

LIFT-OUT: ARE YOU READY FOR THE FIRE SEASON?

VOLUME 30 No.03 // 2008

BUSH FIREbulletin

//// THE JOURNAL OF THE NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

IN THIS ISSUE

**Launch of the
2008 Fire Season**

**Pope Benedict
in Sydney**

**3000 tankers
and counting**

RFS at the CALIFORNIAN FIRES

THE FULL STORY INSIDE

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**THE HUT MEN FROM KOSCIUSKO
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THE 'PERFECT' HELMET**

**PHOTO GALLERIES:
REGION EAST CHAMPIONSHIPS
REGION WEST IMX**



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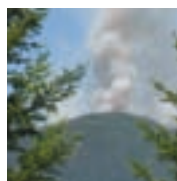
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Cover: The foreshores of Shasta Lake in northern California scorched by the Shu Complex fires in June 2008. Photo by Craig Burley.
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The views expressed in articles in the Bush Fire Bulletin do not necessarily reflect the views or the policies of the NSW Rural Fire Service.

FOREWORD



Around this time last year, the Service was in a fortunate position heading into fire season. This was due mainly to a La Nina weather event which brought mild conditions to much of the State. These conditions culminated in one of the quietest fire seasons in recent memory.

This fire season, we are not as fortunate.

It is worth remembering that 90 percent of NSW remains in some form of drought - either drought declared or marginal. This underlying dryness, coupled with expected higher than median temperatures, means we can expect to see an increase in fire activity. During my recent travels across the State, many rural members have indicated good crop prospects, in particular in the central west and north west regions where there has been some welcome rain. In our south west, however, the conditions remain very dry.

The coastal rain experienced during winter has narrowed the window of opportunity for effective hazard reduction burning. Despite this, the Service has achieved approximately 80 percent of its targeted community protection works including around 60 percent of its planned hazard reduction. This has afforded an improved level of protection to many thousands of homes across the State.

Recruitment is another challenge we face in the years ahead. For this reason, the Service has embarked on a new television recruitment campaign and a specially built website at www.jointherfs.com.au. The advertisement features real volunteers from across the State, with real stories to tell about their time in the Service. I would like to thank those members, as well as the advertising agency BCM, for their important contribution to this project.

Inside this edition of the Bulletin, you will find articles on the Service's role during the recent World Youth Day events in Sydney. During the event, Police Commissioner Andrew Scipione contacted me to thank all volunteers for their professionalism and I echo his praise. You will also find accounts from some of our members, who recently deployed to the United States, as part of a 44-strong delegation from Australia and New Zealand.

As you would be aware, The Hon. Tony Kelly MLC has been appointed Emergency Services Minister. This is a familiar portfolio for the Minister, having previously filled this role. Minister Kelly is also a member of two brigades, so he enjoys a strong understanding of our business. I look forward to continuing to work with the Minister.

Finally, with fire season now upon us, I wish all members and their families a safe season.

Shane Fitzsimmons, AFSM
Commissioner

OUR VALUES UNDERPIN ALL OUR ACTIONS

THE SERVICE IN FOCUS

WELCOME BACK MINISTER KELLY

The new State Government ministry has brought significant changes for the RFS. Our former Minister, Nathan Rees is now Premier of NSW and we welcome back Tony Kelly MLC as the Minister for Emergency Services.

Nathan Rees is a great supporter of the RFS and during his tenure as our Minister attended a great many Service functions right around the State. We wish him well in his challenging new role.

As we farewell one minister, we welcome back a longstanding friend of the RFS in our new Minister, Tony Kelly MLC.

Tony Kelly was Minister for Emergency Services for more than four years from 2003 and oversaw a substantial increase in funding for RFS.

Mr Kelly is also an RFS volunteer. He has membership in two brigades in the Wellington district near his family farm.

As well as being Minister for Emergency Services, Mr Kelly is also Minister for Police and Minister for Lands. We look forward to Mr Kelly's continuing support and welcome him back to his role as Minister for Emergency Services.



STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS: and the winners are...

Photos by Anthony Clark, Media Services

WHAT WOULD IT TAKE FOR YOU **TO FIGHT?**

Watch the ad on www.jointherfs.com.au



I am pleased to announce that the new recruitment Community Service Announcement (CSA) that was filmed at Hill Top in July has reached completion and was launched at the 2008 Open Day at Regentville Rural Fire Brigade. Our Minister, Tony Kelly made the announcement.

The CSA, which aims to attract new volunteers to the RFS as well as raise the camaraderie already felt by our members, is the culmination of many months of hard work by volunteers and staff alike. That hard work has paid off with a visually spectacular and professional product, which I am sure we will all be very proud of.

A specially designed 'micro site' will assist with delivering the CSA to a wider audience and answer any questions new recruits may have about the Service. You can access the campaign site by going to www.jointherfs.com.au.

The 'making of' video has been posted on YouTube www.youtube.com/NSWRFS and the CSA will go live on this same site following the launch.

We anticipate that the CSA will appear on TV screens shortly and that you will start seeing results in your local brigades over the coming months.

Shane Fitzsimmons, AFSM
Commissioner



Congratulations to the new RFS State Champions for 2008 - Tweed District from the Far North Coast Zone.

The 18th NSW RFS State Championships were held in September at Kingscliff, near Tweed Heads. More than 250 volunteer members from across NSW competed to be State's top brigade.

The winners for the junior's category are the St Paul's Cadet Rural Fire Brigade from the Cumberland Zone.

See the next issue of the Bush Fire Bulletin for a full photo gallery of the event.

PAGE 2 SECOND LEFT:

The Commissioner with the happy winners from the St Paul's Grammar School, Cranbrook near Penrith who have won the State Championships for the second consecutive year. LEFT TO RIGHT: Superintendent Richard Petch, Cumberland Zone, Tyrone Pollard, Rhys Goldfinch, Nicholas Mitchell, Michael Gemin, Noah Minor, Jonathan Wong, Alex Casalini, Nicholas McDonnell, Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons. FRONT ROW, LEFT TO RIGHT: Nathan Brasier, Crew Leader Bill Andrews.

TOP LEFT:

RFS State Champions with the Commissioner: LEFT TO RIGHT: Gregg Miller, Damian Freeman, John Milford, John Taylor and Lance Hobson and Crew Leader, Robert Eglington.

ABOVE:

Proud team members Gregg Miller, Byron Bay and Lance Hobson from Mainarm.

INCIDENTS

AUSSIES AT THE CALIFORNIAN FIRES

When huge fires tore through California this year the RFS decided to help out.

A request to assist with the firefighting in California came through in June this year from the Federal Government's Forest Fire Management Group.

It was the fifth time the RFS have sent firefighters to the US since 2000. The RFS sent over three men for the deployment who were part of a 44-strong delegation from Australia and New Zealand. The RFS team consisted of Geoff Parish, coordinator for business development at RFS head office and a group officer in Gosford district, Craig Burley, Hawkesbury District Group Captain and Russell Perry, Group Captain from the Murray District.

The team was in the US for about 40 days and worked primarily on the Shu Fire Complex and Siskiyou Complex in northern California. (See map).

They were farewelled from Sydney by the then Minister for Emergency Services, Nathan Rees and the Assistant Commissioner Rob Rogers on 13 July.

The team spent the next three days in Boise, Idaho at the National Interagency Fire Centre being briefed on differences between the various firefighting techniques, vegetation types, terrain, weather conditions and being fitted out with PPE and camping equipment. They also received orientation in defensive driving, finance, fuel types, fire behaviour, cultural differences, Fireline Safety and Survival, communications and chowline.

"Some interesting statistics were quoted on our first day in class at NIFC," Russell Perry said, "At that time California had 500,000 acres (202,000ha) of uncontained fire and had the following resources deployed: 1,514 tankers, 123 helicopters, 40 air tankers, 487 20-person crews and 25,000 personnel committed.

"During a three day period, California had 1,423 new fires starts. Fifty seven of those had grown into large fires," he said.

The Australians left Boise and headed for Base Camp 84 at Redding, northern



California where they received their work assignments and hire cars.

Craig and Geoff were deployed to the Shu Fire Complex, north of Redding and Russell headed off to the Butte Lightning Complex at Chico, about 1.5 hours south of Redding.

"We all picked up our assigned vehicles and then travelled from Redding to our assignments," Russell said, "Forty odd ANZ personnel driving on the other side of the road for first time - that was interesting."

Craig Burley spoke for the whole team when he expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to deploy to the US.

"There are some very different, albeit at times subtle, cultural differences between Australians and the Americans. But in reality, the core values of wanting to help those in need in times of adversity, are

exactly the same. It makes it really easy to make good friends when our overall objective is the same."

"I would truly like to express my very sincere gratitude to the Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons and the NSW Rural Fire Service for choosing me for a second deployment to the USA."

Those interested in an overseas deployment can join the RFS Overseas Deployment Register. Contact your local Fire Control Centre for further details.

ABOVE: This map shows the areas in northern California where the Australian delegation were deployed. The Siskiyou Complex and Shu Complex fires, surrounding Lake Shasta, are indicated.



**NEARLY 1500
FIRES BLAZED
THROUGHOUT
CALIFORNIA**

AUSSIES AT THE CALIFORNIAN FIRES: GEOFF PARISH



A NOT SO NORMAL DAY ON THE FIRE GROUND

By Geoff Parish, Divisional Supervisor

The day started out as normal with the early morning briefing followed by breakfast, vehicles refueling, collecting stores and packed lunches and then heading off to the fire ground.

The proximity of the ocean had made its presence felt over night. There was still some fog around and the humidity was quite high although the day was sunny and warm.

Our mission for the day was to continue and deepen the burn on the eastern end of our control line and to continue the construction of the hand tool line to the west and down to the junction of Blue and Junction City Creeks.

All was well until about 1100hr when I received a radio call advising that one of the Hooper Bay crew had received a bee sting and need medical attention from our Emergency Medical Team (EMT). This member had an adverse reaction and needed to be removed from the fire line. I organized a ground support vehicle to take them back to the awaiting ambulance at the staging area.

The day then progressed normally until around 1300hr when we received a call from the captain of the Modoc Hot Shot crew requesting urgent medical assistance for a crew member that had been attacked by a nest of angry wasps.

The medical team hadn't picked up the original radio call due to a radio black spot and the medical situation was now urgent. Luckily I knew where they were stationed and was able to alert the medics. Eventually they were able to reach and treat the crew member with out any further problems.

In the interest of crew safety we decided that I would convey the injured member to the camp medical facility so that the EMT was able to stay in position in case of any further problems.

Meanwhile, our main task of burning had been put on hold while we waited for the humidity to drop. Finally, by early afternoon we could begin the burn.

I had tasked the Pleasant Valley Hot Shot crew to carry out the burning for the day. They had commenced with three parallel lines from the road down some 60 metres into the brush. The scrub was quite dense and forward progression quite difficult.

The burn was progressing well when one of the Pleasant Valley lighting crew slipped on a log and dislocated her hip. She was some 50 metres down a steep slope off the road and ahead of the fire. The fire had started to take quite well behind her so there was now an extreme urgency to extract her from the scrub.

Firstly we had to extinguish the fire, construct a hand tool line to the casualty, get the EMT into position, call an ambulance, organise an air medivac as per the medical plan in the Incident Action Plan (IAP) and manage the

change over of incoming and outgoing crews - all before we ran out of light. It took about an hour to extract the injured member from the scrub and get her back to the road so that she could be moved down to the medivac site.

By this time night had well and truly fallen. We had used the support water trucks to settle the dust on the proposed helipad site but now the lack of light was our major concern.

We surrounded the helipad site (which was on top of a ridge) with fire vehicles. Then we turned all their headlights on to create a pool of light for the helicopter to land in.

Meanwhile the dark and smoke was also creating havoc for the ambulance who could not locate us. It did finally arrive some two hours later - at the same time as the helicopter was making its approach.

In the end, due to the smoke and lack of light, the helicopter deemed the ridge too dangerous for landing.

Our only option was to move the patient by ambulance back to the camp and try for a medivac flight from there.

Ironically the ambulance hit a rather large pot hole on the way back to camp and popped the patient's hip back into position! The pain must have been unbearable however she did make a full recovery in hospital.

TOP: Geoff Parish, Divisional Supervisor on the Siskiyou fire with fellow Australian Neil Cooper from ACT Parks.

AUSSIES AT THE CALIFORNIAN FIRES: GEOFF PARISH

CONTAINMENT LINES IN THE MOUNTAINS

By Geoff Parish, Divisional Supervisor

The fire camp with some 2500 people was set up in the fair grounds in the town of Anderson about an hour and a half drive from the main fire ground. The camp consisted of many demountable buildings including laundries, kitchens, shower blocks, toilet blocks, administration trailers, IMT trailers, refueling stations, first aid trailers, media and hundreds of tents.

Each day commenced at 0600hr with the morning supervisors briefing followed by the crew briefing, breakfast and deployment to the fire ground. Mostly my days finished by getting back to camp at around 2100hr in time for dinner and then a late shower before hitting the concrete for an uncomfortable night's sleep.

My position was that of a divisional supervisor. The size of the crews I was supervising varied daily from between 80 to 120 people. My crews' task on this fire was to deepen and monitor containment lines, mop up and remove seven miles (11km) of hose lay and retrieve pumps and portable tanks.

After five days on this fire it was declared contained and we were moved to a new fire complex some six hours drive north called the Siskiyou Fire Complex.

Happy campers

The fire base camp was located at a little town on the Bigfoot Highway called Happy Camp. We were advised by those in the know that Happy Camp was where hell was created. The drive in was very picturesque and followed a narrow winding road through steep canyons along the side of a river. We arrived at Happy Camp late in the afternoon and set up for the evening.

The next morning we moved further down the river to the new fire camp located at Orleans. At Orleans we were given new work assignments, set up our camp site and headed off up the mountain to find the fireground. The drive took nearly 1.5 hours, all of it steep winding road climbing to 4000 feet (1200m) above the fire base camp.

Our new mission was to construct a 13 mile (21km) long back burn along Lonesome Ridge so that the Blue 2 and Siskiyou fires could be eventually joined together to form the southern containment line. This was to take some 300 people and nearly three weeks to complete due to difficult terrain and weather conditions.

Fog causes havoc

One of the many problems we faced was the proximity of the ocean which was only 13 miles (21km) away. Most evenings a fog bank would roll in from the ocean. The humidity would be sky high and would not dissipate until late morning or early afternoon. It made our progress very slow.



Crews came from around the world to help the Californians.



The three Australians deployed to the US at the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, Idaho, Craig Burley, Geoff Parish and Russell Perry.

We worked 16 days straight, had two days off and then 12 days on again and were still just short of completing the burn when our commitment finished.

On our last day the camp gave us a great send off at the morning briefing. The local Indian chief said a prayer for us in his native language.

We packed up our camp and departed back to Redding where we returned our hire vehicles and spent the night in a motel washing off the last 12 days of dust and smoke. The next morning we flew back to Boise for a debrief session at the National Interagency Fire Centre.

AUSSIES AT THE CALIFORNIAN FIRES: CRAIG BURLEY 

MANAGING THE UNEXPECTED

By Craig Burley, Strike Team Leader

For our first assignment at the Shu Complex fire in the US, our home was a chook shed.

