

BUSHFIRE BULLETIN



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FOREWORD

After starting the year in drought, we are finishing with widespread rain across most of the state, including recent flooding in the Central West.

This most welcome rain will likely mean a delayed start to the season. But it will only take a few hot days to significantly increase the risk, particularly in the state's north.

As 2005 draws to a close, the Service has never been in better shape in terms of equipment, training and preparedness. More importantly, despite the very severe fires of the last few seasons and the constant demands on their time, the spirit, courage and dedication of our volunteers remains undaunted.

2005 has continued our consolidation as a Service and we have made a number of improvements, including the delivery of more than 200 tankers to our brigades. It has also seen an increase in the number of our volunteers to a record 70,964, making the NSW Rural Fire Service by far the largest volunteer fire service in the world.

Throughout the year I have spent a great deal of time at brigade events, meeting and talking with people from all over including Dubbo, Walcha, Mildura, Legume, Glen Innes, Manildra and Wagga. At these events I am always impressed by the professionalism and the dedication of our brigades.

I am equally impressed by the support that comes from family and friends and how proud they are of the work our volunteers do. It is truly wonderful to meet volunteers who have more than 50 years service. And it is equally pleasing to meet our juniors, cadets and new members who are just starting out. It is also heartening to get positive feedback from brigades receiving new tankers or station facilities.

Everyone who is part of the Service gives so much of themselves in the interests of community safety. For that, you have the thanks of a grateful community and you have my profound gratitude. A job well done.

With the festive season just around the corner I would like to simply say, have a peaceful, safe and joyous Christmas.


 Phil Koperberg

See page 7 for a list of events attended by the Commissioner in 2005.



Front cover image: Fires in Helensburgh by Holy Cross Primary School students aged 8 to 10 years. This artwork was the result of the Kids Living with Fire program. See our story on page 17

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The views expressed in articles in the Bushfire Bulletin do not necessarily reflect the views of the policies of the NSW Rural Fire Service.



PINE PYRE IN TIMBER YARD

Crews from Bombala Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) and NSW Fire Brigades (NSWFB) were confronted with a fire that had engaged several rows of stacked pine logs in the storage yard of Willmott Timbers 1km south of Bombala township on 3 October 2005.

Extinguishing the blaze was not an option at this stage, so the focus was on asset protection and containment.

To achieve this, two pumpers from NSWFB and Bombala 1 directed their attack towards the burning stacks to prevent the spread of the fire and also cool the burning logs being relocated away from the blaze by loaders.

Additional crews from Mila and Craigie RFB were activated and assisted in the operation by hosing and foaming woodchips of one of the many large heaps.

Adding to the difficult situation, a 180 degree wind shift raised the real possibility of the fire spotting into other woodchip piles and sawdust as well as the processing mill nearby.

With the arrival of Bombala Council's bulk water carrier RFS crews concentrated on water transfer so the town brigade pumper could continue to pump from the water carrier without interruption.

With the threat of spread and further property loss minimised the Craigie and Milla crews stood down at 1930hrs, NSWFB returned to base at 2030hrs and relief crews for Bombala were in place by 2000hrs.

RFS tankers stood down at 2230hrs leaving staff from Willmott to continue to monitor the situation throughout the night.

A the height of the incident there were four RFS tankers, two NSWFB pumpers, one bulk water carrier, four loaders and staff from Willmott involved.

With the onset of summer it was pleasing to see the RFS and NSWFB working in such a coordinated manner with the single aim of protecting property and personnel.

For the author, it was a gratifying moment as I was working alongside my daughter who is a member of the NSWFB.

Story and photos supplied by Bombala Rural Fire Brigade Deputy Captain Colin Green.



Top: Thousands of dollars worth of pine logs were affected by the fire at Willmott's timber.

Above: Bombala, Craigie and Milla RFBs attended the pine log fire.



1 GENERAL NEWS



RFS and NSW Fire Brigades crews coordinated to contain the blaze which affected stacked pine logs.



COOPERATIVE FIREFIGHTING



Smoke from backburning is pictured drifting over the Tweed area. Photo by Tweed Daily News.



Thursday 6 October saw the RFS, NSW Fire Brigades and National Parks and Wildlife Service out in force trying to bring three fires under control.

The day started with two fires, one on Byrill Creek Rd, Byrill Creek about 15-20km southwest of Murwillumbah. The second fire was burning north of Fingal Head at Leticia Spit Rd near Kerosene Inlet on the Tweed River.

At 1430hrs the Byrill Creek fire had burnt out 80 ha, with a combined agency effort of 17 tankers and threatened property in a difficult to access, commune-style area.

At the same time the Fingal Head fire had eight tankers tasked to it, and had burnt out 32ha of a Crown land reserve.

Developing erratic weather conditions caused the Byrill Creek fire to burn out of control, growing to more than 107ha and requiring the deployment of 55 local and out of area firefighters. A helicopter was tasked to assist with property protection.

The Fingal Head fire had continued to burn throughout the day, growing to 40ha, and crews were deployed to conduct property protection to the south of the fire.

The third fire had developed on both sides of the Gwydir Highway, 15km west of Grafton. It had burnt out more than 200ha of private property, with 35 firefighters, and a water bombing helicopter deployed.

Backburning in conjunction with earthmoving machinery at the Byrill Creek fire started late on Thursday afternoon. Crews worked well into the night until the fire was classified as "being contained".

At the Fingal Head fire, crews backburned from existing trails under constant threat of spotover due to strong sea-breezes. Intense spotting activity on the southern control line required crews to fall back to control lines established at a similar fire at the same time last year.

Despite extreme conditions for several days after the initial ignition, the Byrill Creek Fire was contained by Saturday 8 October. Continued hard work in patrolling by crews from the Tweed and Northern Rivers Strike Team, saw this fire declared out on 11 October. A total of 123ha was burnt with two "temporary" dwellings lost.

The Fingal Head fire was contained by early evening on 8 October. Unfortunately crews were repeatedly called out to re-ignitions for several days after the fire was contained. This fire was classified as out on 11 October. Four separate fires burnt approximately 400ha during this event. These fires are subject to investigation.

By Matthew Schroder

RFSA DONATION TO TAMWORTH



The Rural Fire Service Association handed over goods from the State RFS fundraising drive to Tamworth Zone brigades during the RFS Statewide Open Day on 8 October. Shaking hands are RFS Tamworth Zone Manager Lyndon Wieland and RFS representative and Member of Kingswood Brigade Graham Brown. (L-R) Captain Bendemeer Brigade Phillip Dixon accepted a computer, Deputy Captain of Woolomin Brigade Chris Manuel accepted \$7000 funding for a water bore, fridge and station shelving, Secretary of Moore Creek Brigade Tracey Wilcox and Captain John Iuso accepted a computer, tables, chairs and white board.

ARSON DEVICE RESEARCH

Over the past six months, the RFS has worked closely with the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) to research the evidence that remains after an arson device has been used to light a bushfire.

The aim of the project was to determine the evidentiary traces that remain after a device has been used. By better understanding this evidence, fire investigators will be able to more accurately determine the type of device used, and provide information to police investigating possible arson activities.

The research is being undertaken through RFS Operational Research and Analysis Officer, Jen Dainer, the RFS Fire Investigation Unit and students in the UTS Forensic Science program.

Students in this program are required to undertake a research component to satisfy the requirements of their degree.

Industry partners are encouraged to submit projects for research by students. This is the first time the RFS has become involved in the program, by offering a project on Bushfire Arson Devices, which was undertaken by Honours student Chris Anderson.

RFS Fire Investigators were polled to determine the most commonly used devices, including those they had heard of, but not directly witnessed themselves.

In total, the properties of nine devices were tested, including how well they function, the amount of time delay provided, and the evidence they leave behind.

Some devices were constructed using materials commonly available from supermarkets, while others incorporate flammable liquids.

Devices were tested first on metal trays to observe their behaviour and traces in isolation. They were then tested in fuels at Bulli Tops, Wollongong, to determine their behaviour and traces in situ. An area approximately 2m x 2m was burned for each test.

Three repeats of each device were conducted, two without firefighting applied directly to the area of origin, and one with firefighting applied.

Soil samples were taken from the area of origin from the devices that used flammable liquids and analysed using Gas Chromatography-Mass Spectrometry (GCMS) to determine if traces of flammable liquids were detectable.

Future work is planned with UTS to determine the length of time traces are detectable after the device has been used, and whether or not brand differentiation can be achieved depending on the chemical signatures of materials used to construct the devices.

Thanks to Neale Ray, Garry Suters, Richard Cotterill, Brett Storey, Damian Eggleston and Wayne Reeve for their assistance throughout the entire project.

By Jen Dainer, RFS Operational Research and Analysis



Bottom: UTS student Chris Anderson and RFS Fire Investigator Neale Ray assess an arson device and the traces it leaves.



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PERFECTION OF CHRISTMAS LOVE

It was Christmas Eve a number of years ago I had just delivered a Christmas hamper to a house in Campbelltown. As the door opened I was confronted by five children being cared for by their nanna. I placed the hamper on the kitchen table, along with gifts for each of the children.

One could see the twinkle in the eyes of those beautiful little children, and the tearful appreciation of the nanna. I returned to my vehicle and about to leave when I noticed the 12-year-old child, from within the house, with present in hand, tapping on the window of my vehicle. I opened the door, and she said, "Please give my present to another little girl. The look on my nanna's face, and younger brothers, was my Christmas present."

THAT'S THE PERFECTION AND LOVE OF CHRISTMAS!

When you look at the details of Jesus' birth, many of the circumstances were far from perfect. Caesar was imposing taxes for his own interests; Herod violently protected his throne, motivated by fear, greed and insecurity. Joseph and Mary were not married, yet she was pregnant. Though Joseph was a man of faith and obedience to God, I am sure this situation created tremendous concern among the members of their families.

And now, days before giving birth, they find themselves on a journey to a tiny little town called Bethlehem, where there will be no adequate place for them to stay. The King of Kings was to be born, not in a major city, not in luxury and comfort, but in a stable in a seemingly insignificant town. Bethlehem was, as the song goes, a little town, far removed from the centres of influence and power in the world of its day. There was little to recommend Bethlehem for the birthplace of the Messiah. Yet it was God's choice.

In God's wisdom, Bethlehem was the perfect place for the Messiah to be born. It is a humble place, and God blesses those with humble beginnings.

Bethlehem was the home town of King David, who was far from perfect. Yet he was called a man after God's own heart. God is looking for something more than "perfection". That is the whole point of the Christmas story. God didn't come to us at Christmas because we are perfect and good and wonderful. He came to us because we needed him.

Have you ever tried to keep a perfect house when a baby is in residence? It doesn't work. When there is a baby in the house you have to forget about perfection and think about love. That's the message of Christmas. It's not about perfection, it's about love.

The basis for this tremendous burst of buying things and gift giving and parties and near hysteria is a quiet event that happened a long time ago. You can say that in all societies, and that many trappings of our Christmas are almost violently



RFS firefighters by a Year 4 student at Cringila Public School

pagan, but you come back to the central fact of the day. The birth of God on earth.

It's a startling idea that a virgin was selected by God to bear his Son as a way of showing his love and concern. It leaves you only three ways of accepting Christmas. One is cynically, as a time to make money or endorse the making of it. One is graciously, the appropriate attitude for non-Christians, who wish their fellow citizens all the joys their beliefs entitle them. And the third, of course, is reverently. If this is the anniversary of the appearance of the Lord of the universe as a helpless babe, it is a very important day.

The story has a magnificent appeal. Almost nobody has seen God, and almost nobody has any real idea of what he is like. But everyone has seen babies, and most people like them. If God wanted to be loved, if God wanted to be intimately a part of our life, he moved correctly, for the experience of birth and family is our most intimate and precious experience. So, if touched only once a year, the touching is still worth it. Maybe on some given Christmas, some final quiet morning, the touch will take.

I, as a chaplain need to take a better look at what happened at Bethlehem and the one who came there, and perhaps I'm not alone.

I was visiting a firefighter in the burns unit when a doctor standing beside the bed of a young woman beckoned me into the private room. The young woman had incurred very serious facial burns.

"Will my face and mouth always be like this?" the woman asks. "We have a long way to go," said the doctor. She looked at her husband in silence and I could see the couple talking to each other through their eyes.

Her young husband smiled and looks at his wife with a love so absolutely generous that it stunned the doctor and I to silence. The young husband then bent over to kiss her, firstly a donkey kiss, nose to nose, then a butterfly kiss, eye to

eye followed by an elephant kiss, touching ear to ear. Looking into her eyes this young husband then kissed his wife on the lips. Sitting beside the bed I could see how he twisted his lips to accommodate hers through the bandages.

THAT'S THE PERFECTION AND LOVE OF CHRISTMAS!

Once upon a time, the God who bent down and took hold of a handful of dust and shaped humanity and breathed life into it stooped down again, and this time it was Himself that He reshaped in order to kiss a disfigured earth with His grace and to breathe new hope into the life of the beloved. He showed us in that moment that it is not just the staggering height of God that displays His grandeur; it is how far he is willing to bend down that fully displays his glory.

Maybe this Christmas will "take" for someone.

Maybe you won't have a perfect Christmas. Perhaps it will be far better than that. I hope that you will see right to the heart of this sacred event; to the God who is looking not for perfection, but love.

Our prayer is that your Christmas Past will bring wonderful memories, your Christmas Present be filled with happiness, and your Christmas Future will satisfy all your hopes and that He will continue to make a difference in each of us so that we will go on making a difference into 2006 and beyond.

An enjoyable and safe festive season to all, and to those who share the Christian faith we wish you a happy and Holy Christmas.

RFS Senior Chaplain Ron Anderson AFSM

VISITS FROM THE COMMISSIONER IN 2005

Commissioner Phil Koperberg and RFS Assistant Commissioners have made many visits to brigade stations, Fire Control Centres and Councils over the past few months.

These visits are opportunities to thank RFS volunteers for their commitment, in particular for the presentation of Long Service Awards.

Many new tankers and stations have also been opened during these events. The following events were attended by the Commissioner except where an Assistant Commissioner (A/C) is indicated.

- 12/08/05 Shoalhaven District Medals ,Nowra
- 13/08/05 Far South Team National Medals & Awards, Moruya
- 20/08/05 Sanctuary Point Open Day, Shoalhaven
- 27/08/05 Brisbane Waters Station Opening
- 27/08/05 Kilcare Brigade 50th Anniversary
- 02/09/05 Wellington District National Meals & Tanker
- 24/09/05 Legume Station Opening & Tanker Handover
- 25/09/05 Leefield Station Opening, tanker handover
- 08/10/05 2005 Oak Flats Open Day
Austinmeer Open Day
- 16/10/05 Volunteer Memorial Service, Sydney
- 22/10/05 New England Station Openings/Tanker Handover & LSA Armidale/Walcha (A/C Shane Fitzsimmons)
- 29-30/10/05 Cudgegong District Station Openings, Medal Presentations & tanker Handover - Mudgee
- 05/11/05 Hume Zone Station Opening, Tanker Handover & Medal Presentations Albury (A/C Rob Rogers)

09/11/05 Baulkham Hills District Awards Castle Hill

03/12/05 Canobolas Zone Barry Hobbys station opening and handover of 23 tankers to Cabonne, Blayney and Orange brigades.

