



PROTECTING LIVES AND PROPERTY | AUTUMN 2012

BRIGADE

An aerial photograph capturing a wildfire in progress. A large orange helicopter is seen in flight, dropping water or retardant onto the fire. Below, a fire truck is visible on a road, and another fire truck is parked on a dirt road in the foreground. The landscape is a mix of green trees and brown, charred ground, with thick white smoke rising from the fire.

**A BUSY
SEASON**
MANY GRASSFIRES
BUT NO HOMES LOST

COVER STORY

Our busy grassfire season 05-10

Hard-working crews fight large grassfires

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KERRY MURPHY CHAIRMAN

The March Board meeting was held as busy brigades in the north-east and CFA strike teams started moving out of response and into flood recovery. At the time of writing, some communities are facing the prospect of water lingering for many weeks. It's a testing time for our members and their communities who make their living in the area, many from the land, and who are having difficulty getting around their local roads.

The Board acknowledges the workload of brigades in support of State Emergency Service. Once again, the emergency services have been the lifeblood of their communities and we thank you for your outstanding work.

The Chief Executive Officer updated the Board on the civil action in relation to the Kilmore East fire in February 2009. Many interviews with CFA volunteers and staff have taken place and the legal process of discovery is almost complete. The Board has sought more advice on the next steps in this matter.

The Board considered CFA's strategic priorities for 2012. CFA's strategic intent ranges from prevention and preparedness through response and recovery, to the building of a sustainable organisation. To achieve our objectives, CFA will focus on resilient communities, volunteerism, confident stakeholders, interoperability, one CFA, people first, sustainable business and command and control.

The Board received advice from its Fiskville Program Committee on the support being provided to the independent Fiskville Investigation, and the extension by three months, to 30 June, for its report.

The Chief Officer led a solid discussion about what it means to be the best in command and control. Isn't it really about doing the best we can in everything we do? The perception of success before and after a critical incident may vary greatly with success being the gap between expectation

and actual performance. He acknowledged that effective command and control is almost entirely dependent on good information management leading to good decision-making. And because it's people who make decisions, an area of increasing focus is the study of the 'human factors' associated with decision-making.

The Chief discussed the importance of not repeating the mistakes of the past. CFA has strength in its partnerships with other organisations, industry and the community. When times are tough our partners stand shoulder to shoulder with us. In our partnership with the community, however, we need to better manage expectations. Building networks and establishing relationships based on trust must be a key objective in CFA's approach to emergency management. We need to consider moving from a philosophy of 'shared responsibility' with partners and the community to one of 'mutual obligation'. This implies that while CFA plays a vital role in emergency management, we cannot do it all and we cannot do it alone. Our community partners need to play a part. We will help them and we will train them, but they need to be active partners in confronting and managing risk.

The Chief Officer also reported that Fire and Emergency Management is developing robust new processes to capture and analyse the lessons learned both from incidents and from training exercises. A steering group comprising volunteers and paid members as subject matter experts will play a vital role in the assessment of the information collected.

The Board was informed that the structural personal protective clothing replacement program is now complete. CFA is currently undertaking research on the feasibility of a cold climate jacket to provide protection to members at incidents where there is no risk of exposure to heat and flame. CFA is also working with VFBV on options for the roll-out of station wear and uniforms across volunteers and field staff. ■

PROJECT 2016 PUSHES AHEAD

STORY DARREN GREVIS-JAMES

Project 2016 has reached another major milestone with the purchase of land for a new integrated fire station at Rowville in the Southern Metropolitan Region.

This station will be the first new-build station under the ambitious Project 2016 that will see the construction or redevelopment of 10 fire stations at key locations where CFA is ramping up its capacity.

Site works are being planned for the new location and, in the meantime, temporary accommodation is being installed at the existing Rowville station for additional paid firefighters.

Other new stations planned under Project 2016 are at Beaconsfield, Portland, Warrandyte and Eltham, and modifications are planned at South Morang, Ocean Grove, Springvale and Pakenham stations. Work is also finished on the additional facilities in Mildura that will see the deployment of extra firefighters.

"Project 2016 is going to add an additional 342 [paid] firefighter positions to our ranks over the next four years," said Deputy Chief Officer Steve Warrington. "This is a very exciting and challenging time in CFA as we respond to the current gaps in service delivery that stem from the forecast demand on our services in key Melbourne metropolitan and provincial growth corridors." ■



KETH PAKENHAM

Above: The site of the new Rowville integrated station is unveiled

FISKVILLE INVESTIGATION

Following a request from Independent Fiskville Investigator Professor Rob Joy, CFA has approved a three-month extension for his report, to 30 June 2012.

There are still many interviews to be conducted and records to be reviewed. Thanks to everyone who has already offered information. If you still wish to do so, please contact Professor Joy and his team

directly on **(03) 5420 9260** (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday) or info@fiskvilleinvestigation.com.au

We understand that members, both past and present, may have concerns and want more information from CFA, so we encourage you to register for updates by calling **1800 628 616** or emailing fiskvilleprojectteam@cfa.vic.gov.au

MAKING COMMUNICATION EASIER

STORY CHRISTINA BUCCI

A project is currently underway to identify all the communication templates being used across CFA so that we can offer consistent, yet localised, communications to our communities and members.

We're developing a new collection of updated templates to make it easier for both volunteers and staff to create CFA-branded materials. It's about taking the hassle out of communicating.

If you have any thoughts about improvements or templates that your brigade or team think would be handy, please get in touch with your area champion listed below.

Barwon South West: Kristy Palcak; Eastern Metro: Tarryn Campbell; Gippsland: Aziza Talib; Grampians: Trudi Gready; Hume:

Andrea Muskee; Loddon Mallee: Marita Miller; Northern and Western Metro: Natalie Kenely; Southern Metro: Jeanette Craig; Performance and Strategy: Lara Holmes; Business Services: Naomi Hayes and Nick Jacob; Communities and Communication: Sheona Urquhart; Operational Training and Volunteerism: Heather Lindup; Fire and Emergency Management: Angela Cook; People and Culture: Barbara Eileff; VFBV: Adam Barnett. ■

For any queries about this project please contact Christina Bucci.

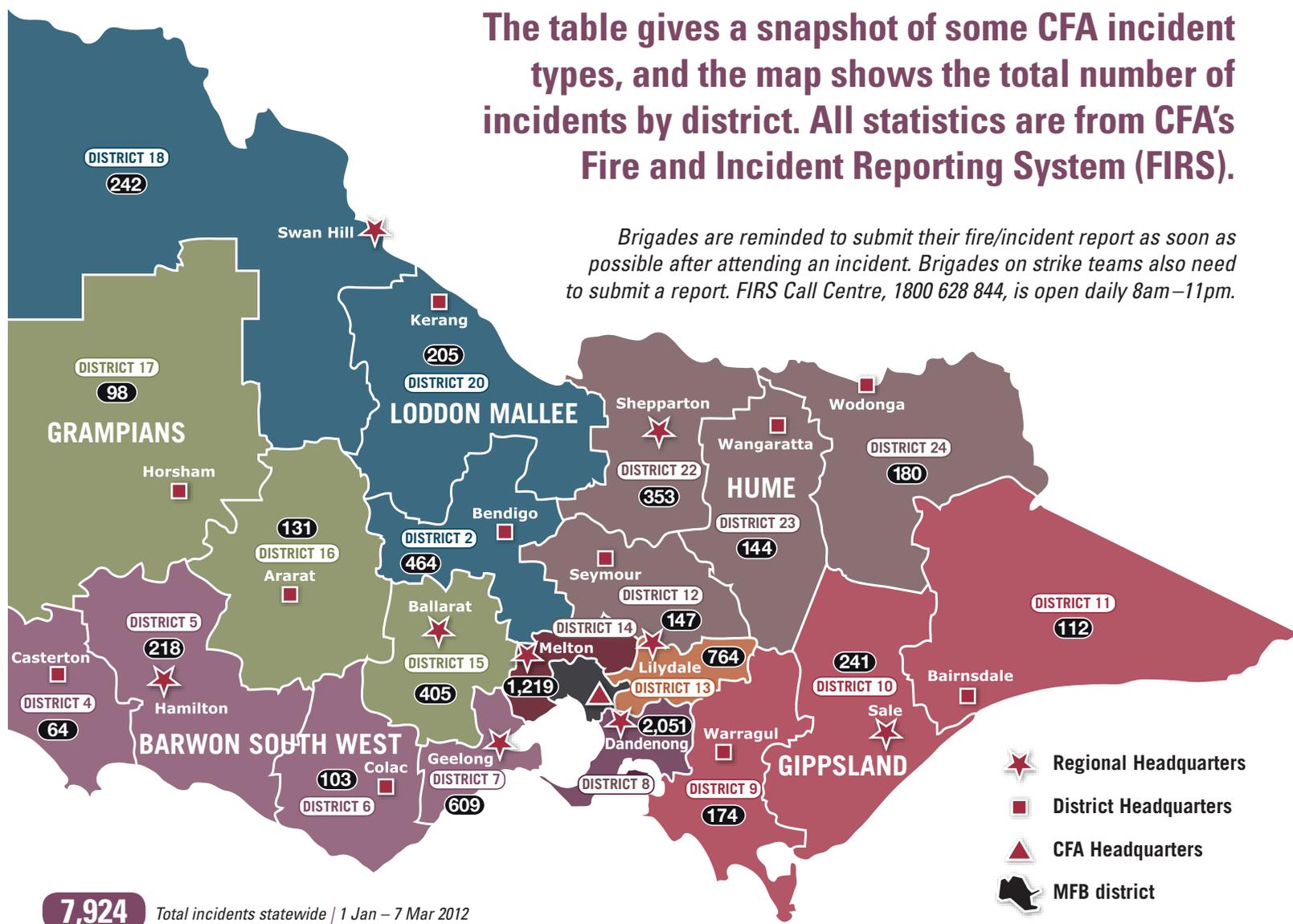
INCIDENT STATISTICS

INCIDENT TYPE	1 JANUARY – 7 MARCH 2012			1 OCTOBER – 31 DECEMBER 2011		
	Est. loss	Est. ha burnt	No. of incidents	Est. loss	Est. ha burnt	No. of incidents
Bush and forest		1,046	33 ^a		206	26 ^a
Car fires and motor vehicle accidents			812			1,344
False alarms			1,229			1,881
Grassfires		3,514	115 ^b		1,201	151 ^b
Hazardous materials			413			672
House fires	\$8,337,645		184	\$13,667,040		292
Industrial fires	\$8,782,000		48	\$8,131,500		75
	\$17,119,645	4,560	2,834	\$21,798,540	1,407	4,441

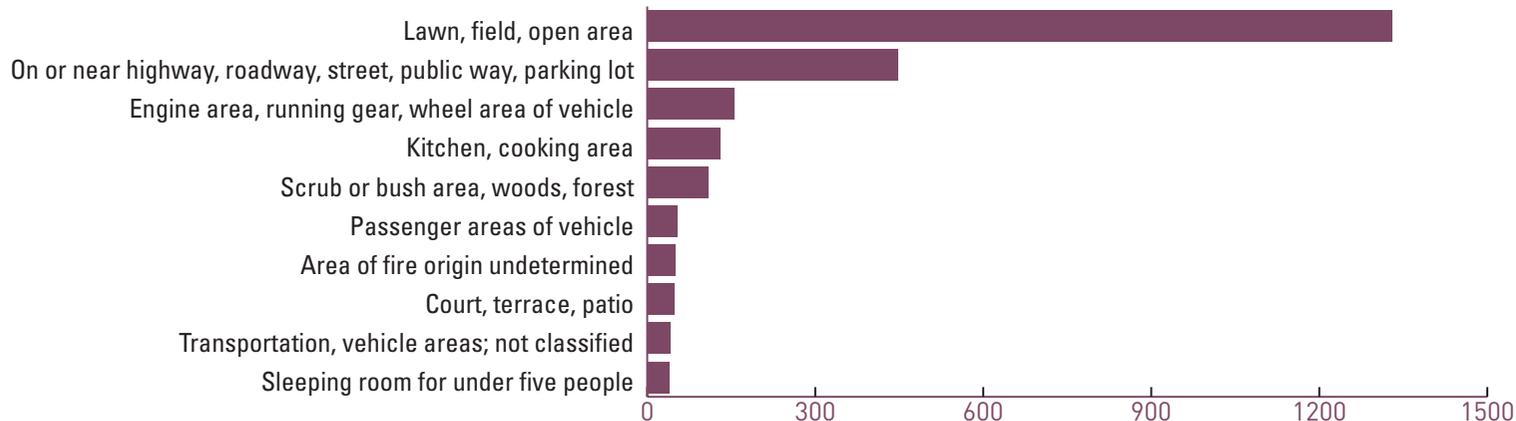
^aForest and bushfires and scrub or bush and grass mixture fires larger than one hectare; ^bLarger than one hectare

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

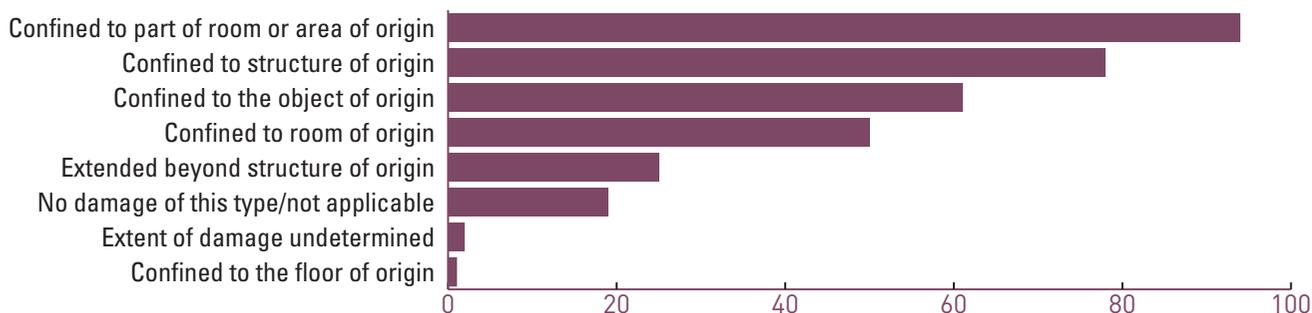
Brigades are reminded to submit their fire/incident report as soon as possible after attending an incident. Brigades on strike teams also need to submit a report. FIRS Call Centre, 1800 628 844, is open daily 8am–11pm.