In fact, the poultry shed of the Anderson County Fair Ground was a pretty good choice to house firefighters from around the world. The floor was concrete but spotlessly clean, the very cool inside temperature was a great relief from the heat and very low relative humidity outside. The low humidity had fuelled approximately 1400 lightning strikes throughout northern California in late June and had set off hundred of fires.

On the first morning, after a reasonably good night's sleep in our "chook shed", the 0600hr briefing arrived. I was assigned to shadow the Divisional Supervisor Mike Hibbard.

Now "shadow" was an entirely appropriate term as Mike is about 190cm, 130kg and had hands that make my feet look small. He has a very clear and decisive demeanor with a high level of experience. Firefighting has been in his family for generations and these days Mike commands respect from everyone who works with him. I spent the following 24 hours with Mike and found him to a very effective fireground manager. Due to a lack of on-ground requirements and on discovering that I am an air attack

supervisor trainee, Mike linked me up with the Air Operations Manager. So I spent a day with the Air Tactical Group Supervisor, John Watt. This role is the equivalent of our air attack supervisor.

Keeping it together

Shortly before take off in our small four-seater fixed wing aircraft, I noticed John reach into his bag and pulled out a small container of air sickness tablets. He took one and we were ready for flight. That turned out to be a subtle hint that I really should have taken notice of.

After about two hours of updrafts, downdrafts and numerous tight turns I let out an urgent call over the intercom: "Hey John, you don't happen to have any spare tablets do you mate?"

I did keep it all together (or should I say down) and the rest of the afternoon was a great learning curve on the coordination of multiple aircraft, both rotary and fixed wing, above the Lime Complex.

Division Foxtrot

A few days later we were redeployed to the Siskiyou Complex which was located just below the border with Oregon. The Siskiyou fire had already burned about 60,000 acres (24,000ha) but had slowed to a moderate intensity by the time we arrived. There was

another fire called Blue 2 in close proximity to the west. It was likely that the two fires would merge.

My job as a strike team leader in Division Foxtrot was to help build the southern containment line for both these fires.

The area where these fires were located is very significant to the local native tribe and the Incident Action Plan was full of instructions and limitations on operational activities in order respect the local Karuk tribe.

Scorpions crew

My assigned crews arrived - the OC 21 from Mendicino and Scorpions 3 from Mexico.

The Scorpions from Mexico, did not speak any English apart from their crew leader and the OC 21 crew were almost all very young looking teenagers on a fireground for the first time.

I have to say I was a bit concerned.

After working with these guys and girls for about two weeks, however, all my concerns were well and truly mitigated. Their enthusiasm and work ethic was second to none. Given that the majority of the crew was fairly inexperienced they were given the relatively menial, but never the less

AUSSIES AT THE CALIFORNIAN FIRES: CRAIG BURLEY

exhausting, job of cutting brush on the side of the forestry road and feeding the cuttings into wood chippers. For 10 days straight they worked the six miles (9.5km) of our Division Foxtrot, cutting, dragging and feeding the extremely noisy wood chipper.

I can't quite describe how laborious this task is and after a few days I was sure that they would start to tire - but not these guys and girls. Each morning they would arrive in their crew bus, lit up with smiles, jokes and degree of internal resilience that made me proud.

One day one of the crew approached me and asked very respectfully: "Mr Burley do you think we would be able to have the honour of holding a section of this line during the burning operation?"

Indeed their enthusiasm did pay off. I put in a good word for them and we got permission for them to assist in the backburning operation. I was immensely proud to be part of their contribution to the fire effort.

Local tribal elders play their part

Our first task for the OC21 and the Scorpions was to widen an existing forestry track below the northern face of Nikowitz Peak. We worked under a quite a few limitations because the Nikowitz Peak is a sacred location for the local indigenous people and cannot be walked on by non-indigenous people.

When the local Kuruk elder arrived unannounced, I could see a situation developing that could test my diplomatic skills. He pulled up in a rather large pickup truck in the company of his wife. When they told me who they were, I thought trouble could be the next thing around the corner.

We exchanged introductions. I soon found out that the first genuine native American chief I had ever met went by the name of Norman. And his wife was Noreen. I soon realised that Norman and Noreen did not need fancy names to command their rightful respect. Norman was one of the most gracious and thoughtful persons I have ever met and all our negotiations went well.

In fact Norman was the focus of one of the most moving things we all experienced during the deployment. It was on the last morning of our stay and the Australians and New Zealanders gathered at camp after putting in 42 tough days of frontline firefighting. Norman approached us at the camp and said a prayer in his native language wishing us a safe trip home. It was very moving indeed.

TOP RIGHT: US fire trucks at the Shu Complex fires.

CENTRE RIGHT: The OC21 team feeding the wood chipper.

RIGHT: Norman and Noreen, Kuruk elders, who are the custodians of the sacred area around Nikowitz Peak where the Australian firefighters were at work.



AUSSIES AT THE CALIFORNIAN FIRES: RUSSELL PERRY



Prisoners serving minor sentences were employed to construct hand tool lines near the fire line. They were brought in and out with Blackhawk helicopters.

CHOPPERS, COBRAS AND BEARS

By Russell Perry, Helicopter Manager

For the first two weeks of my deployment I was assigned to a helibase located at Chico, northern California, where a number of large fires were burning.

The local show grounds had been taken over by Calfire (California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection). There are a number of similarities between Calfire's command structure and the RFS - they were a real pleasure to work with.

I arrived at Chico's airport where a sizable area of vacant land had been taken over and was being used as a helibase. There were a considerable number of helicopters onsite: 1 Chinook, 4 Blackhawks, 3 Jetrangers, 1 Longranger, 2 Huey's, 2 Squirrels, 1S61, 1 H500, 1 Aircrane, 1 Skycrane and around the corner was a dozen heavy air tankers.

I was assigned to Chico Helibase as helicopter manager; where I was to manage the Canadian Aircrane. Apart from our normal helicopter manager responsibilities we would often assist with crew shuttle assignments. The numbers varied from a few up to 140.

Prison crews

The crew of 140 was a prison crew. We flew the prisoners from the helibase to a helispot where they would construct a



Russell's tent at Marble Mountain helibase camping area - bear country.

handline in places where the terrain was too severe for machinery.

Because of their carrying capacity and performance, the Chinook and multiple Blackhawks were used to fly the 140 prisoners up to the fireline. These prisoner crews all wore orange coloured PPE, were paid about \$1 per hour and were serving sentences for minor offences. No murderers, sex offenders or arsonists.

Cobras in flight

After R&R I was reassigned to the Scott Valley Helibase near Etna, this time I managed a jetranger.

An interesting aircraft which arrived at the helibase was one of the US Forest Service (USFS) Cobra helicopters. The USFS purchased 25 ex military Cobra helicopters for the princely sum of \$1 each.

AUSSIES AT THE CALIFORNIAN FIRES: RUSSELL PERRY



Russell Perry standing beside the Bell 209 Cobra at the Scott Valley Helibase with the Marble Mountains in the background. These aircraft were extensively used for infra red and fireline mapping, they are also used as an Air Attack Platform. The Cobra also has a colour video/DVD system and a live tactical downlink.

The military then rebuilt two of the Cobras at a cost of \$300,000 each and then fitted them out with the most advanced Forward Looking Infra Red (FLIR) systems available on the open market. These aircraft are used as an Air Attack Platform, and extensively for infra red and fireline mapping. Each helicopter also has a live tactical downlink. (See photo)

The US had an impressive flight following system where aviation personnel could log into a nationwide flight-following computer system where individual aircraft could be monitored. You could see if a particular helicopter or plane was flying or was landed, what altitude they were at and where it had flown in the past two minutes. This information could be viewed in 3D on Google Earth - a fantastic system.

Bear fears

Throughout the various locations I was camping in tents. During breakfast one



Craig Burley greeting his family on his return to Australia at Sydney Airport.



Geoff Parish being greeted at the airport by Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons and Assistant Commissioner Rob Rogers.

morning there was a discussion about a bear which pays a visit to the camping area in the night. The fresh bear tracks in the BBQ area near our tents confirmed that the story was not fictitious. We were warned that apart from the obvious, bears also like toothpaste and lip balm. So don't clean your teeth near your tent! During the night it was somewhat reassuring to hear people snoring around you.

Welcome home

I did appreciate the welcome home that I received from the RFS. To be greeted at Sydney Airport by the Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons, Assistant Commissioner Rob Rogers and Chief Superintendent Alan Brinkworth was greatly appreciated. It reinforces for me that I am part of a great organisation which cares for its members.

Are you interested in a Certificate III qualification in Rangeland Conservation?



Training can include:

- Undertaking a site assessment
- Operating earthworks machinery
- Constructing access tracks
- Implementing erosion and sediment control measures
- Monitoring sustainable land practices

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WEST DECLARES BUSH FIRE DANGER PERIOD ONE MONTH EARLY

The Cudgegong Rural Fire District declared the Bush Fire Danger Period one month early this year due to very dry conditions and a series of large fires in the area. The Bush Fire Danger period started on September 1.

"In late August, a fire burning in the Grattai area was contained to around 40ha after several brigades responded to the outbreak," Superintendent Mark Ryan, District Manager for Cudgegong District said.

As the smoke was clearly visible from the Mudgee township, the Fire Control Centre received a number of local and Triple Zero (000) calls to the fire.

Crews from Grattai, Mudgee HQ, Lawson and Piambong responded to the outbreak which started shortly after 12pm on 27 August.

A week earlier, crews from the Cudgegong District were assisted by Chifley Zone to contain a large blaze 12km south of Hargraves on the Hill End Rd. The fire which started shortly after 1pm took hold. Nine crews were assisted by water bombing aircraft and managed to contain the fire by 9pm that night. One hundred and fifteen hectares were destroyed before



it was stopped. The crews involved were Hargraves, Grattai, Pyramul, Mudgee Headquarters and Hill End. Two fixed wing bombers from Orange and Scone assisted greatly in slowing the spread of the fire.

"We have had a number of fires that have run over considerable distance for this time of year over the past weeks," Superintendent Ryan said, "and along with the dry conditions, this prompted

the Cudgegong Bush Fire Management Committee to invoke the Bush Fire Danger Period one month early."

TOP: Land at Hargraves near Mudgee was scorched by the fires in August when 115ha were burned. Nine crews were involved.

ABOVE: Crews mopping up the Grattai fire after it was contained to the ridge west of Mudgee.



FIRES ARE A REAL POSSIBILITY THIS SEASON

Photos by Brendon Doyle, Media Services

Emergency Services Minister Tony Kelly launched the 2008 Bush Fire Danger Period on October 1 in a press conference held at the RFS Headquarters Operations Centre.

Minister Tony Kelly was joined by Commissioner Fitzsimmons and NSW Fire Brigades Commissioner Greg Mullins at the launch.

The Minister said that the upcoming season would be less benign than last year but he said the RFS was well-prepared, well-equipped and well-trained.

"It is the responsibility of the general public, however, to be well-prepared," he said.

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said that we can expect fires this season.

"Last fire season, we were fortunate to experience relatively mild conditions due to a La Nina weather event, however this year, we are expecting above average temperatures," he said.

"There will be fires this fire season; however the intensity and duration of those will depend largely on local conditions at the time."

"Weather conditions are predicted to be neutral in relation to rainfall, but the potential is there for above average temperatures."

"Your true asset is a well-prepared property," he said.

Coupled with the underlying drought across much of NSW the Commissioner warned that fires are a real possibility.

"The potential for fires and the rapid spread of fires is there. I encourage everyone living in the urban interface to prepare their properties."

The Commissioner said all residents should be well advanced in their preparations for this fire season.

"Your true asset is a well-prepared property," he said.

"By now, residents should have prepared their properties by removing fuel from around their property, including their gutters. Complacency is a real risk."

"Residents in bush land areas should also ensure they have access to a suitable water supply such as a pool, dam or water tank and have a pump and hoses to use.

"It's vital that all residents have a plan for when a fire affects their property, so everyone understands what they need to do.

"Most importantly, residents should decide now if a fire affects their community, whether they'll stay and defend their home or leave early. Lives are lost when people leave at the last moment.

"The public can rest assured the 70,000 volunteers of the RFS, along with firefighters from NSW Fire Brigades are well prepared for the coming months," he said.

Minister Kelly explained that the funding to the RFS from the State Government has increased four times over the term of the current Labor Government.

ABC Radio marked the day by declaring it Bush Fire Awareness Day. ABC Statewide Drive and 702 Drive broadcast live from the RFS Operations Centre on the afternoon of October 1.

TOP: Media gather to hear the announcement from Minister Kelly and the Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons.

WORLD YOUTH DAY 2008 

Baranagaroo, on the harbourside of Sydney was the site for many of the World Youth Day activities.

WORLD YOUTH DAY 2008 – WHAT A WEEK!

By Matthew Schroder, Media Services
Photos by Matthew Schroder and Narelle Koteff

Early in 2008 the call went out to volunteers of the RFS. World Youth Day 2008 (WYD) was coming to town and the unique skills of RFS members were required. Those who sent in their expressions of interest started down the road of training and security clearances that would enable them to assist in making WYD a success.

The role of RFS volunteers was similar to that performed eight years ago at the Sydney Olympics, volunteers were required to attend a workshop that taught them how to search bags and detect prohibited or restricted items.

Volunteers were also given information on the procedure and protocol for the event and how to work with NSW Police if they did find an item that was not allowed into the event.

As Day One of World Youth Week rolled around some volunteers rose very early in the morning in order to make it to Baranagaroo for the first shift. The volunteers were in very high spirits and got caught up in the joy and enthusiasm of the pilgrims who were patiently waiting to make their way through security for the opening Mass.



RFS volunteers, donned in blue and green uniforms, assisted with the security checks for World Youth Day events held around Darling Harbour in July 2008.



RFS volunteers lined up along the bag check table, followed by many singing and dancing pilgrims who were making their way through the security checkpoints.

As the day wore on and the sun strengthened, crews were rotated through the food hall so that they could take a break and rejuvenate with some well earned lunch. Water was ferried in between the security checkpoints to ensure that the volunteers remained hydrated and well. In total 192 RFS volunteers and 29 staff carried out 682 shifts totally over 6273 hours! An effort which was very commendable and a credit to all involved.

As with the Olympics, volunteers will be able to look back on their contribution with a few souvenirs including their unique blue and green uniforms.

Thank you to all those who gave their time so generously

Presentation ceremonies were held at Baulkham Hills and in RFS Headquarters in Homebush to thank all the RFS volunteers who contributed to the success of the entire World Youth Week event and Pope Benedict's visit to Sydney.

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons acknowledged the volunteers with Certificates of Appreciation. In particular the Baulkham Hills Brigade was thanked for keeping a four day vigil to protect the Pope during his stay in Sydney.

"RFS volunteers have a long and proud history of helping the community and once again, these volunteers have done us proud," Commissioner Fitzsimmons said.

"As they did during the Sydney Olympics, volunteers have assisted Police with bag searches at key locations across the city, ensuring World Youth Day events ran smoothly and safely.

"We also had volunteers providing fire protection services during the Pope's stay at Kenthurst.

"As always, our volunteers have demonstrated their professionalism and commitment to the community.

"They can proudly say they've played an important role in this major event, while the eyes of the world were on Sydney," said Commissioner Fitzsimmons.

See the next page for more about the RFS involvement in World Youth Day.

TOP: Linda Franklin, Director – Planning and Operations for the World Youth Day Co-ordination Authority, visited the RFS headquarters in October to present a gift and message of thanks to Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons for all the support offered by the RFS.

