led initiatives.

Recently, the Berwick Opportunity Shop donated \$13,000 to help Narre Warren North brigade buy a new 4WD. Berwick Opportunity Shop volunteer Margaret Ruse said the op shop had made donations to 14 CFA brigades in 2014.

"We're all volunteers here and for us it's important that the profit we make goes back into the community," Margaret said.

"The majority of our money goes to fireys because we appreciate the outstanding work they do. We've been giving to the Narre Warren North Brigade for over 20 years, and it makes our volunteers feel good knowing what the money has been used for."

Narre Warren North brigade Fourth Lieutenant Gordon Chalmers, who's in charge of the fundraising committee, said brigade members appreciate the donations especially given that Narre Warren North isn't the nearest brigade to the op shop.

"I was amazed at how many brigades they support," said Gordon. "There are so many certificates of appreciation on the shop's wall."

In District 17, CFA worked with Emmetts – a major farm machinery dealer based in Horsham – on the Summer Safe Harvest Pilot. Emmetts helped CFA put together a farm fire safety video targeted at farmers. The video identifies the causes of header fires, which have the potential to destroy large areas of crops, and outlines the steps farmers can take to minimise the risk of fire on their properties.

District 17 Headquarters Brigade Captain and retired farmer Kevin Bolwell is well known in the local community for facilitating information sessions about farm fire safety. He said the support from Emmetts and manufacturer John Deere has really helped to get fire safety messages across to farmers.

"Initially, when we were looking into how these fires were occurring, we contacted John Deere to ask for their help on how to get header farm fire safety messages out to farmers," Kevin said. "The support from Emmetts and John Deere has been magnificent."

STORY INEKE NEESON



Apollo Bay receives Unit Citation for Service award

Congratulations to Apollo Bay Fire Brigade. In early December 2014, Chief Officer Euan Ferguson presented the brigade with the prestigious Unit Citation for Service award.

Two years earlier, the brigade was called to a road accident at Cape Patton, an extremely rugged part of the south-west Victoria coastline, where a driver had crashed through guardrails and plunged down a 90-metre cliff. In challenging conditions, brigade members used ropes and stretchers to transport heavy hydraulic equipment to the crushed vehicle. They then safely rescued the car occupant, who has remained in contact with brigade members.

A Unit Citation for Service is awarded to a brigade, crew, strike team or other work unit to acknowledge a collective act of outstanding service during a special event or over a prolonged period. It recognises their collective actions in relation to fire service duties, administrative leadership or exemplary performance during a difficult project or task.

Captain David Howell, First Lieutenant Colin Coleman, Second Lieutenant Benjamin Whyte, Third Lieutenant Leah Beamish, Bryan Mercer, Scott Earl, Judy Mustafa, William Chow and Gavin McMaster also received individual awards for their efforts.

STORY INEKE NEESON

Above

Back row Gavin McMaster, William Chow, Scott Earl, Second Lt Benjamin Whyte, Captain David Howell; front row Judy Mustafa, Third Lt Leah Beamish, First Lt Colin Coleman

PHOTO: AMY BOYD

Better, lighter, faster



PHOTO: PAUL HORTON

A new concept ultra-light vehicle has been delivered to Mt Buller brigade for trialling during summer and winter.

The unit was delivered in early November as part of the Alpine Vehicle Trial project. During winter, the wheels are removed and the unit is fitted with Mattracks rubber tracks.

Deputy Chief Officer John Haynes said the lightweight vehicle had better manoeuvrability and track design.

"This concept vehicle has been designed to better suit alpine conditions," John said. "It aims to be more user friendly and flexible

for volunteers, resulting in faster response to incidents."

The vehicle will be tested until June 2016. In early February 2015, at a fire in rugged terrain at Ancona, north of Bonnie Doon, Operations Officer Paul Horton said he received positive comments from brigade members about the vehicle's performance.

"They said that fatigue levels were low due to the smaller hose," Paul said.

"Water 'punch' was good when needed, and the finer spray capability also provided the ability to cool down an area without using much water."