ORIGIN OF FIRE **1 JANUARY – 7 MARCH 2012**



EXTENT OF FLAME DAMAGE **1 JANUARY – 7 MARCH 2012**



HOUSES SAVED IN REDESDALE

STORY **AMY SCHILDBERGER**

INCIDENT: Grass and scrub fire

DISTRICT: 2

DATE: 11 February 2012

BRIGADES: Redesdale, Junortoun, Langley-Barfold, Sutton Grange & Myrtle Creek, Knowsley, Metcalfe, Mia Mia, Elphinstone, Mandurang, Axe Creek, Axedale, Heathcote, Mosquito Creek, Sedgwick, Costerfield, Strathfieldsaye, Golden Square, Tylden, Benloch, Pastoria, Kyneton, Spring Hill



COURTESY MIDLAND EXPRESS

CFA and Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) firefighters fought hard to save a Redesdale home from being destroyed, with flames just metres away from the house. The fire also threatened two other houses.

Up to 140 firefighters were called to the North Redesdale Road fire just before 4pm, and it took 32 CFA and DSE trucks and two water aircraft just under two hours to control the blaze that burned almost 200 hectares of land.

Redesdale brigade Captain Glenn Brown said it was a real team effort between CFA and DSE.

"I was very impressed with the way the two agencies worked together, especially under such tough conditions," said Glenn.

"The area was covered in old rock walls which can be very difficult and dangerous for firefighters.

"The dedication of those 140 firefighters was just incredible and they should be acknowledged," he said.

The fire was caused by a lightning strike on a tree the previous night and a DSE tower spotted the fire when it began the next day.

"Even if there's rain, a fire caused by lightning burning inside a tree can flare up and take off quickly," said Glenn.

A haystack was destroyed in the fire but crews were able to save a shed full of machinery.

Four trucks stayed overnight putting out hotspots and one crew remained at the scene all day Sunday blacking out and extinguishing a couple of stump fires. ■

Lightning strike AT MT BECKWORTH

STORY DUNCAN RUSSELL

INCIDENT: Grass and scrub fire

DISTRICT: 15

DATE: 28 January 2012

BRIGADES: Waubra, Glendaruel & Mt Beckworth, Clunes, Creswick, Wendouree, Burnbank, Burrumbeet, Glen Park, Learmonth-Addington, Kooroocheang, Cardigan & Windermere, Newlyn Dean, Ascot & District, Kingston, Beaufort, Langi Kal Kal, Miners Rest, Talbot, Raglan, HVP Ballarat



Around 85 CFA firefighters and 30 from the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) battled a large grass and scrub fire for several hours on Saturday afternoon and evening. The fire in the Waubra/Mount Beckworth area burned around 60 hectares.

“Although it wasn’t windy, the fire took off fairly quickly into the grasslands after a lightning strike on the mountain,” said Ballarat Senior Station Officer

Mal Jones, who was District 15 duty officer on the day.

“It’s an area that has had no fires for several years, so there were a lot of fallen trees.”

Due to the size of the fire, ground crews were supported in the air by Delilah, an Aircrane helicopter that helped to attack the fire in some difficult and rocky terrain as well as open grassland. A second helicopter was used to monitor the fire.

The fire was brought under control after about three hours and CFA crews returned to their stations between 10pm and 11pm. DSE crews monitored the area throughout the night.

On Sunday morning three CFA strike teams and DSE crews continued to work to fully extinguish the blaze, followed by many hours of blacking out.

“We worked very well with DSE. Initially, it was thought the fire was in DSE territory, but it was ours. But as it was near DSE territory, they were happy to supply about 30 people and two bulldozers,” said Mal.

No farm animals were lost and there were no houses in the area. ■



WAYNE RIGG



STRONG SOUTH WIND FANS D20 FIRES

STORY LEITH HILLARD

INCIDENT: Corop grass and scrub fire

DISTRICT: 20

DATE: 13 January 2012

BRIGADES: Elmore, Girgarre, Merrigum, Hunter, Timmering, Stanhope, Rushworth, Toolleen, Goornong, Colbinabbin, Cooma, Corop, Kyabram, Rochester, Tatura, Costerfield, Heathcote, Maiden Gully, Metcalfe, Strathfieldsaye, Woodvale, Echuca



INCIDENT: Toolleen grass and scrub fire

DISTRICT: 20

DATE: 14 January 2012

BRIGADES: Toolleen, Bendigo, Elmore, Girgarre, Heathcote, Eppalock, Axedale, Goornong, Costerfield, Hunter, Kamarooka, Knowsley, Timmering, Mount Camel, Stanhope, Rushworth, Tooborac, Colbinabbin, Corop, Axe Creek, Junortoun, Mosquito Creek



before handing over to Graeme as incident controller of this second fire.

“All the trucks were crewed up at Corop,” said Graeme. “Some were running low on water so they sorted that out and were able to leave for Toolleen and hit it pretty hard. Most of the trucks on the Corop fireground were a lot closer to the Toolleen fire than they would have been if they were in their home stations.

“Some trucks were diverted back to Corop from the Toolleen fire later on when fire got into some vineyards.

“Both fires ultimately ran into canola stubble which doesn’t burn as hard and fast as other stubbles. Conditions were similar for both fires and there were good saves at both. Corop got within 100 metres of houses and Toolleen got within 50 metres of two houses.”

Graeme is also captain of Rushworth brigade, which has developed an excellent relationship with the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE).

“DSE had crews at both fires,” he said. “Once we pulled up the fire, DSE crews looked after the trees. It’s just good to know that they’re happy to work with us.

“I said, ‘Great save everyone’ on the Friday night and then said the same thing from the back of a ute on Saturday night. You don’t usually get to thank everyone but a lot of people helped things run smoothly both on the firefighting vehicles and at our control points.

“These were relatively large fires for our district – both about 200 hectares. We moved from District 22 to District 20 with boundary realignment and we just found that all the support we needed was there. We used air attack on both fires and they were quickly on scene.

“We had a Shepparton DMO [District Mechanical Officer] on scene with Colbinabbin Tanker 2 doing a radiator. Thanks to all the Loddon Mallee team who assisted on both Friday and Saturday.

“I think most people were very happy with the way the job went so they’ll be willing to come back and help us the next time.”

So what does a busy incident controller do when the fires are out? He takes his wife for a Sunday drive . . . to view the fireground. “It gave Wendy an appreciation of what we were facing,” said Graeme. And who should he meet there but Corop Captain Darren Bloomfield, taking his wife Kylie and two children for a Sunday drive around the fireground! ■

One hour after being alerted to the Corop fire, crews at the scene were starting to win on the eastern and southern flanks, the head was getting away from them to the north and the western flank was left until the head fire was contained.

“It was blowing very strongly from the south,” said Incident Controller Graeme Wall. “Any wind on the Mount Camel Range makes the firefight more difficult. We pulled the fire up on Friday evening, organised an excavator to push more trees, and crews from Waranga Group to extinguish them on Saturday morning.

“Most of the burning trees were down and the mop up almost over by Saturday noon, only for us to receive a page about a large fire quickly spreading in the nearby Toolleen brigade area.”

The Toolleen truck was at Corop and needed to be diverted to the new fire, along with a number of other trucks. Toolleen captain Bob Wilson initially attended

The season's BIGGEST FIRE

STORY CHARLOTTE AZZOPARDI

INCIDENT: Grass and scrub fire

DISTRICT: 16

DATE: 25 February 2012

BRIGADES: Amphitheatre, Ararat, Ascot, Avoca, Ballan, Ballarat, Ballarat City, Barkly, Beazleys Bridge, Blackwood, Buangor, Buninyong, Burnbank, Burrumbeet, Cape Clear, Cardigan & Windermere, Carisbrook, Cross Roads, Crowlands, Dadswells Bridge, Elaine, Elmhurst, Glendaruel, Glenorchy, Gooroc, Great Western, Hardies Hill, Invermay, Joel Joel, Kooreh, Lake Goldsmith, Landsborough, Langi Kal Kal, Langi Logan, Linton, Mannibadar, Maroona, Millbrook, Morrisons, Moyston, Mt Buninyong, Mt Warrenheip, Napoleons, Navarre, Pomonal, Raglan, Redbank, Rokewood, Rokewood Junction & District, Sebastopol, Snake Valley, St Arnaud, Tatyoon, Wallace, Wallinduc & District, Warrak, Warrenmang & District, Waubra, Wendouree, Westmere, Willaura, Yalla Y Poora



A 1,000-hectare grassfire at Bulgana near Ararat broke out at about 6pm and more than 300 firefighters from 62 CFA brigades, aerial crews and Department of Sustainability and Environment firefighters worked to contain the blaze.

Incident Controller John Athorn said crews faced the complicated and unusual task of fighting the fire as night fell. When the fire was reaching its peak at 2am on Sunday morning, visibility was low and firefighters hadn't been able to survey the area.

In difficult terrain where trucks had limited access, aerial support was called immediately and nearby towns were put on notice.

"It's not often fires start at that time of night and run at night," said John.

"Being only three to four kilometres from Ararat, if the fire kept running it would have been in the town. At that time of night people are usually asleep and not aware of what's happening."

Another challenge was along the western flank that bordered a state forest, because there was the risk of spot fires quickly spreading. However, bulldozers and graders created fire breaks that prevented it from spreading.

On Sunday, a day of total fire ban in the region, Ararat was listed as one of the worst places in Victoria for a fire to break out. Crews were on high alert in case the fire flared up again or spot fires broke out.

"They worked extremely hard to make sure control lines were in place," said John.

"The information coming from the air and the work they did, particularly early on, got us to the point where we just had to monitor and maintain control lines."

An Incident Control Centre in Ararat operated from 5.30am on Sunday and the fire was contained two hours later.

"The weather conditions dropped off a little bit and from then until 6pm we were confident we had it contained. By daylight Monday morning it was controlled."

In the days following, fire crews remained at the scene consolidating the control lines, burning fuel between control lines and the fireground and burning any remaining fuel.

The fire was in a sparsely populated area and only a shed was lost. ■



ECHUCA FIRE THREATENS HOMES STORY AMY SCHILDBERGER

INCIDENT: Grass and scrub fire

DISTRICT: 20

DATE: 23 February 2012

BRIGADES: Echuca, Girgarre, Kyabram, Northern Campaspe, Kotta, Pine Grove, Tennyson, Wyuna, Bamawm Extension, Barmah, Lockington, Rochester, Tongala, Gunbower, Torrumbarry



Several houses were threatened by a series of small fires in Echuca that stretched for nine kilometres and burned up to 130 hectares. Fifteen brigades were called to the fires that started along a railway track.

Two water aircraft and up to 80 firefighters battled the blaze that took just over two hours to bring under control.

Several properties that backed on to the train line were saved, but one small hayshed was destroyed.

District 20 Operations Manager Stuart Broad said it was a difficult fire to fight because of the number of grassfires along the nine-kilometre stretch.

“Gaining access to some of those fires along the train track and Campaspe River was a challenge so it really was a great effort by CFA, DSE and NSW Fire Service to contain all the fires without any damage to nearby houses,” said Stuart.

“There were several brigades involved and many of those volunteers left work to spend the rest of their day battling the blaze. So our thanks not only extend to those volunteers but to their employers for allowing them to serve and protect the community.”

CFA issued a Watch and Act message for Echuca and Kanyapella South and the alert was downgraded to an Advice message three hours later for the towns of Echuca Village, Simmie, Strathallan, Echuca and Kanyapella South.

A number of crews remained at the scene until late afternoon blacking out and patrolling the area.

The fires were probably caused by sparks from a train’s overheated wheel bearings. The fire caused minor damage to the track and no train services were affected. ■

ELECTRICAL FAULT CAUSES BIG BLAZE STORY LIVIA DE SANCTIS

INCIDENT: Structure fire

DISTRICT: 17

DATE: 25 February 2012

BRIGADES: Edenhope, Apsley, Benayeo, Bringalbert South, Charam, Kadnook, Karnak, Ozenkadnook, Patyah, Poolaijelo, Langkoop, Connewirricoo, Douglas, Miga Lake, Minimay, Mitre, Neuarpur, Harrow, Ullswater



A faulty electric bore pump started a grassfire near Edenhope that burned 100 hectares over a hot weekend in late February.

It took around 100 firefighters, a Helitac, two water bombers and a fire spotter about two hours to contain the fire and it was declared safe almost 24 hours later.

Wimmera Highway was closed for almost 24 hours. District 17 Operations Manager Dale Russell said this action was taken to protect the public from falling trees and branches. A bulldozer was used the following day to clear the debris and make the road safe for the public. ■





BLAIR DELLEMIJN

SERRATED TUSSOCK BURNS HOT

STORY BLAIR DELLEMIJN

INCIDENT: Grass and scrub fire
DISTRICT: 14
DATE: 22 January 2012
BRIGADES: Diggers Rest, Sunbury, Truganina, Mount Cottrell, Caroline Springs, Wildwood, Toolern Vale, Gisborne, Bulla



When Deputy Group Officer Robin Bootle, the officer in charge, arrived at the scene he saw a number of flanks burning freely, so requested 10 tankers. Serrated tussock and other invasive weeds were burning fiercely and generating intense heat. "Serrated tussock burns much hotter than your usual grasses," explained Robin.

The quick action by a number of crews prevented further spread of the fire as it jumped properties and roads with the erratic winds, high temperatures and, in some places, steep and undulating terrain.