ABOVE/LEFT: Thousands of Catholic pilgrims from around the world gathered in Sydney for the Pope's visit.

WORLD YOUTH DAY 2008

HIGH SECURITY OPERATION

By Anthony Clark, Media Services
Photos by Ben Shepherd and Anthony Clark

July 2008: As residents lined the streets, TV news vans rolled into town and helicopters buzzed overhead, the nation's attention was on Kenthurst and its latest resident. Yet few would have an idea about the massive RFS effort already in full swing.

Planning for the Pope's visit began in secrecy four months earlier. Apart from his time in central Sydney for World Youth Day, the Pontiff would also spend a few days relaxing at the Opus Dei Study Centre at Kenthurst, in the Baulkham Hills district, northwest of Sydney.

Inspector Phillip Bow, Baulkham Hills District Operations Officer was part of the planning from the early stages along with Russel Mobbs, Group Captain from the Baulkham Hills District.

"We were advised that this project was to be held in the strictest confidence," Inspector Bow said.

The RFS staff held regular meetings with the NSW Police and a risk assessment was made of the Opus Dei Study Centre. The assessment revealed that the RFS did need to provide a heightened level of response due to the status of the dignitary on site.

"The Kenthurst Rural Fire Station was nominated as the base for fire response to the Study Centre. The station is only eight minutes from the Centre and was the ideal spot to base our response operations," Inspector Bow said.

The Kenthurst Station was operational 24 hours a day for the period of the Pontiff's stay. Crews worked eight hour shifts with three crews per day. Each crew was made up of an officer, driver and two BA Operators and were drawn from brigades throughout the district.

"The idea was to give the opportunity to as many people as we could," Inspector Bow said, "Along with the crew at the station, our Communications Brigade kept the Fire Control Centre operational for the same period of time."

"As always our volunteers were absolutely fantastic."

Security at the Opus Dei Study Centre included NSW Police, Federal Police, the Army, NSW Ambulance, a NSW Fire Brigade HAZMAT team along with the RFS.

Motorcade protection

Providing an up-scale level of fire protection to the Study Centre, however, was only part of the mission.



After the Pope arrived in Sydney at 1500hr on 13 July, he travelled from Richmond RAAF base to the Kenthurst Study Centre by a motorcade consisting of more than a dozen cars, ambulances and police motorcycles. Dotted along the route, just out of view, were RFS tankers, ready to respond to any incident.

The precise route that the Pope would take was revealed only minutes before his arrival. The crews were advised to be prepared for any type of situation and that the eyes of the world would be on them.

"Once again our volunteers took up the challenge," Inspector Bow said, "There was incredible media interest with the Pope being here yet our crews have taken on this task in a professional and outstanding manner."

"It's worked like clockwork, like it always does. From the planning to logistics, everyone has worked hard to make it happen."



Captain Jeremy Clegg from Kenthurst Brigade said: "It's been an excellent experience to interact with other agencies and other brigades from Baulkham Hills District."

"It's what we're about," Jeremy said, "being ready to respond and it's what we do well, whether it's for the Pope or for anyone else needing our service."

COLOURED GELS TESTED

In preparation for the 2008 fire season the RFS Operational Aviation section has trialled two thermal gel fire retardants for the first time in NSW.

The gels were trialled in a controlled blaze on Dubbo Airport in August this year and again at the Wagga Airport in early September. Pilots and aviation specialists from around NSW gathered to observe and be briefed on the effectiveness and use of the gels. The thermal gels were compared to other fire retardants such as foam and Phoscheck D75R retardant at the annual pre-season pilot briefings.

Inspector Sam Crothers from RFS Operational Aviation said the tests were successful and that they were a vital part of equipping the RFS for the coming fire season. "We have had to look at alternative ways to fight bushfires because of the lack of water. This new thermal gel appears to be very effective."

"We hope to continue to trial these products throughout this season," he said, "so we can add another tool to our arsenal for combating bushfires in the future."

The gel is a super absorbent polymer developed over a 10 year period. The products which were trialled comes in two colours - blue and orange - which makes them easily identifiable on the ground for pilots to tag on their loads. The RFS is currently evaluating which one will best suit our operational needs.

"The exciting thing about these products is that they require minimal set up or infrastructure to mix and load them onto our aircraft," Inspector Crothers said, "This makes it an ideal product to use in initial attack."

Inspector Crothers said that one of the advantages of these gels over other suppressants is that they do not evaporate as quickly. "On a hot day with low humidity the manufacturers are estimating that the gels could stay viable for up to three hours. Other suppressants are only lasting minutes under extreme conditions.

"Remember that these gels are for short term use. The long term retardants that we do already use can stay viable until at least 25mm of rain has fallen."

During the trials the aviation experts observed that when the gels were dropped 'half on and half off' the fire, they achieved a 60 percent faster extinguishment time.

"The gels seemed to bind and eliminate the smoke, making it easier for the pilot and ground crews to see for the next drop," Sam said.

"There was also less mop up for the crews where the gel had fallen compared to areas that had no application."



TOP: The RFS aviation section tested Phoscheck Aquagel-K gel at Wagga airport in early September.

CENTRE: Thermagel being used at Dubbo Airport .

ABOVE LEFT: The buoywall, or portable dam, filled with Phoscheck Aquagel-K before being loaded onto the aircraft. The gel comes in a prilled powdered form, is agitated with water and then pumped into the aircraft for use.

ABOVE RIGHT: The blue Thermagel comes in a liquid concentrate. It is seen here sitting in the hopper of the aircraft before take off at Dubbo.

GENERAL NEWS

3000 TANKERS AND COUNTING

By Anthony Clark, Media Services
Photos by Anthony Clark

More than a century ago, when the first volunteer brigades were formed, it may not have been uncommon to see firefighters leaping onto any vehicle they could find to get to a fire. In some cases, horseback may have been the fastest means. Today, it's a very different picture.

A major milestone in the continuous program to update and enhance the RFS fleet was celebrated recently, with the official handing over of "Tanker 3000".

The Category 1 tanker is the 3000th vehicle to be provided under the RFS Tanker Programme, which has now seen \$329 million dollars worth of tankers delivered.

Members of the Illawong Brigade formally took delivery of the vehicle during the RFS Conference in Mudgee in June, with Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons and the then Emergency Services Minister, Nathan Rees on hand for the event.

"Delivering 3000 tankers is a fantastic achievement, which means volunteers across the State are heading to the fireground in safe, up-to-date and efficient bushfire tankers," Mr Rees said.

"Thousands of volunteers are now safer thanks to this program, which has significantly improved the standard of tankers for brigades throughout NSW."

Commissioner Fitzsimmons said modern RFS tankers were purpose-designed by the Service, built to exacting specifications and standards and fitted out with modern equipment.

"They provide vital fire protection to the community and because of the hard work



that goes into designing the safety aspects of these tankers, they provide invaluable protection to our volunteers," he said.

"Like all our modern tankers, the 3000th vehicle is fitted with spray protection technology, which can drench the truck in a dangerous fire situation, giving firefighters the best chance of survival."

The Commissioner and Mr Rees had a chance to see how far the RFS fleet has come over the past century, as they also inspected some historic vehicles once used in service - and prototypes of new ones.

TOP AND RIGHT: Members of the Illawong Brigade formally took delivery of the vehicle during the RFS Conference in Mudgee in June, with RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons and the then Emergency Services Minister Nathan Rees on hand for the event.





RFS TANKER PROGRAM ACHIEVES A MAJOR MILESTONE

Photo by Anthony Clark

HUME ZONE GET NEW ECO BUILDING

Photos by Jessica Morgan

The new Hume Zone Fire Control Centre was opened in May this year and is the first stage in an innovative Emergency Management Centre for Albury.

In the long run, the Emergency Management Centre will house most of the emergency services for the Albury area including SES, Ambulance, an alternate police station and the local emergency management operations centre.

The Hume Zone Fire Control Centre is Stage One and was opened in May by the then Emergency Services Minister and now Premier, Nathan Rees and Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons.

"This new facility will enable the exemplary members of the RFS to combat fires and other emergencies in a coordinated and effective manner," Mr Rees said.

"Further developments will bring local emergency management into one location, which will increase the effectiveness of emergency response."

The new Emergency Management Centre is located at the Albury airport which facilitates greater access for RFS volunteers from elsewhere in the State plus any aerial support that may be required in the case of a fire. It also features the latest eco design.

George Alexander, Manager for the Southern Border Team, is happy with the move.

"We will have better coordination in times of emergencies," he said, "We will be able to talk to each other face to face instead over the phone in any kind of local emergency."

Mr Alexander is also pleased to have greater capability and space for the RFS Hume Zone and Region South satellite offices.

"For us it means lots more space to move around in. We can now manage larger incidents, like an S44 fire. In the past we wouldn't have dreamed of running a larger incident from Albury."

The new building was tested in late August when it hosted the Region South Incident Management Exercise and Workshop. About 50 members of the RFS, National Parks and Wildlife Service and NSW Fire Brigades tackled a simulated three day major fire event, under extreme summer weather conditions.

The workshop aimed to test the team's capabilities, the Hume Zone Fire Control Centre and the new Albury Emergency Management Centre. According to George Alexander the new building scrubbed up well.

"Everything worked reasonably well," he said, "There a little bit of tweaking to be



done. A few minor things like a few more whiteboards and a few extra phones."

Eco design

Planning for the new building has been in process since 2004 and is designed to be energy efficient and environmentally friendly. At the opening of the new centre, Nathan Rees pointed out the eco benefits of the building.

"In addition to the emergency management benefits this building provides, it has been designed so that it is as environmentally friendly as possible.

"It manages air flows for a potential energy saving of 10 percent over a fully air conditioned building, with additional benefits of re-harvesting rain water for toilet flushing and the irrigation of the gardens," he said.

George Alexander said he has already been experiencing the benefits of the excellent design.

"At this time of year I don't turn any lights on and it will be like that until next winter," he said.



"The air is circulating really well so there is no need for air conditioning until the outside temperature reaches about 33 degrees."

TOP: Commissioner Fitzsimmons joined other dignitaries in launching the new Hume Zone Fire Control Centre.

MIDDLE: The Hume Zone Fire Control Centre was opened in May by the then Emergency Services Minister and now Premier, Nathan Rees.

ABOVE: David Bent, Instructor in the Hume Zone and Superintendent Sean McArdle Regional Learning and Development Officer share a joke at the launch of the Hume Zone FCC.



VOLUNTEERS REWARDED FOR SERVICE

Photos by Jessica Morgan

The then Minister for Emergency Services and now Premier Nathan Rees, officially opened the new extensions to the Corowa HQ Rural Fire Brigade Station and Corowa Berrigan Zone Fire Control Centre, as well as presenting a number of medals, awards and keys to new appliances in May this year.

Mr Rees said that it was an honour to attend the event to be able to thank the volunteers personally for their continued dedication and efforts, which has seen a collective 370 years experience between the fifteen medal and award recipients.

“As I travel around the State meeting and talking with the dedicated and professional volunteers of the RFS, there is a common theme of continued and diligent service to the community,” said Mr Rees.

“Presenting the National Medal, 1st and 2nd Clasp and Long Service Awards is always a moving experience, this is especially so in an area like Corowa and Berrigan to where the origins of volunteer firefighting can be traced.

“These two new appliances for Corowa HQ Brigade, a Category 1 and Category 9 worth over a total of \$340,000, will significantly enhance the protection these volunteers provide to their communities.

“Extensions to the Corowa Berrigan Fire Control Centre and Corowa HQ Brigade Station will improve coordination and response to emergencies in the area.

“With these new facilities the staff and volunteers of the RFS will be better equipped to respond to bush fires that threaten the community,” said Mr Rees.

National Medal

Name	Years of Service
John French	45

Long Service Award

Name	Years of Service
Jim Hewson	44
Ross Barber	41
Richard Sargood	29
Tony Piggin	26
Clinton Franks	22
Eric Fielder	21
Wayne Eames	20
Scott McCormick	20
Ken McNamara	20
Peter Moore	18
Alan Panther	18
David Kuschert	17
Troy Kilsby	16
Robin Jenkin	15



TOP: The Commissioner congratulates recipient of the National Medal John French for his 45 years of service to the RFS.

CENTRE: Captain of the Corowa HQ, David Kuschert spoke at the opening of the new extensions to the station and FCC.

ABOVE: Nathan Rees presenting Scott McCormick from the Howlong Brigade with his Long Service Award.

GETTING FAMILIAR WITH TANKERS

Now is the time to book in a Tanker Familiarisation Workshop for your Region, District or Zone for 2009.

Tanker Familiarisation Workshops provide practical information about the tankers. They are designed for brigades that have received or about to receive a new tanker. It is also for brigade training officers and instructors and anyone involved in maintaining the tankers.

The workshops have been held around the State over the last four years and to date all the feedback has been overwhelming positive.

One of the reasons for its popularity is that it an opportunity to learn about the tankers first hand from the experts. The workshops are conducted by Rob Butcher (Gilbert and Roach/Isuzu), Fred Brown (GAAM Emergency Products) and Peter Church (RFS Engineering Services). Peter Church is one of the tanker's designers and Rob and Fred work for key equipment suppliers and also happen to be active brigade members.

Each session is a one day event, with two sessions conducted over a weekend. The presenters provide specialist and specific knowledge in regard to the design, operation and maintenance of tankers supplied by the RFS.



Tanker Familiarisation Workshops have been conducted in this format since 2004, where on average eight one day sessions are conducted over four weekends each year. The typical class size is around 30 people.

Now is the time to plan a workshop for 2009

Now is the time to request Tanker Familiarisation Workshops in your Districts, Zones or Teams. The dates and venues for the 2009 workshops are yet to be set, however only a limited number of these workshops are offered each year.

The locations of the workshops for 2009 are based on demand, so raise the matter with your District Office who can lodge a request with their regional office.

MyRFS Podcast on Cat 1

Along with the workshops, the Cat 1 tanker handover video has now been released as a Podcast on the MyRFS website. Operating manuals for the tankers have also been recently revised and are expected to be released in the near future.



RURAL FIRE SERVICE ON THE ROAD

The RFS will be promoted on the highways of Australia with the launch of a new B-double trailer by Wagga's Ron Crouch Transport.

Riverina Zone Manager Superintendent Joe Knox said the trailer, featuring artwork of firefighting scenes and the Rural Fire Service logo, was designed to promote the important work of RFS volunteers.

"The generous provision of this advertising space has given the RFS an opportunity to promote our message on the highways between Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane,"

said Superintendent Knox.

"The trailer is a reminder to the public of the dedication, hard work and commitment of RFS volunteers in protecting our communities.

"As it travels around the State it may also encourage others to join their local rural fire brigade," said Superintendent Knox.

NO TERRAIN OUT OF THE QUESTION

This unusual fire truck, seen to the right, is the pride of Mackerel Beach Rural Fire Brigade and it's almost constantly in use.

The Kubota All Terrain Vehicle goes everywhere a tanker cannot - on the beach, along the creek, in the national park and on the jetty. Which is just what Mackerel Beach Brigade need.

Mackerel Beach is in Pittwater within the Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park in Sydney. Although it is within the environs of Sydney it is quite inaccessible. The sandy beach beneath a sandstone escarpment, is surrounded by bush and there is no vehicle access. Many of the waterfront properties are inaccessible to a conventional fire truck and medivacs are often by helicopter.

