

BUSH FIREbulletin

THE JOURNAL OF THE NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE



Grass fires a growing threat

IN THIS ISSUE:

Scenes from the Blue Mountains fire

**A hero from the Queensland floods:
Kendall Thompson**

**Is the public getting the
Prepare. Act. Survive. message?**

ADDITIONAL STORIES:

**REGION EAST EXERCISE PHOTO GALLERY
BASE CAMPS: A HOME AMONGST
THE GUM TREES**

**WHAT HAVE THE CADETS BEEN UP TO?
YOUNG MEMBERS FORUM**



contents



44



12



17



20



35

1 FOREWORD

2-3 IN FOCUS

4 INCIDENTS

- 4 Grass fires a growing threat
- 6 Aircraft collides with ferris wheel
- 7 Bus fire closes highway
- 8 Fast and furious fire in Katoomba
- 12 Storms strike the Blue Mountains

16 GENERAL NEWS

- 16 Base camps: Give me a home amongst the gum trees
- 18 Leadership forum looks to the future
- 20 CAD-IRS trial on the Mid North Coast
- 21 Explore the new fire weather reports from the BOM
- 22 "Our gratitude is hard to measure..."
- 24 Communications system upgrade

25 LIFT-OUT

- 25 Heavy Plant Reference Guide

29 GENERAL NEWS cont'd

- 29 Queensland flood hero wins a swag of awards
- 30 Top national award for NSW RFS Hotspots
- 31 Honours go to six of our finest
- 32 State Championships 2012

34 GENERAL NEWS cont'd

- 34 Region East Exercise

36 IN FOCUS VOLUNTEERS

38 SPOTLIGHT ON VOLUNTEERS

- 38 Open Day 2011
- 40 A backyard blitz for one of our own
- 42 Training local residents boosts recruitment
- 44 New State Protocol Officers appointed
- 45 Rookies test their skills in the field
- 46 800 young people complete Secondary School Cadet Program
- 48 Young Members Forum builds the leaders of tomorrow

50 GENERAL NEWS cont'd

- 50 Is the public getting the Prepare. Act. Survive. message?

The NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) encourages the availability, dissemination and exchange of public information. You may copy, distribute, display, download and otherwise freely deal with this material for personal, in-house or non-commercial use, on the condition that you include the copyright notice © State of New South Wales through the NSW Rural Fire Service [plus year of creation or first publication] on all such uses. In the event that you wish to copy, distribute, display, download, store, or use this material for a purpose other than personal, in-house or non-commercial use, you must obtain permission from the NSW RFS by writing to the following address:

Commissioner
NSW Rural Fire Service
Locked Bag 17
Granville NSW 2142

You must also obtain permission from the NSW RFS if you wish to:

- charge others for access to the work (other than at cost);
- include all or part of the work in advertising or a product for sale;
- modify the material; or
- use any trade mark from this publication, including the NSW Rural Fire Service crest, MyRFS logo, or the Firewise logo.

Disclaimer Statement

While the material within this Bush Fire Bulletin is current at the time of writing changes in circumstances after the time of publication may impact on the accuracy of the material. Individuals are responsible for ensuring they have the most current version of this publication.

The information and material contained herein is general in nature and is intended for your use and information. The NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) disclaims, to the extent permitted by law, all warranties, representations or endorsements, express or implied, with regard to the material contained herein. The NSW RFS does not warrant or represent that the material contained herein is free from errors or omissions, or that it is exhaustive. Users should exercise their own skill and care with respect to its uses. You must not assume that this material will be suitable for the particular purpose that you had in mind when using it.

The NSW RFS disclaims any liability (including but not limited to liability by reason of negligence) to the users of the material for any loss, damage, cost or expense whether direct, indirect, consequential or special, incurred by, or arising by reason of, any person using or relying on the material and whether caused by reason of, any error, omission or misrepresentation in the material or otherwise. Users of the Website will be responsible for making their own assessment of the material and should verify all relevant representations, statements and information with their own professional advisers. All photos, unless otherwise stated, taken and owned by the NSW Rural Fire Service, Corporate Communications.

The views expressed in articles in the Bush Fire Bulletin do not necessarily reflect the views or the policies of the NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE.

foreword



Welcome to another year of the *Bush Fire Bulletin*.

2012 is a significant year for the *Bulletin*, being its 60th anniversary. Over the years, the *Bulletin* has earned a special place in our Service, documenting much of our history and progress over that time.

This magazine also plays an important role in celebrating and communicating the achievements and personal experiences of many of our members, as well as providing important news, developments and activities which affect our members across the State.

The *Bulletin* was a very different publication 60 years ago and as times have changed, so has our approach to communicating with members. In recent years, the explosion in online communication such as social media, has presented us with new opportunities. In 2012, you can expect to see further developments in the way the Service communicates with its members. This includes a continued focus on keeping you up to date on issues and events but also building on our current consultative arrangements like the RFSA Consultative Committees by ensuring members are given every opportunity for input in their Service.

This edition highlights the increased risk of grass fires, which we have not seen for perhaps 30 or 40 years in some areas. Grass fires pose a particular issue for the community and the Service because they can start easily and spread quickly, destroying homes, crops and livelihoods. There has been much great work carried out preparing for this increased risk and it's up to all of us, the community included, to continue this work.

Despite damp conditions across much of the season so far, we haven't been spared from fire activity, as demonstrated by the fires late last year in the Blue Mountains and far western NSW. Despite the Blue Mountains fires being relatively small, they impacted on communities in the Mountains quickly and it was a testament to our volunteers that any significant damage was avoided. A number of fires, started literally by thousands of lightning strikes across far western NSW, were contained due to the hard work of crews and some welcome rainfall.

This edition of the *Bulletin* also provides updates on a number of major projects underway across the Service, including the rollout of our communications network upgrade, volunteer identification cards, the Computer Aided Dispatch system and the Prepare. Act. Survive. public awareness campaign. It's also great to see the rollout of our base camp program which will provide accommodation and services for members during incidents, reducing travel time and assisting with fatigue management of crews.

It is also worth touching upon the growing success of our Secondary Schools Cadet Program, which was last year completed by around 800 students. As I travel around the State, it's been great to see so many young people taking part in the program, not only learning about firefighting but also picking up life-skills such as teamwork and leadership. It's also satisfying to see so many of these students join local brigades. I would like to especially thank all of those members who assist with the cadet program in schools and communities all over NSW.

I trust you enjoy this edition of the *Bulletin*.

Shane Fitzsimmons, AFSM
NSW RFS Commissioner

IN THE NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

WE VALUE

community and environment

support, friendship and camaraderie

knowledge and learning

integrity and trust

one team, many players and one purpose

adaptability and resourcefulness

mutual respect



New heights for women

Viki Campbell is the first female Air Attack Supervisor (AAS) in the Service's history to undertake training. She will receive her competency once she has gained field experience. Viki has more than 22 years experience with the NSW RFS and her role as AAS is all about synchronising the air

support with the ground work. At training in Taree, Viki was supervising two women pilots Susan Dibley in the helicopter and Georgia Maxwell who is the Service's first female bomber pilot. The aircraft and pilots used by the NSW RFS are on contract during the fire season.

LEFT: Susan Dibley is the second helicopter pilot for the NSW RFS; CENTRE: Viki Campbell is the first NSW RFS Air Attack Supervisor and RIGHT: Georgia Maxwell is the first female bomber pilot for the Service. The three women attended the Air Attack Supervisors training at Taree Airport in August 2011. Photo by Shane Geerin

Changes to tax laws mean changes and choice for brigades

Tax laws have changed recently, meaning a change for some volunteer brigades who conduct fundraising.

Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status gives a brigade the ability to collect tax-deductible donations - which is a great benefit for brigade fundraising. About one quarter of NSW RFS brigades currently hold DGR status.

The changes to tax laws mean that brigades will need to choose how to conduct these activities into the future. The changed DGR arrangements are likely to be in place by mid-2012 and so brigades will

need to make choices in order to be ready.

Brigades have three options:

1. Brigades can establish, with approval from the ATO, their own DGR fund which will enable them to receive tax deductible donations. This will require a management committee, established under guidelines from the ATO.

The ATO will be writing to those brigades who already have DGR status informing them of the new arrangements.

For those brigades who do not currently have DGR status they will need to consult with the ATO.

Phone the ATO non-profit info line on 1300 130 248 between 8am-6pm, Monday to Friday or visit the ATO website at <http://www.ato.gov.au/nonprofit>

2. Brigades may choose to use a central Public Fund, to be established by the NSW RFS. This will allow brigades to receive tax deductible donations without the costs and compliance issues of managing their own fund. Further information about

this fund will be published in due course and will be available on the Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) page on MyRFS. Questions can also be directed to: dgr@rfs.nsw.gov.au

3. Brigades can choose not to have DGR status which means any donations to the brigade are not tax deductible for the donor.

It's the choice of your brigade.

For information and updates, visit the DGR page at www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au



Identification cards are now available to all volunteers.

In the past, there have been occasions where members were denied access to firegrounds and other operational incidents because they did not have formal NSW RFS identification.

The Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission made a recommendation that all CFA volunteers be issued with photographic identification cards.

This recommendation, with the support of funding from the NSW Government's Bush Fire Protection Package, has led to the Service introducing a program to produce identification cards for members.

The identification cards include member name, Firezone number, membership location and member photo. The cards have embedded holographic technology to enhance security and minimise tampering.

District offices are equipped with printers, cameras, backdrops and software to produce photo identification cards with selected District office staff trained in the relevant procedures.

Members should contact their District Office to arrange for a photo to be taken so an identification card can be produced. Identification cards are valid for five years and do not replace the current authority cards issued to field officers.

Possession of an identification card will not automatically allow a member to pass roadblocks. If police have operational reasons to preclude members from specific areas or if they deem the area too dangerous, access may still be denied.

Take the weather with you

Portable Automatic Weather Stations (PAWS) are a new tool being used on the fireground to give more information about weather conditions during fires and hazard reduction burns.

The PAWS units can be quickly deployed to incidents to measure, record and transmit local weather conditions. The unit measures temperature, dew point (relative humidity), wind speed, wind gusts and rainfall and transmits the data in real time via a phone modem to fire managers and weather forecasters.

Data is used by NSW RFS Fire Behaviour Analysts to assist in creating and validating fire behaviour predictions and the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) forecasters also use the data to assist with fire weather forecasting.

Being so portable means the PAWS can be close to the fire and therefore can measure the specific weather which is driving a fire.

The more traditional automatic weather stations are generally some distance away from the fireground.



Grass fires a growing threat





“In some areas a similar rate of grass growth has not been seen for 30-40 years.”

The La Niña weather event experienced across eastern Australia in the summer of 2010/11 was one of the most significant in recent memory, bringing widespread flooding and the significant risk of grass fires. The rain this fire season brought welcome relief in many areas dealing with a long-running drought which at its height affected more than 90 percent of NSW.

While the rain encouraged crop growth, it has also brought an unwelcome danger.

Growing threat

Prolific grass and vegetation growth has occurred across much of the State, particularly in areas west of the Great Dividing Range. In some areas, a similar rate of grass growth has not been seen for 30-40 years, with grass topping fencelines. Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said, “As this vegetation dries out or cures, there is an increased risk of grass fires.

“If you look at recent years, because of the drought, there has been little to burn in around three-quarters of the State – and now there is, we’ve essentially seen the level of risk increase by three-quarters,” said Commissioner Fitzsimmons.

“You have to go as far back as the ‘70s or ‘80s where we have seen similar conditions.”

While NSW has seen significant and destructive grass fires in recent years, including Gerogery (2009) and Junee (2006), the last

significant and long-running grass fire season was in 1984/85 when more than 3.5 million hectares of land was burnt, resulting in five deaths and \$40M damage.

In 1974/75, the damage was even more widespread with 4.5 million hectares burnt, six people killed and 50,000 head of stock destroyed.

“Grass fires pose a real danger. They can start easily and spread quickly. It’s not unusual for grass fires to burn at 20 or 30kph under certain conditions and they can quickly destroy homes, crops and livelihoods.

“This poses a real issue because many people haven’t seen conditions like this in a generation. They need to understand the risk and prepare for it,” the Commissioner said.

Another issue is the way the NSW landscape has changed over the past 30 years with farming practices changing and large corporations taking over many farms and introducing “fence to fence” pastures to maximise returns. This has resulted in some firebreaks being removed.

There has also been the addition of new assets to the landscape such as electricity facilities, communications equipment or even large developments such as mining operations – built on land where previously grass fires burnt largely without issue.

Sending a message

To assist with informing communities of the increased risk, a coordinated and targeted

public awareness campaign has been implemented across affected areas.

Consisting of radio, television and outdoor advertising, the campaign uses dramatic footage which demonstrates the speed and ferocity of grass fires and outlines steps which landholders and residents can take to reduce their risk.

Also, new community engagement material including grass fire fact sheets and roadside signs have been created. New content, including tips, preparation advice and a video has been published at www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/grass.

“We have been working closely with local councils, farmers and land managers to reduce the risk, especially along roadside verges, which can limit potential ignitions. We’ve also deployed taskforces to areas such as Cobar, Broken Hill and Hay to conduct targeted hazard reduction activities and our mitigation crews have been working in these areas to get burns ready for volunteer brigades.

“Districts and brigades have also worked hard to inform the community about the increased risk. An informed community is most important.”

“It’s been a team effort – but at the end of the day, people need to take responsibility and prepare not only themselves but their homes, properties and families,” the Commissioner concluded.

Be prepared

Advice for people living in or travelling through areas where there is grass or scrub:

- Keep well-maintained firebreaks mowed, ploughed, slashed or even grazed along fence lines or around your home, shed and storage areas which can slow a fire’s spread.
- Keep a well-maintained area around your home, such as lawns, paths or gardens. Keep the grass cut.
- Seal under floor spaces to stop embers entering under your house.
- Make sure you’ve got water for firefighting, in case a fire is on your property. Have water tanks filled and connected to a pump.
- Have a diesel pump. Electric pumps won’t work during a fire if the power goes out.
- Store things like fuel or woodpiles well away from your house.
- Check the access to your property. Ensure cattle grids or bridges can hold the weight of a fire truck.
- Make sure you’ve got adequate levels of insurance for your home, contents, machinery and crops or stock.

For further information and advice see the Service’s dedicated grass fires webpage at www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/grass

Aircraft collides with ferris wheel



In October 2011 a light plane crashed into a carnival ferris wheel in the township of Old Bar near Taree, trapping the two pilots as well as two children who were on the ferris wheel at the time. President of the Old Bar Brigade, Brian Carstens relates the day's events.

The pager went off shortly after 1000hrs on the Saturday of the 2011 October long weekend.

The crew arrived at the station and we radioed fire control to receive instructions. They said: "a plane has crashed into the ferris wheel". We thought the worst and headed to the Old Bar Beach Festival near the beach car park.

When we arrived there was a large police presence, several ambulances and the SES.

We surveyed the scene – an ultralight plane had crashed into the ferris wheel and was hanging suspended in mid-air. Two people were on board the plane and two children were trapped in a gondola on the ferris wheel, behind the plane.

Fortunately, SES personnel were only metres away when the crash occurred and were able to free several children from a gondola on the ferris wheel below the plane. Amazingly, only two people had suffered minor injuries, one from flying debris.

We noticed that fuel was leaking from the suspended plane creating a potential hazard for rescue workers and onlookers. We quickly rolled out the hoses, got the high expansion foam nozzle

and laid a thick foam blanket over the fuel.

Meanwhile, a council worker used a megaphone to keep the two children suspended on the ferris wheel calm and to keep the pilots informed of developments.

It took almost an hour for the cranes to arrive from Taree to help with the rescue. While we waited, we connected up a fire hose to a hydrant and laid out and charged another hose to protect the children if required. This is normal procedure due to the fuel leakage and the high risk of fire.

Several more trucks arrived from NSW RFS and Fire and Rescue NSW. Then the NSW Volunteer Rescue Association arrived and they took charge of the rescue.