A control point was set up on the already-parched grass using Mount Cottrell's field operational vehicle, and field command vehicles were used to monitor the fire spread in several locations.

It was not until well after 3pm that the fire was brought under control. With temperatures expected to hit the mid-30s throughout the week, and northerly winds, the blacking out had to be extremely thorough. The last tankers left the scene just before 7pm. ■

There was no chance for a leisurely Sunday lunch for several District 14 crews when a grassfire was reported at Buckland Way, between Sunbury and Diggers Rest. As Sunbury Tanker 1 approached the fire, Station Officer Jessica Walsh could see a large column of black and brown smoke and she requested five tankers.

FARMER STARTS LYNDHURST FIRE

STORY DUNCAN RUSSELL

INCIDENT: Grass and scrub fire
DISTRICT: 8
DATE: 25 January 2012
BRIGADES: Berwick, Frankston, Carrum Downs, Cranbourne, Dandenong, Hampton Park, Springvale, Patterson River, Baxter, Keysborough, Edithvale, Hallam, Mount Eliza, Clyde, Skye, Devon Meadows, Langwarrin, Narre Warren, Narre Warren North, Pearcedale



KETHI PAKENHAM

A large grassfire that started at around 2pm at Glasscocks Road, Lyndhurst, was brought under control by firefighters from CFA, Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) and water bombing aircraft. It's thought that the fire was started by a farmer using a slasher to cut grass.

Around 100 firefighters from 20 brigades were involved at the height of the fire, which burned approximately 50 hectares over a period of four hours. After a change in the wind direction the fire threatened a Jayco factory but firefighters managed to contain it.

"We had a wind shift and it took off by surprise on the one flank the firefighters didn't have contained," said District 8 Duty Officer Arthur Haynes.

"This gave us a big head fire and pitched it towards Jayco."

One firefighter was treated at the scene by Ambulance Victoria suffering from heat stress.

Crews blacked out and patrolled the fire throughout the night.

A small shed was destroyed in the fire and flames got close to one home but no damage was caused to the house. ■

BITUMEN LEAK IN PORTLAND

INCIDENT: Hazmat incident

DISTRICT: 4

DATE: 18 February 2012

BRIGADES: Portland, Geelong, Ballarat City, Casterton, Corio, Hamilton, Port Fairy, Research, Warrnambool, Malmesbury, Macedon, Dandenong, Mortlake, Lower Yarra, Heywood



STORY **DUNCAN RUSSELL**

At around 3pm the inner lining of a tank containing 3,500 tonnes of liquid pitch at 200°C ruptured at the Koppers Australia facility at Port of Portland, allowing tonnes of pitch to spill into a bunded area.

Over several days firefighters constantly cooled the pitch (used to make aluminium) in the hope that the solidified pitch would seal the leak. But several days after the tank failed, around 600 tonnes had seeped out at a rate of five tonnes an hour. Crews filled more than 4,000 sandbags to protect critical assets and to prevent the bitumen from escaping the bunded area and spreading into the port.

As a result of smoke issuing from the bitumen, CFA quickly advised residents in the town's north-west to close their doors and windows. To keep the public up to date with developments and warnings, incident controllers answered questions from local residents on two radio stations and information was also given at community meetings.



IAN HANLEY

Crews from Dandenong brigade set up sensors around the town to check for toxic chemicals in the air, but none was found. Dandenong is one of the few brigades in Victoria with equipment that can remotely monitor and analyse results from air tests. Operators can link 12 sensors to one computer and monitor the results from up to 1.5 kilometres away.

"Because of the nature of the incident in Portland we monitored the computers 24 hours a day," said CFA Scientific Officer Warren Glover. "We will marry data with dates and times to map out a profile of the incident."

Five days after the start of the incident, the remaining 2,500 tonnes of pitch in the tank was pumped into a ship and crews continued to cool down and clean up the spilled bitumen for a few more days. ■

ROWVILLE'S FIREBALL

STORY **KEITH PAKENHAM**

INCIDENT: Tanker explosion

DISTRICT: 13

DATE: 11 December 2011

BRIGADES: Rowville, Boronia, Scoresby, Ferntree Gully, Upper Ferntree Gully, Narre Warren North, The Basin, Dandenong, Hallam, Montrose, Bayswater BA



Stud Road in Rowville became the centre of attention at around 1am on Sunday when a B-double petrol tanker refilling the Caltex/Woolworths petrol station suddenly ignited.

The tanker was close to the very busy Stamford Inn, packed with Saturday night revellers in the bars, clubs and gaming venue.

After the tanker caught fire, fuel flowed down the sloping road into the rear car park of the hotel, melting hotel signs along the way. Two parked cars caught alight and one, being driven by a P-plater, crashed into a tree while trying to flee the scene.

Emergency services quickly responded and police evacuated the hotel and closed Wellington Road and Stud Road.

Deputy Group Officer Peter Shaw said firefighters arrived to see a "burning wall" around 100 metres long, from the service station to the Stamford Inn. "It had a huge potential for disaster."

Rowville brigade Captain John Farrer took command of the scene, where around 100 CFA firefighters worked to contain the tanker fire (including nearby burning trees) and the spread of burning and unburned fuel in the hotel area.

Foam was applied to the burning vehicle by crews using handheld hose lines and a monitor on Dandenong's heavy pumper. All drain pits were either blocked or bypassed by crews with shovels or rakehoes to prevent run-off into nearby waterways.

Scoresby hose layer provided water supply lines from the north for several hundred metres into Rowville's pumper.

The tanker driver, who suffered severe burns, was taken to the Alfred Hospital and traffic was diverted around the scene until late Sunday. ■



DAVE TANGNEY

WET END TO fire season

CHIEF AND CEO SUPPORT NORTH-EAST

STORY LUKE COMMISSO

During the March floods in areas of north-east Victoria, CFA Chief Officer Euan Ferguson and Chief Executive Officer Mick Bourke visited affected towns.

Joined by Chief Officer for the Victorian State Emergency Service (SES) Trevor White, the three travelled to Katamatite, Tungamah, Numurkah and Nathalia to visit emergency service personnel involved in the flood emergency.

Euan said it was an opportunity for the heads of CFA and SES to see first hand the response and recovery being undertaken in these towns.

"It has given us a much better appreciation of what has happened and what is now needed in these areas," he said.

Euan said while the flood threat remained in some parts of the north-east, others were moving into the clean-up stage.

"There has been some outstanding work already done by SES, CFA and other agencies involved.

"It has been very heartening to see. These volunteers are the lifeblood of their communities and have really been the people who others in the community have been able to turn to."

By talking to people on the ground as well as in Shepparton Incident Control Centre, Euan and Trevor were able to help deploy strike teams and other resources to the flood-affected communities of Katamatite, Tallygaroopna, Congupna, Yarrawonga, Bundalong, St James, Lake Rowan, Wilby, Tungamah, Muckatah and Burramine.

Clean-up teams will also work in the areas of Kaarimba, Wunghnu, Naring, Numurkah, Picola and Nathalia. ■



KAYLA MASKELL

REMARKABLE SAVE AT WUNGHNU

STORY KAYLA MASKELL

The small northern Victorian township of Wunghnu, just south of Numurkah, was spared following a huge and tiring effort by two CFA strike teams.

Working alongside SES and Shepparton Search and Rescue Service members, the crews built a wall of sandbags across the town's levee banks all day Sunday 4 March and into the night.

The strike teams consisted of firefighters from Mooroopna, Shepparton, Murchison, Avenal, Balmattum, Euroa, Violet Town, Nagambie and Longwood. The original partition across the

town's levee bank was unable to withstand the pressure from the rapidly-rising water of the Nine Mile Creek. But crews managed to build a sufficient break at Walters Street to stop the water from impacting the majority of the town's homes and businesses.

Flood plans had to be activated along Welch Street and Hall Road to the north of the Walters Street sandbag partition. The river remained at the same level when changeover crews arrived the following morning. ■

Above: The Chief giving support to Numurkah brigade members



KEITH PAKENHAM

TUNGAMAH GROUP BATTLES INLAND SEA

STORY LEITH HILLARD

While the mayor of Moira Shire described the area as two-thirds underwater on Monday 5 March, Tungamah Group Officer John Parnell upped that figure to 90 per cent by Thursday.

John is also a brigade administrative support officer for the Moira Shire catchment so he knows the area well. He's been stationed at Katamatite brigade since 1 March.

"There was significant rain on Monday, which created a lot of water down the Broken-Boosey Creek system," he said. "From Monday to Thursday there were close to 10 inches of rain on the old scale. The brigades of the Tungamah Group provided support to State Emergency Service (SES) for sandbagging at Tungamah and St James. By Thursday there were heavy water flows into Katamatite, a community of about 300 people.

"The station is on high ground in the main street and the meeting room became a control point. We also ran operations from the Tungamah Fire Station. Both towns were isolated and we were sending information back into the Divisional Command Centre in Numurkah.

"We assisted some evacuees at Tungamah and Katamatite and got them out on the back of the truck. We've worked all through the nights. Katamatite has its own lighting plant and a local from Tungamah helped them with lights and a generator."

John and all brigade members have been overwhelmed by the community support. "We turned around last Friday and found the Lions Club putting on a barbecue for all the emergency services," he said. "The community has really shown their pride. You don't have to ask for anything. The community groups just step up."

Tungamah and Katamatite are now in the recovery phase and welcome the arrival of strike teams from Districts 12, 23 and 24.

Brigade magazine spoke to John during the emergency. "They'll be working with Moira Shire crews," said John who

will assign the tasks. "It's going to be a huge boost to see five big red trucks come into town. It shows the community they're not alone. They will assist with the clean-up of any house that's been inundated: pulling up carpet and stripping wallpaper, that sort of thing.

"A lot of our members in the rural land to the north of Katamatite, off the Muckatah drainage system, have been impacted, so we plan to get out there and help them get back on their feet."

The other great boost for the volunteers was the arrival of Chief Officer Euan Ferguson, CEO Mick Bourke and Trevor White from SES.

"We had an hour's notice before they turned up at Katamatite Fire Station and spent about an hour with us. Katamatite Captain Karren Nordbye had never met the Chief before so it was very much appreciated. It gave us a bit of a break and we could talk about what we'd done." ■

KEITH PAKENHAM



Above: Nathalia Fire Station guarded by the levee

Below: Two members at Nathalia patrol the levee looking for leaks

BOILING OIL CAUSES FACTORY BLAZE

STORY KEITH PAKENHAM

INCIDENT: Structure fire
DISTRICT: 8
DATE: 10 December 2011
BRIGADES: Dandenong, Hallam, Carrum Downs, Frankston, Patterson River



Around 40 firefighters from five brigades tackled a factory blaze in Kitchen Road, Dandenong South.

The fire was at the Greencare Developments factory that makes liquids for cosmetics and cleaning products. The fire started when oil that was being heated as part of the manufacturing process became too hot and boiled over. Staff tried in vain to put out the fire before they were evacuated. There were no injuries.

Dandenong brigade Senior Station Officer Adrian Devenish said his crews were very aggressive in their initial attack of the fire and they contained it to the mixing area. They saved the office, laboratory and storage areas. This also greatly reduced the risk of the fire spreading to neighbouring factories. But despite their efforts, around three-quarters of the factory was affected by the fire.

The fire was under control within an hour but crews remained at the scene for several hours to ensure any hot spots were fully extinguished. The Environmental Protection Authority organised crews to clear contaminants from the drains. ■



KEITH PAKENHAM

CHEMICAL SPILL CAUSES EVACUATION

STORY STEWART KRELTSZHEIM

INCIDENT: Hazmat incident
DISTRICT: 23
DATE: 19 December 2011
BRIGADES: Wangaratta, Corio, Benalla



When staff at Nuplex Resins in Gibson Street, Wangaratta, smelled an odour caused by an unexpected reaction in a production vessel, they activated the alarm. CFA crews were confronted with a strong chemical odour and immediately secured the area.

The chemicals in the factory are used to manufacture acrylic emulsions typically used in textile treatments and paints. Two of the chemicals had a pungent odour and there were concerns about the toxicity of another.

An emergency management team was quickly established to manage the incident and assess any threat to public safety. It consisted of CFA, Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria, local council representatives, the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) and Nuplex Resins.

The team identified a potential 300-metre impact zone and residents were evacuated to a safer area.

Initial concerns were for local hospitals, aged care facilities, and the health of residents who may have been susceptible to respiratory illness. Four people with mild symptoms were taken to Wangaratta Hospital as a precaution and a small number of people were treated at the evacuation centre for minor irritations.

CFA and EPA carried out thorough testing in the area for several hours but no dangerous levels were detected. The final clean-up took place in early January 2012. ■



Left: Leading Firefighter Mark Bellew checks the air quality

COURTESY WANGARATTA CHRONICLE



MICK BOURKE CEO

INDEPENDENT FISKVILLE INVESTIGATION

A significant issue for CFA in early 2012 has been supporting Professor Robert Joy, the independent Fiskville investigator, in the work he is undertaking. We believe this is important to our members and their welfare. His team was set up early in the new year and he now has about 40 staff and contract resources under his control. I have ensured that we are equipped to support the investigation by setting up a Fiskville Program led by James Fox and supported by the Executive Team. The Board has also appointed a specific sub-committee for the Fiskville chemicals issue.

While the work of Professor Joy is confidential, he has requested – and been granted – an extension to 30 June 2012 to conclude his report. This time extension will be adequate for completion of his work and is motivated by the number of CFA members and other people seeking to be interviewed.

Professor Joy has praised the courage of those coming forward to tell their stories and provide important information, and he believes it is necessary and proper to meet with those who have offered to speak with his team. There is also an immense document search of hundreds of thousands of archived records that the investigator has well underway.

Professor Joy has declined to provide an interim report as he sees no benefit in speculating on any possible outcomes until he has all the evidence. We will await his report in June, which CFA has committed to make public.