It's a terrain where the Kubota comes into its own.

"The Kubota can carry portable firefighting equipment - hoses, pumps, generator and McLeod tools," said brigade president David Mackay, "The brigade also designed and purchased a suitable towable trailer for carrying additional equipment such as a stretcher for use in medivacs."



"It gives the brigade access between houses, helps in helicopter emergency evacuations and can ferry firefighting equipment and support crews from the jetty."

The four-wheel-drive carries a crew of three and is fitted with a fully tippable rear tray. The Kubota is fitted with soft 'balloon' tyres which do not impact on Mackerel's grass tracks and beach front.

"The Kubota is almost constantly employed on exercises, for trail maintenance and approved community services," David said.

"We believe the Kubota is the perfect vehicle to support our conventional tanker in performing a whole variety of back-up tasks. It is able to extend fire cover to all areas of the community. It also helps the brigade better contribute to the day-to-day needs of the residents in a remote community like Mackerel."

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A frosty start to the day at Round Mt on the first day of Winter.

THE HUT MEN OF KOSCIUSZKO

Photos by Peter Neyland

Overhaul is the last and sometimes forgotten step of any fire emergency. Adelong Brigade in the state's south, is doing their bit to overhaul part of the Kosciuszko National Park which was badly affected by the fires of 2003 and 2007. In particular Adelong Brigade are contributing towards the preservation of the mountain huts for the generations that follow.

In both 2003 and 2007, fires swept through the Kosciuszko National Park threatening and destroying several huts of significant heritage and cultural value. These include Burrungubuggee, Brooks, Delaneys, Bolton's Hill, Boltons on the Finn, Pretty Plain, Patons, Orange/Diane, Old Geehi/YHA, Geehi, Happy Jacks, Linesman's Number 2, Dr Forbes, Boobee, Pugilistic, O'Keefes, Verandah Camp, Olsens LO Shelter, Opera House, Stockwhip and Grey Hill Cafe.

It was the impact of helping to save many of the huts from bush fire including Millers, Hainsworths and Cooinbil that motivated the Adelong Brigade to get involved in preservation work.



Adelong RFS work party outside Kell's Hut.

"Being so directly involved in fighting the fires around the huts we all became acutely aware of them and their vulnerability to fire," said Peter Neyland, Adelong Senior Deputy Captain, "The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) has done an outstanding job with the rebuilding many

of the huts, but ongoing maintenance of existing huts is imperative for the survival of those still standing."

"Several past and present members of the Adelong Brigade have also had a long association with hut rebuilding, so it was



John Neyland clearing the walking track from Kells Hut to Emu Flat Creek.

really a natural expansion of our interests." The Adelong Brigade joined the Kosciuszko Huts Association (KHA), a volunteer organisation dedicated to the preservation of the huts of the Kosciuszko National Park, and were consequently given 'caretaker-ship' of two huts - Kell's and Round Mt.

Kell's Hut is situated south east of Tumut in the Goobarragandra Wilderness area. It is a small timber slab structure sitting alongside the Emu Flat Creek.

Round Mt Hut is approximately 18km south of Cabramurra perched high above the Tumut River on the edge of the Jagungal Wilderness Area. It is famous for the magnificent view to be had from the toilet where Mount Jagungal, one of the most spectacular peaks in the park can be seen in all its glory.

On Anzac Day 2008, after attending the local march, six Adelong members headed up to Kell's Hut for their first work party. They began their work under the watchful guidance of NPWS Park Ranger Matt White, and KHA Hut Maintenance Officer for the Geehi area, Jim Roche.

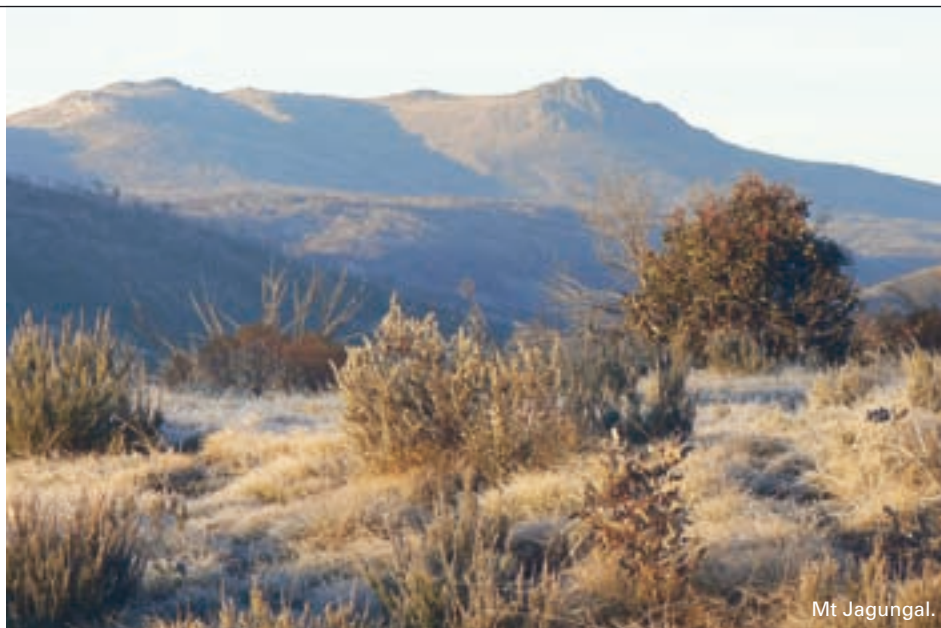
The major tasks to be undertaken around Kell's Hut involve the clearing of apple trees which have spread up and down the valley thanks to birds and wild pigs. Next year they plan a 'serious' spraying program to halt the spread of blackberries which are becoming a huge problem in the area.

On the first day of Winter another work party headed up to Round Mt to prepare it. The dilapidated wood storage shelter was rebuilt and drainage behind the building was re-dug. Next year the area behind the hut will be cleared. Due to the 2003 bushfires, there are a number of dead trees in the area and those close to the hut still need to be removed.

The Adelong members take a great amount of pride in their position as caretakers and see it as a great team building exercise.

"If there is a better way to reflect on a long fire season than telling stories around a campfire then please let me know!" laughed Peter.

If you would like to find out how you or your brigade can join the KHA you can visit their website at <http://www.kosciuzkohuts.org.au/membership.html>.



Mt Jagungal.



NPWS Ranger Matt White (second from left) giving members a tour of the area around Kells Hut.



A beautiful misty morning at Kells Hut.



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ARE YOU READY FOR THE FIRE SEASON?

Does your community know how to protect their property?
Will your home survive a bush fire?
Are you ready to go to a fire call?
Is your farm safe?

Photo by Nick Moir



Our Community

WELL PREPARED PROPERTIES CAN SURVIVE A BUSH FIRE

As members of the Rural Fire Service we are called upon to provide advice to our community on how to prepare their properties for bush fire attack. In this issue of Bush Fire Bulletin we feature a poster that explains the impact of fire on property. Use this poster to share with your community. Additionally download the Bush FireWise Action Plan and the huge range of educational materials available for download on the RFS public website [www.rfs.gov.au/Publications/ Fire Safety Information](http://www.rfs.gov.au/Publications/Fire%20Safety%20Information).

Our Homes

Are our fellow brigade member's properties prepared and ready for the next fire?

While we are focussed on protecting our communities, have we considered the condition of our own properties?

When the next fire arrives we may not be at home to protect our assets from bush fire attack, but may be on the fire ground protecting the homes and assets of others in the community. So are our properties prepared to survive the onslaught of a bush fire?

PREPARATION

Our community
Our homes
Ourselves
Our farms

To ensure that your property is prepared it would be a great idea, for your next brigade training program to include Property Safety Checks at each of your brigade member's properties.

As members of the RFS we should all have bush fire defensive measures in place (tank, pump and hoses). Remember you can insure your house, but not your home. Let's not become a statistic of bush fires.

Checklist for your home:

- Ensure that your home and contents are fully insured and that your policy is current.
- Perform regular Property Safety Checks
- Develop an Evacuation plan – have at least two options for escape
- Prepare a Bush Fire Survival Kit
- Decide whether your family will Leave Early or Stay and Defend
- Decide whether your family will 'Leave Early' or 'Stay and Defend'

"Your true asset is a well-prepared property."

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons at the launch of the 2008 Bush Fire Season

Ourselves

Are you prepared as a bush firefighter? Are you ready to go?

Fire calls can come unexpectedly. In the heat of the moment you may forget something essential. On page four of this liftout we have included a checklist for what to pack in readiness for that call or pager message.

Our farms

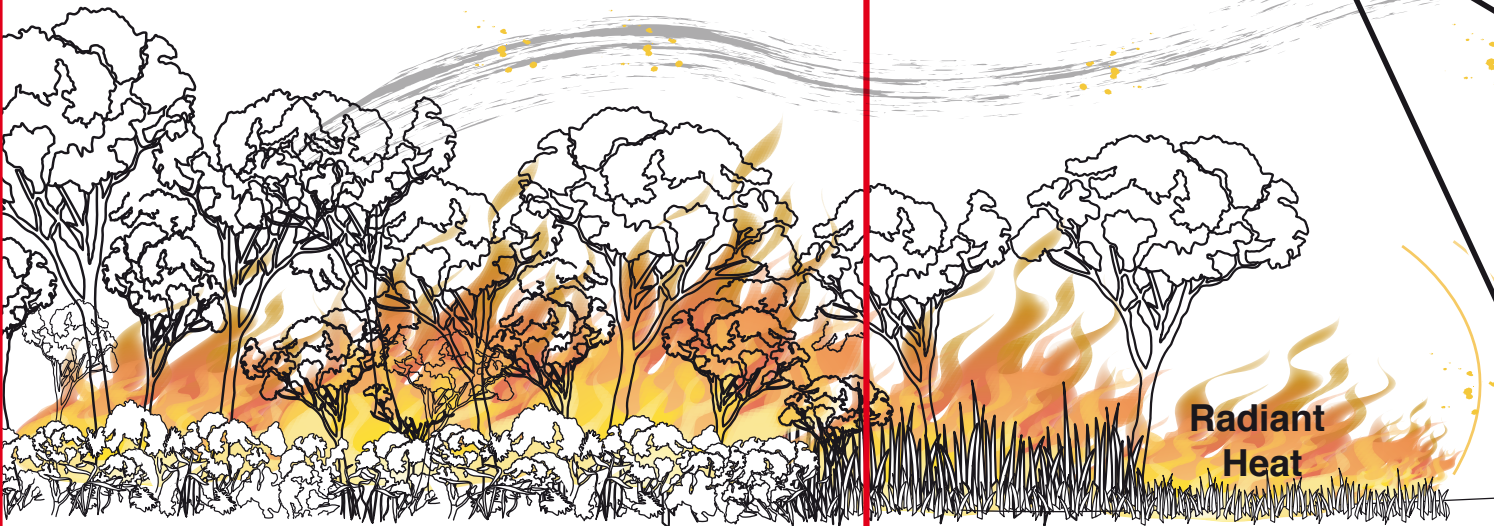
Fire protection on your land is your responsibility. Identify the best fire protection strategies for your property well in advance.

- Complete the checklist available from the RFS website: Farm Firewise Checklist and Action Plan
- Develop an action plan
- Reduce fire hazards on your property.
- See page four of this liftout for a checklist of things not to do.

ARE YOU REA

As the fire approaches

Embers (sparks) are the main cause of houses catching alight during bush fires. Extreme fire weather days are accompanied by strong to gale force winds, which carry burning debris. Embers therefore gain entry to houses through broken windows or gaps in and around walls or roof cladding and ignite the contents. Embers also lodge on and ignite horizontal timber deck, guttering, steps and window sills. They can be blown up against and ignite timber used for supports, underfloor battens, posts and steps.



ACTION

- Have a Bush FireWise Action Plan
- Have a portable AM/FM radio to receive information during the fire
- Don't enter the bush if smoke or fire is in the area
- Stay calm and report all fires on Triple Zero (000)
- Check if elderly neighbours need assistance
- If possible, block your gutters and fill with water
- If you choose to self-evacuate, do so early
- If ordered to evacuate by the police you must obey, so have pets and valuables packed and ready to go
- Wear long sleeves and long pants, natural fibres and sturdy footwear
- Close all windows and doors, block spaces beneath doors with towels or blankets

As the fire front arrives

The hotter a fire the greater the amount of radiant radiation.

Direct flame impact usually occurs when something is in the path of the fire. Shrubs, wood piles or out building.

Direct Flame

Radiant Heat

ACTION

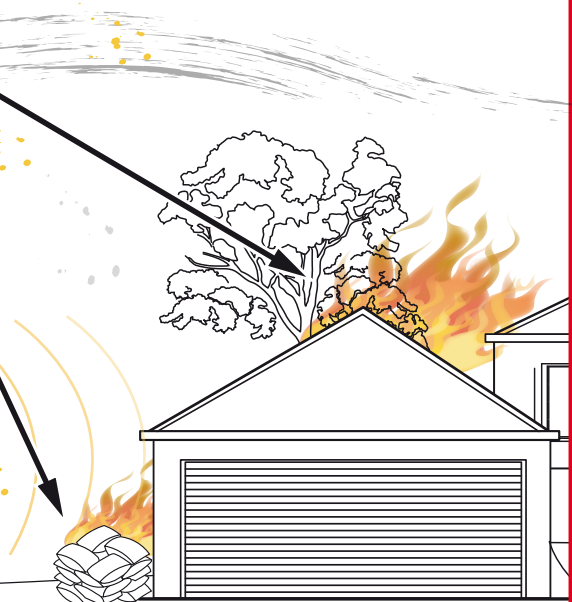
- Wear long sleeves and long pants made from natural fibres
- Have eye and breathing protection available for use
- Keep a torch and portable AM/FM radio at hand
- Turn off gas and power
- Hose down walls, gardens etc before the fire arrives
- Block downpipes and fill gutters with water
- Fill all sinks, baths etc with water to use on spot fires
- Mains water supply or domestic electric water supply
- Bring hoses/fittings and other fire suppression equipment
- Close all doors and windows and block gaps with towels or blankets
- Move flammable curtains and furniture away from windows
- Shelter in a part of the house most distant from the fire front. Once the fire front has passed then actively put out spot fires

READY FOR THIS?

Preparation

Heat and the faster the fire will spread by

combustible is near the house. Eg.



Use natural fibres and sturdy footwear
for everyone
and in case power fails to monitor weather

arrives

Put out fires in case
pumps fail
Keep tools inside, so they can be used later
Use damp towels
Close curtains from windows
Stay in house until fire front until fire has

After the fire has passed

Ember attack is the biggest threat to houses. This can last for several hours after the fire front has passed. Unattended houses are very susceptible during this stage. People who have relocated can return during this stage. Experience shows that people and houses that are well prepared will survive the passage of a bush fire.



ACTION ✓

It is the owner's responsibility to secure the site following a fire.

After the fire has passed and for several hours after the fire front has passed, patrol your property inside and out put out spot fires started by flying embers.



OURSELVES: The Firefighters Kit

It is important for active members of the brigade to inspect and revitalise their personal kit on an ongoing basis.

Remember, when the call comes there may not be the luxury of time to hunt around the house or go to the shops to get things you need.

The following is brief list of what is considered essential as part of your personal kit. Of course other items can be added to your kit based on your past experience or on the advice of more experienced members of the brigade.