Based on a Toyota twin cab Workmate, it:

- has a level of manoeuvrability never seen in oversnow pumpers
- has a lightweight body and the improved track is gentler on the environment
- can access residential areas more easily and has greater flexibility for parking and storage so will reduce incident turnout time
- only needs a standard licence so more volunteers will be able to train to drive it
- can be used all year round.

STORY SONIA MACLEAN

Upton Hill brigade rewarded for smart idea



PHOTO: PHIL HAWKEY

Upton Hill Fire Brigade, with support from Strathbogie Shire Council, has been recognised for its outstanding work to help keep firefighters safe on our roads, by winning the Fire Services category in the annual Fire Awareness Awards.

The project, SaferLinks, addresses the risk to firefighters if they are trapped on the road during a bushfire. The project identified natural features along Upton Hill Road, and established safe zones where firefighters can park their truck if they get caught in a fire. These safe zones are called Emergency Services Safer Areas (ESSAs).

Upton Hill brigade members initiated the project and consulted with the community. Strathbogie Shire Council Emergency Management Fire Coordinator and volunteer firefighter Gary Washusen said local landholders were very supportive and agreed to maintain the ESSAs by giving firefighters access to their grazing paddocks and installing ESSA signs around their land.

"SaferLinks has been accepted very well by the Upton Hill community, with landholders helping to identify places where firefighters can pull off the road," said Gary.

CFA Vegetation Management Officer Phil Hawkey said the project could potentially save lives in a very cost-effective way that involves the local community.

"The initiative leaves the road in its natural state while also ensuring that firefighters can travel in a safe environment," said Phil.

STORY INEKE NEESON



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

Belgrave Heights' unique tanker

Belgrave Heights and South Fire Brigade has commissioned a brand new ultra-light tanker – the first of its type in the CFA fleet.

About 100 people from the local community and CFA staff joined brigade members for the official handover ceremony. Peter Reedy, a strong supporter of the brigade and owner of the local IGA supermarket, handed the keys to project manager and First Lieutenant Aaron Carlton, who also designed the vehicle.

The truck was built by SEM Fire & Rescue on a 4x4 IVECO Daily Cab Chassis according to the brigade's particular requirements.

The new vehicle delivers an unusual amount of operational flexibility for an ultra-light tanker – it seats a crew of six, carries 700 litres of water delivered by a 1,500 kPa PTO pump with a flow rate of 1,000 litres a minute, reducing to 800 litres a minute when drafting.

It's ideal for quickly negotiating steep and narrow tracks that are beyond the reach of a conventional tanker. The vehicle also features a clear deck area for stowing gear, external storage for personal bags, and has extraordinary off-road capability thanks in part to great ground clearance and a total of 24 forward gears to choose from.



At the ceremony, Captain Sean Grondman thanked District 13 Operations Manager David Renkin and Operations Office Colin Brown for their support during the design and construction phases of the project. Sean also thanked CFA's Manager Engineering Andrew Webb for his advice and guidance.

The tanker project was fully funded by the local community through countless sausage sizzles and many cash donations.

STORY CRAIG DENNIS

Pre-determined aircraft dispatch

It's been three years since the inter-agency pre-determined dispatch (PDD) of aircraft began at Bendigo. The joint initiative has been so successful it extended across the state this fire season.

This widespread rollout doesn't necessarily mean widespread understanding of the 'pre-determined' concept, however, which is often incorrectly referred to as 'automatic' dispatch.

Rob Jarvis works for Parks Victoria and is the PDD coordinator at the Bendigo airbase. The aircraft onsite are a Helitak 335 firebombing helicopter and Firebird 305 from which the air attack supervisor coordinates firebombing operations.

"From 17 November we have pilots and an air attack supervisor rostered onsite at the airbase between 10am and 6pm," said Rob.

"That's upgraded to 9am to 7pm on a day of Total Fire Ban.

"While they receive all pager messages for grass and scrub 1 and undefined fires, there must be certain triggers before they deploy – it's not 'automatic'. It must be called in within prescribed operating hours, within the Kyneton, Rushworth, Echuca and Wedderburn footprint, and the Fire Danger Index must be 12 or greater.

"There's science behind it. We're using a trigger point that we hope best represents the need for an aircraft deployment across the footprint. That being said, 12 is now the trigger point for aircraft PDD across the state."