The first step was to stabilise the ferris wheel. The impact of the plane had bent the bracing on one side and lifted the ferris wheel off its foundation pads on the other. Using a large crane and a cherry picker the children were plucked out of their swinging gondola to safety – much to the relief of everyone there. But it had taken two agonising hours of waiting.

It was another hour before the two pilots were freed.

The rescue was complicated by the need to secure the plane and the fact that there was not enough room for the pilots to put on full safety harnesses for the rescue.

After the four people were freed, the plane itself had to be extricated from the ferris wheel frame. The entire frame was pulled apart to release the broken parts of the plane.

After the plane was safely out of the way, police forensics finished taking photos and measurements. It was another hour before the tow truck could finish loading debris and depart.

The Old Bar Brigade crew then finished up the job by cleaning up any spilt fuel off the road.

By the time we packed up we had been on the job for over eight hours. We refuelled, topped up the water tank, unpacked our wet hoses onto the drying rack and refurbished the truck with dry hoses and a drum of foam. Throughout the day, festival volunteers kept the crew fed with some great BBQ sausage sandwiches. They were very welcome on a cold and sometimes wet day.

But the job of a NSW RFS firefighter is never at an end. Just as we were about to leave the station another page came

through about a grass fire. Fortunately, four other brigade members arrived so the first crew could stand down after an exhausting day.

On reflection it was fortunate that there were only two minor injuries sustained. If it had been a full-sized plane or if the ferris wheel had been full of visitors, a much worse scenario may have unfolded.

A preliminary investigation by the Australian Transport Safety Bureau into the incident found that the pilot had twice attempted to land the plane on a nearby airstrip. The report stated that on the second landing, the pilot decided that he would not be able to stop before the end of the airstrip and aborted the landing. He commenced a go-around and it was then that the ultralight collided with the ferris wheel.

ABOVE LEFT: The ferris wheel at the Old Bar Beach Festival was struck by an ultralight aircraft. **ABOVE RIGHT:** No one was injured but the pilot and passenger were stranded for several hours. Photos by Carl Muxlow (carlmuxlow.com)

Bus fire closes highway

By Belinda Brotherton and Susan Barley,
Wollondilly Fire Control Centre

International tourists had their travel plans thrown into chaos when the bus they were travelling in was destroyed by fire on the F5 freeway in the Southern Highlands.

At 0936hrs on 26 September 2011, Wollondilly District was alerted to an incident on the F5 Freeway, between Campbelltown and Picton where a bus was alight.

Crews arrived on the scene to find a bus fully engulfed in flames and quickly moved to close the road to any further traffic. The smoke plume could be seen from 10 to 15km away. The fire was so intense it melted the road surface within 10m of the bus.

Fortunately, before the NSW RFS crews had arrived all passengers and support crew had been safely evacuated by the NSW Police Force. They had been relocated to a safe place under a road bridge about 150m south of the fire. All the passengers were accounted for and there no injuries. There had been 48 people on the coach mainly international tourists, a driver and a tour guide.

The first arriving NSW RFS crew ran two lines of 38mm hose using foam to attack the bus fire, and breathing apparatus until other responding units arrived. Water was then transferred from one truck to another until the fire was under control.

Four Wollondilly NSW RFS units, one Wollondilly NSW RFS Inspector, one Fire & Rescue NSW HAZMAT (hazard materials) unit, NSW Police Force, NSW Ambulance Service and the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) attended the scene.

During the inferno, the coach's tyres exploded causing debris to litter the southbound lanes of the F5 freeway. No crew were injured by the explosion as they were correctly attacking the fire from the side and avoided any problems. As a result the freeway southbound was closed for

approximately 40 minutes while crews cleared the road.

Due to a significant oil and diesel spill approximately 300m long, FRNSW HAZMAT was called to make all F5 freeway lanes safe because of concern about potential contaminated run off into the Sydney Catchment Special Area.

Also a small area of bush caught alight alongside the freeway which was quickly managed. Bargo, Menangle, Douglas Park and Wilton Brigades attended the incident as well as a crew and vehicle from Macarthur Zone. The Douglas Park Captain and Wollondilly Operations Officer acted as the liaison officers between attending agencies.

By 1200hrs the operation was concluded and the RTA commenced clean-up operations to reopen the road to traffic. The cause of

the fire is subject to further investigation.

The Senior Police Officer on-scene praised all NSW RFS crew for their professional execution of all tasks. Cooperation between all attending agencies was first class with each agency complementing the other.

Unfortunately, for the safe but shaken tourists, none of their luggage could be salvaged from the bus wreckage. Even though language was a barrier with the tourists from Japan, quick action by the driver and guide to evacuate the passengers had saved lives from such a quickly escalating and intense fire.

BELOW: Crews from Wollondilly attended the bus fire on the F5 freeway. Photo by Dean Symons





Fast and furious fire in Katoomba

By Rod Walker, Acting Inspector, Blue Mountains Fire Control Centre

The Blue Mountains experienced a rapidly escalating bush fire in October 2011 that burnt out 19ha and threatened to destroy luxury hotels and numerous residences. The quick response of fire crews and some relieving rain brought the fire under control.



24 October 2011

A rapidly-developing bush fire started below the Katoomba Falls Kiosk in Katoomba at 1342hrs. Reports from Narrow Neck Fire Tower, south of Katoomba, confirmed smoke and flames on the edge of the escarpment some 7km away.

South Katoomba and Katoomba/Leura Brigades were paged to respond. Fire & Rescue NSW (FRNSW) advised they had received Triple Zero (000) reports of fire and units were responding.

Group Officer Central 3 responded and requested three appliances but this was quickly upgraded to five appliances as the fire was expanding rapidly.

Weather data at 1300hrs from Narrow Neck Fire Tower

indicated it was 21 degrees Celsius with humidity at about 45 percent, with moderate westerly winds. The Fire Danger Index (FDI) was rated as low/ moderate.

There were dramatic scenes near the carpark of the well-known Scenic Skyway. The fire was now rapidly expanding uphill, adjacent to the Scenic Skyway. Three tourists bolted out of the carpark next to the eastern side of the Scenic Skyway and literally leaped straight into the Group Officer vehicle to seek refuge from the fire. It was a lucky escape as the vehicle made a hasty exit from the scene.

Nearby the fire was threatening properties in the top of Birdwood Ave, Cliff Dr and moving towards the lower end

of Katoomba St and Katoomba Falls Rd. FRNSW units were on scene establishing property protection as the fire had jumped the lower end of Birdwood Ave.

With a number of properties under threat more brigades were paged, the State Air Desk was called requesting helicopter support and the ICON report was updated to Watch and Act.

Around 1405hrs crews were advised that some residents were self evacuating at Birdwood Ave and that the Scenic Railway had been stopped. Scenic World, which includes the Scenic Railway and Skyway, had been closed and all visitors and staff were relocated to a safe area.

TOP LEFT: Smoke and flames on the edge of the escarpment at Katoomba. TOP RIGHT: Firefighting ground crews attacked the fire to protect homes. LOWER RIGHT: Some of the 47 firefighting appliances deployed to the incident. LOWER LEFT: NSW RFS members planning their next move in the battle. Photos by Top Notch Media OPPOSITE PAGE: The fire rapidly expanded but a quick response saved the day. Photo by Ben Shepherd



TOP LEFT: Fire crews worked hard throughout the night to protect residential homes. TOP RIGHT: Over a number of hours fire burnt out the top of the escarpment. LOWER LEFT: Fire threatened a number of residential areas. Photos by Ben Shepherd

At 1410hrs a request was made to send out an emergency alert to residents in the areas of Birdwood Ave near Cliff Dr, Lilianfels Ave, the southern end of Katoomba St and Panorama Drive, Katoomba. Residents were advised to activate their Bush Fire Survival Plans.

The fire then continued to run uphill towards the iconic cliff-top five star hotels in Panorama Dr and Lilianfels Ave and further NSW RFS and FRNSW fire appliances and Strike Teams from the Lower Mountains and Region East responded.

Large areas of South Katoomba were now under ember attack with spot fires starting in backyards, on roof tops and in the gutters of many houses.

By now seven properties had been directly impacted by fire in various ways with flames licking the back doors, walls and window frames of homes, burning garden beds and with some backyards being burnt out. A large shed was also totally destroyed.

At 1435hrs Katoomba High School, some 400m to the east of the fire, was also under ember attack and was fully evacuated by the NSW Police Force.

The water bombing helicopters had been called in and worked hard to protect homes and infrastructure from the fire. Firefighting ground crews were still protecting homes and hotels in some locations while aggressively attacking the fire offensively in other areas.

With the fire still out of control, a Section 44 was declared by the NSW RFS Commissioner for the Blue Mountains Local Government Area at 1545hrs.

Over the next few hours the fire burnt out the top of the escarpment up to Katoomba St and Lilianfels Ave but had also dropped over the southern escarpment and into the Jamison Valley just west of Echo Point.

At the peak of the fire some 300 firefighters were deployed throughout the fireground with 47 firefighting appliances and three helicopters committed.

As the afternoon moved into the early evening, Strike Teams that had responded, began strategic backburning around Katoomba Falls Rd and Panorama Drive to secure



burning areas and to reduce the fire's progression. These crews worked hard throughout the night to protect residential homes and the Lillianfels Hotel and to help restore some normality to the area.

25 October 2011

Early the next morning, NSW RFS and NPWS Remote Area Fire Fighting Team (RAFT) crews were deployed to the Jamison Valley floor. They descended into the valley via the Scenic Railway to contain the southern flank of the fire working right up to the cliff face.

These teams worked in very steep and difficult circumstances and did a great job in containing the fire to the north of the Federal Pass

Walking Track before afternoon rain set in and crews could stand down. At around 1330hrs a strong southerly change came though and grounded all aircraft.

The Section 44 was revoked at 1800hrs that evening and over the next 24 hours approximately 60mm of rain fell across the fireground. Even though only 19ha were burnt, it was a very fast-moving fire that impacted on many hundreds of people, not only within the eastern side of the Scenic World area but at the Echo Point lookout overlooking the Three Sisters and the Prince Henry Cliff walk that links these sites.

It had the potential to be life threatening to residents, bushwalkers, tourists and

those other locals who use this area on a daily basis. Without the expert and professional firefighting from our volunteer firefighters and other emergency services the situation may have been much worse.

ABOVE: Crews worked hard to secure burning areas and to reduce the fire's progression. Photos by Ben Shepherd





Storms strike

the Blue Mountains

Blackheath, Medlow Bath and Mt Wilson in the Blue Mountains were battered by storms and gale-force winds in July. Over several days of freezing weather, the mountains were rocked and pummelled by strong winds. Hundreds of trees came down resulting in damage to houses, causing blocked roads and in some areas power supplies were cut for four days. Fortunately, no one was killed and injuries were minor.

Blackheath, in particular, suffered extensive property damage and some residents were injured. At Medlow Bath, a large, old conifer tree fell on a passenger train.

Throughout the storm and in the days following, all hands were on deck with volunteers, other emergency services and private contractors busy with everything from chainsaws to cranes to restore life back to the mountains.

NSW RFS volunteers joined with other emergency services to help clear the debris. Over the ten days of the storm and subsequent cleanup, 640 NSW RFS volunteers assisted the State Emergency Services (SES) and other emergency services.

In Blackheath, NSW RFS volunteers door-knocked 850 homes and many businesses so that residents were able to receive much needed assistance.

Deputy Commissioner Rob Rogers praised the work of NSW RFS volunteers working in the Blue Mountains as well as the Southern Highlands and Wollondilly Shire which were also affected by the storms.

"We have had more than 600 volunteers from across the State assisting the SES with storm damage recovery in particularly dangerous conditions. This level of commitment is what the NSW RFS prides itself on," he said.

LEFT: Local photographer Brad Bridger saw this massive conifer fall on a passenger train at Medlow Bath on 7 July 2011. "The train had stopped due to another fallen tree," he said. "Passengers were being moved through the train to safety when this tree fell. Almost all the passengers happened to be in the affected carriage at the time, but amazingly no one was hurt." Photo by Brad Bridger

Wild winds at Mt Wilson

This is a personal account of the first busy night at the Mt Wilson/ Mt Irvine Brigade written by Kathleen Oakes, Acting Fire Mitigation Officer, Blue Mountains District Office and volunteer at Mt Wilson/ Mt Irvine Brigade.

Senior Deputy Captain Peter Raines was looking forward to a good night's sleep.

The pager went off asking for a crew to attend a fire at nearby Mt Tomah. Peter noted that the wind was strong and increasing as he and the rest of the crew, Peter Dempsey, Vic Zhukov, Stephen Dean and Captain Beth Raines, set out. The road into Mt Wilson is in the shape of a zig zag as it rises up into the village. It was as far as the crew reached when they sighted the first tree down. No sooner had they cleared that tree than another came down, and then another. The Mt Tomah fire was out before Mt Wilson crews had cleared the zig zag (the first of many times it was cleared that afternoon).

Worker hit by falling tree

Then the pager went again – this time with a Community First Responder (CFR) call to Farrer Rd, out on the other side of Mt Wilson, where a worker had been hit by a falling tree. (CFRs are a group of NSW RFS volunteers who act as honorary ambulance personnel). Peter

and Beth Raines, who are CFRs, set out with medical equipment and chainsaws leaving the rest of the crew to deal with trees falling through the village. With so many trees down, they could only reach Farrer Rd by driving through fire trails, reserves and electricity easements. But Farrer Rd was blocked with more fallen trees so Beth set out on foot for the weary trudge with a trauma kit to the top of the hill to Wendy Holland's house where the injured person had taken refuge.

The crew on the pumper eventually joined Peter at Farrer Rd thanks to the work of Alan Gunn and Mark Bancroft who had driven from Mt Irvine back to Mt Wilson clearing the road as they went. Farrer Rd residents, Graham and Judy Tribe, came down to help with their tractor. As a result of the urgent requests for chainsaw crews coming into District Office, Group Captain Peter Church was dispatched to Mt Wilson. Mt Tomah Brigade arrived to clear Mt Wilson Road but with so many trees down it was not safe for the ambulance

to continue to Mt Wilson and a SCAT (Special Casualty Access Team) was called. It would be six hours after the initial call that the patient was retrieved and left Mt Wilson for hospital.

More help arrives

Mt Wilson/ Mt Irvine Brigade member, Helen Freeman had managed to get through to the station after returning from babysitting her grandchildren on the Central Coast. She thought she would slip home for five minutes to check on her house and her beloved dog, Buster. An hour and half later after scrambling over trees, she returned. A small army of NSW RFS volunteers, council workers, ambulance, family of the injured man and stranded tourists were coming and going at the station. Helen is not a student of military history but she instinctively understands Napoleon's dictum, "an army marches on its stomach". She opened the freezer.

Trees continued to fall throughout the village taking powerlines with them. David Gunn, third generation



mountain born, said he had never seen anything like it. Perched on top of an enormous conifer blocking the main road through Mt Wilson he asked Peter Dempsey to keep watch on a large broken branch swinging directly above him. Little did he know that Peter was wondering how on earth David would hear his warning shout over the noise of the gale and the chainsaw?

Peter's wife Kathleen was in a similar position on the zig zag training a torch on a branch swinging above a council chainsaw operator, a whistle in her hand ready to blow a warning should it drop. A mass of twisted limbs had greeted her on the road and she had thought of retreating until the SCAT team had arrived behind her. Together they moved as many branches as they could until one large tree defeated them. Suddenly, they heard the growl of chainsaws and turned to the joyous sight of a band of grim-faced council workers wielding chainsaws!

Eventually she got through to the station and joined Helen and Moira Green defrosting meals for the crews. Graham and Judy Tribe drove as far as they could into the village then walked to the station with a pot of soup. The warm food was very welcome as the temperature had dropped rapidly. Stephen Dean says that he doesn't feel the cold but out chainsawing that evening his hands were frozen. The wind chill factor was reported at minus 17 degrees.

Group Captain Peter Church was focused on getting the roads open so that the ambulance could reach the injured man. He started to hear calls on the radio of gale force winds now hitting Blackheath, where he lived. He contacted his wife Alison but she was out on a crew on Bells Line of Road. Eventually he got through to his two children.