CFA ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE

Also in the first few months of the year, we have been busy filling the new organisational structure and recruiting a few new executives into key roles across the organisation. We hope to announce our new team members soon.

We have spent time in growing our leadership capability with the first priority being the top and next level executive roles. Importantly, executives will be aligning with a CFA region, to spend time in that region, getting to understand the needs and what is being delivered, and how they can better assist the region. They will seek invitations to join District Planning Committee meetings and find ways to more closely interact with volunteers and staff alike, but they will not be there to interrupt the regional management teams.

You will hear more about how we determine the culture we all agree will be right for CFA and how we will aim to achieve this. Likewise, we will be moving more in the direction of One CFA by putting in place common standards and processes across as many aspects of CFA as we can.

I applaud some of the early initiatives from Lex de Man's team in Operational Training and Volunteerism that will assist in brigade self-management of training drills and easy access to the online systems to understand their members' training needs and to be able to update members' training achievements.

As a volunteer and community based fire and emergency organisation, we are clearly focused on our mission to protect lives and property; and especially on all our members who make the delivery of those services a reality. ■

RADIO REPLACEMENT ON HOME STRETCH

STORY DARREN GREVIS-JAMES

New Tait radios, including the portable and mobile versions, continue to be introduced across CFA and a new transportable radio will be ready soon.

Almost 3,000 new vehicle-mounted mobile radios have been installed in 17 CFA districts, and a further 1,000 will be installed shortly in the three remaining districts.

In addition, around 900 portable radios originally supplied early last year have been replaced with the new portables.

Radio Replacement Project Director Doug Booth said the roll out of the mobile radios is going exceptionally well. "It's good news, particularly for some rural operational firefighters who may now be getting a portable radio for the first time. This is due to an increase in the number of portables purchased and a change in CFA's radio allocation policy," Doug said.

The enhanced version of the P25 portable radio has improved water-shedding performance and upgraded software. According to Doug, the deployment of the remainder of the portable model is gathering pace.

"More than 2,000 portables and associated accessories have recently been deployed. Our objective is to have around 5,000 portables delivered to our brigades by the middle of June this year."

The Radio Replacement Project is also developing new lighter and safer transportable radio to replace the seat belt radios that were mounted on the front seat of some CFA and brigade vehicles. More than 1,500 of these radios will be given to CFA brigades later this year. ■



KETH PAKHAWAN



A flare for FIRE INVESTIGATION

STORY LEITH HILLARD

CFA Fire Investigator Graham Lay is wrapping up his second fire season placement with the Victoria Police Arson and Explosives Squad. This time around he's been embedded for six months as a liaison officer, bridging gaps to ensure greater information sharing and more widespread use of vital CFA data.

"We haven't been united enough in terms of systems and information," said Graham. "A big part of fire investigation and the identification of arson or fire patterns is data management. EIMS Mapper is now sitting in Arson Squad headquarters live – we've put that in play. FIRS, the CAD system: all the databases that CFA has are now more available to them through me. I can also cut through a lot of the barriers because I know, say, to ring an Ops Manager straight away or contact an IMT or a field fire investigator."

"WE'RE WORKING MORE SEAMLESSLY NOW BETWEEN THE AGENCIES"

Through his 28 years with CFA, Graham has come to specialise in vehicle and structural fire investigation but, more broadly, in operations. That knowledge of CFA from the ground up has provided shortcuts for the Arson Squad into the inner workings of CFA districts, regions and the fireground.

Graham, in turn, has had his eyes opened to new investigative techniques that will benefit CFA when he returns to his role as District 7 Fire Investigation Coordinator.

"I've worked with one of their senior sergeants on criminal profiling. I say, 'Look at this trend,' and then get involved

in their side of the investigation with the inclusion or elimination of suspects.

"Sometimes you might be identifying suspicious behaviour but other times you're examining patterns of accidental fires. It's satisfying to look beyond the causes of individual incidents to trends within a particular area or patterns of rubbish bin, car or structural fires.

"People don't understand the arson issue we have. A lot of it is outside bushfire. It starts with juvenile misadventure offending with rubbish bin and playground equipment fires right through to major criminal activity. Four or five CFA districts provide the bulk of our arson cases although we do have other hot spots.

"We're working more seamlessly now between the agencies. DSE and MFB both have a presence in the Arson Squad. The fire services are better placed than we've ever been to alleviate deliberate and accidental fires."

Graham's secondment was funded by CFA's Community Safety, now a part of Fire and Emergency Management.

"[CFA Fire Investigation Coordinator] Nicole Harvey was critical," said Graham. "I can't speak highly enough of her. She put up the initial business case to get one of us into the Arson Squad. She's invited them along to CFA-run fire investigation courses so we can share our knowledge and expertise. In turn, the squad conducts sections of the course dealing with the law, interviewing techniques and applying the police perspective to fire investigation."

Fire investigation ultimately aims, of course, for a reduction in fires and that means the greater protection of lives and property. ■

MINING OUR DATA

Acting Deputy Chief Officer Ross Sullivan is enthusiastic about the benefits of Graham Lay's secondment to the Arson Squad.

"It's a great relationship with tangible results. We're already an information-rich organisation but we're now sharing that information in real time with DSE and MFB through the Arson Squad. Graham's analytical work has helped pick up some trends which have informed police investigations and led to some arrests.

"Nicole Harvey and her team are already very good at picking up trends and now this partnership is helping us draw more deeply from our data. Graham has really highlighted the value of us mining our data using new ways and means.

"And while there's that emphasis on live data, Graham has also done research into some outstanding cold cases.

"His liaison role had supported the Arson Squad's strategic deployment in advance of extreme fire days.

"He's made links between the squad and our various departments and districts. That's meant that we're up-to-date with the progress of arson investigations and the squad has a direct line to Community Safety's information about juvenile fire setting as one example.

"It's given CFA a seat at a number of influential tables such as the Victoria Police Bushfire Arson Steering Committee, the Gippsland Arson Prevention Program and the multi-agency Youth Fire Setting working group. Graham also visited the Police Academy to present to detectives at their bushfire arson refresher day prior to this past fire season."

EUAN FERGUSON CHIEF OFFICER

FOCUSING ON SERVICE DELIVERY

Many of you will have heard of the changes to CFA structure and strategy through CEO Mick Bourke's briefings on 'Creating our future together'. Late last year saw the creation of the Fire and Emergency Management team in CFA's organisational structure. The Fire and Emergency Management team now consists of the eight regions (and all districts, groups and brigades); all the former Operations Directorate; and those parts of the former Community Safety Directorate that are involved in delivery of services to the community. All these functions will now come under the control of the Chief Officer.

The structure of the new Fire and Emergency Management team headquarters is almost complete. Key positions include:

- Deputy Chief Officer Emergency Management
- Deputy Chief Officer Readiness and Response
- Executive Manager Community Capability
- Deputy Chief Officer Service Delivery Strategy
- Deputy Chief Officer Capability and Infrastructure.

This structure will enable us to work to a new service delivery philosophy in CFA. This will focus on our mission of protecting lives and property, delivering services to our citizens and creating public value.

The main activities involved with this philosophy include:

- risk mitigation and regulatory management
- building community capability
- providing information and, where necessary, warnings to citizens
- responding to and managing incidents
- assisting in community recovery after incidents
- providing leadership within CFA, with our partners and stakeholders and in the community.

The development of a capability model and a brigade classification structure will be an important part of this approach. These will allow us to develop long-term plans for the investments in community and CFA infrastructure we need to make in the future.

The integration of Operations and Community Safety into one team will, in time, lead to greater integration between these two important functions at all levels in CFA. We see that, in the future, the classification and structure of CFA brigades may change in some locations to recognise other functions such as fire prevention, community liaison, bushfire education and emergency management planning.

Recently Steven Warrington was appointed as DCO Emergency Management and John Haynes as DCO Service Delivery Strategy. We expect that the new Fire and Emergency Management structure will be filled by the end of April.

In the meantime, I thank you for your collective professionalism and commitment in recent fires, the Portland hazmat job and the floods in the north-east. All have seen a great team effort and strong support to our communities. ■



THE POWER OF SUPPORT

STORY MICHELE KONHEISER

Having friends and support people around has a positive effect on your well-being and emotional health. Intuitively, we all know this and research backs it up – good social support has a positive psychological and physiological effect.

A strong social network has been shown to reduce levels of stress in everyday life and at critical times.

Your social support network consists of the people around you who value and care for you. A good social network includes people who are there for you when the going gets tough. A balance of people is also important – those with similar life experiences to you and those who've had different experiences.

Here are some ways you can build a strong network:

- **Meet new people:** Meeting new people and making new friends can be overwhelming. Consider joining a group that shares a similar interest or take a short course.

- **Cultivate supportive friendships:** Include supportive, accepting friends in your life where you can be yourself and where you can be supportive in return.
- **Keep in contact with old friends:** Call or write when things are good as well as when they're not.
- **Time management:** Make it a priority to find time to meet up with friends.
- **Let go of unsupportive relationships:** Discontinue relationships that aren't reciprocal or that feel like a duty. Also, let go of friends who often criticise you. Recognise that sometimes friendships have run their course. A DVD is available to help CFA members deal with stress and prepare for exposure to traumatic events.

Visit CFA Online and search for Welfare Services for more information about the support the team can offer, or phone 9262 8560. ■

STATION DESIGN CONCEPTS

STORY **DARREN GREVIS-JAMES**

DON GATHERCOLE



The design of CFA fire stations has been taken to a new level thanks to the work of graduates from the University of Ballarat.

In the final year of their Advanced Diploma of Building Design (Architectural) course, the students worked closely with CFA's Grampians regional office to develop a collection of futuristic designs that have impressed both the university and CFA managers.

"It was a great opportunity to get new ideas and some lateral thinking from a group of young, enthusiastic design students," said Grampians Regional Manager Don Kelly. "The designs are fairly elaborate compared with our usual standards, but there are innovative ideas that could one day be incorporated into the CFA fire station of the future."

University of Ballarat building design teacher Ron Pickford said the 12 students worked closely with Ballarat City brigade Station Officer Bernie Fradd. "He gave the students a design brief including the essential ingredients needed for a CFA fire station building," said Ron.

"Working with Don Kelly and other CFA people has been a delight and the students were particularly pleased they could work with people in a practical, direct way." ■

KEITH PARKENHAM



Above: Concept fire station by Robert Cooper, former University of Ballarat student

Left: The new training tools being demonstrated at Foster

ONLINE TRAINING LAUNCHED

STORY **DARREN GREVIS-JAMES**

At Foster Fire Station in mid February, CFA launched a set of new and innovative online programs and other products that make CFA training a lot more accessible.

We rely on the skills of our volunteers and paid staff, so it's vital that we continually build on and improve the way we provide training to members.

The training initiatives include:

- skills maintenance drills folder – a series of drills that will help brigades plan and conduct training relevant to their community risk profile
- WebTRAIN – a website-based program to record members' training
- training materials online – endorsed training materials available online

- emergency services off-road driving DVD – the DVD gives practical advice about how to deal with a range of routine hazards when driving in adverse conditions.

These initiatives were developed following significant input from our volunteers and align with the outcomes of the Jones Inquiry. They will allow brigades to access the latest learning materials, simplify the delivery of skills maintenance training, and accurately record members' training using the WebTRAIN online system.

These new online products, available at www.repository.cfals.info, don't replace any practical training but are an additional way for CFA to offer accessible training.

WebTRAIN and the skills maintenance drills folder will be available to all regions by 30 June 2012. ■



Sharing IS PREPARING

STORY TOBY BORELLA

When someone is trapped in a vehicle, it's more than likely that volunteers from both State Emergency Service (SES) and CFA will be working together to rescue the occupants.

That's why it's so vital for the organisations to work together and share the benefits of their experience.

SES units are generally looking after areas serviced by several CFA brigades. So while the SES is the lead agency for road rescues, CFA crews are often first on the scene. With CFA preparing the scene and supporting the SES throughout, it's critical that there's a high level of communication between agencies and that everyone is on the same page. When this is the case, CFA and SES can work seamlessly together, and can even pitch in if either are a volunteer short.

Helping out in this way is much easier if the volunteers already know each other, having shared training and knowledge before the high-pressure environment of an incident scene.

The Bairnsdale SES partnered with Bairnsdale brigade in December 2011 to hold a joint information and training night. The event gave brigade members some hands-on experience with equipment used at an extrication.

Members were shown standard pieces of equipment used during a road rescue and used Holmatro gear to cut, spread and push components of a demonstration vehicle.

Both groups expressed their desire to keep building their relationship to meet the level of service expected by the community.

Similar connections have been forged in Bendigo. Bendigo SES Unit Controller Ben Penrose said previous training sessions had proven invaluable.

“THESE TYPES OF ACTIVITY FOSTER BETTER COOPERATION AND UNDERSTANDING”

“By having the opportunity to meet and train members of rural brigades in our area, it gives you a great amount of confidence knowing who you may be working with in the near future,” he said.

“Those involved agree that these types of activity foster better cooperation and understanding of each agency's role at an incident.”

The Bendigo unit has taken an active approach, reaching out to local brigades to arrange road rescue training and demonstrations whenever they can. It's particularly important for them, as they respond to about one road rescue a week.

Last year Bendigo responded to 43 road rescues, a large number given that SES responded to 1,000 statewide. The Bendigo unit looks after an area serviced by about 30 CFA brigades.

To carry out road rescues, volunteers must obtain the General Rescue (Participate in a Rescue Operation) and Manage Injuries at Emergency Incidents units of competency. Including both theory and practical elements, the training provides participants with the knowledge and skills to work together at road accidents to safely extricate people trapped in vehicles. It also provides understanding of how vehicles are constructed, how they can be stabilised and how to use the right tools. ■

KEITH PAKENHAM



CFA roses ON SALE AGAIN

STORY NANCY THOMPSON

The Firestar Rose and Firestar Phoenix will once again be available to buy from next month.