If aircraft are required outside those trigger points, they will be dispatched via the State Air Desk.



PHOTO: LEITH HILLARD

Bendigo Fire Brigade B shift

A statewide fleet of 20 aircraft is available under PDD arrangements.

STORY LEITH HILLARD



All change at Riddells Creek

Riddells Creek Fire Brigade is the proud owner of three new firefighting vehicles following a number of changes to its fleet over the past few months.

After many years of fundraising, the brigade bought a new medium tanker late last year to help protect the local area from a range of emergencies.

“With a price tag of almost \$360,000, the fundraising effort was certainly a lengthy one and the brigade has the entire Riddells Creek community to thank for its support and financial contributions,” said Riddells Creek Fire Brigade Captain Dave Thompson.

The new 4WD tanker will certainly increase the brigade’s ability to tackle local grassfires and bushfires.

Riddells Creek was then given the opportunity to exchange its pumper tanker for a newer, light pumper. By late November, the deal had been

made and Riddells Creek’s pumper tanker was destined for Pyramid Hill Fire Brigade, north of Bendigo, in exchange for the new light pumper.

“The vehicle swap with Pyramid Hill was a great example of CFA’s utilisation of its vehicle fleet,” said Dave. “We have benefited greatly by receiving a vehicle which will better meet the future needs of Riddells Creek, especially as the township continues to grow.

“Similarly, Pyramid Hill now has a 4WD fire truck which will better serve its nearby rural and farming areas. So the swap has been a big win for both brigades.”

To cap off the trifecta, Riddells Creek also recently got a new 4WD Ford Ranger ute field command vehicle, which replaced the vehicle stolen from the fire station in July last year.

STORY DEAN ANDERSON

Above

Riddells Creek members Gill Metz, Dawn Ciechomski, Rob Sanderson, Ruary Bucknall and Brendan Tschuck with their new medium tanker and light pumper

PHOTO: DEAN ANDERSON

New brigade roles

With brigade elections fast approaching for around half of CFA’s brigades, now’s the time to ensure your brigade structure meets the new requirements under the Brigade and Membership Classification project.

The membership classification changes give brigades flexibility when choosing a membership model that best fits their and their community’s needs. They can pick a team that suits their members’ skills, interests and availability so that it will be easier for them to continue to operate effectively.

The requirements of the roles can be scaled up or down to meet each brigade’s specific needs. The requirements of a brigade in a remote rural area will be very different to those of an urban interface brigade. In some cases, a role may be just a contact point for district staff.

One of the key changes is the introduction of the community safety coordinator role to the brigade management team (BMT). This reinforces that fire prevention and community preparedness are core business in CFA.

Other changes include the mandated roles of training officer and health and safety coordinator. These roles don’t have to be part of the BMT.

These three roles must begin before 1 July 2016, so brigades with elections this year will need to implement the changes at these elections. Bear in mind the roles can be allocated to existing elected members’ portfolios; brigades don’t have to recruit new members.

A list of additional, optional functional roles has also been prepared for brigades. This is a means of spreading the workload within brigades and possibly attracting new members to a range of non-firefighting roles that have traditionally been done by firefighters.

For more information contact your catchment team or brigade sustainability coordinator.

STORY DAMIEN PEARCE



New arm cooler helps firefighters recover

Following several trials looking for the best way to help firefighters recover from heat stress, CFA has collaborated with Harcor to design an innovative and award-winning product that reduces a firefighter's body temperature.

The Harcor Arm Core Cooler Harness, developed by CFA's Peter Langridge and Teagan Knight, and volunteer firefighter and Harcor Product and Market Development Manager Peter Schaede, won the Product Design category of the 2014 Fire Awareness Awards.

The harness has a watertight sleeve for each arm which reduces core body temperature by submerging firefighter's hands and forearms in water. The team says the harness has been extremely well received by firefighters in the field.

Peter Langridge said the harness, which is small and portable, has received a lot of positive feedback from firefighters. A kit containing five arm coolers will now be standard equipment on all new medium pumpers. Brigades can also buy the product by visiting Harcor's website – harcor.com.au/products/bag-supplies/fire-fighter-bags. A single harness costs \$64.90, a double pack is \$126.50 and a five pack is \$269.50.