He said later that the image of his two teenagers with candles in a cold, dark house with trees falling down around them was most unsettling. He didn't reach home until after midnight.

During that night the wind picked up again and more trees and powerlines came down. The next morning Helen Freeman and Suzanne Bassett walked through the streets to check that everyone was OK and assisted the evacuation of one of our more vulnerable residents. Once he could escape his house through the tangle of trees and powerlines, Tom Bassett set up communications at the brigade station.

Once the telephone lines came back, Kim Gow, Community Education Officer, was able to contact the street coordinators and ask them to check on neighbours and property. She was also able to email the weekenders, the majority of whom live in Sydney, and advise them of the disaster that had hit the village. It was four days before power was restored.

Five weeks later, contractors and heavy machinery were still there, the chainsaws were still going, the wood chips still piling up and the freezer has been restocked, ready for the next emergency.

OPPOSITE PAGE: A large eucalypt blocking The Avenue – the main road through Mt Wilson. Photo by Peter Raines, Mt Wilson/ Mt Irvine Brigade

ABOVE RIGHT: A boy stands near the root base of an enormous tree that fell in Blackheath.



A huge THANK YOU

"We wanted to say a huge thanks to the Rural Fire Service. We had first-hand experience at Blackheath. Trees down everywhere. They worked non-stop alongside the SES – fabulous.

We were incredibly lucky. Our enormous tree came down, across the length of our garden (see picture above with my son standing near the roots of the tree). And another pine of ours fell across our fence and into our neighbour's house – a great way to introduce yourself to your neighbour. We hadn't met him before.

So many houses in our street had huge holes in them. Some of our neighbours who had made the 'tree change' and built a little house across the road moved in just six weeks ago. They had seven trees come crashing through their kitchen. They cannot live in their place for six months until it is repaired, shaken right to the foundations."

Blackheath resident



Give me a home amongst the gum trees

By Glenn Woods,
Business Support Officer,
Operational and Mitigation
Support Services

Base camps are increasingly being used to keep firefighters close to the action during a major incident.

For a number of years, the NSW RFS has used base camps for accommodation at remote fires in regional areas of NSW. A base camp is a self-contained accommodation facility generally containing tents, catering and toilets.

In December 2001 the NSW RFS started using base camps for volunteer accommodation with equipment contracted in as required by Major Incident Logistics Support (MILS). In 2009 it was recognised that the Service required an in-house capability for base camps and a number of Western Shelter Systems™ tents were purchased as part of a trial. Western Shelter Systems™ are utilised by a number of agencies in Australia and overseas and have been used for personnel deployments at a range of incidents.

Operational and Mitigation Support Services (OMSS)

manages the storage, maintenance, deployment and set up of the Service's base camp infrastructure.

In 2010/11 OMSS established 23 base camps for training and regional exercises. The base camp equipment was also on standby in 2011 for deployment to the Queensland floods, Cyclone Yasi and in the aftermath of the New Zealand earthquake in Christchurch.

Base camps provide several benefits to NSW RFS operations including the ability to position firefighters close to an area of operations, reducing travel time at the start and end of a shift, and less reliance on established accommodation providers such as motels, which may or may not be available when operations occur. Base camps also greatly assist with the management of firefighter fatigue. NSW RFS base camp equipment and accommodation

infrastructure can also be used to support other agencies during natural disasters where remote living facilities are required.

Following a successful trial of Western Shelter Systems™ in 2010, the Service purchased additional accommodation infrastructure and shipping containers for storage to support NSW RFS volunteers. This additional equipment is now able to be stored at strategic locations around the State as required. This tripled the Service's base camp capability from 100 to over 300 personnel.

When and how are base camps deployed?

A base camp is generally only viable for deployments exceeding three days duration. Considerations for establishing a base camp include the remoteness of an

incident (if the travel time to and from an incident is more than one hour each way); the availability of commercial accommodation; the availability of aerial transport to the fire line and whether the fire is expected to exceed five days in duration.

Base camp requests occur through the Incident Controller to the Major Incident Coordinator and are managed through MILS. Operational and Mitigation Support Services manages the deployment and set up of the base camp infrastructure before handing the management over to the Base Camp Manager, who is appointed by the Incident Controller.

Types of base camps

NSW RFS base camps are scalable, starting with facilities for 60 personnel. This number is based on two strike teams consisting of five units with five



crew plus a strike team leader and offside, a base camp manager and other personnel. Base camps for larger numbers are based on multiples of 60 and can increase to 120, 180, 240 or 300 personnel as required.

A 60-person base camp requires an area of about 50m by 75m and as part of District pre-incident planning, base camp sites are identified for the range of configurations. Base camps fall into three types:

Type 1. Portable sleeping quarters and bedding supported by sufficient established infrastructure e.g. a showground

Type 2. Portable sleeping quarters and bedding using limited established infrastructure, with additional portable infrastructure e.g. a sports field with power, showers and toilets

Type 3. Completely self-contained and does not require any established infrastructure.

It consists of portable sleeping quarters, kitchen, dining and recreation areas, showers and toilets. It can be deployed to any area of sufficient size.

Sleeping accommodation within a base camp is in multi-person tents, with separate tents for men and women. Residents of a base camp are provided with a stretcher bed, pillow and case, sleeping bag, towel and foam ear plugs.

Base camps include three main areas:

1. Quiet Areas: sleeping area and any medical care area
2. Open Access Areas: hygiene facilities, mess facilities and waste facilities
3. Controlled Access Areas: base camp office, communications area, briefing area and stores area.

The NSW RFS infrastructure for base camps includes:

- 23 large tents – 5.5m x 10.5m (sleeps 12)

- 11 small tents – 6m x 6m (sleeps seven)
- Two portable offices with three work stations and a Next G switch
- One 45 KVA generator
- Four shipping containers storing bedding for 150 people
- Two shipping containers of general equipment
- All tents have purpose designed road cases for easy deployment

Demobilisation of base camp equipment is carried out by OMSS personnel once a base camp operation has concluded. The equipment is cleaned, dried and re-stowed ready for the next deployment.

New Hi Vis Inflatable Tent Systems

Hi Vis tent systems can be set-up in minutes, and are great for quick instant accommodation for late-night arrivals or mobile first aid stations during major incidents or fires.

OMSS manage the storage, maintenance, deployment and set up of these systems also, and like the Western Shelter Systems™ these tents can be linked and joined together depending on the size or area and numbers required.

For further information about the Service's base camp capability contact Supt Angelo Baldo, Manager State Mitigation Support Services.

OPPOSITE PAGE: A home amongst the gum trees...base camps are a self-contained accommodation facility for firefighters in remote areas.

TOP: OMSS personnel putting the finishing touches on a tent set-up at a base camp. LOWER LEFT: Firefighters are housed in multi-person tents with separate quarters for men and women. Photos by Glenn Woods LOWER RIGHT: Hi Vis tent systems are great for quick instant accommodation.

“As we look ahead, there are new challenges on the horizon and I have no doubt we will respond and adapt to those changes as they arise. Again, it will be our people who will lead the Service into the future.”

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons

Leadership forum looks to the future

Under the banner of *Leading Now and for the Future*, senior volunteers from across the State joined District and Headquarters personnel for the Service’s first-ever leadership forum.

Held at the Mount Panorama Pit Complex in Bathurst, the forum was a chance for volunteers and staff to share ideas about challenges facing the Service now and into the future.

Police and Emergency Services Minister, the Hon. Michael Gallacher MLC gave the opening address and touched on future challenges for emergency services and outlined some of his experiences with bush fires and the NSW RFS in his time as a police officer.

Gary Morgan, CEO of the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre (CRC), gave an update on research being conducted by the CRC and future directions over the next few years.

Guest speaker Major General (Retired) Jim Molan AO DSC spoke on “General-ship”, providing an insight into the conduct of the war in Iraq.

Dominic Thurban, Managing Director of the Centre for Skills Development, spoke about harnessing the power of people and highlighted how new media is changing the dynamic in the work environment and in turn affecting our interaction with the wider community.

A number of workshops were also held, providing senior volunteer members with an opportunity to openly share ideas and experiences. A forum with all members of the NSW RFS Executive provided an opportunity for volunteers and staff to ask questions and make suggestions.

A substantial trade exhibition also kept delegates up to date on Service programs and new products and services provided by exhibitors. Group Officers in particular took the time to talk with exhibitors about their products and how these related to brigade members.

Delegates were also able to swap experiences and catch up during the social aspects of the forum and our thanks go to the Principal Sponsor, Gilbert & Roach Isuzu, our Welcome Reception Sponsor, Mastercom and the Official Dinner Sponsor, Smokeshield Australia Pty Ltd.

Without the support of these sponsors and the companies that exhibited at the trade show we would not be able to hold these types of functions.

The Commissioner has determined that the leadership forum will now be held every two years.

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons stated, “As we look ahead, there are new challenges on the horizon and I have no doubt we will respond and adapt to those changes as they arise. Again, it will be our people who will lead the Service into the future.”

OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP: Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon. Michael Gallacher MLC, opened the Leadership Forum in Bathurst. **MIDDLE RIGHT:** Deputy Captain Jason Conn and Firefighter Elise Tasker presented the findings and suggestions from the inaugural Young Members Forum. **LOWER RIGHT:** Deputy Group Captain Peter Mooney from Lachlan District explained that things were a bit different ‘out west’. **LOWER MIDDLE:** One of the most popular speakers was Major General (Retired) Jim Molan AO DSC. **LOWER LEFT:** Deputy Captain Bill Duncan presented on Community Engagement at the Kenthurst Brigade dressed as a Roman Soldier! (see page 42 for more details). Photos by Jacqueline Murphy





CAD-IRS trial on the Mid North Coast

By Bruce Poulter, Senior Consultant, CAD Project

A trial of centralised receipt and dispatch is underway on the Mid North Coast and reports are that the change has been seamless.

The Mid North Coast Call Receipt and Dispatch Trial commenced on 1 August 2011. The aim of the trial is to test the communication and dispatch protocols for a 24/7 centralised dispatch process using the Operations Customer Service Centre (OCSC) at NSW RFS Headquarters. This will be a vital aspect of a possible move by the Service to a Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD-IRS) system.

During the trial the brigades of the Mid North Coast Team have so far responded to 194 incidents, an average of 61 incidents per month comprising:

- 20 percent motor vehicle accidents (MVAs) many with persons trapped
- 17.5 percent grass fires
- 10 percent bush/vegetation fires
- 5 percent structure fires
- 12.2 percent controlled burns.

With possible warmer conditions in the next few months the number of incidents is expected to increase, further testing the protocols, procedures and policies currently in place.

The Mid North Coast Team reports that the trial has been seamless with their current work load. Inspector Michael Brougham, Operations Officer, Mid North Coast Team said the change from the previous local dispatch to centralised dispatch has had minimal impact on the volunteers while bringing the NSW RFS into alignment with best practice.

The trial and scoping of the CAD-IRS System is an initiative of the Commissioner to introduce a modern, uniform incident response system that is efficient and leads to faster response times.

“The current manual system has served us well for some time, but there is a need to bring our systems into a modern framework to better understand an incident and offer a more appropriate and efficient response,” Commissioner Fitzsimmons said.

The Mid North Coast trial has already delivered a number of high-quality lessons including the impact a centralised dispatch has on District staff;

the development of training programs for dispatchers and the development of disaster recovery and business continuity plans.

It has also highlighted the need for high-quality data and information and the opportunity for continuous improvement within all parts of the trial.

How it works

With centralised dispatch, Triple Zero (000) incidents and Automatic Fire Alarm (AFA) calls from Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW) are received by specialist dispatch operators who can query incident information and record this information directly into the NSW RFS Incident Control On Line system.

The incident is mapped, the brigade area of the incident identified and the next “nearest, most appropriate” brigade (based on crew response time to station and road distance to the incident) is also identified should extra assistance be required.

Brigades are paged and the status board in the OCSC

is updated advising if the brigade is available, unavailable, or already committed elsewhere. Situation Reports (SITREPS) and other radio communications are transcribed directly into ICON which streamlines the post-incident reporting process.

This means that after an incident, once the brigade has returned to station, the Officer In Charge simply notifies the OCSC of the crew members who attended the incident and the post-incident reporting is complete. In the trial on the Mid North Coast there have been several occasions when, because of the size and complexity of the incident, the incident communication coordination has been successfully handed back to the Mid North Coast Team for the duration of the incident.

The Mid North Coast trial will continue over the first half of 2012 with a completion report presented to the NSW RFS Executive in mid-2012.

Explore the new fire weather reports from the BOM

By Laurence McCoy, Senior Project Officer, Fire Behaviour Analysis

The Fire Weather Explorer was introduced by the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) during the 2010/11 season. This Explorer (located on the registered users section of the BOM website) displays a set of quality-controlled forecast weather maps from the Australian Digital Forecast Database (ADFD).

This has provided new opportunities for fire managers to display and interpret fire weather information. The daily Fire Weather Forecast product provided by the BOM contains information also extracted from

the ADFD, and is best used in conjunction with the Fire Weather Explorer. Based on feedback about the daily Fire Weather Forecast from the 2010/11 season, the NSW RFS has developed a reformatted version for the

2011/12 season that consolidates the information by fire district.

The graphic below displays the NSW RFS format, highlighting significant changes. A set of Fire Danger Ratings pages for individual Fire Districts is currently

being developed. It is planned for this format to be available on ICON. For further information contact your District Office, NSW RFS Meteorologist Simon Louis or Senior Project Officer Laurence McCoy on 8741 5555.

1 Change to the time of maximum Fire Danger Index. Prior to the 2010/11 season, the weather conditions were given for time of maximum temperature. This change could mean the conditions shown may not always be in the afternoon when it is hottest. This is especially the case in grassland areas as wind has a stronger influence on GFDI.

Five significant changes to way that fire weather is now reported:

Far South Coast [Very High]

Location	Time	Temp °C	RH %	Wind km/h			MaxT °C	CUR %	Fuel	DF	Max. FDI Fuel	Wind Change km/h				District Values	
				Dir	Spd	Gust						Dir	Spd	Gust	Time	WIND (1500m)	RAIN
Moruya	11:00	35	10	WNW	35	55	35	80	4.5	6	F	SSE	25	45	12	WIND (1500m):WSW45	RAIN:20%
Bega	17:00	24	29	SSW	25	45	24	80	4.5	6	F					MIX:1500m	LAL:0
Forest (86%)	Area FFDI:13			VH+:70% Hrs:2 Start:1000			SEV+:0%				EXT+:0%				CAT+:0%		cHaines:6
Grass (14%)	Area GFDI:5			VH+:50% Hrs:2 Start:1000			SEV+:0%				EXT+:0%				CAT+:0%		Rating:Very High

Monaro Alpine [High]

Location	Time	Temp °C	RH %	Wind km/h			MaxT °C	CUR %	Fuel	DF	Max. FDI Fuel	Wind Change km/h				District Values	
				Dir	Spd	Gust						Dir	Spd	Gust	Time	WIND (1500m)	RAIN
Cooma	11:00	28	11	WNW	25	40	28	70	4.5	6	F	SE	20	35	12	WIND (1500m):W45	RAIN:15%
Bombala	15:00	17	36	SSE	25	30	18	70	4.5	4	F					MIX:3000m	LAL:0
Forest (52%)	Area FFDI:22			VH+:3% Hrs:2 Start:1000			SEV+:0%				EXT+:0%				CAT+:0%		cHaines:7
Grass (48%)	Area GFDI:13			VH+:0%			SEV+:0%				EXT+:0%				CAT+:0%		Rating:High

Southern Ranges [Severe]

Location	Time	Temp °C	RH %	Wind km/h			MaxT °C	CUR %	Fuel	DF	Max. FDI Fuel	Wind Change km/h				District Values	
				Dir	Spd	Gust						Dir	Spd	Gust	Time	WIND (1500m)	RAIN
Goulburn	16:00	35	8	NW	35	55	35	65	4.5	9	F	SE	25	35	17	WIND (1500m):NW60	RAIN:20%
Braidwood	12:00	34	6	WNW	35	50	35	55	4.5	8	F	ESE	25	40	13	MIX:2700m	LAL:0
Forest (31%)	Area FFDI:61			VH+:90% Hrs:7 Start:0900			SEV+:45% Hrs:6 Start:1000				EXT+:0%				CAT+:0%		cHaines:7
Grass (69%)	Area GFDI:39			VH+:70% Hrs:4 Start:1200			SEV+:0%				EXT+:0%				CAT+:0%		Rating:Severe

5 Addition of information about the District coverage and duration of Very High FDI conditions.

4 District Values Info
WIND – The wind direction and speed in km/h at 1500m above ground level.

RAIN – The chance of greater than 5mm.