OTHER VISITS BY THE COMMISSIONER THROUGHOUT 2005 INCLUDED:

- > Helensburgh 65th at Heathcote
- > Wellington Captains meeting
- > Murrumbateman Volunteer Forum
- > Moree Fire Control Centre, Baan Baa Brigade, Narrabri
- > Manila Emergency Services Centre
- > Parkes Captains meeting
- > Wingecarribee medal presentation
- > Cambewarra 65th anniversary
- > Shannonvale, Wellingrove, Mt Mitchell and Glencoe brigades
- > Borambola station opening and awards, Wagga Wagga
- > Bland Captains meeting
- > Scotland Island 50th anniversary
- > Megalong Valley and Wentworth Falls station opening
- > Batemans Bay Volunteer Forum
- > Gol Gol station opening and Dareton 50th anniversary Mildura
- > Sutherland medal presentation
- > Region South medal presentations
- > Inglebar, Oxley and Tingha station openings, New England
- > Nangus, Tumut station opening and tanker handover.



RFS Commissioner Phil Koperberg opened the Barry Hobbys Rural Fire Brigade station (Blayney Shire) and presented Long Service Awards and 23 tankers to members of Canobolas Zone brigades on Saturday 3 December.



QUEANBEYAN CITY BRIGADE TAKES OUT ACT CHAMPIONSHIPS



The victorious Queanbeyan City Rural Fire Brigade.

The Queanbeyan City Rural Fire Brigade was victorious at the ACT Rural Fire Service annual field day on Saturday 27 August 2005.

The brigade competed at the field day, organised by the ACT RFS, an event that is held annually to test the skills of firefighters across the region in eight different events.

The Queanbeyan City team achieved the following results:

- > Emergency Overrun Event – an event to test crew's reaction to sudden weather changes, and take refuge in the truck – 1st Place.
- > Equipment Failure Event – an event to test crew's ability to react to equipment failing, and replacing or repairing it rapidly to suppress the incident – 1st Place.
- > Old and New Event – an event that requires crews to utilise contemporary and old technology to suppress fires – 3rd Place.
- > First Aid Event- Testing crews ability to react to different First Aid scenarios that are likely to arise in their work as emergency responders– 3rd Place

"It was enjoyable competing against teams from the ACT Rural Fire Service, and another from our zone," said Deputy Captain Daniel Barwick, the officer in charge of the team.

"This type of exercise allows us to test our skills in a competitive, however fun environment that is built on solid training, teamwork, and in the spirit of cross border assistance of the two services.

"The whole of Queanbeyan City brigade is proud of the team's effort. It's indicative of the commitment to protecting the community of Queanbeyan and surrounds by ensuring our training standards are up to the most current standards.

"We would like to thank the ACT Rural Fire Service, for organising the day and for making us feel most welcome." Deputy Captain Barwick said today.

EXPERIENCE ACKNOWLEDGED IN GUM CREEK TRAINING

Years of firefighting experience were recognised during a training event in RFS Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area Zone on Sunday 6 November.

Brigades from MIA Zone - Boyd, Cararbury, Tubbo and Gundaline - and RFS Mid West Team, made the trek to Boyd's Bridge at Gum Creek, a crossing on the road between Carrathool and Conargo.

The main focus of the day was recognition of the years of firefighting experience brigade members had already developed, their prior learning, to gain accreditation to Bush Firefighter Grassland (BFG) level.

BFG is an abbreviated course that recognises the skills firefighters have built up during their service.

In this area there is approximately one person per 100 square kilometres, meaning for a considerable time they are very much on their own in the case of a fire or other emergency.

Members also took part in two other training evolutions on the day, including basic Global Positioning System familiarisation and foam/pump application.

Members from Coleambally, Dartington Point and Gidgell brigades came along to help zone staff and their assistance ensured the day ran smoothly.

Everyone agreed the day was a success and well worthwhile. Group Captain Ray Townsend commented that it was great to have training bought out into this part of the bush and was of benefit to all.

Many thanks to Ellen and Ray Townsend, Rob and Cheryl Davies, Matt Ross and the "Coly & Point" guys for their help organising the day.

Story and photo by Roger Orr
Learning & Development Officer
MIA Zone



FIREFIGHTERS' POCKETBOOK

In the field there are a number of important things all firefighters need to know, from basic safety to vehicle and officer recognition.

The RFS Firefighters' Pocketbook is designed to provide active members with a fast, easy reference guide to these and other important facts - at your fingertips.

The Firefighters' Pocketbook has been developed by firefighters for firefighters and is concise, relevant and rugged enough to take with you anywhere.

The RFS recognised a need to provide firefighters with an infield guide that was purpose built to give accurate information in a format that was easy to use in adverse conditions.

THE INFORMATION CONTAINED INCLUDES:

- > Emergency procedures for bush and structure fires
- > Radio communication
- > Officer authority
- > HazChem and dangerous goods charts
- > Electricity hazards and procedures
- > First Aid
- > Fire investigation and scene preservation
- > Aircraft safety
- > Foam application guidance
- > Navigation and mapping
- > Incident Control System

In December 2002 a team was formed to research, design, test and create a pocketbook that would give every active firefighter in the Service a quick reference guide.

A considerable amount of research and consultation within the RFS and with other agencies and organisations was carried out to compile the required information.

A preliminary list of contents was created in consultation with various experts including personnel from RFS volunteers, headquarters, regions, districts/teams/zones and State Operations Committees.

The material was checked for consistency with Service Standards, Policies, Standard Operating Procedures and training material to ensure all information was consistent and where necessary the procedures were reviewed.

The Pocketbook's plastic cover was purpose built, with four months of testing taking place in the field. Plastic pages were chosen for the reference guide and were tested against diesel, drip torch fuel, foam, oil, dirt and many other abrasive substances found on the fireground.

While some of the information contained in summary form and is a rough "rule of thumb", it is sufficient to make operational decisions.

The pocket book comes in two parts, an information section with waterproof pages and a replaceable notebook together with a grid roamer, in a plastic cover.

The information notebook is made from durable plastic paper, while the notebook has been produced using ordinary paper to keep costs down.

The paper notebook is easily replaced. It has been set out with a grid for ease of writing or drawing maps and it has a series of four pages which can be used for each incident. There are also three sets of primary and secondary casualty assessment forms at the back of the notebook.

The grid roamer is a replica of the old Bush Fire Council grid roamer with 360 degree compass, corner divisions to suit 1:25,000 and 1:50,000 scale maps and a 90cm scale along one side.

The first 5,000 copies were printed in December 2004 and were distributed at no cost via Fire Control Centres to all Group Officers and Captains of brigades.

Feedback from the first edition was taken into account and the second edition is currently being printed. 45,000 copies will be distributed at no cost, via local Fire Control Centres, to all active firefighters.

An electronic version of the Firefighters' Pocketbook is available to volunteers on MyRFS within the Standard Operating Procedures section by selecting Firefighters' Pocketbook from the menu.

The Firefighters' Pocketbook is available to staff on the Intranet within the Operational Management Procedures, 8.7 Firefighters' Pocketbook which provides copies of the individual pages.

The Firefighters' Pocketbook will be reviewed periodically, so any suggestion for improvement should be forwarded to Chief Superintendent Alan Brinkworth, Manager Operations, Policy and Standards alan.brinkworth@rfs.nsw.gov.au.

By Rebel Talbert, Media Officer and Chief Superintendent, Alan Brinkworth, Manager Operations, Policy and Standards



The RFS Firefighters' Pocketbook is an easy reference guide for important facts useful to RFS members made with durable material for fireground use. A range of information is contained in the pocketbook, from helicopter marshalling signals to foam application guidelines.



TRAINING TURNS TO SALVAGE AND OVERHAUL



What started as a structural firefighting training event turned into the real thing for members of Dural Rural Fire Brigade (RFB).

Members of the brigade were gathering at their station on Saturday 4 June 2005, in preparation for a day of structure fire training at the Hornsby Training Centre.

At 08:50hrs the brigade was called to a report of a house alight at Vineys Rd Dural. They responded with a Cat 1, with two breathing apparatus (BA) operators, Cat 7 and personnel carrier with additional BA operators.

On leaving the station a large and developing column of black smoke was evident, and a request was sent for additional resources to be responded.

On arrival, four minutes after 000 call, the crew was confronted with a split level house about 75m

x 20m, which was 75 percent involved in fire, with fire extending through the roof.

Neighbours advised they believed there to be persons trapped (this was reinforced by the presence of a number of cars in the driveway). A further message was sent advising this and a request of additional appliances, together with ambulance and police.

A 38mm attack line was deployed, with Dural BA crew entering the structure, following isolation of power, through the only section of house not fully involved in an attempt to conduct a primary search. After a short search they were forced back by extreme fire conditions and a defensive attack was adopted.

It took about two hours to control the fire, with the uninvolved section saved, with the assistance

of an additional 5 Cat 1's, 1 NSWFB appliance and various support crews. Numerous BA crews were rotated through the structure over about five hours to perform salvage and overhaul.

All occupants were accounted for, having slept through the fire in a granny flat at the rear of the property. The fire was investigated by Police scientific and RFS Fire Investigation Unit, with the cause determined as the oven being left on its highest heat setting overnight.

The co-operation between all services at the scene (RFS, NSWFB, Police, Ambulance, Energy Australia and Elgas) was excellent

All brigades in the District have asked to be advised in future should Dural intend doing any major training, so that they can prepare accordingly.

Story by Captain Dural Rural Fire Brigade Peter Robinson

Left: Dural RFB crew working on a structure fire at Vineys Rd.

Right: The Dural crew started their day with structural training and ended it with a house fire in Vineys Rd.

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NEW BRIGADE ON THE RIDGE

The RFS' newest brigade started operations in the famous opal mining town of Lightning Ridge in September 2005

Located in Walgett Shire in north west NSW, Lightning Ridge has a mixed population of miners, farmers, graziers and retired people with emergency service provision from NSW Fire Brigades, State Emergency Service, Police and Ambulance.

Incidents over the past six years showed that a new rural fire brigade based in Lightning Ridge was needed to meet the responsibilities of the RFS, and to service the local community.

After a great deal of planning and hard work by Supt. John Kennedy (Community Safety Officer RFS North West Team) over the past three to four years, and the enthusiasm of members such as Damien Busby, a volunteer from Currabubula brigade who moved to the Ridge in January 2005, the RFS established the Lightning Ridge Headquarters Rural Fire Brigade.

Prior to the formation of this new brigade, NSW Fire Brigades provided all fire related response to emergency incidents in the Lightning Ridge District.

RFS North West Team is extremely thankful for the services and support provided by NSW Fire Brigades as the new rural fire brigade formed and look forward to working together and assisting each other in the future.



The Headquarters brigade officially began operations when a Category 2 tanker was handed over to members on 11 September.

"We've been pretty busy with motor vehicle accidents and grass fires, with a call out every couple of days since we got the truck, although it's been quieter since the rain," Captain Busby said.

"It's been going pretty well and we're still looking for new members."

The members of the brigade have been trained to Bush Firefighter level, Senior First Aid and level 1 and 2 chainsaw operator, with some members who have transferred from other areas of the state qualified to higher levels of competency.

The RFS North West Team is currently looking at the feasibility of a station for the new brigade to assist in training and community education events such as the RFS Open Day.

All emergency services in the area work as a united team in a professional manner and the newly formed rural fire brigade enhances the emergency response capability of the area.

Top: Lightning Ridge Rural Fire Brigade crew members practicing their skills during Bush Firefighter training.

Inset: The new Lightning Ridge Rural Fire Brigade crew doing a standpipe drill.

Right: New recruits participate in chainsaw training.



AIRCREW TRAINING FOR FIRE SEASON FLIERS

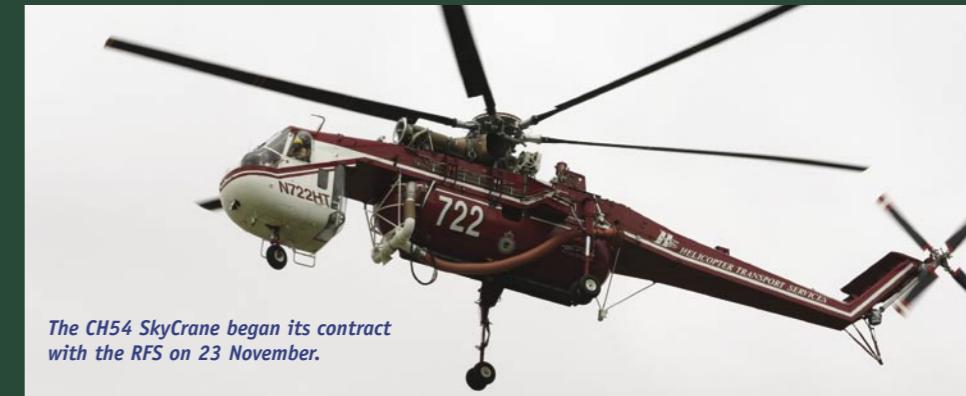
In keeping with its commitment to pro-active aviation safety, the RFS has been conducting Advanced Crew Resource Management (ACRM) training for aircrew for the last four years.

Training conducted over two days in November at RFS Headquarters included volunteer and staff aviation specialists from the RFS and other fire agencies, along with aircrew from aircraft contractors.

In line with the most recent international developments in CRM training, the RFS now requires its air and ground crew specialists, along with air and ground crew from our supporting aircraft contractors, to develop and maintain a thorough understanding of the concepts and practice of CRM.

ACRM was originally known as Cockpit Resource Management and resulted from a series of disastrous aircraft accidents in the mid-1970s.

The development of CRM over the last 25 years recognises that threats to the safety of aircraft are ever-present and that the safe operation of aircraft relies on sound performance by a range of people from the workshop floor, to the operations staff and flight crews. It includes the role played by management in organisations such as fire agencies like the RFS.



The CH54 SkyCrane began its contract with the RFS on 23 November.

Paradoxically, ACRM recognises that human error will always be present and that specific strategies must be employed to minimise the frequency and consequences of threats and human errors.

ACRM training is conducted by specialists from the aviation industry along with members of the RFS Aviation section.

The November training session included theoretical elements, practical demonstrations and exercises in human factor influences, teamwork,

communication, assertiveness, decision-making, and situational awareness.

A number of case studies were examined. Lessons from past accidents and incidents provided useful insights into the conduct of fire and emergency aviation operations.