Peter Schaede, who's a firefighter with Skye Fire Brigade, said other states were now trialling the arm cooler. "Winning this award is acknowledgement that what we are doing has merit and that the product is right," said Peter.

STORY INEKE NEESON

Healthwatch website updated

Now in its eighth year, CFA's Volunteer Healthwatch is continuing to improve and build on the existing program and resources to deliver a high-quality service and useful, easy-to-understand information for CFA members.

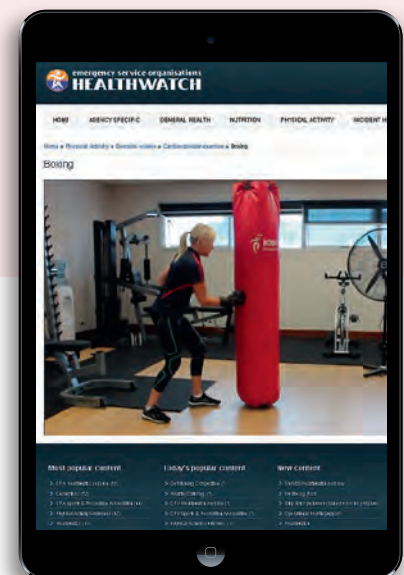
The new Healthwatch website (esohealthwatch.gov.au) is now home to instructional fitness videos as well as useful information on fireground health, general nutrition and physical activity. The website is a hub for all health and wellbeing information, and contains details about many of the programs coordinated by CFA including Healthwatch, Operational Health Support, CFA's Sport and Recreation Association and the Wellbeing Pilot.

The website, which was developed by CFA, is also used by the State Emergency Service which adopted the Healthwatch program in 2010.

One key feature of the new site is a calendar that lets members view upcoming Healthwatch sessions and events around the state. Members can also book a Healthwatch session for their brigade by filling in the easy-to-use, online booking form.

Also, improvements have been made to the Heart Track Online website (honline.com.au) that's used during Healthwatch sessions to produce individual cardiovascular risk reports for participants. It also determines lifestyle changes that will reduce a person's risk of a heart attack. As well as being easier to use, the program works on a variety of devices, including computers, tablets and phones.

STORY TEAGAN KNIGHT



The CFA family gets active outdoors



Above: Hiking in Victoria. **Right:** Members of the Golf Club on the Bellarine Peninsula (PHOTO: ANDREW JUDD)

An informal group of firefighters who took part in charity runs has now become a broader CFA Running and Adventure Club: from rock climbing and kayaking to mountain biking and snow sports, they're all on the schedule. It's one of many clubs affiliated with CFA Sports and Recreation Association (CFASRA).

Frankston Station Officer James Wong is always looking for the next adventure and is also on the CFASRA committee alongside other career firefighters and volunteers.

"We're just happy to see people being active with other members," said James. "It supports the integrated model, bringing together like-minded people. Part of the CFA message is fitness, team bonding and meeting new people and the clubs do all that."

"The Running and Adventure Club, for example, is a central point for any outdoor activities. We send out a group email to find out who's available and we're on the water in Warrandyte, climbing in the You Yangs or hiking in Tasmania. A snow sports group is just cranking up and we want to get the number of members up and look into package deals."

The Golf Club is the largest affiliated club with almost 100 members and they already take advantage of their bulk buying power.

"Each year we run what we call the 'Masters Trip' played over three days," said keen golfer and Cranbourne Senior Station Officer Rick Read.

"We've travelled to the Murray River region and the Mornington and Bellarine peninsulas and played some exceptional-quality courses. Bulk buying power means we can provide excellent value for money for our members."

"It's a catch up and we always have a laugh – golf is secondary."

The passion for Frankston Senior Station Officer Andrew Ellerton is surfing and promoting mental health and wellbeing.

"Surfing is about getting away from work and enjoying life," he said of CFA's Surfing Club. "We tend to stick in a CFA or brigade bubble and it's good to take people away from that environment. You find they're completely different people. The sport and recreation clubs can offer a release valve."

Smokies Angling Club and the CFA Caravan Club take a very laid-back approach to good company and wellbeing.