MIX and cHaines – Related to atmospheric instability.

LAL – Lightning Activity Level, ranging from 0 for no lightning to 3 for widespread.

2 Addition of Forest and Grass Fire Danger Ratings and the relative proportion of forest and grass within a fire weather area. The numbers in brackets next to forest and grass in the table are provided for reference, and show how much of each area consists of each fuel type. Predominantly grassland areas have the forest section greyed out so that the GFDI figures are visually emphasised.

3 Point location data (circled) is now located with the area data for each District. The Fire Danger Ratings for an area is derived from the area data (forest and grass rows). The point data is provided for members to gain a feel for the weather conditions at a point within the District. For more accurate weather conditions at a particular fire location, a Special Fire Weather Forecast request should be made.

Our gratitude is hard to measure...

By Jacqueline Murphy, Acting Manager, Organisational Communications

Our much-loved Senior Chaplains, Majors Ron and Carol Anderson of the Salvation Army, retired in 2011.



Ron and Carol Anderson have been with the NSW RFS since January 1997, providing more than 15 years of selfless care and support to NSW RFS members and their families.

Their involvement with the NSW RFS started in 1994 during the dramatic fires in Sutherland Shire in southern Sydney when they were in charge of the Salvation Army Emergency Services as well as serving as volunteer NSW RFS chaplains. Having already distinguished themselves Ron and Carol were appointed full-time as NSW RFS Senior Chaplains in 1997.

Before coming to the NSW RFS the Andersons had a long and prominent period of service with The Salvation Army. They had spent 15 years as Chaplains with the NSW Police Force and previous to that had dedicated many years to working with children on the street.

Since 1997 Ron and Carol have truly played an integral role in supporting the members and families of the NSW RFS. Together Ron and Carol formalised the Chaplaincy and

Family Support Unit which now includes 63 volunteer chaplains around the State. They have travelled extensively around NSW and have clocked up an incredible one million kilometres of car travel.

They have truly become part of the family for many NSW RFS members being the celebrants at life's important milestones including christenings, weddings and funerals. In fact Ron and Carol have been the celebrants at 230 weddings and 468 funerals in their time with the Service.

"You have been an integral part of our fire service lives," wrote Jaime Marquez from Casula Brigade, "as well as playing a key role in our personal lives for many years now and your absence will be felt deeply by us all.

"I recall with great fondness the many happy moments that we have shared. You have officiated at our marriages and at our children's christenings.

"I am forever grateful that you have been there for all the trials we have faced individually and as a brigade. I would like to say

that you are not just retiring as the Chaplain of the NSW RFS but also as a member of the Casula Fire Brigade and the numerous other brigades with which you have shared your great faith and compassion over the years."

It has been Ron and Carol's rich and extensive skills in helping people during troubled or difficult times that has left its mark on the NSW RFS.

Their period of service included the counsel to friends and families affected by the 17 Line of Duty Deaths that have occurred during their ministry.

They were also there during the 1997 murders of two Bega school girls, the 1998 Wingello bush fires where one member was killed and five were seriously injured, the 2001 Christmas fires, the 2003 ACT fires, as well as the 2009 Black Saturday bush fires in Victoria.

Ron and Carol are both recipients of the Inspirational Australian's of the Year Award (2001), the Commissioner's Commendation for Service Medal, and the ACT Emergency Medal (2003),

the Rural Fire Service Long Service Medal and the Australian Fire Service Medal.

"Our gratitude to Ron and Carol is hard to measure," said Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons. "Probably no one person really knows just how much time and support they have given to the Service and to the people of NSW over their ministry.

"All we can say is that they will be sadly missed and very fondly remembered. Ron and Carol Anderson are inspirational human beings and we thank them for their contribution to the NSW RFS."

ABOVE (L-R): There were tears and laughter on the day that Ron and Carol were farewelled from the Service at the NSW RFS Lidcombe Headquarters. **ABOVE FAR RIGHT:** Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons officially welcomes the new chaplains, Kerry and Ian Spall. Photos by Jacqueline Murphy

A farewell note from our Senior Chaplains

Dear NSW Rural Fire Service family,

Carol and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all NSW RFS members and their families for your loyalty and support over an amazing 15 years. It has been an unforgettable experience for both of us, and we feel so proud to have been part of what has been achieved at the NSW RFS.

We retire with many special memories and pray for God's continued blessings on this special family that some call the NSW Rural Fire Service.

Our decision to retire was not an easy one. But we are sure the time is right for us, and walking away is much easier knowing that we leave the chaplaincy in such capable hands. Majors Ian and Kerry Spall are outstanding communicators and supporters both in the spiritual and secular environment, who already enjoy the respect and affection of the NSW RFS.

In closing I share with you our retirement message...

I do not believe that all miracles are instantaneous. In the Bible there were many miracles by Jesus that stick in our minds as true miracles. I also believe there are miracles that take years to complete. These miracles develop virtually unnoticed until suddenly they stand before us and take our breath away at their size and vision.

The NSW Rural Fire Service is a perfect example of a slowly-emerging miracle. Looking back it is almost impossible to believe just how far the Service has come since the beginnings in Berrigan one hundred years ago.

But I am quite sure that the miracle is by no means over. In fact, it has hardly begun. I am convinced that we have only experienced the beginning of the miracle. However, as for Carol and I this is as far as we go.

We can clearly see that the future of the NSW RFS is fantastic as it cares for the NSW communities! But we feel it is time to pass our role to Majors Ian and Kerry Spall to meet the challenges ahead.

We believe every generation has its time and its limits, and usually ends up standing in awe at what it has created. That is why there is always a younger generation waiting in the wings to place their stamp on the future. That is what is now required within the NSW RFS Chaplaincy.

Already we have some fresh younger minds who have taken over the chaplaincy. More will undoubtedly follow, and on the condition that they continue to humbly and prayerfully ask for the Lord's guidance I am sure the ongoing power of the Chaplaincy and Family Support Program will be limitless to the NSW RFS in the support of volunteers and their families.

Carol and I wish to say thank you to all, for accepting our trust and letting us be part of your families, both within good times, and the hard times. We look forward to catching up with you down the track as we become volunteers within a local brigade and provide volunteer support to Membership Services in retirement.

Finally, Father God, we thank you for the tremendous honour of being permitted to serve within the NSW RFS. May your miracle continue to unfold.

Ron and Carol Anderson



Communications systems upgrade

By Bruce McDonald, Group Manager Mobile Assets & Infrastructure and Aidan Moore, Program Manager, Communications Systems Upgrade

The reliability of NSW RFS communication systems, such as radio and paging networks, is critical for effective operational activities. These systems cover 95 percent of NSW and minimise the impact of bush fires.

These networks need to be upgraded at the end of their practical life, leading to two projects: the Statewide Emergency Paging Network Upgrade and the Radio Network Upgrade.

Paging systems will be upgraded to replace 'single broadcast technology' with 'simulcast technology' and operating systems will be standardised across NSW RFS Districts.

Radio systems will move to "Digital P25 technology", providing added capabilities and resilience that adapts to changing and developing needs.

The program upgrades the backbone communications infrastructure, not the radio handsets or pagers. The progressive upgrade will not replace planned or scheduled maintenance still required on networks.

Paging Upgrade Project

The Paging Upgrade Project has two separate yet linked components. Firstly, paging servers, will be replaced with new servers, connected into the Service's IT Wide Area Network (WAN) with "Messenger" (formerly known as BasePage) operating software installed. When complete the IT paging platform across the State will be consistent. The second component is to replace network transmitters with new infrastructure, delivering a simulcast transmission medium for all networks.

Full upgrades (server/transmission components) have been completed in Manning and Southern Tablelands Zone. Full upgrades are well underway in Orana and Lower Western.

New Paging servers have been commissioned in these locations:

Paging Network

Baulkham Hills	Far South Coast	Lower Hunter
Riverina	Sutherland	Manning
Blue Mountains	Canobolas	Castlereagh
Hawkesbury	Illawarra	Namoi/ Gwydir
Tamworth Regional	Lower Hunter	Mid Lachlan Valley

FCC/Server Locations

Kenthurst	Moruya & Bega	Raymond Terrace
Wagga Wagga	Heathcote	Katoomba
Great Lakes/ Taree	Orange	Coonabarabran
Wilberforce	Albion Park	Tamworth
Cessnock	Narrabri	Moree
Inverell	Forbes	

Radio (PMR) Upgrade Project

The recent focus has been network, infrastructure and spectrum planning, IP linking and finalising the technical and physical design of the new network. Key design decisions are being finalised.

1. PMR networks targeted for upgrade during 2012

Region South

MIA
Southern Tablelands
Monaro

Region East

Manning

Region North

Clarence Valley
Namoi/ Gwydir
Tamworth

Region West

Bland Temora
Orana
Canobolas

2. Communications availability during and after implementation

During implementation, network availability will vary based on various technical and site-related factors. District Operations Teams will advise brigades closer to the implementation date on how the network will be upgraded and what impacts there may be on operational activities.

3. Radio compatibility

Unfortunately, older analogue radios outside the recommended models and brands will not be compatible with the new P25 Digital System.

Supported radios are:

Motorola	Tait	Simoco
XTS2500	TM9155 – with P25 Enabled	SRM9022 – With P25 Option Board only
XTS5000	TM9154 – with P25 Enabled	SRM9030 – With P25 Option Board only
XTL5000	TP9155	
APX6000	TP9160	

4. New profile

Based upon member feedback over the last two years a new radio profile has been developed. This profile is being tested by our User Group and State Mitigation Support Services crews. Once finalised, the profile will be rolled out to over 9,000 radios across NSW.

5. GRN (Government Radio Network)

The NSW Government is overhauling the way GRN is used. The NSW RFS is trialling GRN for coverage and capacity in the following four Region East Districts: Cumberland, Warringah/ Pittwater, Macarthur and Sutherland.

General questions and feedback

FAQs can be found on the Services Intranet or MyRFS. Send specific Radio Upgrade feedback and questions to the Communications Systems Upgrade team at comms.upgrade@rfs.nsw.gov.au



HEAVY PLANT IN THE NSW RFS

What is Heavy Plant?

Heavy Plant is also referred to as plant, heavy machinery or heavy equipment. These are terms typically used to describe earth moving machinery such as bulldozers (wheeled and tracked), graders, excavators, front end loaders, log skidders, rollers/ compactors, floats, tractors, mulchers/ trittrers, bulk water tankers and refuelling tankers.

Why use machinery on the fire line?

Heavy machinery has always played an important role in fire suppression and mitigation work. Increasingly plant is being used to supplement the traditional manual methods with mechanical means to accomplish tasks more rapidly and efficiently. Fire agencies and land managers have recognised the benefits of using machinery in fire operations particularly with respect to worker safety, productivity and cost efficiency. Benefits of heavy plant include:

- using Heavy Plant in control line construction acts as a force multiplier for crews, increasing their capability and productivity
- frees up other firefighting resources to focus on tasks in areas where heavy plant is prohibited
- provides access to a highly-skilled labour workforce and specialised equipment
- provides safer means for dealing with problem trees compared to manual tree felling
- faster and safer broad acre fire suppression requiring fewer firefighting crews.

What is the NSW RFS Heavy Plant Program about?

Historically, the NSW RFS has not had standardised processes or a directory for the engagement and management of plant for incidents. Over the years Districts that

routinely use plant for fire suppression and mitigation work have developed their own level of expertise and list of contractors.

The NSW RFS Heavy Plant Program provides policy, procedures and the framework for the use of heavy plant. These tools were developed in consultation with NSW RFS volunteers, Districts and other agencies to create a unified approach with the longer term objective to establish Bush Fire Coordinating Committee (BFCC) endorsed policy and procedures.

The program was also developed with support from interstate fire agencies including the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) and international firefighting agencies from the US and Canada.

The objectives of the program are to enable the Service to better manage the risks typically associated with the engagement of heavy plant for fire operations. These risks relate to:

- plant operator safety
- managing the impact to the environment
- management of the financial process
- enhancing operational capability
- managing probity issues.

How is Heavy Plant engaged?

Although the administration of the Heavy Plant Program is through the Operational and Mitigation Support Services Group of the Operational Services Directorate, **the engagement and management of Heavy Plant remains at the local level.**

The decision to engage plant contractors is by the approval of the Regional Operations Manager for Class 1 and 2 incidents and the Incident Controller for Class 3 incidents.

The Incident Management procedures (IMPs) for the engagement of plant have been prepared in consultation with the NSW RFS Heavy Plant Program Focus

Group and the Inter-agency Heavy Plant Consultative Group comprising of the National Parks & Wildlife Service, Forests NSW and Fire and Rescue NSW with assistance from DSE Victoria.

Heavy Plant Register

Central to the program is the creation of a plant contractor directory, known as the Heavy Plant Register for use by Districts as a ready reference when sourcing locally-available Heavy Plant.

The term 'plant contractor' refers not only to private contractors but also councils and other government agencies that have registered their plant with the NSW RFS.

As of 2011 there are approximately 200 companies and organisations that have registered with the number of items of plant totalling more than 1,000 machines. It is anticipated that this will expand to approximately 1,500 machines within 12 months.

How can companies and organisations register with the NSW RFS Heavy Plant Register?

The process for registering plant with the NSW RFS is to submit a completed request for proposal (RFP). A copy of the RFP can be downloaded from the NSW RFS website.

To be accepted on to the Heavy Plant Register, contractors are required to be insured and their plant meet the requirements specified including: Roll Over Protection System (ROPS), flashing amber warning lights, knapsack or fire extinguisher, UHF CB radio, NSW RFS Heavy Plant identification number and Falling Object Protection System (FOPS). Each year, the RFP will be released providing contractors with the opportunity to submit revised rates for the hire of their plant.

For further information email heavy.plant@rfs.nsw.gov.au



HEAVY PLANT R

Illustrated below are the commonly used types of Heavy Plant that are engaged to sup

BULLDOZER OR DOZER

(NSW RFS Category 20). Designed to push material, useful for trail and control line construction. Tracked machines are slower but better suited to steeper country due to their greater power, lower ground pressure and traction. Wheeled machines are faster, don't tear up road surfaces and are better suited for working in areas where soil disease or weed seed is a known issue. Control line construction rates can vary from 250 – 1000m/hr.



Small (tracked) bulldozer – e.g. Caterpillar model D3 to D5 or Case model 550 to 850. Blade width 2.5 to 3.2m. Mass 8 to 10t.



Medium (tracked) bulldozer – e.g. Caterpillar model D6 and D7, Case model 1150 to 1850. Blade width 3.0 to 3.3m. Mass 11 to 30t.



Large tracked bulldozer – e.g. Caterpillar model D8 to D11 or Komatsu model D155 to D575. Blade width 4 to 5m. Mass 31 to 120t.

LOADERS

(NSW RFS Category 20). Can be fitted with loading forks and other attachments such as mulching heads. Useful for rapid control line construction in less dense forest, for shifting logs and other obstructions. Smallest model is the skid steer and compact tracked loaders which are well suited for working along the urban interface.



Skid Steer (Bobcat) and Compact Tracked Loader. Bucket capacity 0.5 to 0.7 m³. Mass 0.7 to 1.0t.



Backhoe Loader series. Bucket capacity 1.0 to 1.53 m³. Mass 10 to 12t.



Medium (tracked) Loader – e.g. Caterpillar model 953. Bucket capacity 1.6m³. Mass 16t.

LOADERS (CONT.)