Information to refresh understanding of these concepts as they relate to fireground operations is available in AF/1 - (2003) Firefighter Safety- The Human Factors.

AVIATION RESOURCES FOR 2005-2006 FIRE SEASON

The following aircraft will be provided to NSW through the National Aerial Firefighting Centre for 2005/06 fire season.

This program is supported by funding from the Australian Government, administered by the Department of Transport and Regional Services and the NSW Government.

- > A Bell 212 medium helicopter started its contract based at Bankstown on 4 November. It is available for a minimum of 12 weeks.
- > A CH54 Sky Crane and Bell Long Ranger air attack supervisor platform based at Granville for minimum of 12 weeks began its contract 23 November.
- > A Bell 214B, medium helicopter has been based at Bankstown since 2 December and is contracted for a minimum of 12 weeks.
- > Another Bell 212 is based at Canberra for a minimum of 12 weeks from 23 November. This is a shared resource with the ACT Emergency Services Authority.
- > Two Air Tractor 802, fixed wing water bombers will be based at Gunnedah and Orange for a minimum of 12 weeks each.

These national resources will complement the services of two BK117 medium helicopters and two fixed wing water bombing aircraft contracted to the RFS, along with more than 100 aircraft available on a call-when needed basis across the state.

Two Bell 212 medium helicopters are based at Bankstown and Canberra.



PARAMEDICS PREPARE FOR BUSHFIRE



Left: NSW Ambulance officers Dave Custer, Kate Fisher, Geoff Senior, and Mike Swinbourne took part in the Bush Firefighter course.

Above: A bushfire affecting Evans Head, Christmas 2001.



NSW Ambulance Service officers completed the first RFS Bush Firefighter course, delivered to these emergency health workers at Evans Head on 19 and 20 October 2005.

Over the past five years, areas around Evans Head have experienced a number of substantial bushfires necessitating declaration of Section 44 emergencies.

Following the Christmas 2001 fires NSW Ambulance Service Evans Head Station Officer,

Geoff Senior, and RFS Superintendent Matt Inwood, identified the benefits of ambulance officers having basic fire knowledge.

The course covered emergency drills, bushfire behaviour, first attack firefighting and teamwork.

Station Officer Senior was very pleased with the competencies displayed by officers Katie Fisher, Mike Swinbourne and Dave Custer over the two days and is looking forward to these new skills being transferred to improved operational responses.

Station Officer Senior feels that the training will result in three main operational benefits.

- > An increased level of safety for Ambulance Officers attending bushfire emergencies
- > A greater role in the treatment and injury prevention of firefighters in the field including heat stress, fatigue and dehydration
- > Officers feel more confident and able to respond to the community they serve.

RAIL CORRIDOR ACCESS EXERCISED IN BLUE MOUNTAINS

Over the years there have not been clear guidelines for the RFS and other emergency services to gain access to the rail corridor across the Blue Mountains District.

This was further compounded during the major bushfires of 2001, when it became necessary to backburn off the railway line in the Glenbrook, Blaxland and Warrimoo areas.

Adequate procedures were not in place for the management of rail traffic and safety, which raised significant concerns.

This was raised at the Blue Mountains Bush Fire Management Committee and it was agreed that a meeting be arranged with representatives of RailCorp, which was held at RailCorp's area office in Valley Heights.

A steering committee was established and included Jeff Ray, Ken Sheather, Richard Harris, Mick Metcalfe and the Emergency Preparedness Project Team from RailCorp and Mark Williams, Jack Tolhurst and Mick Metcalfe (who is a Group Officer) from the RFS.

At this first meeting it was recognised that apart from the RFS, other emergency services such as NSW Fire Brigades, Police, Ambulance and rescue organisations would also require access to the rail corridor.

It was agreed that an appropriate locking system, with high security, would be implemented. Keys would be held by all relevant Services and protocols and procedures developed for safe access.

Site inspections were necessary to determine the desired access points and subsequently BF4 locks were fitted to 42 gates between Emu Plains and Mt Victoria. Signage has been erected to enable quick reference to gate number and location.

The interim safe working procedures have been based on RailCorp's employee training programs

Finally, on Saturday 12 November 2005, it all came to fruition with an exercise code named "Operation Mountain Top".

This was held at Mt Victoria railway station and was attended by about 170 emergency services personnel.

Part of the training included a video on safe working around railway lines and how to access

train carriages. The practical, hands-on, instruction was conducted in the railway yards, accessing train carriage doors in the event of forced evacuation.

It is proposed to include this exercise as an annual event on the Blue Mountains training calendar.

The RFS has been developing "Working in the Rail Corridor" Standard Operating Procedures in conjunction with RailCorp NSW and Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC).

A preliminary draft was provided to those conducting this training. It is expected that the Standard Operating Procedures should be finalised early in 2006.

Story by Inspector Jack Tolhurst, Operations Officer, Blue Mountains

Photos by Chief Superintendent Alan Brinkworth

Left: About 170 RFS, NSW Fire Brigades and RailCorp personnel took part in a training session which supported work between the organisations to improve safe rail corridor access.

Below: RFS volunteers are briefed by RailCorp during the rail corridor training session in the Blue Mountains.





CUMBERLAND CREWS CONTAIN PROSPECT RESERVOIR FIRE



While grass fires are relatively common in western Sydney, a fire in a reserve around Prospect Reservoir on 28 October 2005 gained more media and public attention than usual.

At about 1600hrs crews from Cumberland Zone responded to the grass fire. The fire was in Sydney Catchment Authority land and under RFS responsibility.

NSW Fire Brigades (NSWFB) also responded.

Eight RFS units and six from NSWFB attended the fire. The NSWFB units stood down fairly early as the fire presented no threat to property as it burnt towards the large area of water, despite some dramatic crowning at one point due to wind conditions.

A National Parks and Wildlife Service helicopter was called in and assisted with initial reconnaissance then water bombing some of the inaccessible areas involved in fire. Sydney Catchment Authority firefighters also assisted. The fire burnt out 50 ha of scrub.

Story and photo by Cameron Wade

RFS Cumberland Zone volunteers contained a 50ha grass fire near Prospect Reservoir on 28 October 2005.



CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS – NOW HEAR THIS!



RFS volunteers have been offered free hearing tests by AudioClinic National Hearing Aids, one of Australia's most respected providers of audiology.

The Hearing Test Program was officially launched by the Assistant Commissioner, Rob Rogers, and the Managing Director of AudioClinic Jan Christensen on 21 November at RFS Headquarters.

Over the next two months, audiological specialists from AudioClinic will either be travelling to Fire Control Centres or inviting volunteers to come in to their nearest clinic to have a comprehensive hearing test. All results are kept confidential.

The RFS thanks AudioClinic for their support of our volunteers over this important time

"I recommend that all our volunteers who believe they are struggling with hearing, take advantage of this generous offer by AudioClinic and have their hearing tested."

All RFS volunteers who are experiencing hearing problems should call 1800 057 220 for a free hearing check-up or go to www.audioclinic.com.au for more information.

LORD, CAPTAIN & PRESIDENT

Like most volunteer rural firefighters, Chris Lord has a day job - or two. He is the general store owner at Bugaldie, on the edge of the Pilliga Scrub 25 km north of Coonabarabran, where he and Lizzie, his wife of 40 years, sell goods such as groceries, newspapers and fuel, and run the mail service three times a week delivering to the houses and farms outside the village.

Chris's other two jobs are Captain of the Bugaldie Rural Fire Brigade and the newly elected president of the Rural Fire Service Association (RFSA), representing the 70,000 hard working men and women rural firefighters in NSW.

Born in Melbourne in 1940, the son of a retired Brigadier in the then Royal Australian Army, Chris, like most army kids, moved around a lot growing up in Melbourne, Albury and England before returning to Melbourne's Xavier College to finish school.

"Growing up in different places as a kid was a great benefit, as it made for a much broader education, and it was also a basis for developing the life skills of working with people."

A yearning for the bush saw him jackarooing at Nyngan at the age of 17, before moving to the Northern Territory a year later as a stockman. His

love of the land moved him to a farm at Flinders on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula in the mid sixties to a job as stud master/manager for the Ward family.

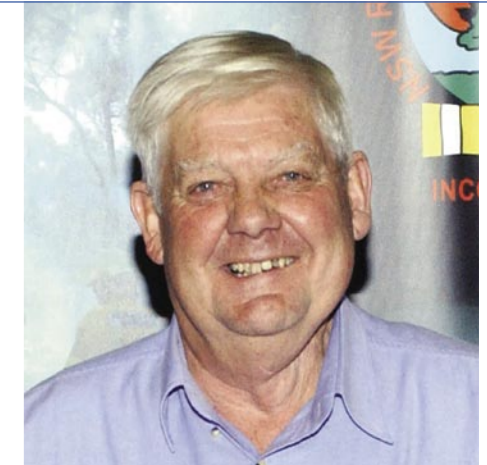
A career shift into the printing industry saw him working for many years at Permara Industries in Melbourne where he retired as their national sales manager for the company's Simplex Transfer division.

Chris's passion for the rural fire brigades began 30 years ago when he joined Victoria's Country Fire Authority as a volunteer. He joined the NSW Rural Fire Service in 1993 and became an active representative of volunteer interests when he joined the RFSA.

The intervening years saw him as an executive member of the RFSA spending much of his time developing and nurturing the Volunteer Charter and Code of Conduct, both of which are now in place.

He is also a delegate of the Australasian Assembly of Volunteer Fire Brigade Associations (of which the RFSA is a member).

Chris said one of his main goals as President of the RFSA will be attracting new members to the service.



"Maintaining and increasing volunteer numbers is vital. RFSA members are the life-blood of the rural fire brigade, and the Association's role is to continue to look after the well being of all our members ensuring they are fit, prepared and able to serve the needs of NSW people."

RFSA President and Captain of Bugaldie Rural Fire Brigade, Chris Lord.



Eatonville resident John Pitkin took this photo of a fire pushing towards Ryans Gully on Sunday 9 October. RFS crews from Clarence Valley fought the fire, battling difficult winds, but successfully bring the fire back within containment lines over a few hours.

JOIN MYRFS TO WIN GPS SYSTEM AND FIRST AID KIT

All registered users of MyRFS, who register before 1 May 2006 will be eligible to win a Garmin GPS system and a Brigade First Aid Kit for their Brigade.

MyRFS is an online extranet service for RFS volunteers available at www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au.

Remember you have to be registered to win. If you have already registered for the previous competition, you are still eligible to win in the next draw.

To register, you will require your preferred name, Brigade name and volunteer number from your Captain or Secretary. Then go to www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au to register online.

THE WINNERS OF THE LAST MYRFS COMPETITION HAVE BEEN SELECTED

The names of the brigades and volunteers who won a Garmin GPS and Brigade First Aid Kit are available on MyRFS.

NEED HELP WITH MYRFS?

MyRFS now has dedicated support from the Operations Customer Support Centre at Headquarters.

You can call for assistance 24 hours-a-day on a new dedicated MyRFS support number 1300 269737 (1300 2 MYRFS).

Customer support operators can help with general enquiries, and can even unlock your account if you enter your password incorrectly too many times.

This new number supersedes the 1800 number that has been in use since July.

The new number is accessible from all parts of the state including Canberra and the lower western area of NSW that previously had problems contacting MyRFS support on the old number.

MYRFS: BRIGADE REPORTS NOW AVAILABLE

Since its inception in July the RFS volunteer extranet, MyRFS, has been constantly evolving and changing, with new functionality being introduced intermittently.

Available at myrfs.nsw.gov.au, MyRFS is a website for volunteers. It gives RFS volunteers access to information in central databases such as FireZone and Icon.

In August MyRFS introduced several key pieces of functionality including Brigade call-out statistics and Brigade and District contact lists.

During research conducted at volunteer forums earlier in the year, incident reports and contact lists were two of the most commonly requested items for inclusion on the site.

MyRFS has also encouraged users to provide feedback on what they would like to see on the site, by using the online suggestion function link.

From these suggestions, as well as external feedback collated since the website's launch, the MyRFS team has been able to work towards providing the functionality that users feel would be most useful.

The "My Brigade" button will enable users to view their Brigade contact lists, including the contact details of their Brigade Captain and Secretary.

Brigade call-out statistics are also available under the My Brigade button. These reports display incident reports sorted by date and incident type. In November MyRFS added a new report which shows which appliance responded.

If a volunteer is a member of more than one Brigade, he or she will be able to see the call-out statistics from each Brigade, by selecting the Brigade from the top of the page.

The introduction of this functionality brings accurate data entry into the spotlight, as the information shown on the site will only ever be as good as the information entered at District level.

"MyRFS' ability to draw upon a variety of information types will benefit volunteers by giving them the chance to highlight inaccuracies that may not have otherwise been identified," said Helen Carlos, a volunteer and staff member from RFS Warringah Pittwater.

If a volunteer notices an information error on MyRFS, contact the District office, so the inconsistency can be rectified in Firezone. In this way, accurate data will fast become the biggest win for the districts with multiple MyRFS users.

By Belinda Landry



RFS volunteers undertake a hazard reduction burn at Soldiers Point, Port Stephens, on Saturday 29 October 2005. Photo by Supt. Alan Gillespie.

KIDS LIVING WITH FIRE

'Kids living with fire' is a pilot project designed to broaden the delivery of the bushfire message to children and the wider community.

The project's goal was to ask different questions and seek out new ways of approaching community education programs on bushfires. Some questions the program explored were:

- > How do we deliver community education programs within a multilingual society
- > What are the barriers that limit the delivery of community educational programs
- > What is the perception of the impact bushfires can have for young people who have not experienced or have not recently experienced a bushfire.

Kids Earth Fund (KEF) developed the program with advice and coordination support from the RFS, National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), the Powerhouse Museum (PH) and Illawarra Ethnic Communities Council.

The Kids Living with Fire project had an emphasis on reaching children from socially and culturally diverse communities.

This was addressed by engaging children creatively through the medium of art.

The program brought relevant stakeholders together in a cohesive partnership, addressing the recommendations of various National and State inquiries about the delivery of bushfire mitigation education.

THE PROJECT OUTCOMES ARE TO:

- > Assist State emergency and environmental agencies' education programs to gather a clearer picture of the barriers that can limit children from understanding the impact that bushfires can have on a community
- > Expand children's educational and ecological awareness of the relationship between bushfires and the Australian landscape, focusing on their particular geographic region and incorporating the message throughout the year
- > Provide a range of mediums for children to learn and share their stories about the impact bushfires can have on a community (providing a resource for children to learn about different environments)

A cross section of public and private schools were invited from the Wollongong region to participate in the program.

The workshops operated over a full school day, incorporating the NSW Board of Studies' Key Learning Areas.

There were two components; environmental education based activities (developed and facilitated by the RFS and NPWS) and creative arts based activities (facilitated by KEF and local community liaison officers and artists).