"We're family friendly with a membership of staff, retirees, volunteers and friends growing through word of mouth," said Dandenong Senior Station Officer Glenn Pröbstl of the angling club. President John Raymond of CFA's Cravan Club simply said, "What better way to enjoy your caravanning experience than to travel with a group from the CFA family."

Clubs affiliated with CFASRA are entitled to apply for grants. CFASRA has its own equipment which clubs can borrow, such as banners and shade tents, and it plans to buy a trailer with a barbecue, eskies and chairs.

Interested volunteers, staff and retired CFA members should contact CFASRA (sra@cfa.vic.gov.au) for information about clubs and grants.

Whether it's golf, fishing, surfing, four-wheel-drive adventures, diving, caravanning, horse riding, surfing or basketball you're interested in, the welcome mat is out.

STORY LEITH HILLARD



CFA Open Day

Above and right
Engaging with the public at Baxter, Beechworth, Upwey and Yackandandah

PHOTOS
(FROM TOP):
KEITH PAKENHAM,
TRACY MCVEA,
SASKIA VAN BEVER,
CAMERON/JENNI
MCKERN

CFA Open Day, formerly known as CFA Sunday, is a great opportunity for brigades to have fun with their local community, discuss important fire safety information, plan for the upcoming fire season and unite with other brigades.

The name was changed following feedback from CFA members received over the past few years, who said holding an event on a particular Sunday wasn't the best time for them. Brigades now have more flexibility to choose a day that suits them and their community.

Many continued the tradition by having their open day on the Sunday at the end of Fire Action Week (16 to 23 November) but others chose to run their events on a variety of days between September and December.

In 2014, 215 brigades opened their doors to the public, which was a slight increase over the previous year.



PHOTOS: KEITH PAKENHAM



CFA at Jubilation Docklands

Blue skies, beautiful waterfront venue, families, Santa, music, food... A week before Christmas, the inaugural 'Jubilation' came to Docklands in Melbourne – a festival of light, food and entertainment. CFA was there as well.

Harbour Esplanade was filled with past and present shiny red fire and rescue trucks on display for the public.

The event kicked off on Friday 12 December. Large crowds from the surrounding offices came down during their lunch break to check out the food park, Christmas market, the CFA trucks and to enjoy the music.

In the evening, The Captain Koala and Friends show entertained the young ones while educating them about important fire safety messages. On Friday and Saturday nights, CFA band The Red Austins rocked the stage, and on Sunday night Koroit brigade member Kayla Dwyer sang country-tinged pop.

Saturday was another beautiful day and, at dusk, Australian Volunteer Coast Guard members did some night flare demonstrations which filled Docklands with red smoke.

During the weekend, CFA members handed out thousands of copies of *Your Guide to Survival* and chatted to the public about fire safety, reminding city-dwellers that they, too, need to be aware of the fire risks when they're on holiday or visiting friends and family in outer metropolitan Melbourne.

Overall, the event raised around \$5,000 for CFA volunteer development.

Thanks to all the CFA members who gave their time to help with the set up, manning the stands and the pack up, and those who brought in trucks and ensured the event was a success.

STORY SASKIA VAN BEVER



PHOTO: KEITH PAKENHAM

Bunnings raises \$52,000 for CFA

CFA would like to extend a huge thank you to Bunnings Warehouse for holding an Aussie Day Weekend Fundraiser BBQ on Saturday 24 January and, of course, to our local communities for their support.

It seems like everyone grabbed a snag on the day. This event is Bunnings' highest fundraiser, raising more than \$450,000 nationally for volunteer emergency services. In Victoria, over \$111,000 was raised for CFA and SES, of which around \$52,000 will go to CFA brigades nominated to receive the funds.

"Our members work incredibly hard to protect their local communities and these barbecues at Bunnings were a great way for residents to show support for their local brigades, as well as get to know some of our dedicated members," CEO Michael Wootten said.

Thanks also to CFA members from participating brigades who gave their time to make this event a success, helping with the barbecues and getting into the Aussie Day spirit!

This fundraiser was also an opportunity for CFA members to connect with communities and share fire safety information at a time when there's a high risk of bushfires and grassfires.