If you are in doubt about any aspect of your personal kit, do not hesitate to speak with your Captain, Senior Deputy Captain or one of your Deputies.

Local activities including any fire duty or hazard reduction normally require only the Basic Kit which is the minimum required on turn out.

Additional items are necessary on short or long term out-of-area commitments (Strike Teams/Task Forces/Response Teams) or for special circumstances. Full Kit is required on these operations.

The Basic Kit

All items should be labelled with your name and your Brigade.

- Helmet correctly marked, chin strap and neck protector
- Non-synthetic undergarments
- Overalls or two piece yellows
- Non-synthetic socks
- Boots
- Smoke goggles
- Smoke mask or face cloth
- Bush fire flash hood
- Gloves
- Water bottle and belt
- Personal first aid kit, personal medication and sunscreen
- Matches
- Pocket knife
- Compass
- Authority card
- Firefighters' Pocket Book, notebook & pen
- Small torch
- Warm coat
- Any other personal requirements including money, sunglasses, snacks, etc.
- Compressed Air Breathing Apparatus (CABA) operators must also include all their offensive structural personal protective equipment

The Full Kit

- The basic kit plus:
- Bag or pack
- Change of overalls or two piece yellows, non-synthetic undergarments and socks
- Rest and Recreation (R&R) clothing including footwear, sunhat, swimmers and nightwear
- Sleeping bag or swag
- Airbed or mat
- Towel, soap, toothpaste and toothbrush, shaving gear or make-up, deodorant and personal hygiene items
- Insect repellent
- Wet weather gear (if not on tanker)

Note: if travelling by plane pocket knives must be in your "checked-in" luggage

Each Appliance should have:

- Single resource T cards
- Sufficient non-perishable crew field rations for 24 hours
- Sufficient crew drinking water for 24 hrs
- Tea, coffee, sugar, condensed milk and biscuits
- Stove, billy can, mugs, plates. Utensils, can opener
- Esky

OUR FARMS

On the farm you can prevent bush fires from starting:

- Don't mow or slash on hot windy days
- Don't use machinery such as an angle grinder or welders on hot windy days
- Keep farm machinery clean and fit spark arresters to exhausts
- Don't smoke near hay stacks or around fuel sheds
- Check that all fires are thoroughly extinguished
- Store fuel and chemicals in cleared areas away from other buildings
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REGION EAST CHAMPIONSHIP PHOTO GALLERY

CADETS PROVE THEIR METTLE AMONGST THE BRIGADES

By Matthew Schroder, Media Services
Photos by Ben Shepherd

Armed with their top crew, well practiced techniques and sleeping bags, brigades from across Region East descended upon Cataract Scout Park in Appin for the 2008 Region East Championship.

Held over the weekend of 24 and 25 May the crews raced against the clock and the judges' scoreboard to see who would come out on top.

A wide variety of scenarios were set up around the site, testing the entire range of skills that volunteers require in the field. Structural firefighting, motor vehicle accidents, run over drills and pumps and pumping were just some of the scenarios that crews came across as they tried to take the top trophy home.

Cadets were also out in force on the Sunday with these junior members showing that height has no bearing on heart. They showed just as much passion and enthusiasm when trying to out bowl and out roll their friendly and familiar rivals.

Saturday night saw some rather unique entertainment on offer, with those members who could withstand the cold treated to the arrival of the CareFlight helicopter, under the guidance of their new night vision technology.

All in all it was a successful competitive weekend, the brigades who went home with bragging rights were:

1st	Castlereagh 1	Cumberland
2nd	Ingleside 1A	Warringah
3rd	Berkshire 1	Cumberland

The successful Cadet Brigades were:

1st	Orchard Hills	Cumberland
2nd	Oakville 1	Hawkesbury
3rd	Llandilo	Cumberland

Special Awards were also presented to Sandra Huer from Oak Flats Brigade for Best Crew Leader, Marrangaroo Brigade won the Safest Crew Award and Darlington Brigade won the Best Improvisation Award.





REGION WEST IMW / IMX PHOTO GALLERY

TEMORA FCC MEETS THE CHALLENGE

By Andrew Dillon, Learning and Development Officer, Region West

The Region West IMW/IMX was held at the new Temora Fire Control Centre from the 28 April to 2 May. It was the first time a major incident (albeit simulated) was held at the new Temora Fire Control Centre and the facility handled the 40 plus participants with ease.

Interagency involvement was a highlight at this year's IMW/IMX with eleven staff members attending from National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), NSW Fire Brigades and Forests NSW. Careful placement of participants was critical to ensure a good mixture of interagency personnel on each shift. An environment of interagency cooperation and teamwork was fostered through this process. We will again be actively promoting the involvement of other agencies in 2009.

The IMW component of the exercise was modified this year to allow participants some lead up time before the exercise proper. This was achieved by actually starting the fire during the workshop phase and walking participants through the critical opening stages of an escalating fire. By calling regular 'time outs' and encouraging discussion participants with limited IMT experience were able to quickly understand the finer points of each functional area role. This process helped by enabling all participants to start on the same page when the IMX phase commenced. This is something we plan to further develop in 2009.

Once again, the formal assessment of participants was a focus with close to half of those in attendance nominating to be assessed. It was great to see so many volunteers put their hand up to be involved and assessed in each functional area. We will be encouraging further volunteer involvement next year.

Real time weather conditions certainly didn't dampen the spirit of the activation cell, who continually stretched the limitations of the Ops, Planning and Logistic cells. Incident controllers also had their work cut out with plenty of surprises arriving via the in tray and Media Services.

Media Services were certainly helpful throughout the exercise by simulating a community in need of information. Incident controllers and Media Liaison Officers benefited greatly from Media Services advice and assistance.

Many thanks go to the Bland Temora Zone staff and volunteers for hosting the 2008 Region West IMX/IMW. We look forward to 2009 where it will be held at Canobolas.





DOES THAT RADIO COME IN A DIFFERENT COLOUR?

By Chief Superintendent Bruce McDonald, Operational Communications

Radio communications technology is constantly evolving which sometimes requires change in the way we do things. Such is the case for vehicle mounted radios as the technology now includes all the control devices in the microphone. In the industry, these are known as a hand held control head, a term which is generally abbreviated to controller microphones.

A controller microphone provides full radio functionality in the palm of your hand. The move to controller microphones has been

a worldwide trend driven by the conflict for space with air bag deployment zones and the diminishing space in modern cars.

The disadvantage for RFS is that we operate multiple devices in the same vehicle, many now with an identical controller microphone. In the past, we could just have a look at which radio the microphone was plugged in to, but today the radio devices are mostly hidden away under the seat or in the tanker control box.

Seeking a solution, the RFS approached the major manufacturers and suggested a colour code for the microphones. Manufacturers Tait and Simoco responded well. They provide the same generic model of radio across all three bands that RFS

use, so the colours will really assist us in our business. The result is that all new Tait and Simoco products are now colour coded based on frequency range. The coding is as follows:

- Red: UHF PMR and CB radios
- Blue: VHF fireground and cross border radios
- Yellow: 80 MHz NPWS and State Forests

Although Motorola have not yet come on board, they have forwarded our request to the US parent company. The need is less urgent with Motorola radios as they do not provide for RFS radios beyond UHF PMR / GRN and therefore are already easily identified.





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THE VALUES THAT STAND BEHIND OUR ORGANISATION

By Anne Fitzsimmons,
Manager, Policy and Standards

Early this year, the RFS established a project to review the existing organisational values. You may ask the question why and why now.

The primary reasons for this review are that our existing organisational values are more than ten years old. In addition, feedback collated during the recent two years has indicated a need for the RFS to revisit our organisational values to better align with the expectations of members - that is all volunteers, all staff and our communities. This data was collected from various sources including the 2006 volunteer survey, volunteer forums, management forums and CRC research.

Developing a set of organisational values means we have a reference point to help our decision making at all levels. They also support the 2008-2012 Strategic Plan which will provide the RFS and its members with a clear vision and direction for the next three years. A unified set of values also helps to improve relationships between all members of the RFS.

The new set of values is part of the larger picture - our core purpose remains the same as defined under the *Rural Fires Act 1997*. But having a statement of values helps attract - and retain - the right people to the RFS. By continually improving these over time, we ensure that they remain relevant to our culture.

What have we done so far?

Initially, executive workshops were conducted to develop a draft set of new values and to introduce the importance of organisational values to members, linking them to both personal values and organisational goals.

Both volunteers and staff have been provided with the opportunity to voice their views through a series of further workshops that have already taken place around the State. These workshops have been designed to capture a variety of opinions and views by talking to members at all levels. Our collective thoughts and suggestions can assist in guiding our organisation into the future thereby meeting the expectations of both the members and their communities. It also gives us insight into how to sustain our membership and how to improve our service delivery.

The draft values were widely consulted and developed at workshops for RFS regional staff, volunteers, headquarters staff, the RFSAC and the RFSAC conducted during the months April and May 2008.

A total of 204 stakeholders, were involved in these workshops, with representatives from each region.

What's happening next?

Consistent with RFS processes, a three month consultation period is underway. This is taking place at staff regional conferences and group officer meetings, as well as other forums.

Following these workshops, we will commence the process of embedding our values into processes such as induction and training, planning frameworks, service standards, policies and procedures, as well as establishing renewed corporate imagery to highlight the best attributes of our organisation.

Have your say

Do you have a suggestion? Would you like to contribute your views to the ongoing review of your organisational values? Please contact Anne Fitzsimmons at anne.fitzsimmons@rfs.nsw.gov.au

RURAL FIRE SERVICE ORGANISATIONAL VALUES

We value:

Mutual Respect

- We actively seek and value everyone's contribution
- We acknowledge differences in people
- Constructive comment is accepted as a positive contribution to the richness of our organisation
- We encourage accepting responsibility and accountability while avoiding a "blaming" culture
- We respect the dignity of each and every person in all our communications

Adaptability and Resourcefulness

- We encourage creativity and flexibility, while approaching our work sensibly and with safety
- Initiative and continuous development are necessary and to be encouraged within our approved standards, procedures and guidelines
- We encourage open mindedness
- We are analytical in our approach to tasks and the Service encourages progression in new methods, alternatives, equipment and processes

One Team, Many Players, One Purpose

- We encourage diversity: our organisation is reflective of our communities
- We encourage contribution from all areas
- Consultation and engagement of stakeholders are essential to the success of RFS
- We target a diverse range of groups in our publications and the promotion of our organisation

Integrity and Trust

- We communicate clearly what we expect from each other
- We take personal responsibility for actions and commitments that we make
- We are both respectful and open with each other
- We foster a climate of trust and reliability
- Open and informed decision making is promoted and encouraged

Support, Friendship, Camaraderie

- We provide a welcome atmosphere for all
- We support each other in all activities
- We foster a sense of belonging, purpose, enjoyment and involvement
- We mentor our people to help develop their full potential

Community and Environment

- We go above and beyond to make a difference in the community and our environment
- We undertake our roles and behave in a way that is inspiring to others
- We see building community capacity as central to our mission
- We engage with the youth of our communities to ensure the sustainability of the Service
- We are mindful of the ecological and environmental impact of our activities

Knowledge and Learning

- We foster a climate of continuous learning and sharing of information
- We encourage self reflection and personal growth
- We enhance our knowledge through participation in a range of forums
- We actively participate in research and embed the learning into our organisation
- Debriefing is important, necessary and to be encouraged to improve our standards, procedures and guidelines

RURAL FIRES REGULATION 2008: WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

By Anne Fitzsimmons,
Manager, Policy and Standards

The Rural Fires Regulation 2002 was repealed on 1 September 2008. It was replaced by Rural Fires Regulation 2008.

The 2008 Regulation supports the operation of the *Rural Fires Act 1997* by providing the necessary operational and administrative support to achieve its objectives.

There are only minor differences between the old and new Regulations. For example, processes, procedures, agency names and fire areas have been updated to reflect the current situation.

Why did we have to make a new Regulation?

- Federal and State Governments have a staged repeal program where Regulations are repealed automatically every five years.
- Rural Fires Regulation 2002 was due for repeal on 1 September 2007.
- The RFS sought and was given approval by the former Premier to postpone the repeal until 1 September 2008.
- Rural Fires Regulation 2002 supported the operation of the Act by prescribing essential operational and administrative matters to achieve its objectives. Without a new Regulation to replace it, the provisions of the Act could not operate effectively.

The Process....

The RFS had to follow the provisions of the:

- Subordinate Legislation Act 1989
- Legislation Review Act 1987

What is a Regulation?

The general rule of thumb with the law is this:

- An Act provides for things to happen
- Subordinate legislation (such as a Regulation) prescribes how those things will happen
- Service Standards and Policies (including Standard Operating Procedures) describe how those things will happen. They are not law but have the force of the law under Section 13 of the Rural Fires Act 1997

What does the Rural Fires Act provide for?

The objects of the Act are to provide for:

- the prevention, mitigation and suppression of bush and other fires in local government areas (or parts of areas) and other parts of the State constituted as rural fire districts, and
- the co-ordination of bush firefighting and bush fire prevention throughout the State, and
- the protection of persons from injury or death, and property from damage, arising from fires, and
- the protection of the environment by requiring certain activities to be carried out having regard to the principles of ecologically sustainable development listed in Section 6 (2) of the Protection of the Environment Administration Act 1991.

What does the Rural Fires Regulation prescribe?

Rural Fires Regulation 2008 prescribes the following:

- membership of rural fire brigades and the constitutions for such brigades,
- the discipline of officers and members of rural fire brigades and groups of rural fire brigades and removal from membership,
- the constitution, membership and procedure of Bush Fire Management Committees,
- fire prevention, the giving of notices required under the Rural Fires Act 1997,
- miscellaneous matters relating to bravery and other awards, voluntary work, managed land, fire permit conditions, bush fire prone land, bush fire hazard reduction, applications for bush fire safety authorities and bush fire hazard reduction certificates, bush fire safety authorities and penalty notices.

How is Rural Fires Regulation 2008 different from Rural Fires Regulation 2002?

Housekeeping amendments were made to:

- Definitions (cl.3) - in respect of disciplinary action against officers or brigade members, the appropriate authority is updated, and a redundant subclause is removed, and the definition of NSW Land is clarified
- Eligibility for membership of Bush Fire Management Committee (cl.14) – to reflect changes in the names of agencies
- Burning garbage and refuse (cl.26) - in respect of the prohibition on burning

household garbage or refuse anywhere other than at a garbage depot, a necessary reference to animal carcasses is added

- Development excluded from requirements for bush fire safety authority (cl.45) - clarifying a reference to a measure of the Western Lands Act 1901
- Application for bush fire hazard reduction certificate (cl.47) - to include any biobanking agreement entered into under Part 7A of the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995, and to reflect that there is only one purpose for which a certificate is required, i.e. for hazard reduction work, and a redundant subclause is removed
- Fire Prohibition Zones (Schedule 1) - reflect changes in the names of local government areas, Weather Forecast Districts and NSW Fire Areas.

Some more substantial changes:

1. Notice of intention to burn off or burn firebreak (cl.33 (2))

The 2002 Regulation stated that notification must be at least 24 hours prior to the fire being lit, but the 2008 Regulation allows the flexibility to specify a time period on the permit differing to this.

This particularly addresses requirements for agricultural burning and such, that may only have a very limited window of opportunity to burn.