The RFS component was coordinated by the Headquarters Community Education section and volunteers and staff from the Wollongong district. Participating schools included, Scarborough, Stanwell Park, Warrawong, Cringila, Kemblawarra and Holy Cross Helensburgh.

RFS volunteers involved included; Christine White, Jackie Dingwall, Greg Dingwall, Rick White, Sandra Bilaniwskyj, Leonie Suters, Renee Merrit, Brian Baker, Sally Perry. RFS staff participating included Michael Gray, David Bartlett and Terry Jackson.

Artwork from the project will be displayed throughout RFS Headquarters and will feature on this year's RFS Christmas card.

By Terry Jackson
RFS Community Education



Students at Scarborough create their bushfire art with RFS personnel as part of the Kids Living with Fire program.

All items are embroidered with the RFS logo

Item	Price	Qty	Colour	Size	Total
Polo Shirt - Double stitched Polyester/Cotton with pocket & Australian made	XS-XXL (L)emon/(N)avy/(W)hite 3XL-7XL XS, 6XL-7XL (N)avy only				\$29.00 \$31.00
T-Shirt - Double stitched 100% Cotton & Australian made	S-XXL (N)avy/(W)hite 3XL-6XL 6XL (N)avy only				\$18.00 \$20.00
Polar Fleecy Jumper - Half zip front with 2 slant pockets at bottom	XS-3XL (N)avy only				\$42.50
Polar Fleecy Jacket - Full zip front, Elasticated cuff, Draw cord waist	S-XXL (N)avy only				\$52.50
Sloppy Joe - Super fleecy / Low pill with round neck & Australian made	S-XXL (N)avy only 3XL-6XL (N)avy only				\$29.00 \$31.00
Dress Jumper - 80/20 Wool/Polyester blend, Shoulder & Elbow Patches, Epaulettes, Pencil pockets & Australian made	S-XXL (N)avy only 3XL-5XL (N)avy only				\$85.00 \$87.00
Beanie - Acrylic - One size fits all - Embroidered RFS Logo	OSFA (N)avy only				\$11.00
Beanie - Fleecy - One size fits all - Embroidered RFS Logo	OSFA (N)avy only				\$13.50
Cap - Baseball - Brushed cotton, Adjustable velcro, One size fits all, Embroidered RFS Logo	OSFA (N)avy only				1-24 \$8.50 / 25-99 \$8.00 / 100+ \$7.50
Medium Kit Bag - Heavy duty nylon & zips, Base board, 3 external zipped pockets with shoulder & hand carry straps	L 50cm x H 30cm x W 20cm				\$35.00
Large Kit Bag - Heavy duty nylon & zips, Base board, 5 external zipped pockets including "Wet" & Boot pockets with shoulder & hand carry straps	L 73cm x H 33cm x W 31cm				\$45.00
Garment Sizes	XS S M L XL XXL 3XL 4XL 5XL 6XL 7XL				Postage & Handling per shipping address (Includes badges if part of order) \$6.60
Total					

SPECIAL OFFER - Order 10 or more garments (excluding caps and bags) and your brigade name will be embroidered under the RFS logo at no extra cost

Please print Name and / or Brigade for embroidering on garments and kit bags. Name or Brigade \$5.00 or Name and Brigade \$8.00	Type (Please Tick)			Total
	Name	Brigade	Both	

*Red on Gold badges are Proban backed

Sew on embroidered Name or Brigade badges - 9cm x 3cm	Colour (Please Tick)			Qty	Total
	White on Navy	Red on Gold*	Red on Navy		
1-99 Badges \$3.30 / 100+ Badges \$3.00 Please note there is NO MINIMUM order For larger orders - please print clearly on extra paper					Postage & Handling per shipping address (Not required if included with garment order) \$4.00
Total					

Please debit my credit card for \$ _____ Including postage and packaging

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Please print Name & Address clearly

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Address: _____

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BRIEFS

READER FEEDBACK

Thanks to all our readers who have sent suggestions for stories and let us know where content errors have been made. Keep the feedback, photos and stories coming by:

Emailing
media@rfs.nsw.gov.au

Or write to:
The Editor
Bushfire Bulletin
NSW Rural Fire Service
Locked Mail Bag 17, Granville NSW 2117

HERE ARE SOME CLARIFICATIONS:

Vehicle Checking Stations
An error has been made in the centre page spread on Strike Team Composition and Response in the previous Bushfire Bulletin (27 #03 2005) on page 24 and in the Firefighters' Pocket Book page 13.

The text should read: All vehicles over 8 tonnes to enter vehicle checking stations (except when responding).

Rural Addressing

I am writing to correct a minor error in the article on rural addressing on page 28. The article says: "So a property located at 2.02 Jennings Rd would be 2.02km from the start of the road." While the intent of the sentence is clear, the detail of the rural address is incorrect, it should read "202 Jennings Rd", that is, there is no period in the address.

The number of a property in the rural addressing system is expressed in hundredths of a kilometre (or metres) of a property's entrance from the nominated start of the road, usually an intersection.

Yours faithfully - Mike Cassidy

Review of Brigade Constitution Model
A review committee has been set up to create the standard Constitutions for brigades across the State. The review committee includes staff and volunteer representatives from across the State.

A new draft, currently open for consultation, is designed to address several anomalies in the current model and meet legislative requirements. Once feedback is received a report on comments will be produced and presented to the review committee. For more information contact RFS Volunteer Relations at volunteer@rfs.nsw.gov.au

Above: RFS volunteers undertake a hazard reduction burn at Soldiers Point, Port Stephens, on Saturday 29 October 2005. Photo by Supt. Alan Gillespie.

SERVICE STRENGTHENS LINKS WITH CLUB MOVEMENT

The RFS's community partnership with ClubsNSW took a further step forward when the RFS participated in a mammoth trade fair held in Tweed Heads from 8-10 October.

The fair was part of the annual ClubsNSW conference and we were joined by the other community partners - Guide Dogs NSW, the Volunteer Rescue Association, Youth Off the Streets, Starlight Foundation and the NSW Institute of Sport.

More than 2,500 club directors and their partners passed the RFS stand and were given detailed information on how best their clubs can help the Service in the area of community education.

Last year, ClubsNSW and its Platinum Partner, Club Keno Holdings, provided \$100,000 to fund 12 new community education trailers.

This year the RFS will receive an additional \$50,000 which will be allocated to a project yet to be identified.

On 8 November the NSW State Council of ClubsNSW held a Council meeting at RFS Headquarters and Commissioner Phil Koperberg addressed the meeting, expressing his wish for the partnership to grow and prosper for mutual benefit.

ClubsNSW Chairman, Peter Newell OAM, and Chief Executive, David Costello, promised continued support for the RFS and the community through the partnership between the two organisations.

Next year the RFS will be given the opportunity to address the 4,000 or more delegates at the first national clubs conference which will be held at the Gold Coast Convention Centre.

NEW RISK PLANS SEEK COMMUNITY INPUT

The knowledge and opinions of local people will form the cornerstone of the next round of bush fire risk management planning which affects 32 council areas.

Thirteen Bush Fire Management Committees (BFMC) will review, rewrite and display new Bush Fire Risk Management Plans over the next few months.

A new bush fire risk planning process will be used. It follows in the footsteps of successful community consultation for a similar plan in the Canobolas area, which actively sought the opinions of local people. (This was commonly known as the Goobang Project.)

BFMCs are local groups representing all the organisations with an interest in bush fire management. They are responsible for developing Bush Fire Risk Management Plans which identify the risk rating and management strategies for areas under their responsibility.

The new plans must understand and account for what areas local people consider to be at risk, what they value as assets, their ideas on what should be done to manage that risk and their knowledge of local fire history and fire paths.

Through community participation in this process, communities will also gain awareness and ownership of their local risk and the appropriate risk management strategies. Community meetings will be a key communication tool.

The purpose of the plan is to protect life, economic assets (including buildings, stock, crops and forests), and our natural and cultural heritage.

Maps within the plan show exactly what streets, roads, farms, public and private land are rated for bushfire risk as extreme, high, moderate or low. The plan outlines what management techniques are employed to deal with that risk.

For example, a plan might identify a local reserve as an extreme risk area, with treatment strategies including; suspending fire ignition activities (camping fires) on difficult weather days, preparing and conducting a strategic hazard reduction burn, and conducting community education programs to help local residents prepare their properties.

Bush fire management was formerly based solely on fuel reduction and responding to fires when they occurred. This has changed. Greater emphasis is now placed on bushfire risk management, mitigation and community preparation to complement fuel management practices.

The following committees are reviewing their plans. For more details contact one of the representatives on your local BFMC, or RFS Fire Control Centre.

- > Macarthur (Liverpool, Camden, Campbelltown)
- > Illawarra (Wollongong, Kiama Shellharbour)
- > Cudgong
- > Orana (Narromine, Dubbo, Wellington)
- > Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area (Murrumbidgee, Griffith, Leeton, Narrandera)
- > Hume (Albury, Greater Hume)
- > Tamworth Regional
- > Northern Rivers (Kyogle, Lismore, Richmond Valley)
- > Riverina Highlands (Gundagai, Tumbarumba, Tumut)
- > Namoi Gwydir (Narrabri, Moree Plains, Gwydir)
- > Liverpool Range (Gunnedah, Liverpool Plains, Upper Hunter)
- > Castlereagh (Wurrumbungle, Gilgandra).
- > NSW Fire Brigades
- > NSW Police
- > Electricity network provider
- > Rural Lands Protection Board
- > State Rail Authority
- > Rail Access Corporation
- > National Parks and Wildlife Service
- > Forestry Commission
- > A person representing the local authority's functions respecting the environment
- > Nature Conservation Council of New South Wales
- > Rural land holder nominated by the NSW Farmers Association or local authority
- > Each Local Aboriginal Land Council
- > Any other person approved by the Bush Fire Coordinating Committee

The following representatives are invited to become members of a BFMC:

- > RFS (including one or two volunteers from Rural Fire Brigades)
- > Local Government Authority
- > Roads and Traffic Authority
- > Department of Land and Water Conservation

Members of the Illawarra Bush Fire Management Committee (Wollongong, Kiama, Shellharbour) Kel Lambkin (Sydney Catchment Authority), Rob Pallin (Nature Conservation Council), Terry Alderton (Transgrid), David Bartlett (RFS) and Jamie Erskine (NPWS) are shown the new risk rating program provided by RFS Community Hazard Management's Susannah Bilous.



OPERATIONS

GOOD FIREGROUND MANAGEMENT



Emergency events have the potential to have significant social, economic and environmental consequences. Emergency Service combat agencies are responsible for planning, preparation for, response to and coordination of such events, as well as commencing the restoration of normality.

Within NSW we use the Incident Control System (ICS) for a single appliance incident right through to a Class 3 fire (section 44 declaration). The only difference is that at the single appliance incident, the Officer in Charge (OIC) fulfils a multitude of roles including Incident Controller (IC), Operations Officer (OO), Logistics Officer (LO), Planning Officer (PO), Safety Advisor (SA) and Liaison Officer (LIO).

At a very large incident there will be a full Incident Management Team with personnel filling each of these key positions and assistants filling other positions within the functional areas.

All NSW firefighting authorities - RFS, NSWFB, National Parks and State Forests - subscribe to ICS and, therefore, integration during coordinated operations occurs seamlessly.

THREE TERMS USED IN ICS ARE:

Command

The direction of the actions of personnel within an agency such as members of your own brigade.

Control

The direction of the actions of personnel across agencies such as the Incident Controller when more than one agency is involved.

Coordination

Bringing agencies together to ensure an effective response to an incident.

Poor management of any emergency event will, in most instances, invite chaos, prolong the operation, make it harder to control and probably lead to unnecessary losses, injury or death.

The concept of management applies to any type of incident from a bush or grass fire, interface fire, structure fire, transport fire to a motor vehicle accident (MVA) and starts with the OIC of the first arriving appliance.

The OIC should concentrate on the management of the incident rather than becoming embroiled in the direct task of firefighting. If, initially, resources are so short it may of course be necessary to become directly involved, but immediate action should be taken to overcome this shortage.

Management of a larger incident or a larger fireground will be more difficult and will therefore require more experience and expertise. Information should be gathered from the emergency call, what is gleaned on arrival on scene and what is previously known from pre-incident planning.

PRE-INCIDENT PLANNING

Pre-incident planning can provide valuable information, particularly if you have been involved in the preparation of such plans. Plans may include; intelligence about hazards, vegetation, topography, trails, recent hazard reductions, available water sources and their accessibility, location of structures, their construction, contents, occupation

undertaken and occupants; transport routes, quickest way and best access; available resources, their capacity and likely response times; available equipment, required equipment, etc.

EMERGENCY EVENTS

Emergency events are generally mobile, free flowing, dynamic and fluid, so the focus must be on safety. Do what you can safely with the available resources, gather all intelligence immediately available, assess the situation and risk and be adaptive. Consider factors such as adrenalin, fatigue and confusion, be cognisant of the timeframe for decision making, continually revise tactics, redeploy resources as necessary and essentially the IC must take command.

RESPONDING APPLIANCES

Responding appliances is no different to any other function that we undertake and is also subject to a risk assessment. En-route or upon arrival the IC and the name of the incident are to be nominated and communicated to all at the incident as well as FireCom.

See the centre page for the first three steps for good fireground management. In the event of an urban interface fire, structural triage will also need to be undertaken to establish and identify what can be saved.

A resource management and tracking system should be established and maintained with the use of T Cards or by some other means, as set out under the principles of ICS.

Continued on Operations Back Cover





THE FIRST THREE STEPS OF GOOD FIREGROUND MANAGEMENT



1. RESPOND

1.1 Respond appliance

Responding appliances should advise FireCom of their callsign, crew strength, OIC and their intentions or confirm details of the call. e.g. responding to house alight in Malvern Road. Any additional appliances or support vehicles should proceed to the incident unless there is an explicit instruction to respond given by the IC, District/Team/Zone Manager or other person with delegated authority.

1.2 Brief crew en-route

Each OIC should brief their crew using the SMEACS briefing sequence. The OIC of the first arriving appliance will assume control and will become the IC and will set the foundation for the fireground organisation. The immediate consideration once on scene is to determine minimum decisive force required to combat the incident, based on the initial size-up – so scale up early with the rapid deployment of sufficient additional resources.

1.3 On scene

The first arriving appliance is to provide an accurate initial SitRep on arrival including callsign, priority code (red, blue), give or confirm location, give or confirm map name and grid reference, give or confirm type of incident (bush, grass, structure, AFA, MVA, false alarm, etc) other agencies in attendance and advise investigating, commencing attack, standing by, etc.

2. TAKE COMMAND

2.1 Assume control of the incident

The OIC of the first arriving appliance will assume control and will become the IC and should not get involved in direct firefighting unless initial resources are so short. For a small incident, up to 5 appliances with up to 20 personnel, the IC carries out the function of the Operations Officer, Planning Officer, Logistics Officer, Safety Advisor and Liaison Officer with other agencies. The IC must take the initiative, set clear priorities, establish span of control, match objectives to available resources, coordinate arriving resources, coordinate attack and communicate all relevant information to the appropriate personnel whilst complying with all Service Standard Operating Procedures.