Thanks to the Bunnings Warehouse team for coordinating the events at 50-plus stores in Victoria.

STORY NANCY THOMPSON

Brigade management team workshops

The Volunteerism team has developed a series of two-hour interactive workshops to help new and existing brigade management team (BMT) members develop and maintain healthy and effective brigades.

A 'Communicating effectively' workshop, recently run in District 16, encouraged participants to think about boundaries between personal and professional relationships, communicating well and capitalising on individual strengths and those of the team.

The interactive discussion-based approach "offered self-reflection and took into consideration other team members' communication styles" said Operations Officer Alfred Mason.

"Nothing is so good it couldn't be better," said Greendale brigade's Shane Cramer, adding "this workshop helps build on strengths and has the potential to smooth out any roadblocks in the decision-making process".

Ararat brigade's BMT also participated in a session and identified a number of strategies on how to keep their members well informed.

Lorne brigade took part in a 'Bring out the best in people, managing performance' workshop

which gave participants an understanding of five performance management strategies. BMT members discussed how they can motivate and support new and current members to perform at their best through training and development, coaching and mentoring and providing feedback.

For more information about BMT workshops, contact your district volunteerism coordinator or contact Leanne Wilson (l.wilson@cfa.vic.gov.au; 0417 232 248).

STORY LEANNE WILSON

Inter-agency exercise pumps up crews

Crews from MFB and CFA took part in a major water relay pumping exercise in late January at Westerfolds Park, north-east of Melbourne.

Taking part were Eltham, Warrandyte, South Warrandyte, Plenty and Scoresby CFA brigades and three MFB trucks.

The aim of the exercise was to test the water delivery capacity over a long hose relay and give crews the opportunity to learn about other vehicles in their local area.

South Warrandyte pumper was set up next to the Yarra River as the draughting vehicle. This fed two lines of 64mm hose into Warrandyte pumper, which then fed two lines of 64mm hose into a collector which fed into a single 100mm hose laid three lengths to MFB Pumper Tanker 30. This in turn fed into MFB Pumper Tanker 16.

A 400-metre hose lay around the park was provided by Scoresby Hoselayer, a specialist CFA truck used for long distance water relays. The hoselay was then divided and fed into MFB Water Tanker 30 and

Plenty pumper tanker simultaneously before being collected once again from four 64mm hose lengths into a single 100mm hose, which supplied water a further four lengths to a ground monitor where water was delivered back into the Yarra river.

"The exercise was designed to try to deliver 4,000 litres a minute at the ground monitor," said Eltham Fire Brigade Station Officer Glenn Bosua who helped coordinate the exercise.

A number of configurations were tried and the best result was close to the theoretical flows.

"It's a fantastic way to test theoretical flows and for the agencies to become more familiar with each other's appliances and capabilities."

MFB Station Officer Tim Fryer agreed wholeheartedly, adding: "It's a great way for the public to see the fire services working and training together as one. We need to do much more of this".

STORY ANDREW HEATH



Graduation for first joint recruit course



PHOTOS: BLAIR DELLEMMUN

Twenty-four career firefighters graduated from Victoria's first-ever combined agency recruit firefighter course in mid-December. It was also the first graduation at the newly-opened Victorian Emergency Management Training Centre at Craigieburn.

Twelve firefighters from each agency spent 17 weeks training together, doing classroom theory and practical drills.

"This course is a landmark initiative for Victorian emergency management reform," MFB Chief Officer Peter Rau said.

"CFA and MFB training departments have worked closely to ensure the current high training standards of both agencies are

maintained. The course is designed to better equip firefighters to work together seamlessly during emergencies."

CFA Chief Officer Euan Ferguson said each of the 24 recruits had a duty to protect life, property and the community.

"Today they march out to join either CFA or the MFB, becoming a member of a global family that holds the trust and respect of communities."

He said the two agencies frequently worked closely together at structure fires, bushfires, rescue, hazardous materials and aviation incidents.

Of the 12 CFA recruits, five have a CFA volunteer background, and two previously working as



firefighters for interstate or commercial services. The group comes from a range of professions including teaching, police, fitness, trades and physiotherapy.