Medium (Wheeled) Loader – e.g. Cat 900 series. Bucket capacity 2.3 to 4.3 m³. Mass 15 to 32t.

TRACTORS

(NSW RFS Category 20). Very useful machines for rapidly ploughing fire breaks in open grassland and around assets. These machines can be fitted with a range of attachments including buckets, ploughs, mulching (trittering) and slashing attachments.



Tractors range in size from a couple of tonnes to the large horsepower 30t agricultural tractors (example shown above).

REFERENCE GUIDE

support fire operations and mitigation work with a description of the machines and their features.

HYDRAULIC EXCAVATORS AND FOREST HARVESTERS

(NSW RFS Category 20). Forest harvesters are designed for operating in steep terrain typical of plantation forests. They have hydraulic grabs (grapples) for holding, lifting, bunching, stacking timber. These machines are useful for clearing logs, dealing with dangerous trees, stacking or breaking up windrows. Excavators may also be fitted with a blade, with a hydraulic thumb on the bucket, mulching heads or grabs enabling rapid construction of fire breaks with less impact than earth moving plant.



Excavators may be tracked or wheeled. Range in size from Mini (1t) to Large (85t). Able to be configured to perform a broad range of tasks.



Forest Harvesters may be tracked or wheeled. Designed for harvesting plantation timber even in steep terrain and used for road construction. Mass 25 to 40t.



Log Skidders can be tracked or wheeled. Typically used for lifting logs and pushing objects rather than trail construction. Mass 16 to 18t.

MOTOR GRADER

(NSW RFS Category 20). Useful for rapidly constructing control lines in open grassland and around assets.



Typically medium in size with blades width 2.4 to 4.3m fitted with ripping tines. May also be fitted with a front blade. Mass up to 25t. Control line construction rates can be between 2 to 6 km/hr.

FLOATS

(NSW RFS Category 17). Used for transporting heavy plant.



Semi-trailer combination or may be tipper and trailer combination. **Assessment of route and staging area to be considered prior to deploying.**

BULK WATER TANKERS

(NSW RFS Category 13). Range in capacity from several thousand litres to 35,000 litres in the form of a semi-trailer tanker or a heavy rigid tanker towing a dog trailer.



Medium Bulk Water Tanker (10,000 – 16,000L) above with a Heavy BWT above right (16,000 – 35,000L). BWT may be a purpose built tanker or may be a tank(s) mounted on the back of a tip truck, table top truck or on semi trailer. Important for contract tankers to have Storz adaptors for coupling to fire tankers.

FIELD SERVICE VEHICLES

(NSW RFS Category 17). These range in size from utilities to medium rigid trucks. These are basically a mobile workshop.



Above is a NSW purpose built field service vehicle, designed to be deployed during campaign fires to provide field (on site) servicing of fire tankers at base camps and assembly areas.

HEAVY PLANT IN THE NSW RFS

Transport of plant checklist

When transporting plant to the fire site you must ensure that available routes to the site are suitable. You must check the following:

- road load limits
- bridge carrying capacity
- height restrictions
- gradients
- local road restrictions.

At the staging area you must ensure:

- accessibility for low loaders (floats)
- sufficient area for unloading, manoeuvring and parking of plant (and their floats)
- staging area is safe from fire threat
- **a fire appliance escort is assigned**
- Is plant assigned to operate as part of a task force?

Refer to information that may be included in pre-incident plans or the s 52 plan.

Discuss these requirements with your plant contractors as they will advise whether “oversize” heavy vehicle regulations will apply for the transportation of their plant. As a rule of thumb, typically the transportation of plant up to medium-sized machines is within oversize vehicle limits.

OPERATOR PROTECTION SYSTEMS – ROLLOVER PROTECTION SYSTEMS (ROPS) AND FALLING OBJECT PROTECTION SYSTEM (FOPS)

Modern earth moving machinery is required to feature rollover protection (ROPS) which includes the plant operator wearing the seatbelt fitted to the machine. Plant operating in locations where there is a risk of falling objects are also required to be fitted with falling object protection systems (FOPS).



PLANT NUMBERING

When plant is registered with the NSW RFS, a unique identification number is allocated and a set of decals with this number are issued. For earthmoving plant these decals may be displayed on each side of the machine as shown in the images, or for vehicles they may be displayed front and rear.

This number enables the plant to be readily identified at incidents, aids with the tracking of the plant and provides a call sign for radio communications. Correctly identifying and tracking plant at incidents is important for safety reasons, particularly during fast running fires and where the fire fighters working near the plant may not be familiar with the machine. This number is also for correctly identifying the machine in the payment process.



Queensland flood hero wins a swag of awards



NSW RFS firefighter, Deputy Group Captain Kendall Thompson, who rescued over 40 people in the Queensland floods of January 2011, was named winner of the 2011 International Benjamin Franklin Fire Service Award for Valor, winner of the Royal Lifesaving Society Awards and the Royal Humane Society award.

The 2011 International Benjamin Franklin Fire Service Award for Valor recognises firefighters around the world for their expert training, leadership, heroic actions and safe practices and is the highest honour bestowed by the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC). Kendall travelled to Atlanta in the US to receive the award in September 2011. He was presented with the Royal Lifesaving Society Award by the Governor of NSW, Marie Bashir in December 2011 and will accept his award from the Royal Humane Society one year after the tragic floods.

Kendall Thompson's days 'down-the-wire'

Deputy Group Captain Thompson of Tamworth, was deployed on a rescue helicopter as the down-the-wire crewman (person at the end of the winch below

the helicopter). He was repeatedly inserted into the water, onto roof tops or floating cars. He was left to prepare and secure victims, call the aircraft in and either winch or hover-load people into the helicopter for transport to safer ground.

"[Deputy Group] Captain Thompson's tremendous contributions to this extraordinary rescue effort certainly make him worthy of this award," said Chief Jack Parow, IAFC president and chairman of the board.

"His story captures the whole of the spirit that is the fire and emergency service: from individual courage to dedicated teamwork and from tactical proficiency to creative problem solving."

In January 2011, the aircrew of Helitak 220, sent by the NSW RFS to support rescue efforts

in the devastating Queensland floods, conducted rescue operations over a two-day period in the Lockyer Valley in what could only be described as atrocious conditions.

Over these two harrowing days, the helicopter crew, with Deputy Group Captain Thompson down-the-wire, rescued an elderly couple and their family dog trapped inside a house that had been swept downstream, a family trapped on top of their car, and many people rescued from rooftops, clinging to trees and just holding on in raging floodwaters.

Kris Larkin, Winch Operator/Air crewman with the helicopter crew that day said that many people, "would have perished if not for his efforts. In the eyes of myself, my colleagues and associated rescue staff on site he has

earned admiration and respect to himself and the organisation that he represents."

The iconic image of the family desperate to be rescued on top of their car is known to many people in Australia who watched the unfolding drama on the news. Deputy Group Captain Thompson had a hand in saving members of this family.

TOP LEFT: IAFC President Chief Jack Parow, NSW RFS Assistant Commissioner Keith Harrap and Deputy Group Captain Kendall Thompson on stage at the awards in Atlanta USA. Photo courtesy of IAFC
TOP RIGHT: Commissioner Fitzsimmons and Deputy Group Captain Kendall Thompson at the Royal Lifesaving Society Awards at Government House.
LOWER RIGHT: Deputy Group Captain Kendall Thompson with his IAFC medal at the ceremony in Atlanta. Photo courtesy of IAFC

Top national award for NSW RFS Hotspots



The NSW Rural Fire Service has won a major national award for its work in engaging with communities about the risk of fire.

The NSW RFS Hotspots project won the 2011 Australian Safer Communities Award in the Education, Training and Research section.

NSW RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said the awards recognise innovative practises that help build safer, stronger and more disaster resilient communities that are better prepared to manage emergency situations.

"The Hotspots project has been in operation for six years now and is designed to equip landholders and land managers with the necessary skills and knowledge to manage fire.

"The NSW RFS works closely with agencies like the NSW Farmers Association and Nature Conservation Council to make sure the Hotspots project is helping to protect communities whilst maintaining the unique biodiversity of the Australian landscape.

"The team's ongoing commitment to the scheme has assisted communities across NSW protect lives, properties and the environment from the devastation of bush fire," Commissioner Fitzsimmons said.

The Hotspots project consists of a number of workshops aimed at improving landholders' understanding of fire and steps they can take to manage their risk.

The program also focuses on environmental sustainability and is supported by the Nature Conservation Council.

Commissioner Fitzsimmons said that by engaging with land managers through these practical programs, the Service is helping to develop a more resilient community.

"Initially the NSW RFS took away first prize in the Education, Training and Research section at the State Awards held in October. To then go on and win this award in the national competition is a testament to the innovation and commitment of NSW RFS members.

"The Hotspots project is a great example of how communities can actively participate in fire management to make sure healthy, productive landscapes are maintained and the inevitable risk of fire is managed.

"The NSW RFS is committed to ensuring communities are

well educated and prepared for emergency situations".

Further information on the Hotspots project is available on the NSW RFS website at www.rfs.nsw.gov.au

Hotspots workshops have been conducted in nearly 50 locations around NSW.

Two other awards

The Service also won two other State-level awards at the 2011 Australian Safer Communities Awards. The Campbelltown Home

Emergency Kit project won the State-level Local Government Category and the Canyonleigh Rural Fire Brigade Women's Fire Awareness Program was highly commended.

ABOVE: Community members, landholders, NSW RFS brigade members and ecologists together at a Hotspots workshop in 2009. Photo by K. McShea. BELOW (L-R): The Hotspots team in Canberra after winning a National Award – Phil Patterson, Waminda Parker, Simon Heemstra, Lana Andrews, Brodie Rafferty and Bruce Hansen. Photo by Gary Morgan



Honours go to six of our finest

Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Michael Gallacher MLC congratulated those who received Australian Fire Service Medals as part of the Queen's Birthday Honours.

"I would like to express the sincere gratitude of both the NSW Government and the people of this State for the contribution made by each of the recipients.

"These dedicated individuals have, and continue to show, a steadfast commitment to the protection of the people of NSW during times of emergency," Mr Gallacher said.

Captain Judee Bryant

Judee has been a dedicated member of the NSW RFS for 30 years and is currently the Captain of the South Durras Rural Fire Brigade on the far south coast. She has been influential in raising funds for the Eurobodalla Training Centre for over 20 years, a Centre utilised by local brigades and other agencies including the CSIRO and the NSW Police Force. Judee continues to contribute extensively to the coordination and delivery of training to both local and out-of-area brigades.

Jeffrey Cree

Jeffrey has been a valued member of the NSW RFS for 41 years and has held a field officer position for 38 of those years. He has attended fires across NSW as well as being deployed as a Task Force leader to fires in Victoria and South Australia. Jeffrey remains an active member of the Davidson Brigade in the Warringah/ Pittwater District and continues to assist in District-based training and raising the awareness of fire safety and the NSW RFS in the community.

Group Captain Norman Carter

Norman has been a member of the Gloucester District of



Recipients of the AFSM (L-R) Group Captain Norman Carter, Jeffrey Cree, Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons, Supt David Hoadley, Roy Stacy and Group Captain Grahame Fothergill. Absent: Captain Judee Bryant. Photo by Grant Turner, Mediakoo

the NSW RFS since 1960 and continues to provide active service as Group Captain. He represents volunteers on the local Bush Fire Management Committee and is actively involved with the annual inspection and maintenance of fire trails. His superior leadership and communications skills continue to hold him in high regard with his fellow volunteers.

Superintendent David Hoadley

David joined the Blayney Rural Fire Brigade in 1969 before being appointed as the part-time Fire Control Officer for the Blayney Shire Council in 1992. In 2001 he was appointed Manager after playing a significant role in the development of the Canobolas

Zone responsible for the Blayney, Cabonne and Orange areas. David has been a strong advocate for volunteers playing a significant role in the strategic direction of the Service.

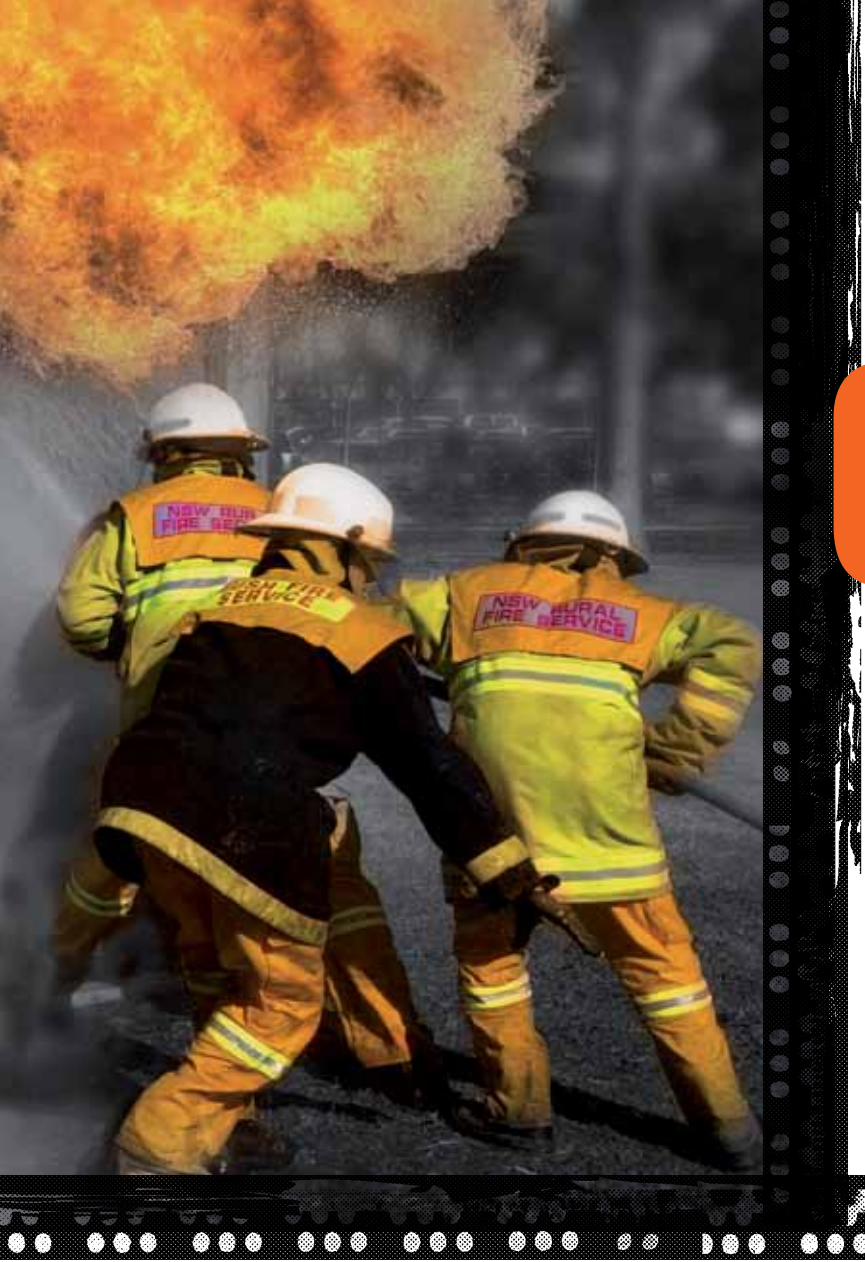
Roy Stacy

Roy fought bush fires in the Blue Mountains with the RAAF before officially joining the Bush Fire Service in 1947. He was instrumental in establishing the Katoomba Bush Fire Brigade and remained Captain for 13 years before moving to the Griffith Brigade where he remains an active member of the executive. Roy was awarded the Griffith Community Citizen of the Year in 1990 and Lifetime Volunteer of the Year in 2009.

Group Captain Grahame Fothergill

Grahame joined the Service with the Farmborough Heights Brigade in 1977 where he held the position of Captain for 20 years before being appointed as Group Captain five years ago, a position he still holds today. He has attended fires across NSW and interstate. Grahame provides the highest level of dedication and commitment to his fellow volunteers and ensures the welfare and needs of his crews come before his personal well-being. He is widely respected and a great ambassador of the Service.