2.2 Gather intelligence

Gathering intelligence should include initial size-up of the incident and consider safety of the crew/s, LACES, hazards, identification of greatest threat to life, property or the environment, who and what is threatened, available timeframe, rate of spread, fuel, terrain, access, road closures, diversions, evacuation, livestock and pets, etc. This will determine the resource requirements and initial strategies and tactics.

2.3 Issue orders and deploy resources

As more resources and equipment arrive, initial strategies and tactics may need to be adapted once intelligence is gathered. At this stage a simple Incident Action Plan should be developed and documented based on your chosen course of action.

3. MANAGE THE FIREGROUND

3.1 Staging areas

A staging area type 1 should be established within striking distance of the incident to ensure that appliances do not simply drive onto the fireground unless they have been allocated a task. All later arriving units are to report to the staging area and communicate with the IC on approach for a briefing and the allocation of tasks. As soon as time and intelligence permits, a further SitRep should be given to FireCom including any injuries, fatalities, persons trapped, persons missing or assets under longer term threat (give timeframe), fire behaviour, objectives, strategies and tactics, additional firefighting or logistics resources required, any specialists or other services required (rescue, HAZMAT, Police, Ambulance, electricity authority, heavy plant, aircraft, etc), any hazard or safety warnings, weather observations or any suspicious circumstances.

3.2 Sectorise

The IC should set up field command and start to sectorise the fireground and appoint Sector Commanders (SC) to ensure the effective use of resources. This may be a section of a fire trail, a street, one or more buildings, the front or rear of a building, a floor of a building, the water supply, etc. As the sectors and other functions on the fireground are allocated it is essential, to assist with the management of the fireground, that each key position is clearly identified with a tabard such as Fireground Incident Controller, Fireground Operations Officer, Sector Commander, Safety Advisor, Breathing Apparatus Control Officer (BACO), Staging Area Coordinator, etc.

3.3 Hand over to more senior officer as incident escalates

As the incident escalates, the IC may need to hand over command to a more senior officer, such as a Captain, to whom the IC will provide a full briefing.



Continued from Operations Front Cover

The IC is to provide additional situation reports (SitReps) as the situation changes or as additional information is known, when major benchmarks are achieved, at least every 30 mins or as the fire status changes (going, being controlled, contained, patrol, out).

Consider fire investigation and scene preservation if suspicious circumstances exist.

As the incident escalates, you may need to hand over command to a more senior officer, such as a Captain, to whom you will provide a full briefing. Always work within the "span of five".

MEDIUM INCIDENT

At this stage for a medium incident, 5 to 10 appliances with up to 40 personnel, the IC carries out the functions of the PO, LO, SAD and LIO with other agencies and a separate officer manages the operation and sectors.

A Staging Areas type 2 should now be considered and this is a tactical area with appliances awaiting and ready for immediate deployment. The area should be close to the fireground for all inbound appliances and this is usually looked after by an available crew leader with direct contact with the Incident Controller. On larger fires this may be activated for a sector or a division.

LARGE INCIDENT

As the incident escalates to a large incident the Captain may need to hand over command to a more senior officer, such as a Group Officer to whom a full briefing will be provided.

A large incident is over 10 appliances with up to 100 personnel, the functions of IC, PO, LO, SAD and LIO with other agencies will generally be located at the Incident Control Centre (ICC) and the OO is likely to remain in the field with the Sector Commanders or may be in the ICC as well.

A Staging Areas type 3 may be required for a large incident. It is a strategic area to which all incoming appliances, strike teams, task forces, plant, etc., would report. This would usually have some logistical support and a Staging Area Coordinator (SAC) who would have direct contact with both the OO and the LO and this is usually managed by an available group leader.

VERY LARGE INCIDENT

As the incident escalates the IC will be appointed by the Bush Fire Management Committee (BFMC) for a Class 2 fire and by the RFS Commissioner for a Class 3 fire declared under section 44 of the Rural Fires Act 1997. An Incident Management Team (IMT) will be established at the ICC to undertake all ICS functions other than Air Operations, Divisional Command and Sector Command which remain in the field.

A comprehensive Incident Action Plan (IAP) should be prepared by the IMT for each shift but this should only contain the basic relevant information to get the job done together with a suitable map.

Chief Superintendent Alan Brinkworth
Manager Operations, Policy and Standards

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES 3.05.02.01 SECTOR COMMANDER

Sector Commanders are responsible, within their sector, for the combat of the fire and the management of all personnel and equipment within the Sector. They are responsible to the Divisional Commander (DC) if appointed and if not then to the Operations Officer (OO) or to the Incident Controller (IC).

- > Assume role and wear "Sector Commander" tabard
- > Attend changeover briefing from the Divisional Commander (OO or IC)
- > Confirm you have the current IAP (SMEACS) and maps, which detail clear objectives and strategies
- > Confirm the communications plan
- > Develop teamwork within your Sector
- > Confirm your Crew Leaders and Strike Team/Task Force Leaders have the relevant sections of the IAP and map and brief them prior to deployment using SMEACS and LACES
- > Task and track all resources within the sector
- > Ensure that all units allocated to a Strike Team or Task Force remain together
- > Ensure that resources tasked within your sector comply with OH&S requirements
- > Maintain communications with the DC (OO or IC), your Crew Leaders and Strike Team/Task Force Leaders as well as adjoining Sector Commanders and other relevant areas, (SA, Aircraft, etc.)
- > Maintain regular Field Situation Reports to DC (OO or IC)
- > Attend meetings with DC (OO or IC) as required
- > Liaise with DC (OO or IC) on possible relocation and changeover of resources

COMPETENCIES

- > Minimum competency for a Sector Commander is the National Public Safety Units of Competency "Suppress Wildfire" (PUA FIR 303A) and "Supervise Response" (PUA OPE 001A)

VEHICLE AND EQUIPMENT REQUIREMENTS

- > A 4WD capable vehicle, with appropriate markings and lights
- > 2 GRN/PMR Radios
- > 1 VHF Fireground Radio
- > 1 VHF Ground to Air Radio
- > 1 UHF CB Radio
- > 1 Mobile Phone
- > 1 Operational Management (T Card) Kit
- > GPS
- > Weather Monitoring Equipment
- > Stationery

HANDOVER

- > Prepare for handover to next shift
- > Conduct and document a debrief with Crew Leaders and Strike Team/Task Force Leaders at end of shift and incorporate into debrief with DC (OO or IC)
- > Prepare debrief to the DC (OO or IC)
- > After receiving IAP details, prepare sector strategy and tactical plans as appropriate
- > Confirm maps and other operational tools are current
- > Brief incoming Sector Commander

THEN STAND DOWN

INCIDENT BRIEFING

Once at the incident an operational briefing should follow the SMEACS format:

Situation

Current and Predicted - Incident details, what is at risk, topography, weather, fire behaviour, hazard risks and resources deployed, enroute or available

Mission

Objectives - Overall or specific objectives, who or what is savable, where to stop the fire/incident

Execution

Strategy and Tactics - task allocation, timing and safety considerations

Administration

Assistance and Logistics - What support is needed and being provided, staging areas, personnel, fuel, food, water, supplies, facilities, information - where, when and how much

Command

Command, Control and Communications - organisation, divisions, sectors, who is in charge of what, chain of command, communications plan, channels and procedures

Safety

Hazards (LACES checklist) - safety hazards and precautions, safety advisor, personal protective clothing and equipment

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS AT AN INCIDENT USE THE LACES FORMAT

FIREFIGHTER

Lookouts

Everybody looks out for everybody else

Awareness

Everybody is aware of the current and anticipated behaviour of the fire and other incident hazards and precautions

Communications

Everybody speaks up about what is happening and their concerns at the incident and everybody listens

Escape Routes

Everybody has an "out" planned

Safety Refuge

Everybody helps everybody to survive. Everybody supports the decision to get clear of a hazard

CREW LEADER

Lookouts

Assign a "lookout" to a safe vantage point in communication with the crew leader

Awareness

Terrain, weather, fire behaviour, the tasks and nearby activities

Communications

Maintain suitable radio or other contact

Escape Routes

Suitable escape route/s checked and known by all

Safety Refuge

Suitable, large enough, close enough and free of hazards

RFS TEAM WINS 2005 OVERNIGHT NAVIGATION EVENT

The Navigation Shield (NavShield) is an overnight navigation event where teams of competitors attempt to gain as many points as possible by finding their way, on foot only, through wilderness terrain to pre-set checkpoints.

Held on the weekend of 13 - 14 August 2005, this year's event once again provided an opportunity for the best navigation and rescue teams in the country to compete in unfamiliar terrain and with no support groups.

RFS brigades from Kangaroo Valley Patonga, Berowra, Ebenezer, Coal & Candle, Winmalee, Hazelbrook and Kenthurst took part.

The 2005 NavShield was held in Coolah Tops National Park, approximately 90km north of Mudgee. More than 150 teams from across the country participated in both the one and two day events.

Kangaroo Valley Rural Fire Brigade took out the top position in the two day event with 1840 points. Blue Mountains National Parks and Wildlife Service won the

one day event with 940 points and two RFS teams reached the top 10 in the one day event.

Each year's NavShield brings its own challenges. There are a lot of common features of the event - it's always cold, the competition can be intense, and a wide range of navigation skills are required for successful completion.

In the past the course has included dense scrub, marshes, and sheer cliffs. This year was a contrast. Coolah Tops is located on a plateau, it's fairly flat and open terrain with medium forest covering.

The event started on Saturday at 0830hrs. Many teams arrived on Friday night and spent the evening plotting their routes, preparing their gear, and catching up with familiar faces amongst the NavShield regulars.

Working in below-freezing temperatures is a novelty for bush firefighters, but we set up a comfortable campsite, with all our winter gear, card tables, lanterns, and fires.

Rough, hilly country is hard to walk through, but easy to navigate in - there are always visible hills and other landmarks for map orientation. Coolah Tops had limited visibility and in much of the course, few features and hills.

This meant the going was easier, but required teams to navigate often using nothing more than bearings and pace counting. Some checkpoints were easily found in obvious places, and some were only accessible if you planned your approach effectively.

Teams criss-crossed the course, often crossing paths and, depending on whether we met familiar faces or not, either shared hints on finding checkpoints, or guarded the information jealously.

Some teams work hard for the entire event - walking fast or jogging the whole way, with few breaks. For many teams the event is used as training before fire season, to brush up on Advanced Firefighter navigation skills, and practice operating in the bush in small teams.

NavShield is organised by the Bushwalkers Wilderness Rescue Squad Inc. in association with National Parks & Wildlife Service.

By Dan Meijer - Coal & Candle Rural Fire Brigade

Coolah Tops National Park provided a stunning backdrop to the 2005 NavShield event. Photo by Rolf Poole.





CADETS

FIREFIGHTING... THE BEST SCHOOL SPORT ON OFFER

My name is Amelia Redenbach. I am one of the lucky students who had the privilege to be a part of the first NSW Rural Fire Service cadet course run at Parkes High School.

I think it is a really great idea running this course through the school system because it can develop great leadership skills for our youth and also firefighting skills that could be used in the community.

I am currently a member of the RFS, and I found by doing this course, I learned a lot more about fire safety, proper firefighting procedures, and developing teamwork skills with people other than my crew at Alectown.

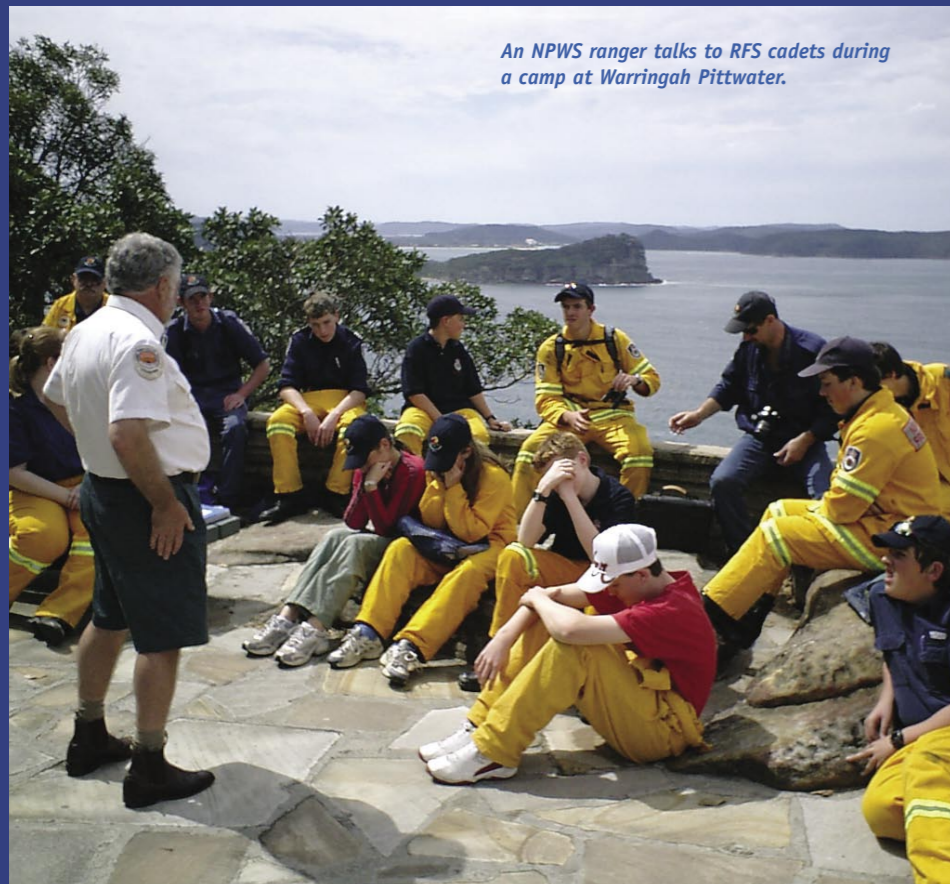
The other students that did this course learned essential life saving skills they can use throughout their lives. The cadet course was actually run as a sport at Parkes High, which is a bonus as we got to do something other than the same old tennis, football, netball and so forth.

During this course we ventured out to the mountains up at Goobang and ran different scenarios, such as a motor vehicle accident, creating fire breaks, enhancing communication skills, first aid training, and, of course my favourite, target practice with Karen (water fights!).

We were also on display in the centre ring at our local show, where we represented Parkes High School.

I would recommend this course to high school students, because of the skills that you can develop that could help save lives. I think I speak for all from Parkes High...we really enjoyed this firefighting course.

An NPWS ranger talks to RFS cadets during a camp at Warringah Pittwater.