- Policies to be reviewed:
 - SS 4.2.2 Fire Permits
 - P6.1.3 Environmental Assessment for Bushfire Hazard Reduction Works
 - BRIMS, "Before you light that fire"

2. Hazard reduction on managed lands (cl.41)

- a definition is extended to cover certain classes of Crown Lands

3. Penalty Notices (cl.48)

In respect of offences under the Rural Fires Act 1997, the power to issue penalties (currently only provided to police and local government officers) is extended to certain RFS staff to be authorised by the Commissioner.

- Policies to be reviewed:
 - Policy P6.1.2 Penalty Notices (formerly SS 4.2.4)

If you would like any further information, you can contact Anne Fitzsimmons, Manager Policy and Standards on (02) 8741 5233 or Boh Fitzgerald of the Policy Section on (02) 8741 5112.



OAK FLATS SHOW THEIR SUPPORT FOR SICK KIDS

By Carolyn Cuello,
C4K Advisory Committee Member.
Photos by Hayden Crowweller

Eye boggling!', 'Very good!', 'Loved it!'... These are just some of the reactions from members of the Oak Flats Rural Fire Brigade who visited The Children's Hospital at Westmead to see what a difference the Coffee4Kids Foundation .

Children with problems such as severe burns, major heart conditions and liver and kidney diseases are referred to The Children's Hospital at Westmead because it houses leading specialty units within the Hospital grounds.

On Saturday 26 April, 16 volunteers were taken on a guided tour by Gilly Paxton, Director Public Relations, and shown through the very colourful corridors of the building that has over 700,000 outpatients per year!

"The thanks really needs to go to the families of the volunteers who initiated a Coffee4Kids day outside the station which raised \$640," said Captain Chris Nolan.

"Loose change from collection tins raised the total to \$870 with one of our brigade members adding an extra \$130 from their own pocket to round the donation to \$1000 - which we're really proud of!"



Assistant Commissioner Mark Crowweller, Chairman and Founder of the Coffee4Kids Foundation thanked Chris and his brigade on behalf of Coffee4Kids, the RFS Commissioner and The Children's Hospital for such a significant contribution.

The Oak Flats community is no stranger to The Children's Hospital with over 1000 beanies already donated by the Oak Flats Bowling Club knitters!

The volunteers then headed to Rural Fire Service Headquarters in Homebush for a tour of State Operations.

Since the launch of the Coffee4Kids Foundation Volunteer Strategy in December

2007, other brigades and their volunteers have already started to participate in this innovative and vitally important initiative.

To register your interest or for more information, please visit www.coffee4kids.org.au today!

TOP: Assistant Commissioner Mark Crowweller, Chairman and Founder of the Coffee4Kids Foundation, congratulating Oak Flats Rural Fire Brigade Captain Chris Nolan on their amazing contribution.

BELOW: Members of the Oak Flats Rural Fire Brigade and the Coffee4Kids Foundation on the pirate ship in the hospital's George Gregan Playground.





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Our Christmas shutdown will be from 22/12/2008 to 5/1/2009 in keeping with our major suppliers. Orders can still be sent through during this time by any method and will be dealt with promptly when we re-open.

Pam and Mike, wish you and your families a safe, healthy and happy Festive Season.



Thank you for all the support you have given us throughout 2008.

Hopefully, in spite of the global economy situation, we will still be saying that at the end of next year!

We don't have any new items for this Bulletin but look for our advert in the first edition of 2009 when we hope to introduce something new for which we already have HQ approval.

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RFS OPEN DAY

MEET YOUR LOCAL VOLUNTEERS

MAKES IT ALL WORTHWHILE

Almost 450 brigades participated in the annual RFS Open Day on 20 September 2008 making it the largest open day event in its five year history.

Rural Fire Brigades throughout NSW opened their doors to educate the community with various fire safety messages such as 'Prepare Your Property for Fire Season'. Well done to all staff and volunteers who contributed to the success of RFS Open Day in 2008.

RFS Open Day at Clarence Town Brigade Station was made extra special by an act of selflessness by a couple of kids - Josh and Becky Siebermaier, who are the children of one of the brigade's members.

Di Bennett, Senior Deputy Captain at Clarence Town wrote in to the Bulletin tell us the story:

"Most weekends Josh and Becky spend endless hours at the station helping out in any way they can, but on Open Day they blew us all away.

"One of our members, Polly Ashby, and her workmates, bought a pushbike for us to give away as a door prize. I asked a lady from out of town, someone not known to anyone in the brigade, to draw the ticket.

"Josh Siebermaier's ticket was drawn. He whispered to his Dad that he didn't need a bike as he already had one and it should be redrawn. Ray told him to tell me, I pointed out that it was a big decision to give up a bike, but he was firm in his decision.

"I had the same woman draw the next ticket and you wouldn't believe it, *Becky Siebermaier's* number was drawn out. Immediately she called out: "Redraw it!" I knew it was no use arguing.

"For the third time a number was drawn and a dear little eight-year-old girl, Ruby Cornish, was the winner. Her face lit up with excitement.

"Josh was then overheard saying to his Dad: "That makes it worth giving it back, Dad."

"There was more than one tear shed throughout the station. Locals and out-of-towners couldn't believe what we had just witnessed.

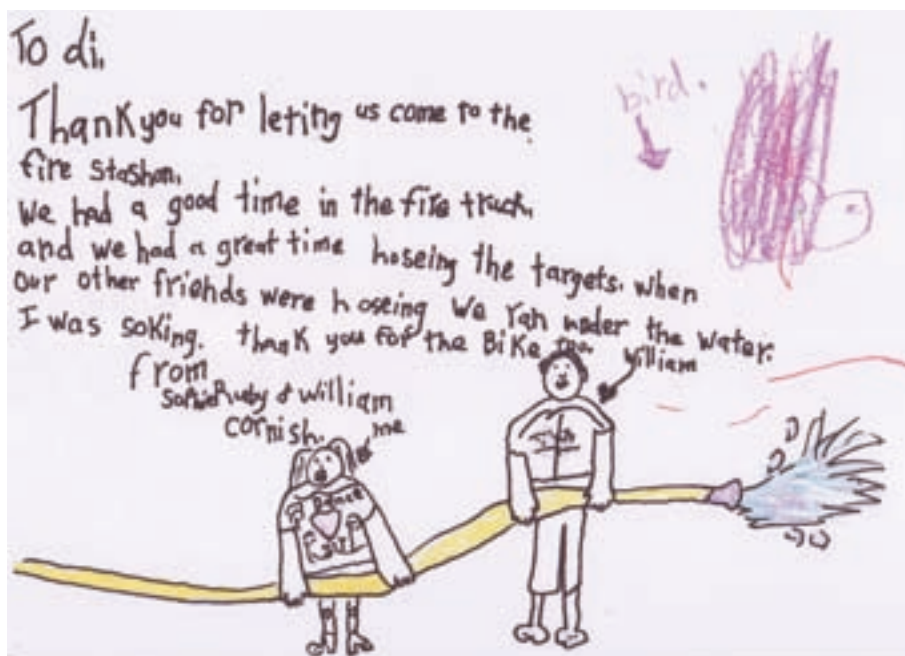
"We hear so many bad things about kids but this is proof that there are many, many good ones around too.

Good on you, Josh and Becky, your parents can be very proud of you both."

LOWER LEFT: After such an exciting RFS Open Day, Ruby Cornish wrote to the Clarence Town Brigade to thank them.



Josh Siebermaier, Ruby Cornish and Becky Siebermaier at RFS Open Day in the Clarence Town Brigade. "Good on you, Josh and Becky, your parents can be very proud of you both."



ENERGY BOOST

Some brigades will get an electrical make over and energy efficiency review under a new partnership agreement signed by EnergyAustralia and the RFS.

Under the \$200,000 two-year partnership, RFS brigades will also receive important office equipment as well as life-saving electrical hazard training from EnergyAustralia expert instructors.

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons and EnergyAustralia Managing Director George Maltabarow signed the agreement. Mr Maltabarow said the partnership would deliver vital support to the dedicated firefighting volunteers working on the frontline to protect local communities.

"NSW RFS volunteers risk their lives in fires and emergencies, without asking for reward and or recognition," Mr Maltabarow said.

"We wanted to find practical ways to support them, as well as giving our staff opportunities to gain essential on-the-job skills.

"We're using our expertise in electrical safety, energy efficiency and emergency response to give the RFS the most valuable assistance that we have to offer."

Over the two year term of the partnership, EnergyAustralia will provide free of charge:

- Up to 20 RFS brigades with an electrical upgrade including re-wiring
- Energy efficiency review including light globes and fridges
- Office equipment such as chairs, tables, and filing cabinets
- Electrical hazard awareness training for up to 320 volunteers.



NSW Rural Fire Service Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons and EnergyAustralia Managing Director George Maltabarow signing the agreement.

RFS WEBSITE GETS A SPRING CLEAN

By Liz Mead, Online Communications

Managing information on the web is taking a front seat in the RFS. As a community, we rely more and more on the web to manage our lives - we bank on the web, we study on the web, we shop on the web, we keep abreast of the news on the web and we connect with each other through the web.

The RFS public website www.rfs.nsw.gov.au provides essential information to the community in an emergency as well as in the day-to-day education of fire safety messages and property protection. Each day we have an average of 12,000 visits to the site. During fire season this reaches an average of 30,000 each day. The highest usage in a month was 1,300,000 in November 2006 with 290,000 hits in one day.

The volunteer-only website www.myrfs.nsw.gov.au provides in-depth information to our volunteers about incidents and fire

activity across the State. It also stores personal information on each and every member of the Service, their brigades and their local area - information they can control and access at any time. This website has in excess of 10,000 members. Each day more members sign up because they see real benefits in staying connected to information and to each other.

Government is putting more money and time into developing websites to provide public information quickly and accurately. As part of a Government directive, the RFS public website has been given an overhaul.

Over the last few months, a lot of time and energy has been put into the www.rfs.nsw.gov.au public website to make sure it is working as well as it can.

- All the content on the site has been refreshed to ensure it's up to date, correct and more accessible
- Improvements to the structure of the website mean it is easier to move around and critical information is easy to see and find

- An increased search capability means that the web is working 30 percent faster than before - ensuring people find what they want as soon as they want it
- A new method is in place to monitor how people use the website, what they look for and where they look. In this way, we can continually improve how the website works, making things continually easier to find and use.
- There is now a single spot for updated fire information. As soon as we know what's going on, we load the information onto the website to be seen by the community. We also include information from RTA and Police on road closures as it comes to hand.
- This same up-to-the-minute information is seen in more detail by our volunteers on their own protected website. On **MyRFS**, volunteers can access maps, weather information and brigade call out details to do with each significant incident. Our volunteers can see who is doing what around the State from an operational point of view.

MyRFS

USING MYRFS IN THE FIRE SEASON

With summer fast approaching the MyRFS team have been receiving plenty of questions from our members asking about how they can get incident information using MyRFS. There are two main ways you can do this:

The Incident Whiteboard

The Incident Whiteboard is a regularly updated list of current notifiable incidents from across the State.

The whiteboard is found on the right hand side of the MyRFS homepage, under "Current Incidents". It shows you the number of current notifiable incidents for each region as well as the total number for the whole of NSW.

To view detailed information about these incidents you can click on the regions name,

or to view the State as a whole you can select "total". This will show you in-depth data about each fire including its location, size and type, resources currently fighting it, the fire's status and the last time the information was updated. (See figure 1)

Some fires will also have a fire map available for download which will show detailed geographical information about that fire. Detailed fire updates are also available for some notifiable incidents. These fire updates appear on the MyRFS homepage underneath the Incident Whiteboard.

Brigade vehicles

The MyRFS team are frequently asked why individual brigade vehicles are not listed in the resources section of the Incident Whiteboard.

Brigade vehicles are not displayed because this level of detail is not currently recorded in ICON, the incident control database,

which is where the information on the Incident Whiteboard is drawn from.

Other incidents

Another regular question is why some callouts are shown under current incidents but not others.

This is because the Incident Whiteboard only displays *notifiable* incidents, which generally have one or more of the following characteristics:

- Any Class 2 or 3 fire
- All Class 1 fire during a Total Fire Ban
- Structural fires of significance
- Motor vehicle accidents with multiple fatalities
- Any response into NSWFB district
- Requests from other emergency services for assistance
- Activation of aviation resources
- Any operational activity likely to attract media attention

The complete list of incidents which are notifiable can be obtained by contacting your local fire control centre.

Brigade Callout Statistics

Another way to access incident information on MyRFS is to use the Brigade Callout Statistics module. This module allows you to review historical information about incidents that one or more of your brigade vehicles attended.

The callout statistics module is found by clicking "My Brigade" on the MyRFS homepage and then selecting "Callout Statistics".

To view incidents for your brigade you must select the date range of callouts you wish to view by using the "from date" and "to date" settings.

You can then view these incidents by either their incident type, day of the week or by the appliance/s used.

The appliance usage view also allows you to view detailed incident information such as response times, resources used and which members attended. (See figure 2). To do this click on the "view" link next to the incident you are interested in.

If you would like to view only the incidents which you have attended this can be done by accessing "Callouts" in the "My Profile" section.

The information contained in the callout statistics module is drawn from FIRS, which is updated when you report an incident to the FIRS reporting line. It is important to remember that if you don't phone in an incident, it won't appear in MyRFS.



Figure 1



Figure 2

SPOTLIGHT ON VOLUNTEERS



HE IS THE TRUE IDEAL

Gulmarrad Rural Fire Brigade in the Clarence Valley are really proud of their Deputy Captain Chris Thompson. Not just because he is an inspiring brigade member, but because Chris has just been judged the Australian Golf Clubs Apprentice Green Keeper of the Year.

Chris Thompson is only 21. He grew up in the Clarence Valley and began a green keeping apprenticeship with Maclean Golf Club in 2006. In June this year he was awarded NSW Green Keeper Apprentice of the Year and then went to Melbourne

for the judging of the Australian Apprentice Green Keeper of the Year.

On the 2 July Chris received notification that he had been named the Australian Apprentice of the Year. Part of his prize is a six week trip to the USA to attend lectures on preparation of golf courses and to visit some of the famous courses.

"It's a well-deserved honour for a very conscientious worker," said Operations Officer in Clarence Valley, Inspector Brian Williams, "Chris is the true ideal of the RFS."

"He is willing to give his time to volunteer to help others in the community," he said,

"and even his fiancée, Cassie and brother Matt, have now joined the brigade because of his encouragement."

Chris Thompson joined the Gulmarrad Rural Fire Brigade in 2004 and has gone on to be an integral part of the brigade as one of the brigade's main response drivers. This year Chris was elected Deputy Captain and Assistant Training Officer. He gives his time willingly not only to answer fire calls and MVAs, but he is always there to help with training the newer members, participate in community awareness programmes, help with maintenance of the vehicles and station and fund raising.

And it's all done with a smile.

A NIGHT IN THE FLYER

By Chief Superintendent Alan Brinkworth and Matthew Schroder

The first thing you notice is the strobe light. It goes off before the phone rings and the buzzer sounds. So you get ready and you wait. Wait for the crackle of the radio. Then finally as time seems to drag...

"Flyer from Fire Comm."

Our crew were up and out the door, heading towards the truck, only to find a man holding... dinner. The local pizza delivery boy arrived just as the call went out.

The origins of the Warringah Flyer can be found in the 1979 fires. The Fire Control Officer (FCO) in Terrey Hills at the time, Brian White, decided that they were fielding too many emergency calls for structures threatened or alight. He decided that a permanent resource was required to deal with these.