For more information about the AFSM see www.itsanhonour.gov.au



State Champs

"The State Championships is the ultimate competitive event for NSW RFS firefighters. It showcases the outstanding skills and teamwork of our members.

In 2012, the Championships will be held in the wonderful Port Stephens area and the event line-up promises to be more exciting and challenging than ever.

I strongly encourage all of you, no matter where you are, to give it a go and seek selection through your Districts and Regional qualifying process. I look forward to seeing you there!"

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons

State Championships September 2012

The NSW RFS State Championships is the premier competitive firefighting event for members of the NSW RFS, held every two years around September.

The 2012 State Championships will be held on 14-16 September 2012 at the Tomaree Sports Complex in Port Stephens, hosted by Lower Hunter Zone in Region East.

The first State-wide competition was held in 1972 when Bush Fire Brigades from 14 local councils gathered at the National Fitness Camp in Narrabeen. 2012 marks the 40th anniversary of the competition.

At the State Championships, teams from across NSW compete in a series of challenges held over two days, designed to test the competitors' skills and teamwork. The overall winning team in each category is

awarded the State Champions title and a range of prizes for their brigade and District.

The Championships is also an opportunity for volunteers to meet other members from across the State, share experiences and learn from one another.

Marshals and events

The 2010 Dubbo State Championships highlighted the crucial role of event marshals – without them, there would be no Championships! Marshals are responsible for planning and conducting each event, so the team of marshals for 2012 was selected early in the planning process and brought together for a workshop to design a whole new event line-up.

Most events are scenario-based and are designed to test core skills such as firefighting, fireground procedures, navigation and first aid. The

team of marshals were also given another brief – make your event exciting and fun for participants. To encourage innovative thinking there will be an award given to the marshal who delivers the best event, decided by votes from competing teams – and as an added incentive the marshal with the least votes will shout the winner's prize.

Combined Junior and Senior events

Here are some of the events scheduled for the 2012 State Championships. Please note that because some of the events will test a crew's ability to respond to an unknown or rapidly changing situation, exact details of all the events have not been released.

Aquatic Inferno

A day on the water can turn into your worst nightmare

... this event delivers an experience like no other!

When a boat catches fire there's nowhere to run to, so these passengers had better hope your crew is good enough to put the fire out and get them to safety.

Equipment Catastrophe

What looks like a routine task goes horribly wrong. Now what are you going to do?

Good problem solving skills and resourcefulness will see you through this challenge. The best preparation will be to make sure you know your standard firefighting gear inside out – and be ready for anything.

Transfer Torment

Put your crew through its paces in this test of basic skills.

The scenario is all about getting water to where you really need it – but there'll be plenty of obstacles along the way to

putting out this fire. Extra credits will be awarded for initiative and teamwork.

Fireground Procedures

How well do you know your way around a fireground? There's more to it than just putting the wet stuff on the hot stuff!

This event is a little different. It will run over the whole Championships and will keep you on your toes throughout the competition. It's made up of a number of individual tasks which, when combined, will thoroughly test your fireground, communications, logistics and community safety skills – and you won't know who's won until right at the end.

Best of the Best: Team Sprint Challenge

A mad dash to the finish line – winner takes all in this test of speed, strength, and smarts.

Here you'll need to combine crew teamwork, speed and lateral thinking to navigate your crew safely through the course. You must finish each station before moving to the next test of skill, or penalties will be applied.

Senior events

Remote Fire Combination Experience

Expect the unexpected ... this event sets new standards in firefighting competition.

The Fire Danger Rating has hit Extreme and you'll face multiple competing priorities while responding to this scenario. Your ability to size up the situation and allocate your resources appropriately under pressure will win the day.

Emergency Response

You'll have to be good just to reach this event ... but will you be able to face what you'll find?

We can't tell you too much about this event – it's all about your ability to deal with the unexpected. What we can tell you is that you'll need navigation skills and that safe practices will be a key judging criteria.

Project Mayhem

This scenario is so extreme we hope it never happens for real!

Watch out, the organisers of this event will be doing their best to create confusion and debate in your team. Stay calm and stay focused on the task no matter what distractions they throw at you – the whole team must cross the finish line to complete the challenge.

Construction site fire

A new twist on an old favourite gets this event "off the ground".

Building fires present all kinds of hazards for firefighters – there's dangerous goods, risk of building collapse, electrical hazards and many

others. Using the right techniques and equipment will be crucial in this challenge, so brush up on your SOPs.

Junior events

Find Them and Fix Them

Think you know how to read a map?

Let's find out – but hurry, someone's injured out there and desperately needs your help!

ALPHA Protocol Challenge

Failure is not an option.

You must work quickly and maintain secrecy to achieve your objective in this scenario, national security is at stake! There's only one way to win – work together and trust your team mates.

Head to Head

An all-out, head to head challenge

Are you ready to take on the competition?

How are teams selected for the State Championships?

Each Region selects three Junior teams (12-16 years) and three Senior teams (over 16 years) to represent them at the State Championships. Each region has its own qualifying process, however

it often involves attendance at a Regional Exercise in the year leading up to the Championships. To find out more about the selection process in your Region, contact your District office.

How to prepare

The best preparation for the State Championships or the qualifying competitions is to practice basic skills and work on communication as a team in as many different scenarios as you can. The events are designed to reflect as many facets of firefighting operations as possible, including some your particular brigade may not use – for example, a Fire Boat-based scenario. Adaptability, resourcefulness and teamwork are essential for rural firefighters, so our Champions will need to demonstrate those qualities.

Want to know more?

To find out more about the 2012 State Championships, talk to your District Office. You can also check for updates on MyRFS or the NSW RFS Intranet.

2010 State Champions



The Mulloon Team from Region South are the current NSW RFS State Champions.

They won the 2010 State Championships in Dubbo and also took out first place in the MVA (motor vehicle accident) event and the Fireground Procedure event. We asked them about their team and their experiences in 2010.

Where is Mulloon Brigade?

Mulloon Brigade area is between Bungendore and Braidwood, in the south east of NSW.

What is the average age of the team?

At the time of competition, the average age of the team was 26 and the members were all from Mulloon, with the exception of one person from a nearby brigade. The team qualified for

the Championships through the Region South Exercise where we came in at second place.

What training schedule did you use?

We started training intensively about six weeks before the Championships. Our training comprised of one theory and one practical session per week. The theory session typically incorporated a couple of key core skills and the practical session concentrated on how these practical skills were linked.

Most training exercises commenced with a combination of bowling and rolling skills, in addition to drafting and relay exercises. We also emphasised the importance of two-way communication as part of all our drills.

What advice would you give to other brigades wanting to compete in the State Championships?

At the State Championships we really enjoyed the scenario-based events, because they challenged us to use a number of core skills in complex situations.

The best preparation for any team thinking about qualifying is to concentrate on core skills in combination with scenario-based training exercises.

However, we are ready and willing to defend our title at Port Stephens in 2012!

LEFT: (L-R): Robbie Price, Chris Watson, Andrew Price, Cameron Urquhart. Front Row (L-R): Jenni Collins, Kathleen Harvey



Region East EXERCISE



Almost 300 volunteers from the NSW RFS once again descended on Appin's Cataract Scout Park, south of Sydney for the Region East Exercise 2011.

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said the training features typical incidents that the NSW RFS attends when protecting the community.

"Various types of fires, motor vehicle accident response, LPG safety, working at heights, electrical safety, fire investigation and search and rescue form part of the exercise."

Crews were put through their paces in a number of real-life scenarios in order to test their skills such as a motor vehicle accident, administering first aid, and a multi-storey building fire that required crews to access equipment using ropes alone.

A pumping exercise where crews were required to pump water up and over a cliff was conducted where firefighters could only use the equipment they had on their truck.

Representatives from NSW Police were also on hand to teach the finer art of evidence

gathering and search and rescue techniques.

Across the weekend volunteers were provided the opportunity to have their proficiency formally assessed, enabling them to develop their existing skills and qualifications.

And despite the early wet weather, the crew's enthusiasm could not be dampened and a great time was had by all involved.

"This exercise is important in demonstrating the diverse nature of our work and the many skills required to be an RFS volunteer," said Commissioner Fitzsimmons.

OPPOSITE AND THIS PAGE: Region East members engaged in real-life scenarios to test their skills. Photos by Ben Shepherd and Caroline Rembridge



Premier hands over new tanker

NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell travelled to Tamworth in October 2011 to officially hand over a new tanker to the Dungowan Brigade. The Cat 7 tanker has been fitted with new protection cab sprays that will greatly improve a crew's survival if overrun by fire, and an advanced grass fire suppression system that will allow the driver to remotely tackle grass fires from the safety of the cabin. The Premier took time to chat with the members and thanked them for their dedicated service.

ABOVE (L-R): Supt. Allyn Purkiss, Kevin Anderson MP, Premier Barry O'Farrell and Captain Bruce Drury. Photo by Barry Gehrig

Moolarben Coal Mine thinks big

When the Cudgegong Communications Unit approached Moolarben Coal Mine near Mudgee for a donation to help purchase new radios, they were in for a surprise.

Although the Unit had been doing other fundraising and hoped for a \$1,000 donation, the mine offered enough money to cover all five devices with a gift of \$10,000. It was a result beyond their wildest dreams!

Cudgegong FCC have now been able to purchase five digital handheld radios which are now in service, being carried by the Communication Unit's deputies ready to be brought into use during large operations. The money raised at fundraising barbecues has now been used to buy a new freezer at headquarters.

RIGHT: Moolarben Coal presents the \$10,000 cheque to members of the Cudgegong Brigade in November 2011 (L-R) Ross Davies (Cudgegong Communications President), Frank Fulham (Moolarben General Manager), David Price (Cudgegong Communications Secretary) and Donna Zanella (mine employee). Photo by Bruce Birchall



REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN VOLUNTEERS



ABOVE: Marsden Park Brigade members honour Don Deppeler who passed away in 2011. (L-R) Cumberland District Supt Richard Petch, Marsden Park Deputy Captain Wayne Clarke and Marsden Park Captain Dave Brown. Photo by Adam Hollingworth

The 11th Emergency Services Volunteers Memorial Service was held on Sunday 9 October 2011 to honour volunteers who have lost their lives in the course of their duties.

Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon. Michael Gallacher MLC said that the Memorial is one way we can all remember the members of the volunteer family who have died while protecting or assisting others.

It has been six years since the name of a NSW RFS volunteer has been added to the Memorial but sadly this year the name of Donald "Don" Deppeler, Senior Deputy Captain of Marsden Park Brigade was engraved.

Don died in January 2011 after suffering what appears to be a heart attack while driving the Brigade's Cat 1. He had been an active member of several brigades since 1994.

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said, "he was the quintessential volunteer that was always there to lend a hand no matter the task."



Open Day 2011



Many brigades used the day to introduce some great community engagement initiatives and improve their ability to share bush fire safety messages. They also increased community awareness of the role of the NSW RFS.

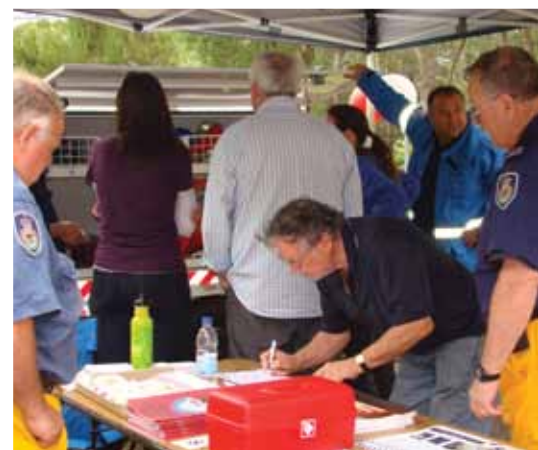


Photo competition a great development

The Community Engagement Team held a competition for members to submit photographs that best captured their brigade engaging with their community. We had a great response, with many great photographs submitted. Congratulations to these winners.

Winners



FIRST Kerry Hammell, Tweed Coast Brigade, Far North Coast Team



SECOND Gregg Miller, Byron Bay Brigade, Far North Coast Team



THIRD Mike Rushby, Wardell Brigade, Far North Coast Team



HIGHLY COMMENDED Brett Atkins, Menangle Park Brigade, Macarthur Zone

The NSW RFS state-wide 2011 Open Day was held in September. We opened our doors to the public so they could meet our volunteers and find out more about what we do.

By Melissa Baker, Community Engagement

Over 350 brigades from four regions across the State put out the welcome mat and gave equipment demonstrations and station tours. Some even used the time to engage with their communities and raise more funds.

The unfavourable weather did not dampen the enthusiasm of the community. This year's Open Day was one of our most successful and continues to build in popularity every year.

Many brigades used the day to introduce some great community engagement initiatives and improve their ability to share bush fire safety messages. They also increased community awareness of the role of the NSW RFS.

Some highlights of the 2011 Open Day included:

- Buxton Brigade, in partnership with Buxton Public School organised a very successful artwork project with students.
- Hilltop Brigade combined a garage sale at their station with the Open Day. The garage sale raised money as well as recruiting eight new members.
- Cottage Point Brigade utilised Open Day to promote the development of the Community Fire Units within Cottage Point (a small isolated village). As a result they were successful in signing up 17 new resident recruits.
- Byron Bay Brigade had another hugely successful Open Day with several hundred attending. Ice blocks were a very popular attraction for the children as well as getting to explore a real fire truck.
- Charmhaven Brigade held a combined inter-agency Open

Day, with Fire & Rescue NSW (FRNSW), St John Ambulance, SES, Volunteer Rescue Association, as well as Wyong Communications Brigade. There were vehicle fire demonstrations with FRNSW facilitating fat fire demonstrations. There was face painting for children and a cake stall run by the children of brigade members.

- Collector Brigade had a great Open Day, despite unusually cold weather they had a good turnout including one family who travelled from Canberra to visit.
- The Killcare-Wagstaffe Brigade put on a great display during the Open Day on the Hardy's Bay waterfront. They talked to the locals and gave property preparation advice with equipment demonstrations and displays. They also pulled out a few secret recipes for chutneys, jams and spreads to raise funds for the brigade.

OPPOSITE PAGE, CLOCKWISE: Murrumbateman Brigade let the kids try on the uniform for size. Photo by Andrew Taylor Killcare-Wagstaffe Brigade show the kids the fire hose. Photos by Terry Wilson and Fiona Lambell Charmhaven Kids Cake Stall raising funds for the brigade.

Cottage Point Brigade had a recruiting bonanza with 17 new members.

Heathcote Brigade putting our logo on some small faces. Photo by Sharon Campbell

Collector Brigade demonstrating their firefighting skills. Photo by Jeannette Sheridan Hilltop Brigade raised funds by holding a garage sale with treasure galore. Photo by Melissa Baker

Killcare/Wagstaffe Brigade put on a great demonstration by the water at Hardys Bay. Photo by Terry Wilson and Fiona Lambell

A backyard blitz

FOR ONE OF OUR OWN



By Inspector Justin Back, Community Safety Officer, Cumberland Zone

Katherine Green was diagnosed with a brain tumour and over the past year has been undergoing extensive medical treatment requiring constant care and support. Her husband, Troy Green has been a member of the NSW RFS for over 10 years, and he is currently a member of the Orchard Hills Brigade. He is one of those members that every District wants; he is actively involved in almost everything that goes on in a District from helping out at the Fire Control Centre, training, community safety and either on the radios or in a truck when a job is on.

Sudden illness

Katherine had been experiencing difficulty in talking, remembering things and with movement on her left side. After a range of tests and scans, a brain tumour was identified and within two weeks, she had commenced both radiation and chemotherapy to slow the spread of the tumour.

The question of surgery was raised but unfortunately this was not an option due to the way the tumour had spread. With Katherine losing most of her ability to use her left arm, to walk, to speak and move she was confined to a wheelchair and moved into hospital for treatment. It was a very emotional time for the couple, their family and friends.