The Firestar Rose, the first in the series, was created following Black Saturday. The rose honours the lives lost and the many dedicated CFA members who were involved and celebrates the regeneration of life.

The Firestar Phoenix rose was named after the mythical bird that builds a nest that ignites and then rises from the ashes to begin life anew. The phoenix is a symbol of hope.

The roses, grown by Danny and his team at Knights Roses, have been patiently hand grafted and have won national and international recognition for their beauty and robust nature.

Bare-rooted roses of both types will be available from 31 May 2012 for \$26 each, with \$11.50 going directly from the sale of each rose to a CFA brigade of a customer's choice.

Deliveries of the bare-rooted rose will be available until the end of August 2012. ■

For more information and to purchase a rose visit www.firestarrose.com.au. Bloomed roses will be available later this year.

KAREN POON, IIRC



VOLUNTEERING WITH RED CROSS

STORY KIM BATCHELOR

Challenge, adventure, travel, and the chance to make a difference in the lives of vulnerable people – the new Australian Volunteers for International Development program offers it all.

Australian Red Cross is a core partner of the Australian Volunteers for International Development program, managed by AusAID. The program helps skilled people make an effective contribution as part of Australia's overseas aid program.

Red Cross often recruits Australian volunteers with disaster management experience for assignments in Asia, the Pacific and Africa, with placements ranging from three months to two years.

Typical disaster management roles include helping communities to prepare for disasters and emergencies, training emergency service workers and supporting climate change mitigation and adaptation.

CFA volunteers are likely to have the hands-on skills and experiences that would be perfectly suited to some of Red Cross's overseas assignments.

Sydneysider Tim Allan is currently volunteering in Mongolia helping the local Red Cross with disaster preparedness and response should a natural disaster strike.

"Mongolians are very much like Australians: down-to-earth, hardworking, resilient, and they say it like it is," said Tim, who has a background in logistics.

"Helping communities to be more resilient is a wonderful experience. When you see people develop, and organisations grow their capability through knowledge gained, it is the most rewarding of feelings." ■

Australian volunteers receive airfares, modest living allowances and accommodation. For more information go to www.ausaidvolunteers.gov.au or call Red Cross on (03) 9345 1834.

Above right: Tim Allan is currently volunteering in Mongolia

Above: Firestar Rose



Left: Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Peter Ryan, with Macedon brigade Captain Greg Snart, Macedon First Lieutenant Ross Luke, Macedon volunteer firefighters and Donna Petrovich, State Member of Parliament for Northern Victoria

BETTER BURNOVER PROTECTION STORY KAYLA MASKELL

CFA firefighters will be better protected from the risk of injury or death in a burnover, thanks to a major upgrade of safety systems and equipment in tankers.

The statewide \$23 million project covers 844 vehicles made before 2006. They are receiving enhanced crew protection systems with features including radiant heat protective curtains, water-spraying systems, heat-shielding panels and upgraded intercom communication systems.

Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Peter Ryan, launched the project at Mount Macedon Fire Station.

Around 800 of CFA's 1,222 brigades will receive upgrades to their vehicles, with the modifications taking place at CFA's 13 district mechanical workshops.

"If trapped in a burnover situation, it will make it safer to shelter in the trucks," said CFA Deputy Chief Officer John Haynes.

John added that all vehicles produced after 2006 were already fitted with crew protection systems.

"A number of trucks with these protective features already installed were involved in burnover situations during the Black Saturday bushfires and it was found that the systems played a significant part in protecting crews from injury or death," he said.

"All of these systems have been tested by CSIRO and while we hope crews never have to use them, it is just another measure we can take to ensure the safety of our people at the front line."

The program is scheduled to be completed by June 2013. ■

GLOBAL CORPORATE CHALLENGE STORY MICHELE KONHEISER

Across the world each year, teams compete in a fun activity that also improves their fitness. This year's participants will aim to walk 10,000 steps a day for four months beginning on 24 May.

The Global Corporate Challenge was primarily designed to tackle the global health crisis caused by long working days, sedentary occupations and little exercise.

To get involved you need a team of seven. When you join you receive a backpack and goodies to the value of \$97.90 per person, including a pedometer to keep track of your steps. You'll also get fitness and nutrition advice along the way.

To get CFA moving, it has subsidised the joining fees for 11 teams of CFA members across Victoria, to reduce the participation fee from \$97.90 a person to \$40. More teams can take part, but will have to pay \$97.90 per person.

I'm a member of one of the teams and it's the first time I've done the challenge. I want to improve my health and fitness. In recent months, a

family member was diagnosed with cancer and it has made me realise the importance of caring for your health all the time.

I work in the Diversity Unit at CFA and we coordinate welfare services and related projects. The connection between a healthy mind and body shows up consistently in research. Walking is an excellent way to improve mental and physical fitness.

Another team member, Anna Ruzic, plans to keep up her steps by taking the stairs instead of the lift, walking at lunchtime and parking her car further away than necessary so that she walks more.

If you're interested in taking part, get together a group of seven people and nominate a team captain. The captain needs to register the team at www.gettheworldmoving.com/portal/6397-68193/country-fire-authority and pay the registration fee on behalf of the team by 11 May. ■

To find out more about the challenge, go to www.gettheworldmoving.com

IN BRIEF

OUR VALUES

At the CFA Board meeting in May 2011, CFA adopted these values: discretion, commitment, agility, attentiveness, compassion, clarity, courage and determination.

Put simply, we want members to behave in a way that doesn't cause offence, to strongly believe in CFA's purposes, to adapt to change, to understand what they see and respond appropriately, to care about the welfare of others, to express themselves clearly, to have the courage to uphold our values, and to show tenacity until they succeed.

Our values and behaviours are an important platform to consistently deliver our mission to the highest possible standard.

Tell us WHAT YOU THINK

We want to be sure that the information we send to you is relevant, topical and presented in a way that is easy and convenient. We know most people live busy lives, with study, work, community activities and family commitments and we don't want to add to the information overload. At the same time, we want to make sure you have the most up-to-date information.

We're working to better understand the information you need, and your input is vital. We'd appreciate it if you could complete this survey and post it to us using the reply paid envelope included with the magazine. Alternatively you can complete it online – follow the links from CFA Connect

www.cfaconnect.net.au

We've kept it to just 21 questions and it should take less than five minutes.

By completing the survey members will go into a draw to receive one of five \$250 vouchers to spend on equipment for their brigade from Fire Trader (www.firetrader.com.au).

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Natalie on 03 8822 8045 or n.pearson@cfa.vic.gov.au

1. Do you use a computer? (tick box)

- Yes
 No (Go to question 8)

2. Are you online every day?

- Yes
 No

3. Are you a social media user (eg Facebook, Twitter)?

- Yes
 No (Go to question 5)

4. Please tick the social media sites you visit

- YouTube Twitter
 Facebook Other (please name)
 LinkedIn

5. How often do you check in to Brigades Online?

- Daily Monthly
 Weekly Rarely

6. Do you subscribe to news feeds (RSS)?

- Yes
 No

7. As a computer user, do you still prefer information in print (magazine, newsletter)

- Yes
 No

8. Do you frequently send text messages using your mobile phone?

- Yes
 No

9. Do you like (and have time) to sit down and read a magazine?

- Yes
 No

10. Do you generally prefer bite-sized pieces of information that you can digest on the run or longer articles that give you more in-depth information?

- Bite-sized pieces of information
- Longer articles

11. Please tick the statement(s) which best describe you (tick all that apply).

- I like to know what's going on in CFA across Victoria, to keep in touch generally
- I'm interested in the history and heritage of CFA
- I'm only really interested in what's happening in my local area
- I like to read human interest stories – why people join CFA and what they think about things
- I'm always looking for opportunities to do more with CFA and would like information about other activities
- I just need the essential information to do my job, I don't have time for anything else
- I like to know the technical information about firefighting and rescue equipment and techniques
- Other (please specify)

12. Which of these do you receive, subscribe to, or use to get information about CFA?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> CFA Connect | <input type="checkbox"/> Brigade Magazine |
| <input type="checkbox"/> cfa.vic.gov.au | <input type="checkbox"/> Regional newsletters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Brigades Online | <input type="checkbox"/> District, HQ or field staff newsletters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The Fireman | <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> From the Chief Officer message | <input type="checkbox"/> Brigade meetings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CEO blog | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pager | |

13. Do you feel you receive too much, too little, or about the right amount of information from CFA?

- Too little
- Too much
- Right amount

14. How often do you like to receive information from CFA?

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Daily | <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly | <input type="checkbox"/> Quarterly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fortnightly | |

15. Who would you most like to hear from (tick all that apply)?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chief Executive Officer | <input type="checkbox"/> Regional Manager |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chief Officer | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Executive Team | |

16. How often would you like to see Brigade magazine?

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly | <input type="checkbox"/> Quarterly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bi-monthly | <input type="checkbox"/> Twice a year |

17. Would you be willing to receive Brigade magazine by email to save print costs?

- Yes
- No

18. Did you read the last two issues of Brigade Magazine...

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cover to cover | <input type="checkbox"/> Skimmed through |
| <input type="checkbox"/> They're on the pile waiting to be read | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't have time so I've binned them or passed them on |

19. How do you provide feedback about CFA?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Write a letter to the editor of a newspaper | <input type="checkbox"/> Member forums on CFA Connect |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Send an email to HQ | <input type="checkbox"/> Verbal, through the brigade captain |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Post a comment on CFA Connect in response to CEO blog or Chief Officer message | <input type="checkbox"/> I haven't needed to provide feedback |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) |



Pound Creek CELEBRATES WITH CHIEF

STORY JASON LEIGH

Pound Creek brigade's Australia Day celebration was a huge success, with Chief Officer Euan Ferguson choosing to visit the brigade instead of meeting the Prime Minister.

"We started this Australia Day celebration 10 years ago, with around 30 firefighters and family members attending," said Pound Creek Captain Peter Vanzuyden. "It's since grown to 200 people, which is quite big for our country location."

"It was a privilege to see the Chief Officer at work and fantastic to see how he dealt with the public. He shook every single person's hand, spoke with all the junior members and elderly members and didn't miss a beat. Kristen his wife was right alongside to support him and she was lovely," Peter said.

"Euan spoke about Command and Control and the importance of local decision making, and then spoke of how proud he is of the 60,000 volunteers. We all stood there with our chests expanded, as he described us as great people who give up so much for the safety of our community.

"We had so many people here at the station and it really put us on the map. People came from the Leongatha and Wonthaggi brigades and couldn't believe we had the Chief here.

"I'd like to thank the Ladies Auxiliary for catering the whole event, as well as the South Gippsland brass band who donated their time to provide music for the day. We're already thinking about who we can invite next year – maybe even some famous AFL footballers who grew up around here." ■



GREAT SOUTHERN STAR NEWSPAPER/SIMONE SHORT



PETER MCFARLANE/TANIA FRANK

Left: Pound Creek Captain Peter Vanzuyden with Chief Officer Euan Ferguson

Below Right: Chief Officer Euan Ferguson praises Pound Creek brigade members

IN BRIEF

NEW STATIONS

Mannerim brigade's 38-year-old tin shed has been replaced by a four-bay station with a large meeting room, office and kitchen. Celebrating with brigade members at the official opening in February were CFA Chief Officer Euan Ferguson, Fire Services Commissioner Craig Lapsley and Barwon South West Regional Manager Bob Barry.

Also in February, the Honourable Peter Walsh, Member of Parliament for Swan Hill, officially opened Minyip brigade's new station. In a double celebration, hosted by Grampians Regional Manager Don Kelly, the brigade also received a new light pumper.

Left to right:
Gippsland Regional
Manager Mark Reid,
Mt Taylor brigade
Captain Ken Stuart,
Chief Officer Euan
Ferguson and Alan
Stuart, former captain
of Mt Taylor brigade



Mt Taylor's SPECIAL AWARD

STORY ADAM TOWNSEND

In early December Chief Officer Euan Ferguson presented Mount Taylor brigade with a special recognition award – the first in CFA's history.

Euan made the presentation at the same time as officially opening the brigade's building extension, and thanked the brigade for the work they have carried out over a significant period of time.

"I FEEL HUMBLLED BY SUCH SERVICE"

The wording on the citation (printed in full, below) tells the story of the brigade's dedication to its community.

"This Special Recognition Award is made in appreciation of Mt Taylor Fire Brigade's outstanding and prolonged service to the community of East Gippsland.

"The Brigade's extraordinary support to the community has been unbroken and consistent over a period of almost 10 years. In an outstanding demonstration of individual and team commitment, many brigade members sacrificed their personal time to help property owners recover their losses following several major fires through the Gippsland region.

"During the 2003 fires the Brigade provided continuous support to the Omeo community 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Brigade also provided its brigade-owned tanker to the Omeo brigade for nearly six weeks. Following these fires, 33 brigade

members and their families spent 11 weekends, often camping on site, clearing and replacing burnt fencing on 15 properties in the Benambra, Bindi, Black Mountain and Gelantipy areas.

"In 2004 the Brigade carried out a major renovation of a member's family home after the member was killed in a motor vehicle accident and his wife left wheelchair bound for a significant period.

"During the 2006 fires Mt Taylor Fire Brigade completed 95 kilometres of back burning and patrol work, operating three appliances 24 hours a day for 10 consecutive days in the Blacks Camp and Swamp Creek areas near Bairnsdale. After these fires, the Brigade then spent several weekends assisting at Tambo Crossing with fence line clearing on three private properties.

"Following the 2009 fires 37 brigade members spent over 35 weekends doing recovery work on numerous properties in the Callignee, Carrajung and Traralgon South areas.

"In 2011 the Brigade again spent three days installing new fencing following the Tostaree fire.