FUTURE FIREFIGHTERS AND LEADERS

Cadets from Tumut, Kelso High and St Paul's Grammar School Cranebrook attended a camp hosted by Warringah Pittwater Cadets from 8-9 October.

Eight cadets and four instructors from Tumut, four cadets and one instructor from St Paul's, seven cadets and three instructors from Warringah and one cadet from Kelso High attended.

The aim of the camp was to promote and develop leadership and teamwork.

Saturday involved a few games of cricket prior to breakfast then a talk from RFS Community Education Cadet Coordinator Paul McGrath about the program. The cadets were then split in to groups and were asked to interview each other to get to know their team.

Once they had chosen a team name it was off to Warringah Fire Control Centre to look over the centre and scale the fire tower.

They then travelled by personnel carrier to West Head where a NPWS Ranger spoke to them about the area. Saturday afternoon involved a 3km mapping exercise and trail walk in their groups to the Basin Reserve where they camped the night.

On Sunday a ferry took them to Scotland Island where another trek and mapping exercise was held before a ferry to Church Point and back to the District Training Centre.

Story and photos by Riverina Highlands Community Safety Officer Peter Jones



CADET PROGRAM SCORES TOP MARKS

The ability of the RFS Secondary Schools Cadet Program to captivate the interest of students and achieve study and development goals has caused it to be described as a run-away success by teachers, students and RFS supervisors.

More than 50 students from Kelso, Parkes, Forbes, Bingara and Moree High Schools have participated this year.

Since the program was first piloted in Moree in 2004, about 60 students have graduated. Delivered to Year 9 and 10 students as part of the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education Curriculum, the Program aims to develop life skills which will assist students and their communities in the future.

Faculty supervisors and RFS Cadet Supervisors have been impressed by excellent teamwork, cooperation and the high levels of interest that all student cadets have shown during the ten week program.

The positive outcomes participants have displayed include:

- > Increased self esteem
- > Sense of community and belonging
- > Teamwork
- > Unparalleled level of camaraderie by working side by side with other cadets
- > Acquisition of new and valuable skills that will assist in day-to-day life.

Bingara Central School intends to increase the number of students participating next year. The success of programs in Forbes and Parkes may result in the program being extended to Weddin, Peak Hill and Lachlan schools in 2006. Kelso students had a real fire to deal with shortly after starting their cadet program when their school, text books and personal protective equipment were destroyed by a blaze in August.

Enthusiasm carried the students through. The loss of the school reinforced the importance of home fire safety and the need to continue with the program.

Despite being relocated to four separate campuses to complete their studies, the Kelso student cadets rallied each week at the Bathurst Fire Control Centre, graduating in a ceremony on 24 October.

While the aim is personal development, not recruitment, all nine students intend to join an RFS brigade and many have already attended brigade training sessions. Lithgow High School has expressed an interest in undertaking the program in 2006 and Dubbo High School will start a program next year.

For more details on the program contact RFS Community Education's Paul McGrath on (02) 87415418.

RFS SECONDARY SCHOOLS CADET PROGRAM

TOPICS

- > Code of Conduct, Housekeeping, Basic Safety, Fire Behaviour
- > Brigade Elections, Vehicle & Equipment Familiarisation
- > Hand tools, Knapsack Sprays, Hoses, and Pumps
- > Police, Ambulance, NSW Fire Brigades
- > Communications
- > Casualty Assistance
- > Structure Fires, Motor Vehicle Fires/Accidents
- > Fire Extinguishers
- > Practical Scenarios and Revision
- > Final Theory and Practical Assessment Presentation of Certificates



CADETS



Top: Cadets undertake some theory sessions.

Above: Cadets from Tumut, Kelso and St Paul's Cranebrook with Belrose 1 during the cadet camp at Warringah Pittwater.

WILDFIRE WORKPLACE SAFER FOR UTILITIES PERSONNEL

The RFS is working to improve the safety of a range of people who require access to the fireground by providing accredited bushfire awareness training for non-firefighting personnel.

The course is particularly useful for utility suppliers (electricity, water, gas, telephone) who need to restore services to the community as soon as possible, or who need to take precautionary measures ahead of a fire.

The course has already been delivered to a range of organisations including telecommunication and electricity providers.

The following topics are covered by the program:

- > Identify the essential elements required for wildfire to burn
- > Wildfire behaviour
- > Basic suppression strategies
- > Common risks of wildfire as a workplace
- > Options to protect personnel from approaching fire
- > Incident organisation and communication
- > Procedures to access the fireground.

Those attending are provided with a card to confirm they have completed the safety training.

RFS trainers run the program through the Business Development Unit and fees collected from those attending are used to provide training and development resources and facilities for volunteers.

For more information contact the RFS Business Development Unit on (02) 8741 5555 or corporate.training@rfs.nsw.gov.au.



RFS firefighters from Blue Mountains conducted a hazard Reduction at Wentworth Falls on 15 November 2005. Photograph by Blue Mountains Headquarters RFB Deputy Captain David Ward.

FIREFIGHTING, FIRST AID AND FM RADIO COMMITMENTS REWARDED

On 18 August 2005, Daniel Gordon from the Gilgandra Rural Fire Brigade was awarded the Young Aussie Pride of Australia Medal for his work within the community.

The Daily Telegraph and The Sunday Telegraph Pride of Australia Medal honours the nation's unsung heroes, and is an achievement medal which aims to acknowledge citizens who do extraordinary work within their community.

Daniel, 15, was nominated for the award in recognition of his time spent volunteering for the RFS, radio presenting for 98/9 WAR FM Gilgandra, and his general community work. He was nominated by the Western Acting Professional Officer in St John's Ambulance NSW, where he is also a cadet.

After being selected from thousands of nominees to join a shortlist of just three young Australians, Daniel was flown down from Gilgandra to Sydney by Nationwide News to attend the ceremony, where he took out the prestigious medal.

"When the MC announced that I was the winner, I was shocked, excited and relieved," Daniel said.

"The CEO of News Limited presented me with the Sterling Silver medal and a large certificate saying that I was the winner of the Young Aussie Category of the Pride of Australia Medal 2005."

After the ceremony Daniel attended the after party, where he had his photo taken with a few famous faces.

"Representatives from the major TV channels were present (as well as) other celebrities, (including) David Koch and Lisa Wilkinson from Channel 7, Mike Munroe from Channel 9, and Sandra Sully from Channel 10," Daniel said.

By Belinda Landry

Daniel Gordon, 15, received the Pride of Australia Medal for his community work.



GELIGNITE DISPOSAL NO SWEAT FOR EAST KURRAJONG CREW

On Monday 24 October 2005 Hawkesbury Firecom received a call to assist police with the discovery of 80 sticks of 'sweating' gelnite in a shed in the Lower Portland area.

East Kurrajong 1 and Group 8 were responded. On arrival the crew were told of a container with old, deteriorating sticks of explosives inside.

The police bomb squad was en route and the crew from East Kurrajong decided to wait for them to arrive. Hazmat and ambulance crews were also called.

The bomb squad arrived and inspected the material. The sticks of explosives were over 50 years-old and very volatile, described by the bomb squad as enough to level a two storey brick home.

The bomb squad then began stabilizing the explosives by soaking them in diesel.

RFS crews provided fire protection and started preparing an area where the gelnite could be burnt...once it was more stable.

There was no threat to any property as the shed was remote from any home or populated areas.

With the gelnite was also a quantity of detonators which were taken away and blown up by the bomb squad in a nearby paddock.

A number of hours passed before the gelnite was stable enough to move the 20ft to the area prepared by the RFS for the burning process.

The sticks were laid out by police bomb squad then set alight with no problems encountered. The whole operation took over four hours to complete.

Story and photo by Cameron Wade

East Kurrajong Rural Fire Brigade provided fire protection during an operation to stabilise and destroy 80 sticks of 50-year-old gelnite found in a shed in Lower Portland, Hawkesbury district.



HEADQUARTERS TEAM GET ON THEIR BIKES



NSW Rural Fire Service Headquarters personnel rallied for the Prince of Wales Hospital cancer unit by participating in fundraising bike ride on Saturday, 13 August 2005. Joining cancer survivors, general public and past Olympic champions at Centennial Park were RFS Development Control Services Manager Lew Short, Natural Environment Manager Simon Heemstra, Assistant Commissioner Operations and Regional Management Mark Croswell, Director Regional Management Steve Yorke and Community Education Technology and Design Officer Tony Longa.



2005 OPEN DAY SUCCESS



BRIGADES OPENED THEIR DOORS

After many months of planning and preparation, nearly 500 brigades opened their doors to thousands of community members on Saturday 8 October as part of the 2005 RFS Chubb Open Day.

Participating brigades orchestrated some amazing events to show the public how the RFS protect their communities.

Some brigades demonstrated the structural firefighting capability of the RFS with compressed air breathing apparatus events.

Knapsack games for kids were a popular choice in many brigades. This game includes teaching kids how to use a knapsack by having them aim at and hit targets.

In light of recent house fire tragedies some brigades educated their communities on the proper way to use fire extinguishers and fire blankets.

Many brigades invited other services to attend their Open Day, to demonstrate how emergency services work together at different.

One brigade decided to provide free portable pump services for the community, using this as an opportunity to provide them with information on hoses and fittings.

A few brigades added to the spectacle of the day with hot rod demonstrations and jumping castles.

And what would an open day be without a traditional barbecue, always a crowd pleaser.

Some reported that new recruits came on board as a result of the event and that community members increased their knowledge of how to prepare for fire.

While stations were the focus for most brigades, others in remote areas targeted village or town centres and shopping centres to spread the FireWise message.

An online survey was recently distributed to gather comments from RFS members to help improve next year's Open Day. About 350 people took the time to provide feedback through the survey, with 90 percent of them volunteers.



Some great suggestions were included in the responses, providing feedback on what problems exist, and how to improve, expand and make 2006 even better.

Thank you to all who responded to the survey, and thank you to all the brigades who opened their doors. Without you volunteering your time this day would not work.

Story by Matthew Schroder

Top: A front seat view from one of Gulgong's vehicles.

Above: Children decorated the station walls at Bundeena Rural Fire Brigade's open day.

AUSTRAL BRIGADE THANKED FOR SAVING SOCCER EQUIPMENT



Soccer presentations at Scott Park provided a perfect opportunity for Austral Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) to present safety information, and be thanked for saving thousands of dollars of community sporting equipment threatened during a fire.

On Sunday 16 October 2005 the Macarthur Zone brigade attended the presentation day ceremony for the Austral Soccer Club.

Deputy Captains Peter Hamori and David Saunders conducted a tanker demonstration, extinguishing a contained fire.

During the presentation ceremony Austral RFB received thanks for their community work, in particular for their attendance at a fire that caused extensive damage to the club's facilities.

Austral RFB, supported by other agencies, successfully saved an estimated \$60,000 worth of sporting equipment that would otherwise been lost to the local community. The brigade was able to bring the fire under quick control with effective salvage and overhaul.

Captain Simon Andrews gratefully accepted a donation of \$500 from Austral Soccer Club Committee members and spoke of the work of the RFS in the community. This money will go towards improving the brigade's resources used in active firefighting and training.

Simon extended thanks and invitations of support to individuals and local businesses. Potential new members were also invited to sign up. The day was capped off with individual soccer presentations and a much needed afternoon of rain, that didn't dampen anyone's spirits.

By Deputy Captain Austral Rural Fire Brigade, David Saunders

Top: A busy soccer presentation ceremony provided Austral RFB with an excellent forum for delivering the RFS message. The club thanked volunteer firefighters for saving their equipment during a fire. Photo by David Saunders.

Left: Austral volunteers gave Austral Soccer Club members a demonstration of their equipment and skills. Photo by Simon Andrews.

REMOTE, RURAL AND READY

A safety education program aimed at rural women is proving successful in RFS Namoi Gwydir Team (Moree Plains, Narrabri, Gwydir councils).

The Remote Rural Women's Program aims to provide basic fire and general emergency information to women in isolated areas because they live so far away from immediate emergency service assistance.

By improving their skills in basic fire safety and first aid these women can help friends, family and neighbours in emergency situations.

The most recent meeting involved 12 ladies from the Warrana, Whalan Creek and Tulloona Rural Fire Brigades at Tulloona Rural Fire Station, 70 km north of Moree, on Friday 16th September 2005.

TOPICS COVERED INCLUDED:

- > Basic fire behaviour
- > "000" calls
- > Smoke alarms
- > Fire blankets
- > Fire extinguishers
- > Emergency evacuation plans
- > Preparing for bushfires
- > Fire safety in the home
- > Casualty assistance.

"The ladies had a most enjoyable day and pledged to pass on this valuable information to family members, friends and neighbours," said RFS Namoi Gwydir Community Safety Officer Insp. Marty Thick.

"They have also pledged to become more involved in future brigade training activities."

Women from Warrana, Whalan Creek and Tulloona gathered at Tulloona station for the Remote Rural Women's Program.



WEBSITE REDESIGN IMPROVES SAFETY INFORMATION – WWW.RFS.NSW.GOV.AU

The RFS public website has been redesigned to make it easier for the public to find fire safety and property preparation information, as well as showcase the hard work of RFS volunteers.

If you haven't had a look already – check it out at www.rfs.nsw.gov.au

An online survey completed by around 400 website users came up with many great ideas to improve the site.

Five percent of users found the old site hard to use, 44 percent found it moderate and 52 percent found it easy. In a follow-up survey on the new site with 150 respondents these statistics improved. One percent found the new site hard to use, 25 percent found it moderate and 76 percent found it easy.

Specifically, users found it easier to find information on where fire permits are required, what the regulations are during the bushfire danger period, where Total Fire Bans are declared, and in which NSW Fire Area they are located.

The white background and new menu items are the main features. Here are the suggestions the RFS Media & Public Affairs team were given, and how they have been included in the new site.

UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION

We've reviewed, rewritten, updated and repackaged a range of information to ensure it's current. One of the best initiatives of the new site is the 'Current Incidents' section. It sits under the 'Fire Updates' menu, provides information on notifiable incidents

being attended by RFS volunteers, and updates every 30 minutes.

BLACK BACKGROUND

This was not users' favourite feature of the website, so we've moved to a white background with black text, making it easier on the eyes.

MORE PICTURES PLEASE!

We found that the majority of users connect via ADSL/Cable while about a third are dial-up users. So we've tried to provide more pictures and graphics without making life too hard for our dial-up users. There's a specific section called Photos and Movies where we will be placing lots of pictures of RFS activities for those who are interested.