A place to call home

Katherine is 26 and extremely well-liked by her friends and work colleagues. She and Troy married in June 2010 after being together for a number of years. They immediately began planning their new married life together starting with the construction of a new home. After hours of debate over home and land packages, colours, finishes and designs, they finally decided on a block of land in Claremont Meadows near Penrith.

Just as the house was nearing lock-up stage, Katherine's illness was diagnosed. With all the focus on Katherine's health, the finalisation of the house was just one more stress. Wisdom Homes managed the process with compassion and when the keys were handed over in August, Katherine was unable to see the home completed, so they sent a large bunch of flowers to her in hospital.

Lending a hand

With the house construction finished, Katherine still in hospital and undergoing treatment, Troy had very little opportunity to consider the landscaping and the actual move. This is when local brigades stepped in. Around 50 members from Plumpton, Llandilo, Orchard Hills and Wallacia Brigades joined up with the local Salvation Army to help Katherine and Troy call their new house a home.

A weekend in August 2011 was named as the date to give the house a backyard blitz. The plan was to landscape and lay turf around the house, erect fencing and move their furniture in.

With just a phone call our local brigade members were able to arrange turf, top soil and gravel, all generously donated. Members brought a full range of practical skills to all the tasks and even installed wheelchair access to the home for Katherine. It was a great illustration of the support of the local community towards both the local NSW RFS and its members during times of need.

The days leading up to the event were wet and more heavy rain was expected on the Saturday and it was uncertain how many people would actually turn up for the working bee.

To our great relief, the Salvation Army arrived first with their catering truck and other

Crew members from the NSW RFS and the Salvation Army completed a rescue of a different kind when they came to the aid of one of our long-serving volunteers in August 2011. Community-minded members from both organisations got together to transform the backyard of Troy and Katherine Green who are doing it tough.

ABOVE (L-R): Graham Chapman, Troy and Katherine Green with Panthers NRL coach, Ivan Cleary at the fundraising night. Photo by Luke Fowler



INSET (BEFORE): With the house finished and Katherine still in hospital, Troy had very little opportunity to consider the landscaping. **AFTER:** Long days and an enormous effort by everyone transformed the backyard for Troy and Katherine. Photos by Justin Back

equipment. They must have a good connection to the big man upstairs, because the rain stopped and the clouds disappeared giving us a very nice day.

We had a couple of hiccups, but none as disheartening as the moment when we went to dig the first hole for a retaining wall. We immediately heard and smelt gas gushing from under the ground. It seems that plans showing where the gas pipes are supposed to be aren't always right.

Luckily we had NSW RFS appliances on site and when Fire & Rescue NSW arrived they were able to seal off the gas leak quickly and then the gas company arrived to repair the damage. There were plenty of scones so the crews were rewarded with morning tea. It works out well when there is a good relationship between local crews.

Overall the weekend went extremely well, there were long days and an enormous amount of effort was put in, but the brigades were able to achieve everything that we set out to do. A huge thank you must go to all the NSW RFS members who helped out, the Salvation Army for the catering and manpower, Kennards for donating equipment, Bunnings Warehouse at South Penrith, Gretch's Turf Supplies at Windsor and Australian Native Landscapes at Seven Hills.

Fundraising night highlights

Knowing that this illness was going to have a huge impact on their finances, a charity night for Troy and Katherine was held in November 2011. With the generosity of Penrith Panthers, a function room was provided and around 150 people came along for a three-course meal.

We had Ivan Cleary, the new Penrith Panthers Coach, as a guest speaker, Seattle Sound and Rockboxx playing throughout the night, and an auction of a range of items to raise money for Katherine's ongoing care.

The auction was very popular with items such as: a day with Penrith Panthers at a coaching session, Breakfast with the Triple M Grill Team, Firefighter version of Monopoly, a 10-kilo block of chocolate, and a 2010 Panthers signed football jersey. Raffles were also held through the night and around \$18,000 was raised.

I know that Katherine and her family were very overwhelmed with the whole affair and how much people were prepared to give. Katherine was in very good spirits with a grin on her face the whole night, and all those that came along were very pleased to see that she

and her family were having a great night.

A DVD of the backyard blitz was put together by Leigh Zaghet, a very close friend of Troy and Katherine, and it was shown throughout dinner. The DVD gave everyone, including Katherine and her family, the chance to see what went on at the house over the weekend in August. By the end of the screening there wasn't a dry eye in the room.

It was an opportunity for everyone to catch up with Troy and Katherine and more importantly to provide them with a night out with friends and family. It is spoken about often, but it is events such as these, where it shows that when you are a member of the NSW RFS, you are also a member of a much larger family.

Training local residents boosts recruitment



The lessons of history and the methods of Roman battle are the inspiration behind a whole-of-community approach to fire protection at the Kenthurst Brigade.

Kenthurst Brigade is enjoying the benefits of training local residents to safely defend their own properties with the subsequent recruitment of many of those residents into the Service.

Following the 2009 Black Saturday bush fires in Victoria, the Kenthurst Brigade reviewed their area's defensive strategy and realised they needed a whole-of-community approach to fire protection.

"Through training and strong community support and cooperation, residents are now assisting each other in preparation and hazard reduction on neighbouring properties," said Kenthurst Brigade, Community

Engagement Coordinator, Deputy Captain Bill Duncan.

The semi-rural area in Sydney's North-West now has hundreds of well-prepared landowners and 15 new Bush Firefighter (BF)-trained recruits with more waiting to be trained.

Lessons from history

To develop a workable resident protection program Deputy Captain Bill Duncan turned to history and studied ancient Rome's successful border defence of its then extensive empire.

For nearly 1,000 years, Roman legions were thinly dispersed along the margins of the Roman empire's provinces

in small garrison forts, each containing just one or two century-sized units.

Alone, they were no match for the hordes of barbarians launching raids, but Roman centurions befriended and recruited neighbouring farmers and townspeople to build a significant defensive organisation.

These citizen-soldiers warned of the enemy's approach, delayed the barbarians' advance (by effectively defending their own properties and communities) to buy time for the legions to use their decisive power for victory.

Effectively recruiting the locals was the key and making them indispensable allies.

Everybody needs good neighbours

Where the Romans operated in provinces, Kenthurst Brigade works in precincts, working with residents in neighbouring streets each comprising one to two hundred properties.

Since residents often already know each other, they have been happy to work together on fire protection projects. By arranging fire protection training in these neighbourhood precinct groups, cooperative relationships have been formed.

Precincts were targeted with newspaper advertising, letter box leaflets and electronic street signs. On average, about 15 percent of each targeted precinct initially responded positively to the offer of fire protection training. More have followed.

Residents-in-training

About 20 residents attend each course to learn fire behaviour and firefighting principles before going out into the field for practical exercises.

Residents wear appropriate clothing and are issued with smoke goggles and inducted into the importance of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Practical training exercises deal with fire exposure, safe building materials, use of static water sources (including dams, ponds, pools and tanks), preparation of an Asset Protection Zone (APZ) and protection of fences, pets, stock, out buildings and other equipment.

They learn about preparing main residential and farm buildings for ember attack (including on-roof sprinkler systems and in-roof access with appropriate equipment).

Residents learn cooperation to minimise fire risk to their properties through regular clearance of deadfall, regular slashing and mowing of the APZ and practice correct construction and execution of deadfall pile burns (including blacking out).

"Since ember attack is the most likely fire experience, resident trainees practice dealing with spot fires using sand, backpack sprays, wet blankets and towels.

"One of the most popular segments of the program

is the maintenance and use of portable firefighter pumps drawing water from farm dams or household swimming pools." Bill Duncan said.

The brigade arranges for local pump/hose suppliers to demonstrate their equipment (and extend those residents attending the course some attractive discounts).

Most course participants now have their own firefighting pumps and many are actively cooperating with neighbours in mutual protection arrangements.

The course is particularly welcoming to families and the elderly to ensure that all members of a household are competent and confident in their respective roles in a fire and know how to use appropriate equipment.

Connecting to the community

At the end of each course, participants return to the brigade station for a debrief, presentation of an Associate Member (of the brigade) certificate and a sausage sizzle.

"They now closely identify with the NSW RFS team and embrace Kenthurst as their brigade. Residents can get to know members of the brigade, arrange for a property inspection follow up, enquire about NSW RFS membership or get assistance with property protection strategies in their neighbourhood," Captain Jeremy Clegg said.

This training approach has been so successful that Kenthurst Brigade regularly hosts representatives of other brigades to observe and duplicate the concept in their own areas.

A short video can be viewed on the official NSW RFS YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/user/NSWRFS. Search for Kenthurst Rural Fire Brigade's Training Programme.

For more information about the program contact Kenthurst Brigade Deputy Captain Bill Duncan i.mentor@me.com.

OPPOSITE PAGE : Scenes from a Community Safety Workshop held in Kenthurst in August 2011. **TOP RIGHT:** A resident learns about preparing their property against fire. **LOWER RIGHT:** Demonstration of a portable water pump was very popular. Photos by Damien Ford

"They now closely identify with the NSW RFS team and embrace Kenthurst as their brigade. Residents can get to know members of the brigade, arrange for a property inspection follow up, enquire about NSW RFS membership or get assistance with property protection strategies in their neighbourhood."

Captain Jeremy Clegg



New State Protocol Officers appointed



A new State Protocol Officer and two new Deputy State Protocol Officers have been appointed. The State Protocol Officer (SPO) is part of the public face of the NSW RFS by attending ceremonial events and functions and coordinating protocols across other agencies.

Since the inception of the office, the NSW RFS has had three Protocol Officers all contributing to the standing and reputation of the NSW RFS in their own way.

The SPO is an honorary position and office holders are appointed for a period of three years. At the end of each three-year period or in the case of an earlier retirement, an expression of interest is issued.

The position works very closely with the chaplains of the NSW RFS, particularly the Senior Chaplains and liaises with the Counselling and Support Unit Coordinator, Paul Scott, regularly.

Of the three key positions, the SPO and the two DSPOs, two of the three officers are volunteers.

The newly-appointed SPO is Bill Duncan. Bill is a member, Deputy Captain and Vice President of Kenthurst Brigade with a background in the military, senior management

experience with a range of companies and community-based initiatives. Though retired, he remains active through his work with Marine Rescue, running his privately-funded nautical scholarship program for young Australians and mentoring executives and CEOs – apart from his NSW RFS involvement.

The two DSPOs are Inspector Chris Palmer and Mark Unwin. Chris was associated with the Protocol Team back in 1994 when it was first formed. He is a District Officer for the Shoalhaven and has undertaken a number of other roles including Acting Zone Manager Lower North Coast Zone. Chris has an army background including being a Battalion Training Sergeant.

Mark Unwin is a member of Kellyville Brigade. He emigrated to Australia from the UK where he was in the Royal Navy. Mark continued his connection with the Navy through his work as an Officer with the Sea Cadet Corps for many years. He is a facilities manager with a major company and brings a different perspective to the role.

With the State Protocol Team and the NSW RFS Pipes and Drums they form the NSW RFS's public face at ceremonial events and functions.

State Protocol Team to recruit in Regional areas

The State Protocol Team is recruiting new members to establish a squad of about a dozen members in each of the State's four regions.

"I am very keen to include more members from regional NSW in the team," said Bill Duncan, "and over the next few months I will be travelling around NSW to meet interested volunteers."

Protocol Team tasks include assisting Regional and District staff with Service recognition medal ceremonies, facilities openings, tanker handovers, civic functions as well as major NSW RFS commitments such as the State Championships and Memorial Day. The Protocol team is also likely to have a role in the World Firefighter Games in October 2012.

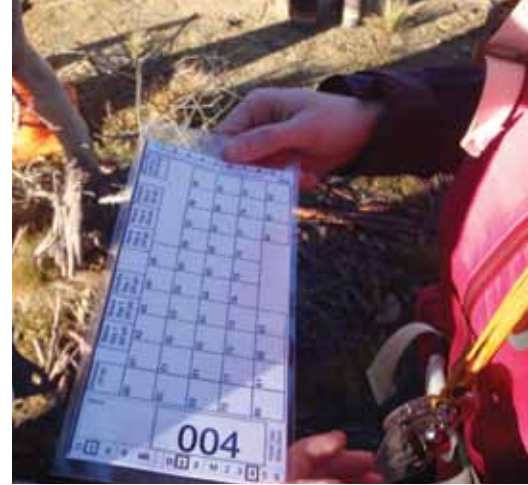
"Although Protocol Team members must obviously be exemplary in character, turnout and drill – to proudly represent the NSW RFS on public occasions – it is not mandatory that applicants should have a military background," he said.

"Just as I remain an active member of Kenthurst Brigade, Protocol Team members may also continue to serve in their respective local brigades."

Enquiries or expressions of interest can be addressed to state.protocol@rfs.nsw.gov.au

TOP LEFT: The newly-appointed State Protocol Officer Bill Duncan from the Kenthurst Brigade. Photo by Damien Ford. TOP RIGHT: One of the new Deputy State Protocol Officers, Mark Unwin from Kellyville Brigade. Photo by Brendan Doyle. State Protocol Officer Chris Palmer. BELOW: NSW RFS State Protocol Officers in action at the 2010 State Championships. Photo by Anthony Clark





Rookies test their skills in the field

By M'Shenda Turner, Warringah-Pittwater Headquarters Brigade

Destination: Mt Werong, three hours south west of Sydney. Overnight July temperatures average at or below zero. Unfamiliar and rough National Park terrain.

So why did almost 100 teams of Emergency Service personnel converge on this one spot on the first weekend of July 2011? Answer: to battle it out for the NSW Emergency Services Wilderness Navigation Shield (NavShield).

NavShield is a well-organised, annual event run by the Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue Squad. It is a one day or overnight event designed to test the participants' bush and compass navigation skills.

It is a foot race through bush terrain to pre-marked checkpoints over an area from 80 to 100sq km. Teams are able to pick and choose their checkpoints depending on their skills, fitness and time limits.

This year the NSW RFS had representatives from Warringah-Pittwater Headquarters, Duffys Forest, Valley Heights, Ebenezer, Kangaroo Valley and Patonga Brigades.

It provides an excellent opportunity for brigades to test their map reading and navigation skills in unfamiliar

areas. It is also a great team building and bonding event.

From this first-timer's perspective, it offered a chance to use our brigade training in a real-life situation. I can assure you, nothing makes you concentrate more, on the learned skills you have brought with you as a firefighter, than the thought of getting lost and having to get the SES to come in and rescue you.

While my rookie team had a slightly rookie-type start, we soon pulled together and started to use our core skills that we had learned at the station.

We used skills such as looking at and using the surrounding landscape, understanding magnetic to grid factors, effectively using your bearings and some good old-fashioned team work.

In fact, the team work required to successfully navigate to checkpoints (and more importantly at the end of day back to base camp) will remain an outstanding legacy of the weekend.

There is no doubt that we learned to listen to each other, communicate effectively and work as one to achieve our goals and this will improve our work both in training situations and on the fireground.

Participating in Navshield challenged our map skills, fitness and team skills. It also offered a great camping experience with some great friends.

You can do worse than sitting around a camp fire with friends, re-living the tall tales of the day's activities. This first-timer will be back. Next time with a warmer sleeping bag!

TOP LEFT: Rookies fly the flag after testing their skills in the field. Each checkpoint has a unique stamp. Each team gets a card to record which checkpoints they make. Not lost, I promise!
LOWER RIGHT: Jennie Cramp and Al Choy showing them how it's done after finding a checkpoint at the bottom of a dried out river bed... under a rock... behind a log. Photos courtesy of James Andrews and M'Shenda Turner

800 young people

complete Secondary School Cadet Program

The innovative NSW RFS Secondary Schools Cadet Program continues to go from strength to strength with more than 800 students participating in 2011.

The innovative NSW RFS Secondary Schools Cadet Program continues to go from strength to strength with around 800 students participating in 2011.

Since its inception in 2005, almost 4,000 young people from across NSW have successfully graduated from the Program. In 2011 the Program was offered in 45 schools in 52 Programs across NSW.

James Petty from Gundagai High School was named NSW RFS Cadet of the Year in May 2011 and presented with his award in a special ceremony at NSW Parliament House by Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Hon. Michael Gallacher MLC.