An appliance that was not heavily involved in the operations was pulled from the fireground and "stood by" at the Fire Control Centre in Terry Hills. When a call of threat to life or property was received they were responded to the incident and another appliance pulled in to replace them. This appliance was nominated as "The Flyer"

It was not until some years after this that the full time Flyer appliance was commissioned into operation. A Ford F350 with a 350 litre tank and eight horse power pump was donated by Rotary and Apex on 2 April 1983. (See photo)

It was fitted out with specialised equipment such as Compressed Air Breathing Apparatus (CABA), thermal imaging camera, modiewark, extinguishers, hydraulic tools to open boots and hoods, lighting and MVA cleanup equipment. While some of this equipment may seem common by current standards, at the time it was not standard on many appliances in NSW.

Over time The Flyer has evolved and although always crewed for 24/7 response, now brigades share the load by taking rostered weeks. Members crew overnight staying in the "The Flyer hut" which is fitted out with beds, television, a bathroom and kitchen. During business hours the staff from the Terrey Hills FCC office crew The Flyer.

Often dinner is brought in unless, like with ours, it is interrupted by a Fire Call. The pizzas were quickly stowed in the oven and the delivery boy sent on his way. Followed promptly by The Flyer en route to the smoke sighting.

We met up with NSW Police and began to search for the cause of the smoke. We were lucky enough to have four crew members on board, but when first introduced in 1983, The Flyer often had only one crew member for weeks at a time.

As the community's expectation of the Service expanded, so did the need for a larger crew on The Flyer and so the number



of people crewing the truck was increased, this often involving members staying over at other member's houses.

As it was back in 1983, The Flyer was responded along with the local brigade. On the night when I was 'embedded' on the crew, however, Beacon Hill were stood down when no fire was found.

We returned to station and our lukewarm pizzas. Halfway through a second slice of BBQ chicken came the strobe into our peripheral vision. "Flyer from Fire Comm."

Off again to reports of smoke sighting. Upon arrival Police indicated the source of the smoke was a small metal skip bin that had some rubbish alight inside. An effort from the crews of The Flyer and Beacon Hill ensured no further smoke sighting would come again that night.

After a reheated dinner it was time to prepare for bed and the selection of a bunk,

or your relegation to the "snorer's room". Consideration has to be made for the possibility of an overnight call, so it's to bed donning an RFS shirt and wearing socks to ensure a speedy response overnight.

Luckily though we got a good nights sleep and handed The Flyer back to the district staff in the morning.

Crewing The Flyer was a very unique and interesting experience and one, which the brigades of Warringah embrace wholeheartedly, ensuring that the community within their district receive the fastest and most efficient emergency response.

TOP: A Ford F350 with a 350 litre tank and eight horse power pump was donated by Rotary and Apex on 2 April 1983. It became the first Warringah Flyer.

ABOVE: The Flyer in 2008 with Bush Fire Bulletin reporter, Matthew Schroder, on board.

TRADITIONS

THE 'PERFECT' HELMET

By Michael Shaw,
Corporate Communications Intern
Special thanks to Mark White, AFSM
at the NSW Museum of Fire, Penrith

The standard issue helmets that today's RFS firefighters receive undergo rigorous testing to ensure that they meet the necessary safety standards and really do protect us in the line of duty.

This level of testing, however, is far removed from that of our predecessors. In comparison, the two are vastly different in both design and materials.

Let's begin with the structural helmets of 1800's.

1866: Brass helmets designed in London

While bush firefighters of the past had little Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) available to them, the London Metropolitan Fire Brigades adopted the use of brass helmets. Prior to this time, most helmets had been made from leather or compressed cork.

The new brass helmets had more than 28 separate pieces which were fastened, screwed and riveted together. There was also a leather skull cap to provide protection from electric shock and heat.

When Captain Eyre Massey Shaw was appointed Chief Officer of London Metropolitan Board of Works' "Metropolitan Fire Brigade" in 1866, one of his first tasks was to create a uniform that was practical from a working point of view.

Captain Eyre Massey Shaw travelled around Europe and America to "examine into the merits and defects of nearly all the helmets in existence". In the end he selected a design used by French military regiments and fire brigades in Paris. The NSW Fire Museum in Penrith notes the process he went through:



LEFT, ABOVE AND RIGHT:
The brass helmet designed in 1866 in London. The most prominent part of the helmet was the top comb.



His main task was directed at creating the "perfect" helmet for his men.

He determined that a front peak was required to "shade the eyes without much interfering with the sight", and a back peak was required to "protect the neck and ears from molten lead, etc., without preventing the men hearing".

The comb on top was required to be "constructed as with a light weight to bear a very heavy blow". The projecting ends of the comb and front peak were to be "so arranged that when a man falls forward they both touch the ground before any part of his face touches". The upper part had to be kept "well clear of the temples, pole and crown of the head".

The most prominent part of the helmet was the top comb. Its curved design provided strength, and would absorb any shock from falling objects. Holes were drilled in the front to provide ventilation.

Australia adopts the British style

The NSW Fire Museum notes that when the Metropolitan Fire Brigades (MFB) was formed in Sydney in 1884, the London Metropolitan Fire Brigades uniform, including the brass helmet, was adopted.

Senior Officers' helmets were nickel plated to give a silver finish. When MFB expanded to become the NSW Fire Brigades in 1910, the front plate was changed from MFB to NSWFB.

From May 1964, the brass helmets in NSW were replaced by an American design made from polycarbonate. In some other States of Australia, the brass helmet continued in limited use until the late 1970s.

Bush Fire helmets

All of the helmets referred to above were used in structural fires, not bushfires. One main feature of the standard issued bushfire helmets in the service today is their composition. These days the helmets chosen by the RFS meet the requirements of protecting our heads from impact and heat, while reducing head heat and neck strain through the use of lighter construction materials.

If a helmet is too soft it may not give adequate protection but if a helmet is too rigid then it might cause more harm than good.

Our helmets consist of three main parts:

1. Outer shell
2. Inner harness and chin strap
3. Ear/neck flap

There are two basic types of outer shells - composite and moulded thermo plastic (the current RFS helmet). The shell protects against penetration, impact and shields us against heat.

The inner harness absorbs a large proportion of the force of any impact. The helmet's shell also absorbs energy.

The standard issued helmets undergo rigorous testing to ensure that they not only meet the Australian standard, but exceed it.

Years of research and improvements in technology have brought us a long way in terms of Personal Protective Equipment. Just think, the British brass helmet adopted by the Australian fire services weighed a massive 1.8 kilos. With better design and lighter materials today's structural helmets weigh 1.4kg and are capable of absorbing the majority of any impact on the head and neck in the case of an accident. They also reduce heat levels by 90 percent. In comparison the modern day bushfire helmets weigh as little as 400g.

TOP: Brass helmets required regular cleaning to maintain their shiny appearance. Brass buttons were also part of the fire fighting uniform, and these too required regular attention. Polishing of all this equipment, as well as the brassware on the vehicles, was once an important part of the firefighter's daily ritual.

WORLDFIRE



HE WAS NEVER ALONE

July 2008

From STLToday.com

From the moment Maplewood firefighter Ryan Hummert died, firefighters were there.

At first, it was his Maplewood crew, who, along with 22-year-old Hummert, had thought they were responding to a routine car fire. Instead, they found themselves in the middle of a gunman's killing field.

Before it was over, two police officers were shot, Hummert was killed and several other bullets barely missed their intended targets.

Police safely removed Hummert's body from the crime scene and then firefighters were there to carry him to an ambulance. Clayton firefighter Brian Zinanni knew it was time to begin a firefighter's tradition.

"We need somebody to stay with Ryan," Zinanni told a visibly shaken crowd of firefighters.

When Hummert was pronounced dead at the hospital, firefighters were there. When the medical examiner autopsied the body, firefighters were there.

Firefighters delivered Hummert to the funeral home, where other firefighters relieved them. Two firefighters stayed with the casket for two-hour shifts. Firefighters from across the US had volunteered to keep vigil. They passed the time as they might at their firehouses, waiting for the next call. Talking shop. Sharing laughs. And sitting together.

The following day the informal casket vigil gave way to a formal honour guard. Firefighters in full dress blues stood at both ends of the casket for 10-minute shifts during the seven-hour visitation.

About 135 fire trucks escorted the casket to the cemetery. As family and guest left the cemetery, cemetery workers prepared to lower the casket. They pushed a mound of earth over Hummert's grave.

And a firefighter was there.



ENDANGERED SPECIES UP IN SMOKE

June 2008

A fire burning in the Bonny Doon region of Santa Cruz in California sparked the concerns of wildlife authorities because it threatened a grove of the rare Santa Cruz Cypress.

The large grove of the cypress is one of the few places where this tree still flourishes but it caught fire when a house fire got out of control. Nine hundred acres (370ha) of the forest was burned.

Fire crews battled the blaze but concentrated on protecting property in the area. One thousand seven hundred residents were evacuated as the fire crowned from tree to tree.

According to a US Fish and Wildlife Service survey done in 1997, there were around 5,100 of the cypress trees growing in five groves and about 3,000 of those were in the area affected by the fire.

Initial concerns for the survival of this endangered species, were eased once it was understood the fire might actually assist in the plant's ability to reproduce. Much like in the Australian bush, the blaze may actually spur more growth. Not only does the fire clear the underbrush but the chemicals in the smoke and ash leech out during the first rains, making the soil more fertile for germinating seeds and possibly enhancing the rate of seedling growth.

"So long as the fire wasn't too hot it might actually help the forest," said Brett Hall, President of the Santa Cruz chapter of the Native Plant Society, "I think what's going to be really interesting is to watch and see what happens next."

Thanks to the Santa Cruz County Emergency Operations Center.



LAND CLEARING DOUBLES INDOONESIAN FIRES

August 2008

The number of forest fires on Indonesian Borneo quadrupled over a few days in August this year due to unmonitored land clearing by farmers despite government promises to control the annual burn-off.

Hundreds of fires were set by local farmers and commercial operations performing annual land clearing in West Kalimantan province on Borneo.

Haze from the fires sent air pollution levels in neighbouring Malaysia and Singapore to unhealthy levels. Experts warned that the haze was contributing significantly to global greenhouse gas emissions and could have an impact on climate change.

An Indonesian Forestry Ministry official said that 122 hot spots had been recorded in the West Kalimantan province on Borneo. Two days later the count had doubled to 217 hot spots. After another two days had passed, the Indonesian Forestry Ministry recorded the number had risen to 400 fires.

The Forestry Ministry said most of the fires are in West Kalimantan, the majority of which have been set by local farmers, and the rest on commercial plantations.

Indonesian news agency Antara says air quality is down in the state capital Pontianak.

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IT MIGHT DISHEARTEN SOME FIREFIGHTERS...

By Michael Shaw, RFS Corporate Communications Intern

The sight of tinder dry grasses and reeds purposely fastened as roofing, might dishearten some firefighters in Australia, but it's a common sight in Devon and Somerset.

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service has 83 stations which currently protect around 1.6 million residents living in England's south west counties many of which feature these thatched roofs.

"Thatch fires are treated differently," said Tessa Farrow, Press Officer for Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (DSFRS), "More appliances are sent and it often takes much longer to extinguish. In some cases crews have been out for over 24 hours at a thatch fire."

Continually responding to house fires which, in essence, resemble aesthetically pleasing campfires would be tiresome enough, but lately DSFRS has had a number of interesting, not to mention high profile incidents to deal with as well.

A fire which began just after 11am at the Rossiter's scrap yard a mile from the Glastonbury Festival in June this year quickly escalated, soon requiring fifteen vehicles. The scrap yard which covered four acres, had 150 scrap cars, metal parts and gas cylinders on the site.

"An incident like this puts all the skills firefighters have to the test. On scene they dealt with explosive gas cylinders, a fire that was gaining quick momentum and potential pollution threats," said Chief Fire Officer Paul Young.

Crews continued to monitor the incident for more than 48 hours after the initial blaze was extinguished, ensuring that hotspots and the cooled cylinders no longer posed a threat.

"I am immensely proud of how the firefighters and support staff dealt with the situation," said Paul Young, "They kept all members of the public out of harms way and worked closely with other emergency services and agencies to contain the incident."

In 2007 a fire at the Trago shopping complex, Newton Abbot saw Devon's largest property fire in living memory.

The presence of fire doors coupled with a quick and diligent response from fire crews, eventually totalling 200, ensured that they were able to save approximately two thirds of the 100 acre (40ha) property. Paul Young said the blaze was "the most severe in Devon for some time."

The difference in terrain, architecture and climate conditions have meant that DSFRS use a number of vehicles that differ from those used in the RFS. These include the unique and very impressive 'Supacat' six wheeler, capable of carrying specialized fighters and equipment into difficult terrain and a hose laying vehicle capable of laying 1.5 km of hose in a matter of minutes.



TOP: Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service has 83 stations which currently protect around 1.6 million residents living in England's south west.

LOWER RIGHT: Just par for the course: Thatch fires are common in the Devon and Somerset area.

CADETS

WINNER
OF THE
CREW WITH THE
COMMISSIONER
COMPETITION

JUNIORS ON HIGH

By Melissa Morris,
Williamstown/Salt Ash Rural Fire Brigade
Photos by Melissa Morris

The Williamstown/Salt Ash Brigade has recently attracted a number of junior members. In fact, we have a total of 11 junior members. Some are following in their mum or dad's footsteps and others became interested in the RFS at Open Day.

We train twice a week – every Wednesday night and Saturday mornings – and our junior members are always in attendance and keen to learn. Our training has included everything from pumping to drafting, map reading to GPS and hose drills to truck maintenance. Recently, all our juniors have sat and passed their BF assessment with many looking ahead to completing Senior First Aid (SFA) and Village Firefighter (VF) training later this year. The junior members are heavily involved in the brigade and participate in the monthly maintenance checks of our trucks and lend a hand with any fundraising and community activities.

For the Open Day 2007, our junior members got together and organised several demonstrations including a fire overrun drill, a mock car fire and bowling hoses. They also assisted in showing people around our station, handing out showbags and balloons, cooking the BBQ (very important!) as well as setting up hoses for people to have a go. Before the day, however, they had spent hours washing, polishing and vacuuming the trucks! They even blackened the tyres!

Taking initiative

In the early hours of 1 October, 2007, our brigade was called to a fire on Hunter Water Corporation land near Oyster Cove. We worked long and hard all day on property protection and attempted containment before we were relieved by out-of-area crews - by that time a S44 had been declared.

We returned to our station only to find several of our junior members waiting for us. Without being asked, they washed and hung up our hoses, cleaned out the trucks and restocked them with fresh hoses, food and water. Then, when we went inside they had cups of tea ready for us! At 0700hr the next morning they rode their bikes to the station to help the night crews. They also lent a hand to the men and women who were preparing the food for all the firefighters, as well as helping on trips to Fire Control for equipment.



The new generation

Three of our juniors will be turning 16 this year and will be old enough to attend calls while the others still have a couple more years to wait. They are going to be a great asset on the fireground and we can't wait to have them working along side us. They have been such a great help to our brigade and will be a great asset for the future.

TOP : Sarah Watters, one of 11 junior members at the Williamstown/Salt Ash Brigade.

ABOVE: The juniors at Williamstown/Salt Ash Brigade have made themselves indispensable by playing a key roles in Open Day and other events at the brigade.