"CFA congratulates the Mt Taylor Fire Brigade for selfless and dedicated service to the community of East Gippsland. This Special Recognition Award has been made by the CFA Board as a token of recognition and sincere appreciation. Through your service you have brought benefit and comfort to many in need. You are an inspiration to CFA and to other citizens and we salute you."

Euan said, "I feel humbled by such service. The efforts of the Mount Taylor brigade members epitomise what it means to be a member of CFA." ■

IN BRIEF

NYAH WEST'S CHRISSIE PRESENT

Christmas came early for Nyah West brigade when it received a new Hino light pumper in mid December. It replaced a 1983 Ford Type 2 pumper. The new two-wheel drive truck seats a crew of five, has a 1,200-litre water tank and a 100-litre tank for Class B foam.

At the official handover, Captain Brian Lewis said he was very pleased with the new asset, and he thanked District 18 for attending the evening.



ERICA'S NEW STATION

STORY LOUISE HAUGHTON

On CFA Sunday in late November when more than 400 brigades opened their doors to the public, Erica and District brigade members welcomed Local Member for Narracan, Gary Blackwood MLA, CFA regional staff, the community and past and present members of the brigade to their official station opening.

Des Michah, former secretary/treasurer, fire equipment maintenance officer and firefighter with 45 years experience with the brigade, unveiled a wooden Honour Board that lists all previous captains, life members and soon-to-be-added secretaries.

Des, who's a very influential life member of the brigade, was excited to be a part of the celebration.

Brigade Captain Flo Swan and Secretary Russell Wright welcomed the community and thanked everyone for joining the brigade to celebrate the station's official opening. Flo gave a special mention to the employers of brigade members for allowing them to be volunteers. "With their ongoing support for volunteers, we have the brigade we have today. Their support enables us to continue our service to the community," he said.

District 9 Operations Manager Mark Jones acknowledged the brigade's service to the community and mentioned some of the campaign fires the brigade has had on their doorstep.

"The new station has been strategically built directly opposite the Department of Sustainability and Environment to further strengthen the working relationship between DSE and CFA," Mark added. ■

THE EAGLE HAS LANDED

STORY DUNCAN RUSSELL

At the beginning of December members of Traralgon brigade received a page that simply said, "The eagle has landed". The eagle was the brigade's latest firefighting vehicle – a 42-metre Bronto ladder platform.

District 10 Operations Officer Peter Lockwood said they'd been looking forward to getting the Bronto for some time and it will be put to good use in the area.

"One of the primary reasons for having an aerial appliance in the Latrobe Valley is to service the critical infrastructure risk, such as power stations, other major facilities, heavy industry and high-rise developments around Gippsland," said Peter.

But before the Bronto becomes operational, there are several months of comprehensive training for brigade members so they are accredited to use an elevated work platform.

"There's a very intensive training program for staff. Twenty-six people at Traralgon need to be trained to use it and Morwell members also need training." ■



FUNDRAISING PAYS OFF

STORY JOHN MONAGLE

Many years of hard work fundraising, tin-rattling and barbecues have finally paid off for Torquay brigade. In mid December State Member of Parliament for South Barwon, Andrew Katos, presented the keys to a new Hino 2.4C tanker to brigade Captain Phil Campbell.

Many brigade members contributed to this mighty effort and the local community also deserves thanks for its generous contributions that have allowed the brigade to get a new truck with safety features our older tankers lack – such as the dual cab and crew protection sprays.

“It’s reassuring to have a modern new appliance to help protect our response area that also maximises the safety of the crew on board,” said Phil.

“I’d like to thank the State Government’s VESEP grants program that contributed the rest of the money to pay for the tanker.” ■



JOHN MONAGLE



BIGGER AND BETTER FOR ST ANDREWS

STORY KAYLA MASKELL

After spending 10 months operating out of two old shipping containers and a basketball court, moving into a new fire station was an exciting milestone for St Andrews Fire Brigade. “It was a challenge. It was especially hard to maintain enthusiasm while out on the basketball court cleaning the trucks in the middle of winter,” said St Andrews brigade Captain Laurie Steel.

“But we’re in luxury now.” By luxury, Laurie is referring to the extra space.

“We have a safer working environment, a turnout room to get changed in and a kitchen that we never had before, as well as an enormous meeting room and large office,” he said. “It’s much bigger than anything we’ve ever had.”

Laurie said an added benefit was that the station was set up in a way that could isolate the engine bay from the rest of the building.

“This means the community can also make use of the facilities, like the meeting room, for any event,” he said.

Laurie added that it was important to acknowledge the brigade’s strong connection with its community.

“Nearly half of the cost of the new station was covered through donations made to the brigade by the community and corporate sponsors.”

This included more than \$70,000 from the Paul Newman’s Own Foundation. CFA also committed funding under its capital works program.

“The amount of money that came into the brigade immediately after the 2009 fires was unbelievable. It has meant we can do things we never dreamed of,” Laurie said.

“During the last six months there have been lots of questions from the community about when we would be moving in.

“So on Sunday 18 March we’re having a community opening and everyone in town is invited to look at the new facility. It’s going to be an opportunity for us to say thanks to the community for their generosity.” ■

Above left: St Andrews’ volunteers Felicity Wiltshire, Peter Wiltshire, Wil Dixon, Matt Ryan and Terry Melbourne



MADIE ARNOLD

Roadside BURN IN D24

STORY PAUL ALLWOOD

In late January 2012 around 50 CFA volunteers carried out a successful fuel reduction burn along the side of the Yackandandah-Wodonga Road.

Volunteers from Baranduda, Allans Flat, Kiewa, Bonegilla, Wodonga, Wodonga West and Wodonga Headquarters brigades burned 1.7 kilometres of heavily-treed, dry, high-fuel-load roadside. The burn area was split into four sectors of around 400 metres long and 10 metres to 20 metres wide. Two taskforces – each with three tankers, two slip-ons, an ignition crew and a rotating rakehoe crew – had responsibility for preparing, igniting, extinguishing, blacking out and monitoring their sectors.

Baranduda Captain Paul Allwood, First Lieutenant Mark Goldsworthy and Second Lieutenant Patrick Barnes took on the incident control and taskforce leader roles with support from Wodonga First Lieutenant Alex Todd, Bonegilla First Lieutenant and Wodonga Group Deputy Group Officer Phil Browne, and District 24 Operations Officer Mark Owens.

A major key to the success of the burn was the preparation put in by rakehoe crews, who worked tirelessly 50 metres to 100 metres ahead of the fire clearing a 30-centimetre ring around the base of trees. ■

APES FIND NEW USE FOR OLD HOSE

STORY CHARLOTTE AZZOPARDI

Old fire hoses donated to the Werribee Open Range Zoo are a hit with the dancing gorillas.

Ballan brigade donated more than 500 metres of hose for use in the new gorilla enclosure. Werribee's gorilla keeper Kat Thompson said the hoses were ideal because they were tough and could withstand the weight of the gorillas during their exercise.

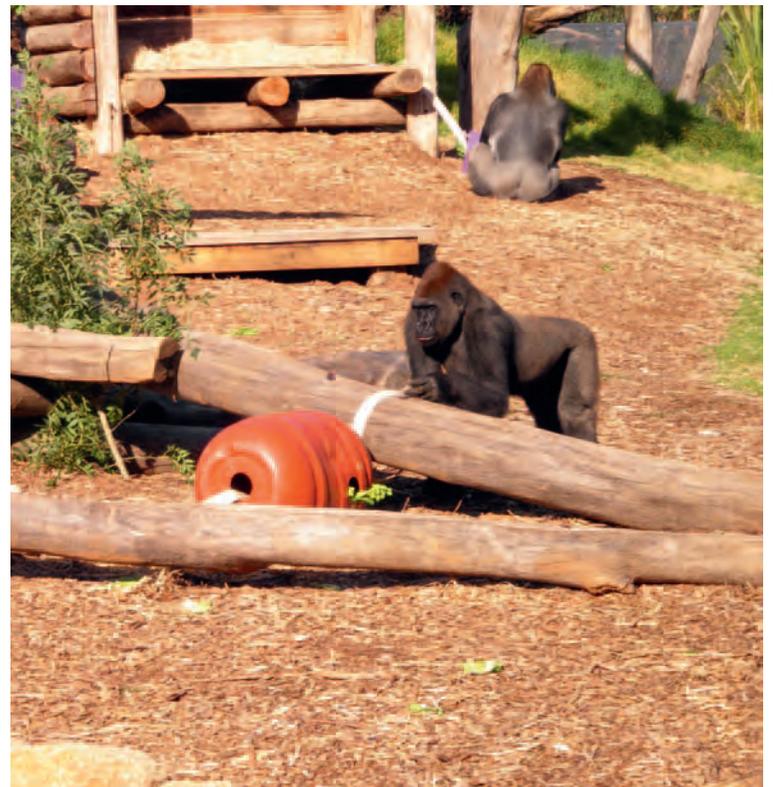
"The hoses are used for exercise and enrichment – they run through them, lift themselves up, dance on them and spin around in circles," Ms Thompson said.

The hoses are used to tie down their food troughs, they hang from the ceiling with toys on the end and they line pieces of canvas to make sturdy hammocks.

"They will also be used as insulation in winter and put over the doors to stop the cold air coming in. It's really durable and soft for their hands," Ms Thompson said.

Ballan Catchment Officer Archie Conroy said a CFA member associated with the zoo asked him what CFA does with old hoses and, as a result of the conversation, CFA donated them to the zoo.

"We sent old hoses to be tested and if they came back unusable we stored them until we had a decent amount to give to the zoo," Archie said. And the grateful gorillas are dancing on them with joy. ■



CHARLOTTE AZZOPARDI

YOU'VE EARNED IT



Emergency Memberlink is a key recognition program that thanks members for their significant contribution and dedication to CFA and creating safer communities.

Through Emergency Memberlink, members can receive discounts and benefits on a wide range of products and services. In excess of 250 offers are now available, with new benefits being added regularly.

Details of the offers can be found in the Emergency Memberlink Guide which is sent out with all new Memberlink Cards and on the Memberlink website www.emergencymemberlink.com.au. Be sure to visit the website regularly to keep up to date.

There are a number of ways you can access your Memberlink Benefits. These include:

- **Show your card and save** – discounts and benefits available upon presentation of your Memberlink Card at businesses throughout Victoria, and some nationally.
- **Online Shopping** – goods below RRP delivered state-wide.
- **Purchase Cards** – Safeway/Caltex and Coles Gift Cards available through your Memberlink team at 5% discount.
- **Discount Vouchers** – time limited, special offers updated regularly. Members can download these vouchers from the Memberlink website or call the Memberlink Team.

For anyone without a Memberlink Card, you can call the Memberlink Team on **1800 820 037** or register online.

WINNER us on Facebook Competition

Jenni Clemens from Dromana Brigade was the lucky Emergency Memberlink Member that won this for her Brigade.

Our thanks to Harvey Norman Commercial for their generosity in making this prize available.



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Full listing and more information call **1800 820 037** or visit www.emergencymemberlink.com.au

*Conditions apply and offers are subject to change. Valid to 31 December 2012.



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Gift Card Value	Memberlink Price*
\$50	\$47.50
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*Visit the Memberlink Website for Terms & Conditions

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Large-scale bushfire EXERCISE

JOHN COWAN

STORY **KAYLA MASKELL**

Around 1,000 emergency service staff and volunteers attended an exercise in late November that simulated a bushfire in the Warrandyte area.

Coordinated by CFA, the field exercise involved fire trucks from CFA, the Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board (MFB) and Department of Sustainability and Environment, as well as firefighting aircraft, Victoria Police and State Emergency Service members.

CFA Northern and Western Metro region Operations Officer Tony O’Day said the exercise formed a critical part of emergency services’ pre-summer preparedness.

“The exercise was also a great opportunity for the community to enhance their self reliance and resilience when faced with an emergency,” Tony said.

Craigieburn Leading Firefighter, North Warrandyte volunteer and Exercise Director Troy Lowther said feedback from the exercise had been “overwhelmingly positive”.

“The exercise has got to the point where so many people want to be involved that it’s gone from involving 100 people to 1,000,” he said. “This year we had brigades from as far away as Seymour as well as a number from down the Peninsula, which was great to see.

“It’s really a fantastic opportunity to be able to practise command and control arrangements and interoperability on such a large scale.”

CFA Chief Officer Euan Ferguson thanked the organisers and participants in the exercise.

“In spite of the damp weather preceding the exercise, it was a resounding success,” Euan said.

“Thank you and a job well done goes to the exercise director Leading Firefighter Troy Lowther and the exercise team of Senior Station Officer Brian Wright [CFA], Station Officer Stuart Morris [MFB] and Senior Sergeant Peter O’Connor [Victoria Police]. ■

SUCCESSFUL GROUP TRAINING

STORY **TONY RILEY**

MEGAN ANGEL

In mid December the Casey and Cardinia Groups held a joint exercise focusing on pre-summer preparedness.

More than 200 members from 27 brigades participated in the exercise, which Deputy Group Officer Wayne Nutting from Cardinia Group and I organised.

The incident control centre at Pakenham was activated and assumed control of the incidents with input and participation from Victoria Police.

The day was split into scenarios focusing on a bushfire in a heavily-forested area and a fast-running grassfire on the plains.

Various bushfire scenarios were presented and crews needed to adapt to difficult conditions – the previous day’s heavy rain caused additional challenges accessing the area.

Crews were then deployed to a fast-running grassfire in the Officer South and Clyde North area, with the fire spreading to properties next to Cardinia Creek.

Three tanker strike teams and two ultralight tanker taskforces participated in the exercise and new strike team leaders and sector commanders honed their skills under the guidance of mentors.

Overall, the exercise was a great success, and gave participants the opportunity to test local incident response and control as well as critical pre-fire season skills maintenance at all levels.