"I have the strongest admiration and appreciation for these young cadets and the commitment they have shown to their training," Minister Gallacher said.

Program numbers are up

In 2011 more Secondary Cadet Programs were offered than ever before. Davidson High School (Warringah/Pittwater), Northholm Grammar (Hornsby/ Ku-ring-gai), Clarence Valley Anglican School (Clarence Valley) and Muswellbrook High School (Hunter Valley) all offered the Program for the first time. At Muswellbrook High School 30 students from Years 9 and 10 successfully completed the Program over two terms.

In the Chifley/Lithgow District the Program has expanded from one school to five since it began in 2006. Thirty five students from Bathurst High, Kelso High, St Joseph's School, The La Salle Academy and The Scots School graduated in July 2011. The Shoalhaven District once again offered one of the biggest cadet programs in the State with around 90 students graduating.

In Armidale the local NSW RFS members took a new approach. All Year 11 boarders at the Armidale High School were offered the chance to become fully fledged brigade members. Eighteen took up the opportunity in the third semester and 16 of those are now Bush Firefighter qualified. The hope is that they will remain as volunteers after they leave school and return to their local brigades.

Awards for effort

South West Cadets from Young received double honours in 2011. Not only did they win the Cadet title at the 2010 State Championships, they were also nominated for a community service award by the local council. Cadets across many brigades and districts came together for regular training to achieve this result.



Cadets in Muswellbrook learning the trade. Photo by Steve Brown, Hunter Valley

CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT: NSW RFS cadets at the National Fire Cadet Championships. Photo by Shane Geerin. The Tumut Team was led by Cadet Captain Phillip Brunsdon. Photo by Amanda Scott. Minister Gallacher and James Petty, NSW RFS Cadet of the Year. Photo by Narelle Koteff



“I have the strongest admiration and appreciation for these young cadets and the commitment they have shown to their training.”

The Hon. Minister for Police and Emergency Services, Michael Gallacher



Cadets converge for combined training

Riverina Highlands and the South West Slopes Zones continued the combined training events and in June 2011 held a friendly competition for the two Districts. Eight teams participated in the event, with each team consisting of six or seven members. Participants included Junior Members from brigades, participants in the Secondary School Cadet Program as well as the 2010 State Champions from Young.

The training paid off because the South West Cadets also

became equal winners at the 2011 Australian National Fire Cadets Championships held in October 2011.

Over 150 fire cadets from across Australia converged on Myuna Bay in the Lake Macquarie region for the Championships. A record 30 teams from across NSW, Queensland, Victoria, Western Australia and New Zealand competed in the four-day event. It was a mix of NSW RFS Juniors and NSW RFS Cadets and participants from the Program who represented the NSW RFS. The two teams who came in as equal winners were Oakville Brigade and

South West Cadets – both from the NSW RFS!

The team from Gundagai led by Cadet Captain James Petty, NSW RFS Cadet of the Year, performed exceptionally well gaining a silver medal in the Two Tanker event and finished sixth overall.

The Tumut Team was led by Cadet Captain Phillip Brunsdon who overcame his own personal challenge to bring home a bronze medal in the Light Tanker and Handtool event with the Tumut Team finishing twelfth overall. Phillip suffers from cerebral palsy and impressed the judges with his

knowledge and crew leadership ability particularly in the team challenge event where the team needs to think laterally and solve multiple tasks.

Developing firefighting and other skills in the youth of NSW remains an important goal for the Service. Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said: “The NSW RFS is committed to fostering and developing youth, to ensure that the spirit of volunteering is perpetuated.”

ABOVE: Cadets took part in some training exercises and even had some fun along the way. Photos by Shane Geerin

Young Members Forum builds the leaders of tomorrow

Story by Amanda Scott, Youth Development Officer and photos by Jacqueline Murphy



In 2011 the NSW RFS hosted the first ever NSW RFS Young Members Forum with 60 young members aged between 18 and 25 coming from every region to share their ideas.

The forum was held in April 2011 in Bathurst a few days ahead of the inaugural NSW RFS Leadership Forum – a forum for young members of the Service.

The Young Members Group was established in October 2010 and one of the tasks they set themselves for their first year of operation was to hold a forum to hear directly from other young members. The Young Members Group promotes and advises on issues affecting young members and assists in developing strategies to enhance the experience of young members in the NSW RFS.

The Group also advises on recruitment and retention strategies to raise the profile of young members within the NSW RFS and helps to develop communication strategies to better reach young members.

Chair of the Young Members Group, Firefighter Elise Tasker, said the forum was a fantastic opportunity to bring young volunteers from all over the State together to share their ideas about the NSW RFS.

“It was really good to see all regions represented, it brought a lot of young people together that otherwise would not have had the opportunity to meet.”

Young people, new ideas

The idea behind the Young Members Forum was to better understand the issues which affect young members within the organisation. The outcomes of the Forum will be used to form future work plans.

The Forum itself got down to business and members arrived at lunch time on the first day where they were welcomed by the Rural Fire Service Association and given a rundown of the two days ahead.

After the official welcome, the Group wasted no time

kicking off with the initial workshop which would shape the conversation for the remainder of the Forum.

In this workshop members were asked to raise questions on what they thought were the most important issues for young members within the organisation. The highest scored questions were:

How is the NSW RFS training/ equipping young members to take on leadership roles within the brigade/ organisation?

How do we make the NSW RFS more interesting for young members to encourage and recruit them?



The entire Forum got together for a photo shoot on the last day.

How do we have more effective communication between the younger and older generations to increase productivity, cooperation and team-work within the organisation?

After the workshop, the group were joined by Dominic Thurbon the Co-Founder and Managing Director of the Centre for Skills Development. Dominic proved to be one of the highlights of the forum, talking about organisations engaging Generation Y – making sense of generational change and workforce trends.

The afternoon session included a team-building activity focusing on communication and a workshop aimed at developing answers and solutions to the three key questions that were raised.

Everyone took a short break before regrouping for dinner and some fantastic rounds of trivia, dancing and even a singing contest to top off the night.

Working as a team

The next day started with a workshop incorporating SMS polling (using mobile phone text messages) which allowed members to vote for their favourite answers to questions while responses were graphed in real time.

Participants then took part in an activity where the entire group had to work together to resolve a team challenge placed upon them by the Forum's facilitators.

For the final workshop, Kristine Wendtman, Deputy Manager, State Championships Organising Committee, talked about the State Championships, what young members think of them, and how they can be better marketed to young people and how other local, regional and national competitions work.

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons gave the closing address thanking members for their input and reinforced

the importance of recruiting and retaining young volunteers within the Service.

"By engaging young people through events such as these, we can help to develop community-minded and resourceful individuals," the Commissioner said.

Positive forum, positive future

The Forum received very positive feedback from participants who said it was an enjoyable and worthwhile event. Many expressed their appreciation and satisfaction in being able to be part of a forum which fostered genuine youth participation and created an avenue to provide advice and offer suggestions to the NSW RFS.

The forum received plenty of local media interest with Young Members Group Chair, Elise Tasker and Deputy Chair, Jason Conn giving several media interviews further raising the profile of young members in the Service.

"We were amazed at the levels of enthusiasm of the members who attended the forum. While we may not have all the answers to all the issues, we are sure that by continuing the conversation we can only make a difference," said Jason Conn.

Ideas generated from the forum will be used to better shape future efforts to recruit and engage young members and ensure that they feel connected and important to the work of the Service.

Following on from the forum, Young Members Group representatives Elise Tasker and Jason Conn presented the outcomes of the forum at the NSW RFS Leadership Forum where they received great support and encouragement from senior leaders of the Service.



Activities included a blind fold exercise to develop trust.



Local media showed great interest in the Forum.



Is the public getting the **Prepare. Act. Survive.** message?

A public media campaign continues to successfully build awareness of fire danger ratings, alert levels and preventative action. Anthony Clark, Group Manager Corporate Communications, evaluates the 2009/10 campaign.

Following the 2009 Victorian bush fires, fire agencies across Australia made significant changes to Fire Danger Ratings and the way information is delivered to communities both before and during fires.

A new national framework was introduced including the Prepare. Act. Survive. public awareness campaign as well as the development of new Bush Fire Danger Ratings, Alert Levels and Bush Fire Survival Plans.

The changes were designed to provide the community with clearer and more concise

information, to allow them to make informed decisions about their actions during bush fire emergencies.

The NSW Prepare. Act. Survive. campaign, developed by the NSW RFS and jointly-badged with Fire and Rescue NSW, was designed to drive behavioural change relating to bush fires and to increase the public's understanding of bush fires and the new Fire Danger Ratings and Alert Levels in NSW.

The advertising campaign was developed by The Campaign

Palace in consultation with the NSW RFS and ran from the beginning of the statutory Bush Fire Danger Period in NSW on 1 October 2009 until the end of March 2010.

The campaign consisted of strong media coverage with television providing the basis for the campaign, supported by other media channels including radio, print media, outdoor billboards and online channels including social media.

Each component of the campaign directed people to the NSW RFS website to obtain more information

and encouraged downloads of the Bush Fire Survival Plan.

In addition to the significant media coverage that the Service receives during the Bush Fire Danger Period, the campaign was strongly supported by NSW RFS members as well as staff from Fire and Rescue NSW working with their local communities.

The campaign was designed to target people living in, close to, or travelling through bush fire prone areas, and encouraged them to take appropriate action to properly prepare their homes, properties



and themselves for bush fires before they threaten.

What happened?

The campaign consisted of:

1. Print: A series of print advertisements appearing in local and metropolitan newspapers across NSW. Print media was used to explain the new Fire Danger Ratings in a visual way as well as explain the new Alert Levels, the functionality of Neighbourhood Safer Places and the importance of having a plan. Additionally, the Prepare. Act. Survive. advertisements appeared in 11 specialist newspapers to reflect indigenous and CALD (culturally and linguistically diverse) communities.
2. Outdoor campaign: A total of 110 billboards displayed the Prepare. Act. Survive. message throughout November, December and January 2009/10 – months where families are traditionally travelling around the State.
3. Television: This allowed for broad coverage explaining the key elements of Prepare. Act. Survive. Television also provided the opportunity to

visually explain Alert Levels and Fire Danger Ratings. A series of four television commercials featuring actor Peter Phelps were broadcast across the State with the themes: Prepare. Act. Survive. and the Bush Fire Survival Plan.

4. Radio: This also allowed for broad coverage, particularly in regional areas. Due to the nature of radio this medium was used to explain the warning sirens which may be broadcast during a bush fire emergency. The radio ads carried specific messages about needing to know the fire danger where you are living or visiting. The ads were also tailored to suit local conditions and were broadcast on 13 Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) radio stations in the relevant language.
5. Online advertising: This was used to channel people to the NSW RFS website to obtain more detailed information and to download a Bush Fire Survival Plan.

Are they getting the message?

An independent evaluation was carried out by Mediacom

Insight of the 2009/10 Prepare. Act. Survive. campaign which demonstrated measurable results. It showed that communication was successful in building awareness of Fire Danger ratings, Alert Levels and preventative action. Specifically:

- 57 percent of people recalled seeing the campaign unprompted
- When prompted with images from the campaign, 71 percent of people recalled it
- Recognition of the term Prepare. Act. Survive. had risen to 77 percent in March 2011, compared to 47 percent at the start of that year's campaign
- 30 percent of people consider the term "Catastrophic" the most appropriate name for the highest fire danger rating, compared to terms like "Extreme", "Code Red" or "Critical"
- 36 percent of respondents claim to have some form of plan for bush fires, up from 30 percent at the start of that year's campaign
- 53 percent of people claim to have identified a place to go during a bush fire

- Recognition of the term "Neighbourhood Safer Place" was up from 15 to 21 percent.

Mediacom Insight stated: "These results should be seen as particularly strong given the lack of serious bush fire threats over the 2010/11 summer period in NSW.

Because of this mild environment, the increases can generally be attributed to the advertising and communications activity rather than to heightened awareness based on news coverage and personal experience."

2011/12 Fire Season

The Prepare. Act. Survive. campaign was developed to have a three-year longevity and will run throughout the 2011/12 fire season.

This year the campaign is being complemented by a custom-made grass fire awareness campaign which was launched across regional NSW in September 2011. In keeping with the Prepare. Act. Survive. branding, the grass fire advertising campaign will feature in print, radio, television and outdoor media. The ads carry messages specific to grass fires.

NSW RFS LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT FORUM 2012

Process

Practice

People

Linking process to practice; people driving success



The 2012 LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT FORUM will be held from Friday 29 June until Sunday 1 July at Charles Sturt University Bathurst.

Topics covered include:

- ✓ People driven quality training
- ✓ Training innovations and inventions
- ✓ Leadership and training
- ✓ Continuous improvement in our training environment

The 2012 theme is “*Linking process to practice; people driving success*” and will focus on the members who work within the NSW RFS training system.

We invite you to visit the Learning and Development Forum Information page on MyRFS to receive regular updates or speak to your local Learning and Development Officer.

NOW OPEN!

Nominations to attend

Expressions of Interest to present at the forum

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION visit the Forum Information Page on either MyRFS or the Intranet, or contact Learning and Development, Headquarters on telephone 02 8741 5211 or via email ldforum@rfs.nsw.gov.au.



Photo competition winners: IT'S WHO WE ARE



Jerry Retford from Bucketty Brigade won the "It's who we are" *Bush Fire Bulletin/ Ausgrid* photo competition with his image of his fellow brigade members out on a foot patrol.

The winning photo was captured with an iPhone but Jerry plans to buy a professional SLR camera with the win and will be a force to be reckoned with in future competitions. Thanks to Ausgrid for their generous donation that made this competition possible.

LEFT: Superintendent Jayson McKellar, Lower Hunter Zone, presents Jerry with his \$1,000 Camera House voucher and a copy of the *Bulletin* that features Jerry's photo.



The winning photo: Bucketty Brigade members out on an early morning foot patrol after a day spent firefighting in the area.

THE BUSH FIRE BULLETIN WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU

ANNUAL PUBLISHING AUTUMN / WINTER / SPRING / SUMMER

The *Bush Fire Bulletin* is the official journal of the NSW RFS.

We always welcome stories and photos from members.

We are looking for dynamic, colourful,

engaging photos and stories that capture the life in the brigades.

It takes about three months to put together each *Bush Fire Bulletin*. So send in your articles in autumn for the winter edition, in spring for the summer edition.

Contact the editor on 02 8741 5480 or Email

Bush.Fire.Bulletin@
rfs.nsw.gov.au

WHAT IS A GOOD PHOTO?

Remember to send photos which are high quality, high resolution and that you have permission to use.

For photos of children under 16, permission

from parents or guardians is required.

If you have the photo from a local newspaper, please ask for their permission so we can acknowledge them correctly.

Photos that look best in print are 300dpi or about 1MB in size.

BUSH FIRE BULLETIN

SIGN UP TO RECEIVE **BUSH FIRE BULLETIN** DIRECT TO YOUR HOME OR UPDATE YOUR DETAILS



Cut out and mail to:

**Bush Fire Bulletin
NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE**

Reply Paid 67059 Locked Bag 17
Granville NSW 2142
(No stamp required)

or email your details to:

Bush.Fire.Bulletin@rfs.nsw.gov.au

Name:
(Please include any post-nominals)

Address:

Postcode: Phone: Home and/or mobile:

Email address:

Update

New Subscription

NSW RFS Member



www.rfs.nsw.gov.au



NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

15 Carter Street
Lidcombe NSW 2141

Locked Bag 17
Granville NSW 2142

Tel: 02 8741 5555
Fax: 02 8741 5550

Email: Bush.Fire.Bulletin@rfs.nsw.gov.au
Web: www.rfs.nsw.gov.au

ISSN: 1033-7598

Publisher NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE Produced Corporate Communications Editor Jacqueline Murphy Assistant Editor Phillip Byrne
Graphic Design & Art/Production Coordinator birdcreative Printed on Monza Gloss; FSC (CoC), ISO 14001, IPPC, ECF environmental accreditation
Cover Photo Hazard Reduction burn in Bingara, August 2011. Photo by Jason Wall