PHOTO: IAN WESTHORPE



District 5 learns about air support

Senior volunteers in CFA's District 5 had the opportunity to look at aircraft, talk to pilots and see water dropped as part of a training session at Hamilton airport in December.

The district's Aviation Unit explained to around 70 group officers, deputy group officers and captains the use of aircraft for observation and for attacking grass and scrub fires.

Air Attack Supervisor/Operations Officer Paul Marshall said it was great to hear feedback from participants that they would no longer be reluctant to speak to aircraft directly if they needed to.

"They will treat aircraft as another firefighting unit, just like they would a tanker on the ground," Paul said.

Participants heard about the structure of the

Aviation Unit and the roles of air observer and air attack supervisor. This led to a discussion about who makes the decision about using the aircraft and who decides where loads should be dropped.

District 5 has two water bombers at Hamilton, two at Casterton and two at Stawell. The firefighting capacity and drop strategies of each unit were discussed in the sessions. Under 'pre-determined dispatch' arrangements, these units are sent to grass and scrub fires as soon as they start, in line with forecast weather and fire conditions.

Thanks to Air Base Manager and volunteer firefighter with Dunkeld brigade Leighton Wraith for organising the sessions.

STORY JULIE OWENS

Through the ages – Bairnsdale





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, including:

- accommodation
- home and garden
- attractions
- retail
- dining
- technology
- financial services
- travel
- health and beauty
- wine

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



Contact Memberlink

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.

Brigade magazine is published by CFA Communities and Communication

PO Box 701 Mt Waverley Vic 3149

Executive Director Communities and Communication:
Mark Sullivan

Managers Corporate Communications:
Liz Armitage and Natalie Pearson

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- Members have access to exclusive discounts and unique offers through the **JB Hi-Fi Family & Friends Program**.
- Receive \$20 off Bath House bathing at **Peninsula Hot Springs** during off-peak periods.
- Members have access to **Goodlife Health Clubs'** Corporate offer including a seven-day VIP experience, 15% off the Standard All Club membership rate and a free health consultation.
- Receive 10% off most land trips with **Intrepid Travel**.
- 5% discount on a range of pre-purchased **Gift Cards** including Woolworths WISH, Coles, Myer, Supercheap Auto, Rebel Sport.
- Receive 10% discount on any purchase made at **Hip Pocket Workwear & Safety** Golden Square and Castlemaine stores.
- Save 40% on **AIG Travel Insurance** and protect you and family on your next trip.
- 10% discount off a regular excursion fare on **Puffing Billy**.
- **Experience Oz** offers 10% discount on a range of tours and attractions around Australia and New Zealand such as zoos and aquariums, reef trips, day tours, theme parks, extreme activities and whale watching.
- Members receive 20% discount on unlimited ticket rides at **Luna Park Melbourne**.
- **Choice Hotels Australasia** offers preferential government accommodation rates for Emergency Memberlink members.
- **Thrifty** offers exclusive rental rates and a reduced liability fee on all cars, trucks, buses and 4WDs throughout Australia.
- 10% off best available accommodation rates with **Best Western Hotels Australasia**.
- Members receive discounted passenger fares when sailing on **Spirit of Tasmania**. Visit the Emergency Memberlink website to view the current offer.
- Free medium drink (soft drink, orange juice or standard espresso pronto) with any purchase over \$3 at any **McDonald's** restaurants in Victoria.
- Discounted rates and reduced insurance excess with **AVIS** car rental.
- **Goodyear Airport Parking** offers members a 20% discount on parking at Tullamarine Airport when booked online.
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- **Searoad Ferries** offers 10% discount on ferry travel between Sorrento and Queenscliff on presentation of your Emergency Memberlink card.
- **Flight Centre** offers members \$50 off their next international booking with a minimum spend of \$1,500.
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- 20% discount off day admission tickets at **Moonlit Sanctuary Wildlife Conservation Park**. Valid for the cardholder and immediate family.
- 10% off **Sovereign Hill** day entry for members and their immediate families.
- Save 10% off the best available rate at 22 hotel locations in Australia and New Zealand through the **Wyndham Hotel Group**.

Visit your Emergency Memberlink website www.emergencymemberlink.com.au for more details and terms and conditions on the above offers.

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