This was the first time that an exercise of this size had been conducted between neighbouring groups and it’s hoped that the success of this exercise will lead to further collaboration in the future. ■

Tony Riley is Deputy Group Officer, Casey Group

IN BRIEF

TRAPPED

Grovedale brigade firefighters Ash Blain and Adam Meehan spent two months planning a multi-agency exercise at the end of February. It involved Victoria Police, the South Barwon SES Unit, CFA District 7 Training Department and Grovedale and Belmont brigades.

Grovedale crews were paged to attend a car crash with trapped occupants. At the scene, a car was on its side with powerlines over the vehicle and leaking fuel. The exercise was a great success with all agencies gaining valuable experience.



Kids missing IN HEATHCOTE

STORY LEITH HILLARD

The search-and-rescue exercise scenario started out as a normal school day at Holy Rosary Primary School in Heathcote. About 90 people attended the exercise late last year from CFA, State Emergency Service (SES) and the school community.

Teachers smelled smoke on the second floor of the heritage building, evacuated the students and called triple zero. They conducted a head count in the assembly area and advised the brigade that five students were missing and thought to be upstairs where the fire was taking hold.

Members of Heathcote, Mount Camel, Junortoun and Axedale brigades from Eppalock Group swung into action alongside Bendigo members on the Bronto and Heathcote SES.

Heathcote's collar tank was set up with water supplied by Junortoun and Heathcote's two tankers. Mount Camel tanker was used for asset protection and a five-person fog attack for venting domestic LPG gas cylinders. The pumper was at full capacity supplying water to Mount Camel tanker, two lengths of hose and then boosting the Bendigo platform.

"This was the first time we'd exercised with the Bronto," said Heathcote Training Officer Shane Nixon, who was the dynamo behind the exercise.

"The Bronto needs 1000kpa to work effectively but our pumper can only do 750kpa. The operator kept the platform relatively close to the ground so not as much pressure was needed to supply water. We used our pumper for training purposes only but, overall, we were happy with what we could achieve."

Two lengths of 38mm hose using Protek nozzles fought the fire from outside the building. Another two lengths of 38mm hose went up to the second floor with the members wearing breathing apparatus for both the internal firefight and the search for the missing students.

While some of the 'unconscious children' (played by dummies) were evacuated from the second floor using the Bendigo platform, others were given the fireman's lift and taken down the stairs.

"Overall, the exercise was a great success and people put in 110 per cent effort," said Shane. "They were all feeling the heat wearing their structure uniforms, but they pulled through and did a great job. Mistakes were made on the day and there were equipment failures but that's what training is for. We learn so we can perform the job better.

"As a training officer, I could not be any prouder than I was on the day to see everything fall into place. The members deserve a big pat on the back for a great job well done."

A successful exercise means a lot of planning behind the scenes and Shane is quick to give credit where it's due.

"A special thanks to Junortoun, Mount Camel, Axedale and Bendigo brigades, Heathcote SES, Ambulance Victoria and the students, teachers and parents of the Holy Rosary Catholic School.

"It was great to have Carl Watkins as Incident Controller and Wayne Watts and Ray Mundy supervised breathing apparatus operators in the building. Heathcote Fire Station was our incident control centre and we had two new people running radio operations. Operations Officer Chris Jacobsen really came through for us, ensuring Bendigo staff were available to bring over the Bronto." ■

Above: SES Commander Steve Johnson, Heathcote CFA Training Officer Shane Nixon, Incident Controller Carl Watkins, SES member Peter Zenz





STORY DARREN GREVIS-JAMES

Above: The testing facilitators were CFA Operations Manager Stephen Walls, former Chief Officer Trevor Roche and Level 3 Incident Controller Training Coordinator Dean Simmons

A group of nine senior CFA volunteer operational members have recently successfully completed validation testing as Level 3 incident controllers.

They underwent eight hours of intensive scenario testing at Fiskville to formally qualify or continue to act in the pivotal incident controller role in the incident management team structure.

The day focused on a series of scenarios concerning a major bushfire, including leading emergency management team meetings, consulting and working with other fire and emergency management agencies, management of information flow to the community and media briefings.

Other testing included dealing with possible evacuations, road closures and vulnerable people.

Facilitators of the scenarios were Operations Manager Stephens Walls, former CFA Chief Officer Trevor Roche, and Level 3 Incident

Controller Training Coordinator from the Incident Management Team Training Project, Dean Simmons.

Dean said the scenario started with the outbreak of a fire and then unfolded throughout the day as the bushfire and its implications progress in real time.

"All these candidates are, by and large, highly experienced bushfire incident controllers who, under changes that stem from the Bushfires Royal Commission recommendations, are now compelled to go through a process that validates their skills and competencies," he said.

"All the CFA regional commanders have also gone through the scenario testing and the feedback has been very supportive of what we are doing here," Dean added.

More than 40 CFA incident controllers have now successfully completed the validation testing. ■

NEW WILDLIFE OPS COORDINATORS STORY JOHN PAINTER

In November 2011 four volunteers attended the Department of Sustainability and Environment's (DSE) wildlife field operations coordinator (WFOC) course.

Andrena Francey from Bayles brigade, Bronwen Sinnott and Leonie Woodham from Gembrook and Marilyn Blankley-Lyall from Portland brigade successfully completed the three-day course and are CFAs first DSE-accredited wildlife field operations coordinators.

WFOC plays an important role in resolving wildlife issues during a major incident by communicating and coordinating between the

planning and operations sections of an incident management team.

The role operates from the staging area and is responsible for identifying wildlife populations at risk, providing specialist animal welfare to help develop planning strategies, coordinating the safe retrieval, treatment and transport of injured animals, and coordinating DSE-registered wildlife animal rescuers during major incidents.

Congratulations to these CFA members for completing the training and providing a valuable link between CFA and DSE for the rescue and protection of our wildlife. ■

USING A HOSE LAYER UNIT

STORY KEITH PAKENHAM

In January 2012 more than 100 firefighters gathered at Caribbean Gardens in Scoresby to carry out a large-scale pumping exercise.

Scoresby Fire Brigade, under the leadership of Leading Firefighter Glenn Bosua, wanted to demonstrate the challenges of supplying water to the fireground, and highlight the benefits of using a hose layer unit.

Four scenarios demonstrated the correct relay set-ups to supply various quantities of water, using trailer pumps, big fill pumps, tankers, pumper/tankers and pumpers. Dandenong's ladder platform was also used in one of the scenarios.

In one scenario, Scoresby brigade showed that, by using the hose layer, it could pump enough water using only two tankers and 12 firefighters. Without the hose layer, 10 tankers and 50 firefighters were needed to achieve the same results.

"As we've seen today with the 90mm hose, it cuts down the number of appliances we need and makes the operation more efficient," said Richard Cromb, a pump operations instructor and firefighter with Sassafras and Ferny Creek brigade.

Glenn Bosua also highlighted some trigger points to help incident controllers decide when to request the hose layer.

"If you call for one or more aerial appliances, call the hose layer. If you make pumpers four, call the hose layer. If you make tankers five, call the hose layer."

For more information or to book the hose layer for a demonstration, contact Scoresby brigade on 9763 6858. ■



BLAIR DELLEMIN



STEVEN BARLING

MORWELL GETS FAMILIAR

STORY STEVEN BARLING

In ideal weather at the end of January and with a picturesque backdrop of Kernot Hall Lake, Morwell Group held its annual familiarisation day. Forty members from brigades at Boolarra, Churchill, Driffield, Hazelwood North, Morwell, Yinnar and Yinnar South attended the training day.

Brigades brought along tankers, ultralight tankers, quick fills, and trailer pumps, so that members from across the group could familiarise themselves with each other's operational equipment.

Hazelwood North brigade also set up the weather trailer so that members could see the data the weather station collects before it's fed into the Bureau of Meteorology's network.

In addition, Morwell pumper gave a marvellous demonstration of the capability of its remote controlled mounted monitor.

We then had a very enjoyable barbecue followed by a burnover drill to finish the day.

"It has been a great day. This event provides us with the opportunity to have a go at using the many different types of equipment that operate across the fleet in our area," said Deputy Group Officer Rob Langston.

"After all, these days we can easily end up working on a different appliance to that in our own brigade, and having prior opportunity to operate the pump and practise the burnover drill can be invaluable." ■

FIRE READY WITH a difference

Traditional community meetings make up the foundation of the Fire Ready Victoria program, but this year a number of CFA staff across Victoria worked tirelessly on pilots and initiatives that reached different people in different ways. Just some of them are described in this feature.

WORKSHOPS FOR RURAL WOMEN

"Every one of us is a farmer's wife, all our husbands are in the brigade, and a lot of us live about three kilometres away from anywhere else," said Renae Hulland, who joined other young mums from around Patchewollock last December at a Loddon Mallee region workshop aimed solely at women from rural properties.

The session took into account that if a fire threatened their home, nine times out of ten these women would be at home alone with small children, while their husbands were either out harvesting or on a fire truck with the local brigade.

Renae agrees that it's important to talk about bushfire with other women in the same situation. They might not have signed on the dotted line to become a CFA member, but a volunteer's family is a vital part of operational response. Community Education Coordinator Kevin Sleep, who conducted the 'Patche' workshop, said that for six to eight weeks through harvesting these women have to be all things to all people.

"We've had participants tell us, 'I thought we had a plan but when there was a fire at our property the plan went out the window and we just found ourselves running in circles'."

"The workshops help them write down what they would do, in what order, and which neighbours they would call."

Since October Loddon Mallee has held 35 workshops as part of its Fire Ready Rural Women project that started as a pilot in 2010.

SLEEPING BAG: CHECK. TORCH: CHECK. FIRE PLAN: CHECK

According to Northern and Western Metro's Mike Shaw, summer was all about targeting 'Mr and Mrs Suburbia'. "There are a lot of people who might only venture out into fire-prone bushland areas for a brief holiday," said Mike, "so to target them we 'set up camp' in three outdoor equipment stores." All in all, presenters spoke with more than 300 people about how to make their upcoming trip a safe one.

A BUCKET OF INFORMATION

Staff members at Gippsland were also looking to do something a bit different this year for holidaymakers, and they came up with a new way to deliver information – in a bucket. Well over 1,000 stickered plastic buckets were given away at caravan parks, each filled with brochures. "People loved them," said organiser Robbie de Zwart. "Walking around the park, you could see Fire Ready buckets absolutely everywhere. It was a simple idea but a great conversation starter."

Continued ▶

COURTESY IMPACT MARKETING



Right: Robert Scott with a local resident

IN BRIEF

SUMMER IN NUMBERS

During the 2011-2012 season...

2,300 people booked the Home Bushfire Advice Service.

450,000 households were sent a Township Protection Plan.

1,300 Community Fireguard groups were supported by CFA.

Around 18,000 people went to a community meeting.

3,000 new followers signed up to receive twitter updates on current incidents.

63,000 people downloaded the FireReady smartphone app.



FIRE SAFETY NO BULL AT CATTLE SALE

"Farmers can be a bit like a plumber with a leaky tap: they'll fix everyone else's before they'll look after their own," said Hume presenter Robert Scott, who went out to six cattle sales over summer and talked with hundreds of farmers. "It can be a tough audience but I just park myself right there next to the canteen, and the farmers are more than happy to come over for a chat when they grab their cuppa."

HAVE KNOWLEDGE, WILL TRAVEL

Members of Hume's Community Safety team have been run off their feet keeping up with demand for their new 'Fire Ready for Industry' sessions. These are aimed at employees who spend a lot of time on the open road or who work outdoors. Utilities, councils and businesses have all jumped at the chance to book the sessions.

PLANTING SEEDS IN THE RIGHT PLACES

A passion for biodiversity and farming has prompted Barwon South West coordinator Kylie Dixon to direct her focus towards Landcare groups. "It's a great network to tap into," said Kylie, who has also delivered tailored sessions to dairy farmers and TAFEs. "Among other things, we talk to them about plantings and shelterbelts – which species to select and how to arrange your plantings."

NEXT GENERATION FIRES UP

A group of teens will have their say on how fire safety messages are communicated to young people thanks to a new Eastern Metro initiative. The group, all studying for their Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning, will no doubt have some good tips for CFA on the challenging task of engaging Generation Z.

ATTENTION SHOPPERS

The 2011-12 Fire Ready roadshow visited 15 shopping centres in regional centres from Mildura to Sale. Plastic fire hats and a giant Fire Danger Rating wheel (shown left) were hits with the kids and thousands of shoppers grabbed the chance to talk to CFA about their fire plans. ■

CFA'S DJ

STORY MIKE DORNAU

I've been presenting a radio show, Community Matters on Highlands FM, for about a year. It's a great opportunity to put over important CFA safety messages as part of a community news program.

I became a CFA volunteer soon after I moved to Woodend more than 10 years ago, when I realised I knew very little about living in one of the world's most dangerous bushfire areas. I also wanted to get involved in the local community. I'm currently first lieutenant with Woodend brigade.

I'm a strong advocate for community engagement and believe that community awareness and education is as important as putting the wet stuff on the hot stuff.

About a year ago I had the idea of presenting a CFA community safety program on Highlands FM. The station's management thought it was an excellent idea and, as they were looking for a new presenter for the Community Matters program, it was decided to combine the best of both worlds.

The program covers local stories and people and has an impressive and interesting group of guests who regularly join me on air. The list includes state members of parliament Donna Petrovich and Joanne Duncan, Macedon Ranges Shire Mayor Henry McLaughlin, CFA Operations Officer Rohan Luke, Fiona Corke from the Macedon Ranges Wildlife Network, and inspiring disability pioneer Ryan Jans.

In the past 12 months, I've conducted more than 150 interviews on the weekly program.

It all adds up to a busy and interesting two-hour program. ■



CFA'S FIRE AWARENESS award winners

The annual Fire Awareness Awards provide an opportunity for individuals, groups and organisations to submit innovative projects that make a real difference to fire awareness in Victoria.

The awards are a collaboration between the State's three fire agencies – Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Board (MFB), CFA and the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) – and submissions are judged on how successful they are in reducing the number, or the effects, of fires in Victoria.