BETTER NAVIGATION

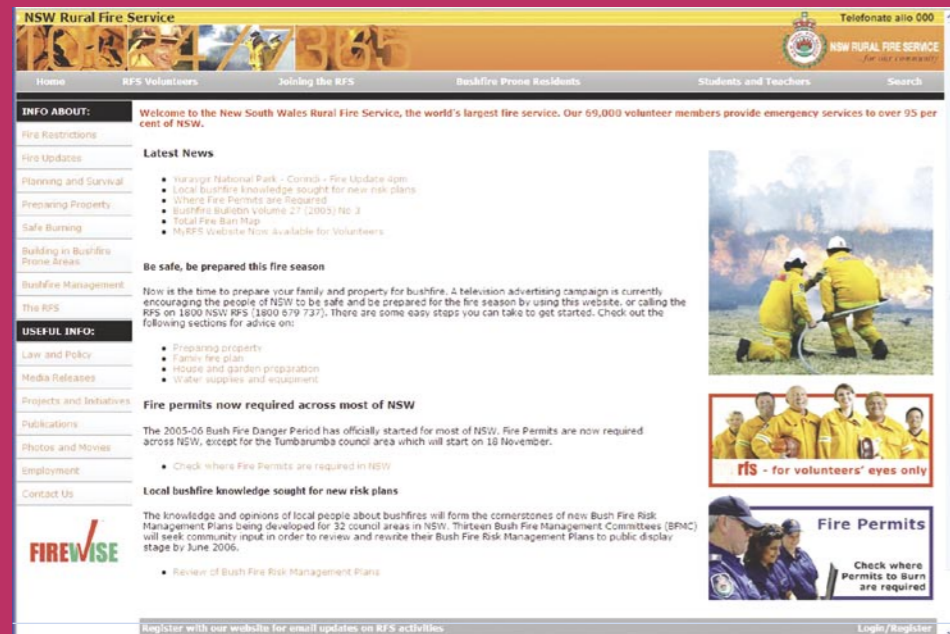
On our old site, information for RFS volunteers was mixed in with fire safety and educative material for the public. So we've structured the site by targeting information either for specific groups (such as RFS volunteers, those interested in joining the RFS, those living in bushfire prone areas), or about specific subjects (fire restrictions, fire updates, preparing and building in bushfire prone areas and about the RFS).

You will now find two ways to navigate the site - at the top of the page and down the left hand side of the page.

We hope this makes it easier to find the information, and that new information and interesting sections are easier to locate on the site.

IMPROVE THE SEARCH FUNCTION

The new search tool provides you with information in an easier to use format, with the ability to order data alphabetically or by date.



www.rfs.nsw.gov.au

TAFE PROMOTES FIREWISE



FireWise messages met technical training at the Mt Druiitt TAFE Industry Expo Open day on 19 October.

RFS Cumberland Zone rural fire brigades from Plumpton, Erskine Park and representatives from Penrith Fire Control Centre were on hand to showcase equipment used by volunteer firefighters to the local community, high school, TAFE students and staff.

Mt.Druiitt TAFE has about 8000 students and is the Western Sydney Institute's main trade, technology and engineering centre, offering

courses in Information Technology, Hospitality, Library Studies, Plumbing, Hairdressing and Beauty, Business Studies and general education.

The Expo was well timed, coinciding with the launch of a TAFE course for fitting external sprinklers in properties in bushfire zones within the plumbing section.

Staff and students were shown around the Plumpton 1 tanker and had the opportunity to hold some of the equipment used by the RFS. One very interested group of international students was surprised that the fire service being promoted was a volunteer service and commented on the level of professionalism of RFS personnel and the amount and type of equipment carried on the tanker.

The day was organised by Cynthia Lowe – Business Unit Manager of Mt Druiitt TAFE, to showcase the skills of the students across a wide range of employment

areas. Industry representatives also attended during the day meeting and talking with students and staff. During the early evening a local band provided some good entertainment.

Students, staff and management extended their thanks to RFS Cumberland Zone staff and volunteers - Justin Back, Steve Grey from Penrith Fire Control, Adam Quinn from Erskine Park, Jim Samuel and Trevor Haskins from Plumpton Brigade. Their support of the day and involvement during the event is greatly appreciated.

Without the support of the RFS through the Cumberland Zone, the day would not have been as successful. MT Druiitt TAFE college extends an invitation to the RFS Cumberland Zone to attend next year's Open Day and is looking forward to developing a greater relationship with the RFS to both promote the Firewise message and any mutual organisational opportunities that may arise.

Photo by Cynthia Lowe
Mt.Druiitt TAFE 2005

Nokia has kindly donated a number of mobile phones for use by RFS chaplains. Photographed are Louise Ingram (Marketing Manager Nokia), Angus Jon (Customer Service Manager Nokia) and RFS Senior Chaplain Ron Anderson who presented Nokia with a certificate of appreciation. Photo by Rebel Talbert.



MYRFS FUNDED FROM HEAD OFFICE SAVINGS

Getting accurate and timely information to volunteers has always been a challenge for the RFS. It's something that many volunteers have raised with me through the Volunteer Survey, regional volunteer forums, and other face-to-face meetings. In response to this concern, MyRFS was developed and is available at www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au.

MyRFS is a sophisticated communications and information tool that now gives our volunteers unprecedented access to RFS systems and information – helping them manage their day-to-day firefighting and brigade activities.

Even in its early stages, MyRFS is providing very useful information to brigades. Brigades now have a snapshot of brigade activity statewide allowing them to see where Fire Bans are in force and even aircraft movements. Additionally – and importantly – it allows individual volunteers to view the personal information we hold, and provide us updates to that information when it's required. The most recent release provided vital statistics on brigade call outs allowing brigades to plan responses, crews and contact lists. Soon, volunteers will be able to see historical reports showing which appliances are most used.

MyRFS is an ongoing development program and new features are being regularly released. We have a team of volunteer and RFS representatives guiding the development activities, and members of our own in-house development team are active volunteers. I am aware that there have been a number of questions raised about how MyRFS is funded. The MyRFS project has specific funds allocated to it. In terms of your District/Zone budget for this year, extra money has been put on top of the allocation specifically for this project.

MyRFS funding was sourced from savings derived from the Head Office budget and provided on-top of your district's allocation for purchasing equipment. I do not envisage that this situation will change next year either. What this means is that brigades and districts have not lost one cent of funding for vital firefighting equipment as a result of the MyRFS project. In fact in a number of Districts/Zones the monies available for equipment has been increased.

Our Media and Public Affairs unit are also seeking external sponsorship funding for the MyRFS project so that we can allocate existing MyRFS funding to other worthwhile projects. To do this we need our internet-enabled volunteers to register for the MyRFS service. It goes without saying that the more volunteers we have registered; the more attractive MyRFS will look to potential sponsors. MyRFS has my strong support, and the support of every level of the RFS and the RFSA. The RFSA have applauded the efforts of MyRFS to date, and encourage all members to discover the benefits of this important communications tool.

If you have an internet connection, at home, at work or even at your local library, I encourage you all to register for MyRFS and check your personal information. While you're there, take a look at the benefits that MyRFS can offer you and provide them feedback to make a better system for you.

RFS Commissioner Phil Koperberg



SES CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

For those not in the know, it must have almost been alarming – thousands of orange clad State Emergency Service (SES) volunteers gathered in one place (Sydney Harbour, no less), being briefed by Premier Morris Iemma.

However, Saturday 12 November was not a day of catastrophe, but a day of celebration, marking the 50th anniversary of the SES in NSW.

Less than a week after assisting in floods that prompted more than 700 call-outs across the state, SES volunteers enjoyed blue skies and warm weather for their George St march, which began in First Fleet park.

Around 1500 SES volunteers marched through the centre of Sydney, cheered on by the public who consistently rely on their efforts.

Also marching were the SES, NSW Fire Brigades and the NSW Police band.

About 80 RFS volunteers from around the state gave their time to direct traffic, manage crowd control, and support the SES.

Story and photo Belinda Landry

The SES band entertains crowds during the 50th anniversary street march in Sydney.

NEW ENGLAND FIREWISE EXPO

In a major community education and public relations initiative, emergency services and community support agencies from the New England region teamed together to stage the second annual Emergency Services and Firewise Expo for over 1000 people.

Hosted at RFS New England Zone Headquarters in Armidale on 24 September, the Expo featured an array of static displays and demonstrations.

Participating agencies included RFS, Rural Lands Protection Board, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Community Services (disaster recovery), Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, St John Ambulance, State Emergency Service, NSW Police, NSW Ambulance Service, NSW Fire Brigades, RSPCA, WIRES and a number of fire-related commercial companies.

Jointly coordinated by RFS New England Zone Community Safety Officer Sean Chipman and volunteer Media Officer Kerri Tyrrell from Armidale-Dumaresq SES, the event called on volunteers of a number of agencies who provided strong support to the initiative.

In addition to local SES teams, RFS units from Dumaresq, Guyra, Ben Lomond, Dangarsleigh, Diggings, Balala, Devils Pinch, Warrane and Enmore Rural Fire Brigades and the New England Zone Remote Area Fire Fighting Team together with the Zone Communications Unit responded to the call for assistance.

The highlight of the day was a simulated multiple motor vehicle accident that called upon RFS, SES, NSWFB (HAZMAT), Police and Ambulance resources. No detail was overlooked – an SES Chaplain was on site to assist a disoriented (but otherwise uninjured) victim in the accident.

“This is our major Community Education project for the year. I am happy that it has gone so well – I think that we have offered some familiarity in

what we all do and how we can help,” RFS New England Zone Manager Supt Steve Mepham said.

Story and photos by David Thomas

Below Left: In dusty conditions, a heli-bucket drawing water from a portable dam was demonstrated at the Armidale Firewise Expo.

Below Right: A five-man crew from Devils Pinch RFB commanded by Deputy Captain Neil Clayton demonstrate a fog attack on a burning gas cylinder at the Firewise Expo.

Bottom: A rescue team from Armidale-Dumaresq SES demonstrate MVA victim recovery techniques at the Armidale Firewise Expo.





TYRE BLOW OUT CAUSES TRUCK FIRE ON FREEWAY

RFS and NSW Fire Brigades attended a truck fire on the F3 Freeway, Mount White on 14 July 2005.

The truck experienced a tyre blow out causing it to swerve across several lanes. The driver managed to steer the truck off the freeway, crashing between the barrier and rock wall.

The fuel tank ruptured and ignited. Burning fuel and tyre debris spilled into the drain and ignited adjacent bushland.

The driver was commended by police for managing to exit the freeway, minimising risk to other motorists.

Story and photo by Gosford Community Safety Officer Rolf Poole



RFS ASSISTS NSW FIRE BRIGADES WITH RECRUITMENT

RFS officers will be involved in the recruitment of NSW Fire Brigades (NSWFB) firefighters by assisting with their selection process.

Six RFS officers are sitting as independent selection panel members to assist NSWFB with the recruitment process for over 3,000 applications.

This is another positive step in the working relationship between the RFS and NSWFB.

The RFS officers from Headquarters attended a two day workshop in October at the NSWFB Specialised State Operations site at Greenacre to prepare them for their part in the selection process.

The training was conducted by the Australian Institute of Forensic Psychology.

Participants were provided with insight into the psychological assessment process and how to interpret and use this data when conducting interviews in order to choose the most suitable candidate to progress.



NSWFB and RFS staff who trained together and will participate jointly in choosing the permanent firefighters for the future.

BACK ROW

Station Officer Tony Lenthall (NSWFB Maitland Station), Linden Dryburgh (RFS Operational Communications), Station Officer Fernando Martin (NSWFB Work Experience Coordinator), Senior Firefighter Michael Van Den Bout (NSWFB Instructor), Senior Firefighter Stephen Brown (NSWFB Manly Station), Ryan Coffey (RFS Operations, Policy & Standards), Station Officer Jeremy Hood (NSWFB Instructor)

FRONT ROW

Shona Guthrie (RFS Development Control Services), Qualified Firefighter Nick Andronicus (NSWFB City of Sydney Station), Marielle Davidson (RFS Corporate Planning and Performance), Janelle Clark (RFS Staff Services), Qualified Firefighter Paula Raat (NSWFB Employee Assistance Coordinator).



FLASHES OF RED IN THE FOREST

Flashes of red through the trees of the Bongil Bongil National Park were not flames but tankers from five rural fire brigades from Coffs Harbour and Bellingen on a joint familiarisation exercise with the local National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS).

Held on 21 August, the morning started with introductions at the Bonville station.

Martin Smith, National Parks Ranger for the area, met the group at Grandis Camp, a forest clearing that was once a Forestry Camp site, large enough to assemble all 10 vehicles.

Martin, an experience firefighter himself, gave a very realistic assessment of firefighting problems.

"In the event of a fire the local rural fire brigades would clearly be first crews on scene, and their bigger water tankers vital," he said.

When the convoy of eight fire tankers wove their way along the fire trails in the southern eastern section of the park, the greater clearance and turn around space needed for bigger Category 1 tankers was obvious.



Crews were updated on the latest access, trail conditions and current water sources, with en-route communications by radio and stops at water holes and locked gates.

Martin praised the co-operation and interest shown by the brigades, and said the input of local firefighters' knowledge and community consultation would be sought in the near future for upgrading of the park's fire plan.

The event was organised by Senior Deputy Captain of Bonville Rural Fire Brigade Wendy Crampton.

"We invited our neighbour brigades to join us on this exercise as in any large incident we are all likely to be involved," Wendy said.

She said it was particularly important to find out before a fire if the trails were suitable for the bigger, higher tankers, and to get to know members of the other brigades. Feedback from the day supported this.




The exercise was attended by Bonville, Boambee, Mylstrom, Repton and Red Hill brigades and concluded with a barbecue lunch at the Repton Brigade Station.

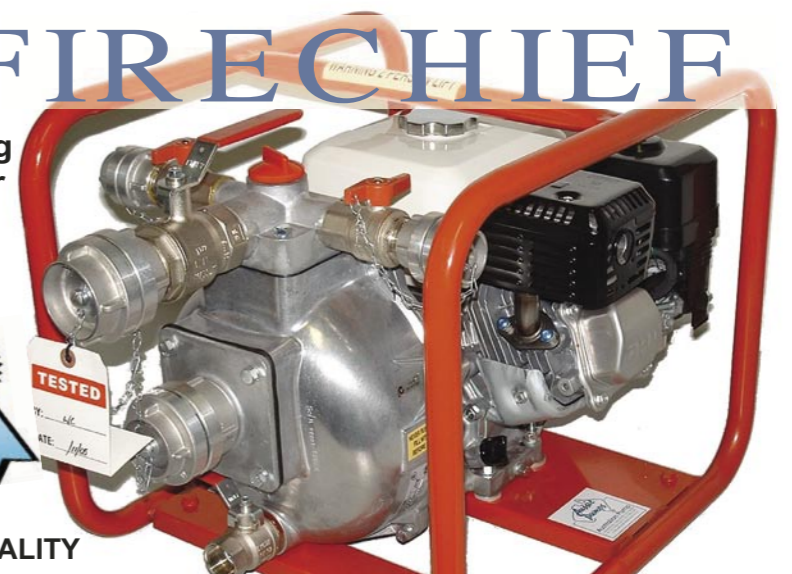
Story and photo by Narelle Swanson, Bonville Rural Fire Brigade

Ranger Martin Smith shows local RFS volunteers access points to the southern section of Bongil Bongil National Park.

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HORNSBY CREW LEADERS PUT THROUGH THEIR PACES

One hot night early in March 2005, eight potential crew leaders from Hornsby District assembled at the Berowra Rural Fire Brigade (RFB) station to be briefed on their final assessment.

The assessment involved four Cat 1 tankers, and crews from Berowra, Westleigh, Mt Kuring-gai and Muogamarra. The group was split in two, one sent to the practical course, the other to the theory. Half way through the night they would swap over.

As we sat listening to the briefing for the practical component we could see the tension on the faces of the potential crew leaders as they contemplated the hours ahead.

Our first response of the night was to assist another brigade with a reported fire at the end of a trail near a light industrial area. En route to the "incident" we heard the sitrep of the other brigade. They were

attacking the main fire, but unable to access a spot fire which had developed down a side trail.

On our approach we saw the glow of the fires reflected in the sky - this was just like the real thing. The Officer In Charge of the initial brigade had adopted the call sign Mundowie Control, and directed us to extinguish the spot fire.

After extinguishing this we were given a whole two minute break before being asked to "respond" to a property for protection against a wildfire. There was no live fire in this exercise, so the crew leader was given the scenario in the form a short situation briefing from an assessor.

Our crew leader instructed us to lay our hose lines and wait for the fire to reach us. As we made up the assessor spent some time asking our crew leader a range of questions about how he would have reacted and what course of action he would have taken if it had been a different scenario at the same location.

Our next scenario was a motor vehicle accident. As we responded around the final corner we saw a 4WD nose first into a telegraph pole, the driver badly injured suffering from a severe chest wound that looked all too real.

A chlorine container had fallen from the vehicle to the road and there a fuel fire was burning furiously next to the vehicle. We did not envy the crew leader as he used all his knowledge and skills to prioritise the tasks and delegate them.

The final scenario for our first crew leader was as the initial brigade at Medowie Rd. After this the practical side of the night was all over for the first set of crew leaders.

They went off to do their theory and the second crew leaders came in to take us through the scenarios all over again.

By the end of the night we were exhausted, having participated in a range of exciting and challenging training exercises that were very similar to the real thing.

Story by James De Berardis Berowra RFB





COMMUNITY FIRE EDUCATION

STRIKE WHILE THE IRON IS HOT

Strike while the iron is hot; make hay while the sun shines - good old country sayings which can be appropriate to community fire education.

There is no better time to get a community's attention in fire mitigation matters than after an incident or near miss.

Fernmount Rural Fire Brigade (Bellingen Shire) had its near miss on its Open Day, which also happened to be a day of Total Fire Ban.

The open day proceeded with the obligatory sausage sizzle and displays with about 30 residents dropping in. Despite the Total Fire Ban the response for information was not overwhelming.

What a difference four hours can make.

At 18:00hrs that evening winds had kicked in and were gusting to 60kph. The following events happened in quick succession:

1. A tallowwood fell across high tension powerlines blocking the only access in or out of a large proportion of the village.

2. The powerlines caused a fire to start on the side of the road.

3. The fire was into the crowns of the regrowth bush and had travelled 40-50 metres to a dwelling.

4. Sixteen members heeded the siren/pager call; however 11 were on the wrong side of the road blockage. The other five responded the Cat 1 and 7.

5. Some good firefighting with a little bit of luck stopped the fire at a house wall with the gutters alight.

Despite the high temperatures and strong winds the ill-prepared house was saved.

Local residents realised what we had been saying for years could eventuate. This one event generated more interest and response than all previous community education.

So to strike while the iron was hot, a field day was organised for the following weekend by volunteers and the Fire Mitigation Officer.

An enthusiastic crowd in excess of 50 greeted us. They were now well motivated, thirsty for information and hit us with a barrage of questions. A suggestion box was also opened to canvas local ideas.

Some of the outcomes included ways to provide emergency access to dead end roads, several applications for Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificates, inspections, some new members, and the delivery of a large number of brochures.

Despite someone's near misfortune, this incident was the best motivational tool you could wish for. So leave no stone unturned, make hay while the sun shines and strike while the iron is hot.

By Rod McGrath, Fire Mitigation Officer, Mid North Coast Team.

Below: Fernmount RFB members saved this property – and its near loss sparked community interest in RFS education and information.



CORLETTE HILL HAZARD REDUCTION

Interagency cooperation enabled a hazard reduction burn to take place at Corlette Hill near Nelson Bay in Port Stephens, on 12 October 2005. The burn was on Council land in NSW Fire Brigades area and involved RFS personnel from Salt Ash, Soldiers Point and Vacy Rural Fire Brigades. Rain fell across most of Port Stephens on the day, except for Corlette Hill.

Right: Inspector Mark Delves from NSWFB and Inspector Tami Snowden of the RFS checking maps during the Corlette Hill hazard reduction. Photo by Peter Murphy

Below: NSW Fire Brigades and RFS firefighters working together on the fireline during the Corlette Hill hazard reduction. Photo by Tami Snowden.



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CRASH FREE DRIVING COURSE WELCOMED BY VOLUNTEERS

The new Crash Free Driving (CFD) course is making a big impact across the state. Some volunteers enjoyed it so that they were compelled to write to us.

So far about 110 RFS members have completed the course, and are raving about it. Here is what some of them have said:

I would like to thank you once again for the chance to attend the CFD course in Yass. Over the past number of weeks I have been implementing the processes that were shown to us at the course and have noticed a distinct change in my driving habits. This has also been noticed by my wife who can be my biggest critic. I knew before the course that I had a few bad habits, but I never knew I had that many.

The part of the course that really stood out for me was the CAS (Crash Avoidance Space). I have found myself leaving that space now out of habit, where as before I was on the tail of the person in front trying to get around.

I have talked to the other two members from our brigade about the after affects of the course and each of us have changed in some way... (our wives have let us know!!). From the course I have pulled aside some of our drivers to just say "stay back a little".

I think it is a great course and I hope that it will be instigated right through the RFS as soon as possible. Thanks again,

*Colin McKenzie
St Georges Basin Rural Fire Brigade*

ANOTHER MEMBER WROTE IN WITH THE FOLLOWING PRAISE FOR THE COURSE:

On one occasion, on my way to the station and running a little late, I believe the control the course gave me prevented a serious crash with another vehicle. A driveway sits on a blind corner, and I usually travel at speed around it. I forced myself to slow down after I completed my training. One serious crash prevented and I thank the NSW RFS for the introduction of the CFD. It has brought back to the forefront something that I had become complacent about. I arrived at the station safe, a few minutes late for training. It was certainly much easier to face the crew and apologise for being late, rather than dealing with what could have been the alternative.

For more information on the course contact your local Fire Control Centre or Brett Storey, RFS Headquarters Learning and Development.

Story by Matthew Schroder

RFS IN RESIDENCE AT NSW FIRE BRIGADES

An RFS Liaison Officer based at NSW Fire Brigade's (NSWFB) Alexandria Sydney communications centre will help ensure RFS response to incidents remains consistent and that jurisdictional issues are addressed.

Enhancing our operational capability, coordination, and response to incidents, is a key aim of the role.

Supt. Mat Smith has taken up the position which aims to improve interagency operations, improve the data on our brigades held within the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system, and assist with boundary issues and mutual aid agreements.

Another key role is to assist in determining our tactical business requirements for the next generation CAD.

This involves three agencies (NSWFB, RFS & SES) moving towards jointly staffed call-taking and dispatch facilities through FireCAD.

Supt. Smith has full access to the current FireCAD system, its business rules and the NSWFB staff who support it.

This improves the transparency of operations and fosters further trust and understanding between the Services.

An enormous amount of RFS information that is vital for appropriate response is stored in FireCAD, including call signs, station locations, contact details and phone numbers.

The liaison officer position will ensure that the intent and content of Mutual Aid Agreements are properly translated into operational procedures, enhancing responses and minimising potential disputes.

As well as acting as an RFS 'helpdesk' at Alexandria during normal day-to-day operations, the liaison officer is also available during the activation of a Major Incident Coordination Centre.

Previously NSWFB liaison officers have been involved at RFS State Operations during major incidents, but a mutual exchange has not occurred.

Supt. Mat Smith with NSWFB colleagues in the Alexandria communication centre.



CERTIFICATES AVAILABLE THROUGH FIRE CONTROL CENTRES

LIFE MEMBERSHIP CERTIFICATE

From time to time, as a show of appreciation for their tireless work and commitment, brigades elect to present a past or present member with an honorary Life Membership.

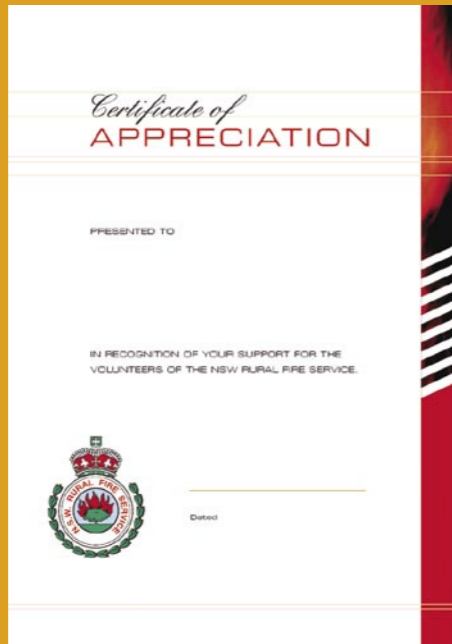
The RFS has made available a Life Membership Certificate for just such an occasion.

For brigades to obtain this certificate a letter of request signed by either the Captain or a member of the brigade Executive Committee, a copy the minutes of the meeting in which the decision was approved, as well as a brief Service history of the recipient (one to two paragraphs is sufficient) will need to be provided to their Fire Control Centre.

APPRECIATION CERTIFICATE

Also available are Appreciation Certificates. These are available to brigades who wish to thank those organisations or individuals who have supported them e.g. donations for raffles, contributions towards brigade community activities etc.

To obtain this certificate a letter of request signed by either the Captain or member of the Executive Committee listing the recipients' names must be forwarded, with a brief explanation of the reasons behind awarding the certificate, to the local Fire Control Centre.



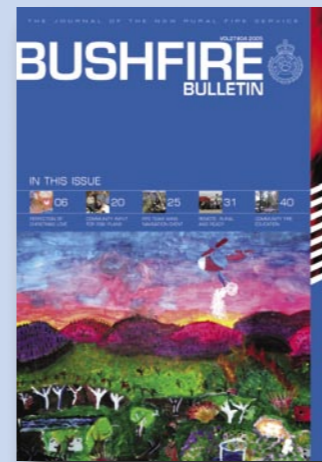
Once the request has been received it will then be forwarded to the Volunteer Relations Unit where



the certificates are issued and returned to the Fire Control Centre in the shortest possible time.



BUSHFIRE BULLETIN ADVERTISING RATES AND SPECIFICATIONS



BOOKING DEADLINES

Issue 1	Issue 2	Issue 3	Issue 4
First week of January	Last week of March	First week of July	Last week of October

MECHANICAL DETAILS

(mm)	1/6page	1/3page	1/2page	Full Page
Width	60	190	190	190
Height	137	90	137	277

ADVERTISING RATES per issue (includes GST)

1/6page	1/3page	1/2page	Full Page	Inside Cover
Casual rate Full colour				
475	675	850	1275	1800
12 month Contract Full colour				
400	550	680	1000	1400

PREFERRED POSITION

The normal position and placing of advertisements is at the discretion of the publisher, with exception of the covers

COPY DEADLINE

Three weeks prior to publication date. If material has not been supplied by the appropriate deadline, the publisher reserves the right to repeat material previously used

DISTRIBUTION

Publishing run 33,000 copies

CONTENT

The Publisher reserves the right to refuse to accept any advertisement

CONTACT

Advertising Sales: Belinda Landry belinda.landry@rfs.nsw.gov.au
Telephone: (02)8741 5183 Facsimile: (02)9737 0171

FIGHTING FIRE WITH FIRE – BURNING DOWN THE HOUSE

At 11.40hrs on Friday 23 September 2005, breathing apparatus (BA) crews from Alpine and Yerrinbool Rural Fire Brigades forced entry into a derelict house partially involved in fire.

Inside they found two rooms fully involved...and an RFS Media and Fire Investigation film crew.

Charles Sturt University (CSU) approached RFS Wollondilly district in search of a derelict house that could be set alight as a practical assessment for students undertaking a Graduate Certificate in Fire Investigation.

A resident of the district was all too happy to provide such a structure. After six weeks of coordination and preparation between the RFS and CSU, the exercise was ready to proceed.

Aiming to be as realistic as possible, the course instructors set up the burn thinking like an arsonist.

A "For Sale" sign out the front, little property inside the house, termite damage, and burn patterns throughout the house were just some of the indicators the students had to look for.

Crew briefings emphasized safety as the priority in the burn, but also the preservation of evidence for the investigators' assessment.

A film crew inside and outside the house tracked the fire's progression not only for the benefit of the fire investigation students, but also for the RFS.



The footage provided images of how fire behaves within a structure, and how long rooms take to become fully involved.

The exercise also assisted the RFS in its firefighter training. For some of the members in attendance this was their first village incident. They were able to put into practice their theory work and see first hand the smoke and radiant heat involved in structure fires.

Instructors were overjoyed with the results. The variety of burn patterns in the remains of the house would provide a challenge for students.

After fire investigation students finished their assessment, RFS volunteers continued to burn the

house for defensive village firefighting training.

All parties agreed that the exercise was an overwhelming success. The RFS benefited not only from the practical experience the volunteers gained, but also because another group of students now has the necessary qualifications to discover the cause of fire.

Story and photos by Matthew Schroder

Above: CSU students in fire investigation inspected this building as an assessment exercise.



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- | | |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Spotfires (incidents attended by brigades) | <input type="checkbox"/> Briefs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> RFSA Donation | <input type="checkbox"/> New Risk Plans |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arson Device Research | <input type="checkbox"/> Operations Centre Pull Out |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Christmas Message | <input type="checkbox"/> Navigation Event |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Training Stories | <input type="checkbox"/> Young Aussie Pride Award |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Firefighters' Pocketbook | <input type="checkbox"/> Open Day Success |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New Brigade in Lightning Ridge | <input type="checkbox"/> Remote Rural Women's Program |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aviation Resources and Training | <input type="checkbox"/> Website Redesign |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Rail Corridor Exercise | <input type="checkbox"/> SES Celebration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> RFSA President Profile | <input type="checkbox"/> New England Expo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MyRFS Update | <input type="checkbox"/> RFS in Residence at NSW Fire Brigades |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Kids Living With Fire | |

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