At the awards night, held in December 2011, five CFA-related projects received a Fire Awareness Award, highlighting the terrific work undertaken by CFA members in promoting fire awareness in communities.



COURTESY FIRE AWARENESS AWARDS

EAST GIPPSLAND DOORKNOCK

CFA's East Gippsland Doorknock project won the Fire Services Award for its doorknocking initiative that reached more than 700 isolated and remote East Gippsland locations.

The innovative project beat nine other entries to be judged joint winner of the award, presented by Fire Services Commissioner Craig Lapsley.

Robbie de Zwart, a member of the two doorknocking teams, found the one-on-one nature of the project to be extremely effective. "I think one of the reasons this project was so successful is that we were able to reach a lot of people who had never engaged with CFA before. We met a lot of new residents and people we don't normally reach, and it was great for them to get an understanding of the local fire risk."

This successful initiative will continue into the future as the doorknocking team identifies more high risk, remote areas to visit.

GRANT WINNERS

In addition to the Fire Awareness Award winners, two CFA projects were awarded Special Incentive Grants of \$3,000 each and one CFA project was a joint winner of the RACV Insurance Fire Innovation Grant of \$5,000.

Special Incentive Grant winners

- Euroa Secondary College and CFA's Euroa Group of brigades for the Advance Program.
- CFA Community Education Group Bendigo for the Mobile Smoke House.

RACV Insurance Fire Innovation Grant winner

Wye River Community Volunteers, Wye River brigade and Wye River Surf Life Saving Club.

Above: East Gippsland doorknockers Robert Melville and Robbie De Zwart



LEITH HILLARD

PUT YOURSELF ON THE MAP

Gellibrand's Put Yourself on the Map initiative took the small Otways township to the finals of the Fire Awareness Awards in the Community Preparedness category. But most importantly, it has firmly put Gellibrand community members on the road to shared responsibility in the face of bushfire risk.

The project is based on the simple truth that people pay more attention to a picture when they are in it. The snapshot in this case is a Department of Sustainability and Environment aerial image of Gellibrand that gives residents an overview of the risks on their home front.

The partnership between Gellibrand Community House, the DSE Fire Learning Network and Gellibrand brigade has a particular champion in brigade member John Cochrane.

"I must have doorknocked about 140 households," said John. "To make emergency plans, you have to define your community and know who might be vulnerable. I asked people to find themselves on the map and that became a conversation starter about fire issues."

TESS FOLLETT



CFA CONNECT SOCIAL MEDIA PROJECT

CFA's news website, CFA Connect, was awarded a Fire Awareness Award in the New and Emerging Technology category for its role in improving awareness of fire safety programs and providing coverage of unfolding incidents.

The website launched on the opening day of the Bushfires Royal Commission on 11 May 2009 as part of a strategy to improve communication between CFA, its members and the community.

Before the February 2009 fires, CFA had been engaging in social media activity on an ad hoc basis and a need was identified for a central hub that could focus its social media activity and provide a platform for CFA members to share their stories.

The site empowers CFA members to engage and collaborate by letting them upload their stories and use the site's forum. It also enables CFA to share its fire awareness messages consistently across the State.

WYE RIVER COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS

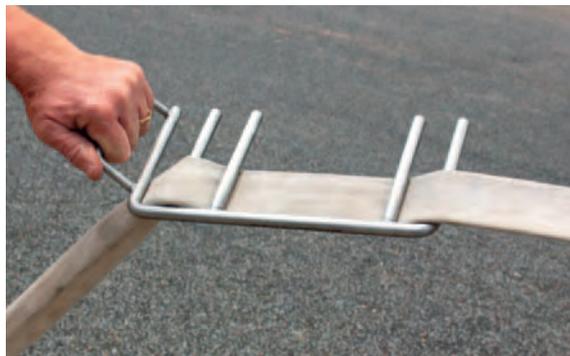
Wye River community volunteers were the worthy winners of the RACV Insurance Award for Excellence.

This initiative confronts the worst-case scenario of an emergency hitting a community of 100 people but with 5,000 visitors in peak season; a township perched on the Great Ocean Road a long way from support.

"Within that 5,000 you might have people who can organise or who are hands-on," explained Peter Mitchell from Wye River brigade's management team. "Wouldn't it be good to have those people on a roster?"

This is how the plan unfolds. An emergency is called in. A text message goes out to 32 pre-registered volunteers. Those who present themselves will be assigned roles. Volunteers from the broader crowd are called for and also assigned roles, tabards and sunhats.

"The heart of the project is coordinating community participation. We keep everyone away from the fire station where the incident is being run and hand people over to the surf life saving club. It has a kitchen, toilets and a first-aid room," said Peter.



DIANNE SMITH



STRADL FIRE HOSE BRACKET

The Stradl fire hose bracket received a Fire Awareness Award in the Design/Construction category for its efficient method of removing water from a fire hose and assisting with drying.

Developed by Yea brigade member Don Smith, together with his wife Dianne and members of Yea brigade, the Stradl fire hose bracket makes it easier to remove water from a hose without having to detach it from a tanker. The method avoids the time consuming process of using guy ropes on a horizontal hose rack, the traditional method of drying a hose.

Another feature of this bracket is that it can reduce the chances of coming into contact with contaminated water. "Using the Stradl bracket to drain the hose eliminates using the 'hose over shoulder' method. We believe it's a much cleaner and safer way to drain hoses in the field," said Don.

The Stradl fire hose bracket can be ordered from www.stradl.com.au. ■

Top: Martin Anderson and Livia De Sanctis receiving an award for CFA Connect

Above: Don Smith demonstrates his Stradl fire hose bracket

OTHER AWARDS FOR CFA MEMBERS

AUSTRALIA DAY AWARDS

Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM):

Barry Clugston, Vin Shelley

Australian Fire Services Medal (AFSM):

Bruce Vine, Alan Rhodes, Neil Labbett, Trevor Mills

National Emergency Medal:

Helen Kenney, Steven Barling

Emergency Services Medal (ESM):

Peter Kueffer

ROYAL HUMANE SOCIETY OF AUSTRALASIA AWARDS

Certificates of Merit:

Reefton brigade

Danny Bennett, Ross Minifie, Paul McCuskey, Andrew McDonald, Kathleen Tilley and Rachel Bennett

Craigieburn brigade

Steven Povolo

Greenvale brigade

Alan Severn, Andre Smith, John Cheevers and Damion Sloane

Epping brigade

Matthew Gedge, Kathleen Kelson, David Woodford, Jeffrey Mendoza and Michael Cawthan

Nar Nar Goon brigade

James Cain and Marc Jansen; Cardinia Group Officer Phillip Craig



First aid

STORY LEITH HILLARD

REACHES HIMALAYAN HEIGHTS

When Barwon South West Wildfire Instructor Michael Evans treks in Nepal – something he’s done five times since 2005 – he doesn’t just take a first-aid kit for his own needs. On his last visit, CFA brigade first-aid supplies past their use-by dates accounted for 10 kilograms of his and wife Margaret’s luggage.

“A lot of the villages we pass through have nothing in the way of medical supplies and people approach us with sores, burns and broken bones. We fix them up as best we can,” said Michael, who’s also Deputy Group Officer of Corangamite Group.

Margaret, Michael and fellow traveller and Dereel brigade member Ian Stanley-Eyles have built a relationship with their regular guide Dorje from Patale village in the Solukhumbu region. This village of 180 inhabitants gratefully received the 10 kilograms of supplies.

“We just want to soak up the culture and meet the locals. Last visit, we went to a meeting with the town council and learned about their challenges, which are mainly health and education. We talked about what medical gear they have, what they would like and what might be possible for us to perhaps supply.

“Patrick Shawcross, our [District 6] storeman in Colac, rebuilds first-aid kits after the Section 29s. As long as the seals haven’t broken, there are so many things from the old kits that are still useful: saline, dressings, bandages, rubber gloves, shears, CPR [cardiopulmonary resuscitation] masks. On top of that, Ian gathered material from hospitals and ambos.

“It’s one of those things that could be extended...”

And this is where the broader CFA family comes in. “Every district rebuilds their first-aid kits differently,” said Michael. “Instead of sealed items being thrown out, we’d love it if they could be delivered to us in Colac. They don’t have to come in a hurry – just when someone from a regional office is coming our way.

“We’ve got a relationship with a company that regularly leads tours to Nepal so we can get the supplies across as they come in.

Any brigades, groups or districts with out-of-date first-aid supplies, or who are updating their kits soon, can contact Michael at m.evans@cfa.vic.gov.au

“You can’t help everyone but you can help one village,” said Michael.

CFA FLAG FLIES AT EVEREST BASE CAMP

Last year Michael’s group, with one local guide and one porter, walked 300 kilometres in 21 days with only two rest days. The oldest person in the group was 84 years old.

“We climbed and dropped 1,000 vertical metres twice in one day,” said Michael. It’s a punishing schedule that Michael describes as “slow going” as the trekkers adjust to the altitude.

“We took the CFA flag with us as a bit of a challenge. We raised the flag at Everest Base Camp and again at the Cho La Pass.

“The whole experience was amazing. The mountains, the people...” ■

KIDS FLOCK TO ORBOST

STORY ADAM TOWNSEND

More than 1,500 school children attended the first Emergency Services Day in Orbost in mid December 2011.

The day was arranged by Victoria Police and featured a huge range of displays. CFA was represented by Gippsland's smoke house, the Gippsland community safety team, and brigades from Orbost, Lakes Entrance and Newmerella. CFA crews displayed several vehicles and carried out hot fire drills, which gave parents and teachers the opportunity to use an extinguisher.

Victoria Police, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Parks Victoria, Ambulance Victoria, Volunteer Coast Guard and Marlo Rescue, Customs (NSW), Fisheries, and State Emergency Service showed the children their equipment and talked about a range of topics.

"The hot fire training and the ability for adults to have the chance to practise using extinguishers was a valuable tool to teach the children first hand about fire safety and the need for extinguishers to be looked after so they are ready for firefighting," said District 11 Operations Manager Bryan Russell.

"Well done to all the organising committees from CFA and other agencies for the professionalism shown throughout the day." ■



FIRE AWARENESS EXPO

STORY FIONA SEWELL

A very successful Bushfire Awareness Expo was held at the beginning of December, with the theme 'We're all in this together'. It was organised by Emerald, Clematis, Macclesfield and Menzies Creek brigades.

During the opening, Chief Officer Euan Ferguson and Fire Services Commissioner Craig Lapsley launched the new Township Protection Plans for the local area.

There were many exhibitors in Emerald Hall, including the police who spoke about what would happen if there was need for an evacuation, the local chemist with information about asthma and organising your medications when you leave, and a pet and livestock stand with information about caring for animals during a fire, both at home and when you leave.

Vegetation management officers from Districts 8 and 13 answered questions about fuel reduction and members of the public booked in for some home visits.

The community safety department from District 13 had an informative display that was well attended.

Emerald Community House informed the public of their programs, including the innovative 'Go List' that includes many solutions to potential problems.

Four popular workshops in the adjacent library covered preparing your property, making a plan, fire behaviour and Community Fireguard.

There was also plenty happening outside with a bunker on display, an emergency vehicles display, a helicopter and a fire table.

"I was impressed and inspired by the huge effort that went into the planning and the unified passion for community resilience that was evident from agencies and the public. A fantastic effort," said Chief Officer Euan Ferguson.

Thanks to Bendigo Community Bank for donating \$2,500 to help stage the event, and Emerald Community House for its \$500 donation.

More than 500 people came through the doors over the five-hour event and hopefully this will become an annual event. ■

Top left: The smoke house was a big hit with the kids

IN BRIEF

CFA BEATS THE REST

In mid November 2011 CFA members competed against Victoria Police, Ambulance Victoria and SES at the second annual Station 2 Summit challenge at the Summit adventure park in Trafalgar East, Gippsland. After four events – the alpine challenge, monster obstacle course, four-wheel drive challenge and a laser skirmish battle – CFA came first again, following its success at the inaugural event in 2010.

The CFA team members were drawn from Neerim South, Drouin, Moe South and Tanjil brigades.



THROUGH THE AGES Smythesdale



FACES OF CFA

BRONWYN HASTINGS DIMBOOLA BRIGADE, DISTRICT 17

How long have you been with this brigade?

Eight years.

Why did you join CFA?

I was running the local paper, and reporting on the CFA incidents as they happened. I got to know local brigade members this way and they encouraged me to join. They were short on firefighters during the day, and soon had me in the role of secretary as well as on the back of the truck.

Being a volunteer gives me another family, a group of people that has the same values and ideals as I do. I'm very glad I joined. We have had a lot of fun in between the hard times and I really enjoy spending time with them.

What was the first incident you attended?

A header and stubble fire. I still think it was the hottest and fiercest fire I've ever attended.

Which incident has had the greatest impact on you?

Many have impacted me in different ways, but last year was awful for our whole brigade. We had six fatalities in five months in four incidents, something we hadn't seen before and no one ever wants to see again.

The brigade was called to another incident some years ago, I helped out with comms that night, and gave birth to our first child hours later. The incident itself wasn't memorable, but the hours that followed were!

What have you done around your home to prevent fires?

We keep the yard clear and grass low, and try to keep the lawn and gardens green.

What do you do when you're not firefighting?

I'm a wife, mother, and freelance journalist and photographer. I enjoy spending time with my children, helping out at the school and kinder and with their activities. I'm not able to fight fires as often as I could before, but now the kids and I go to fires to report on them for the local online newspaper.

I took a step back from firefighting in 2005 when our son was born. But just prior to this, I signed my husband up. He's now second lieutenant and is enjoying brigade life. Both our kids are completely at ease at the station and with the emergency services. Our son wants to be a firefighter when he grows up!



Our volunteers are a varied lot, but it works so well. Lately, we've gone through a lot of grief and tough times, but this has given us all something in common and brought us closer together. ■



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