WILL WE DO THE PROGRAM AGAIN? TRY AND STOP US!

By Brian Baker, Phil Draper and Bob Parker,
Illawarra Community Safety Brigade
Photos by Brian Baker and Gail Mellor

The Illawarra Zone has broken new ground this year starting up their first cadet program at the Kiama High School - and it was a great success for both cadets and the community safety team.

At the Australasian Education and Fire Awareness Conference 2007 in Newcastle, Illawarra firefighter Brian Baker first raised the idea about running a RFS Cadets program in the Illawarra area.

"We had some mixed feelings at first, as we didn't really know what we were up against," Brian Baker said.

The team approached the Illawarra Community Safety Officer, Inspector Michael Gray with the idea. It was agreed that a cadet programme should be integrated into the Illawarra Community Safety strategies and that Kiama High School was a great place to start.

We made contact the Cadet Coordinator in Headquarters and they suggested we speak to Cumberland Zone as they were working with students from Nepean High. We were invited up to Nepean to watch the cadets training and then on their graduation day we became their special guests.

All the information, skills and learning techniques we acquired from these visits were very rewarding and valuable. The whole project no longer seemed so daunting.

"We were sold!" said Brian.

Finally in December 2007 we felt ready to approach the Principal of Kiama High School and the response was enthusiastic.

Expression of interest forms were given to the students. We were relieved to find that there was indeed enough interest to kick off our first program as a Wednesday afternoon sport alternative.

May was set as the date to run the 10 week program. For many weeks the three of us got together to work out what we wanted to do, how we were going to do it, what resources we needed and who we could call on to help us. Lesson plans were prepared and it was all systems go, go, go.

We met the students prior to the first week of the course to take the pressure off. We were first timers at this as well! From then it was "first names only". The students responded well to this environment.

The real reward for our efforts came when we got into the practical drills. The students loved this part and put in a big effort. We were most impressed by the standard of skills and team work shown on the exercises held on their graduation day.

One of the cadets, Madeline said it was a great experience. "Not only did we do some



theory, but we got to use the equipment which was great! I've had so much fun," she said.

"The planning of this course was in the interest of the students," said another cadet Ron, "It wasn't boring. I have learnt to communicate with team members and remain calm in a critical situation."

"I have learnt things I will never forget," said Emily, "These firefighters are very nice people and I had fun working with them."

The teacher assigned to the activity was Gail Mellor. She was full of praise for the program. "Thanks so much for all your time, effort, patience, and most importantly enthusiasm. You did a great job explaining the why's, how's and what for's. The kids and I learnt a lot and enjoyed the process."

We wish to thank all who helped us in one way or another. Incidentally the team from Cumberland reciprocated our visit to Nepean High and attended our graduation ceremony. Thanks guys, you helped to make the day a success!

A number of students have expressed a keen interest in becoming more involved



with the Rural Fire Service. All the preparation and hard work that went into the exercise had paid off, the kids loved it and we loved it.

Will we do the program again? Try and stop us!

For further information on cadet programs contact your local Fire Control Centre or the Volunteer Relations Unit.

TOP, CENTRE AND ABOVE: Many of the cadets at the first Kiama High School cadet program expressed a keen interest in becoming more involved with the Rural Fire Service.

PREPARED HOUSE



UNPREPARED HOUSE



CAN YOU TELL THE DIFFERENCE?

Find the seven differences between a house prepared for the Bush Fire Danger Period and a house that is unprepared.



FIFTY YEARS AGO: September 1958

The Bush Fire Bulletin, the journal of the NSW Rural Fire Service, has been in circulation for 56 years. The first issue was published on 1 September 1952 by the then Bush Fire Committee. In every issue of the modern Bush Fire Bulletin we feature articles from the Bulletin which were published Fifty Years Ago. Take a trip down memory lane.....



AIR TANKERS – A NEW TOOL FOR FOREST FIRE FIGHTERS

This article appeared in Bush Fire Bulletin, September 1958

Review of the use of air tankers in USA and Canada by R.H Luke, Fire Control Officer, NSW Forestry Commission, and Member, Bush Fire Committee.

In various parts of the world, particularly in the USA and Canada, aircraft have been used for a variety of purposes in connection with the prevention and suppression of bush fires.

Although the use of air tankers made newspaper headlines in the USA during 1956, their development was the culmination of an idea that began as far back as 1921. Ever since then firefighters have tried to develop practical methods of dropping liquids in bombs or paper bags or by free-drop. Until 1955 little or no success was achieved and real progress only began to be made when the US Forest Service turned for help to agricultural aircraft operators who are highly skilled in low level flying.

As a result of the experiments which then took place, the 1956 fire season saw the first large-scale use of air tankers for fire suppression. From August to November in that year 25 fires in western USA were fought from the air. During 1,387 individual attacks, 83,000 gallons of water (315,000 litres) and 66,000 gallons (250,000 litres) of chemical retardant were dropped (ie about 110 gallons - 417 litres - per attack on average). Forest officers considered that firefighting was materially helped in 20 out of 25 fires. The size of the fires varied from one acre to 40,000 acres.

On the larger fires, serious operational problems were encountered. These included supply and loading of aircraft to keep pace with demands, coordination with ground forces and air traffic control.

From these operations and from test flights a considerable knowledge has been gained

of the best combinations of place, height, altitude, speed, release, gate size and wind.

What air tankers can do

The 1956 experience left no doubt in the minds of the American foresters that water or a chemical mix dropped free-fall from aircraft can have a significant effect on grass, brush and timber fires.

The chemical mix is used in the form of slurry and consists generally of 'firebreak' - a sodium calcium borate mixed with water. Because of its fire retardant properties this does a better all-round job than water but air tankers with water alone can knock down fires in light fuel such as grass.

Here are some of the jobs air tankers can do:

- 1) Hold a small fire until the initial ground attack forces arrive.
- 2) Cool down hot spots so that men can enter the area and work safely.
- 3) Knock down spot fires.
- 4) Build a fire retardant line with borate in advance of the fire or where men cannot work.
- 5) Reduce the possibility of crowning.
- 6) Strengthen existing firelines.
- 7) Direct support ground forces who are actually engaged in line construction.
- 8) Fireproof local areas where spot fires are probable.

What air tankers cannot do

In some situations air tankers are of little help. They cannot:

- 1) Knock down rolling brush or timber fires.
- 2) Safely make drops in high winds
- 3) Make drops in gorge bottoms
- 4) Cool down hot fires in heavy fuels under timber stands.
- 5) Work at night.

Operational data

Flights of four to six air tankers make an effective squad. If possible they should be led by an experienced firefighter in a

reconnaissance plane. Low and level flying at low speeds into the wind is desirable. Drops from 100 feet above the vegetation will usually be wasted. Cross winds above 10 mph make it hard to hit the target. Dive bombing techniques are sometimes used to improve efficiency.

Aircraft and equipment

Highly efficient aircraft are needed. Tankers of 50 to 200 gallons capacity are in common use but some bigger aircraft have been tried, eg: Catalinas holding 1,500 gallons (5680 litres). In smaller aircraft it is necessary to have a quick release gate of about 14 inches x 14 inches (35cm x 35cm) to allow the liquid to escape in a couple of seconds.

Flights are generally made in the lighter aircraft at about 80 mph (130kph) and at about 50 feet (15 metres) above the vegetation. Proper radio or similar contact from ground to air is necessary if drops are to be made effectively in the right place.

For best results airstrips of the type used by agricultural air operators need to be selected as close to the fire as possible in order to get the greatest possible number of strikes per hour. Ground crews and tankers are needed to load water or slurry into the aircraft.

Air drops alone will rarely be sufficient to put out a fire. They must be coordinated with adequate ground forces.

Usefulness in Australia

The American methods which have been discussed are for land-based aircraft. In Canada where lakes and rivers are plentiful seaplanes are used to skim over the water surface and scoop up the water into tanks attached to the floats. In dry Australia the Canadian method would seem to have little application except close to the coastline.

The American method is more worthy of general thought but Foresters who have given the matter consideration cannot but wonder whether the list of things which tankers cannot do will not rule out their use under most Australian conditions.

We know already that Australian agricultural aircraft firms are keen to try these new methods and we know, too, that they should be able to develop good techniques. Whether sufficient success can be achieved under our often extremely dangerous conditions of fire spread to justify the great expense of these operations is another matter. Meanwhile our experimental programme was commenced during August in an endeavour to find the answers to this query.

The Bush Fire Committee and several other organisations, including the Rural Bank, interested in bush fire fighting techniques, have joined with the Forest Commission in carrying out this series of experiments.

THEN: 1960s



THEN: The Piper Pawnee was built and used in the 1960's. It is an agricultural aircraft designed for spraying crops but adapted to firefighting. The Piper Pawnee holds 140 gallons (530 litres) of water or fire retardant, ranges in horsepower from 150 to 260 and has a fuel endurance of two hours. Note the vehicle parked beside the aircraft to show the comparative size with the more modern 802F airtractor. The cockpit of the Piper Pawnee used analogue instruments and had one radio.

Photos by Fred Fahey.

AVIATION IN THE RFS TODAY

After 50 years of diligent experimentation, development and research, aerial suppression has gone from a theory to being a core practice of the firefighting in Australia.

Inspector Sam Crothers from RFS Operational Aviation says that much of this article about aerial fire management written in the 1950s is still true today. Even the limitations of using aircraft are still relevant. The real changes have come in the area of improved technology in aircraft design and functionality.

"Today the aircraft themselves are so much more reliable and powerful," Inspector Crothers said, "We know the aircraft are safer and we can use them in areas that were previously inaccessible to us. Also, the RFS now has around 900 trained aviation specialists. This has made a huge difference to our capacity to fight fires."

The improvements in skills and capacity are so great that aerial suppression has become a vital and expected part of firefighting. "So much so, that there would be a huge out cry if they weren't available," he said.

The design and technology of helicopters that were developed during the Vietnam War in the 1960s has had a significant effect on what we can and can't do in aerial fire suppression. For example the Air Crane helicopters, also known as 'Elvis', were developed to lift shipping containers from ships to land during the war.

"The RFS does not currently use heavy water scooping aircraft. As Mr Luke suggests in his article, Australia does not have huge waterways from which to draw water and heavy water scooping is not practiced in Australia as a result.

"The largest capacity aircraft we use is the Air Crane helicopter which is capable of carrying 9000 litres of water. The largest capacity fixed-wing aircraft is an 802F Airtractor single engine air tankers (SEAT) which holds 3000 litres."

These days there are now also more aircraft available to the RFS. It has come about because of the wide spread use of aircraft in the agricultural, tourist and mining industries. "In the event of a bush fire, the RFS is able to make use of these aircraft. These just weren't available back in the 1960s," Sam said, "It's also true that larger capacity aircraft are available these days that can easily land on agricultural airstrips

where once only smaller fixed wing aircraft could only do so. Helicopters were only just becoming commercially available in the Sixties.

The accessibility of water has also increased. "Many airstrips now have water supplies – hydrants, bores or water tanks. Much of our agricultural land has improved and farmers have built water supplies by constructing dams – which we can use to fill up. The methods for the ground loading and picking up water has also improved."

"The application of suppressant – gels and retardants has been developing rapidly over the last few years. While this is extremely expensive operation, it is very effective when used in the right circumstances."

A shift in Federal and State government policy has also impacted on aerial firefighting as the RFS and other fire services do now have greater funding to support the use of aircraft in firefighting.

On the horizon for the use of aircraft in firefighting are the development of night time flying, sophisticated reconnaissance aircraft using back to base cameras and larger fixed wing aircraft that will carry even larger amounts of water.

NOW: 2008



NOW: The 802F Airtractor, and aircraft like it, are often used by the RFS today in firefighting throughout NSW. It holds 800 gallons (3200 litres), has 1400 horsepower and five hours of endurance. This is a purpose-built fire bombing aircraft. Note the vehicle parked beside the aircraft – the Airtractor is about 2.5 times bigger than its 1960s cousin the Piper Pawnee. The cockpit of the 802F Airtractor is equipped with digital instruments, six radios and three Global Positioning Systems (GPS).

Photos by Fred Fahey.

A SHORT HISTORY OF AERIAL FIRE MANAGEMENT IN AUSTRALIA

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>1925 RAAF perform aerial observation of a bush fire</p> <p>1932 Radio used to spot fire from an aircraft</p> <p>1939 First time chemical retardant used for fire bombing</p> <p>1943 First airborne command where firefighting is managed from the air</p> <p>1947 Fire bombing trialled by military aircraft</p> <p>1949 First use of a helicopter in a firefighting operation</p> <p>1949 Food drops to fire crews using fixed wing aircraft</p> <p>1964 First use of rappelling techniques, allowing firefighting in otherwise inaccessible terrain</p> <p>1966 First helicopter contracted to a fire service in Australia</p> | <p>1967 First major use of water-bombing aircraft to fight a fire</p> <p>1968 First large scale use of aerial incendiaries (lighting back burns from the air)</p> <p>1983 The Ash Wednesday fires in Victoria see the largest aerial fire management operation in Australia's history. Over 40 aircraft are used as well as infra red line scanning. The CSIRO trials fire bombing with chemical retardants during the fire emergency.</p> <p>1995 NSW RFS contracted its first Bell 212</p> <p>1997 Victoria contracts 22 aircraft, indicating that aerial suppression had become a major part of their firefighting arsenal. The newly formed NSW RFS contracts two fixed wing and two rotary wing craft.</p> | <p>1997 First use in Australia of Erickson Air Crane also known as "Elvis"</p> <p>2001 The Summer of 2001-2002 saw the greatest use of aircraft in NSW with over 103 tactical and transport aircraft in operation</p> <p>2008 Today the RFS has over 100 aircraft on call at any given time. Nineteen aircraft are contracted for use by the RFS including Heavy Helicopters (Crane type) and Medium Helicopters (some winch-equipped), fixed-wing bombers, linescan aircraft and reconnaissance aircraft. There are 20 fuel trucks, 12 aviation support trailers and approximately 900 trained Aviation Specialists. Long and short term fire suppressants are regularly in use.</p> |
|---|--|--|

BUSH FIRE BULLETIN READER SURVEY

Overall, how appealing did you find this edition?

- Very appealing
- Fairly appealing
- Neutral
- Fairly unappealing
- Very unappealing

Comments:

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CREW WITH THE COMMISSIONER! THE WINNER



"I certainly miss not being on the end of a hose - to coin a phrase!... If time permits I would like to go back ... and participate in being a member and maybe doing some hazard reductions."

Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons

He said it. Now some brigades have taken him up on his word.

In the first issue of 2008 the Bush Fire Bulletin offered the opportunity to Crew with the Commissioner. Volunteers were invited to send in a story or photo about their brigade to enter the competition.

For the past few months we have been receiving great pictures and inspiring stories from around the State. We now

have the pleasure to announce the winner of the Crew with the Commissioner competition:

Williamtown/Salt Ash Brigade

Melissa Morris at the Williamtown/Salt Ash Brigade, Lower Hunter Team, sent in photos and a story about the juniors in her brigade. The story appears on Page 50 of this issue.

As someone who started brigade life at the age of

15 himself, Commissioner Fitzsimmons was keen to support the juniors at the Williamtown/Salt Ash Brigade.

"In my early years, life at the brigade was like a family. I became very involved and enthusiastic at a young age."

Get ready Williamtown/Salt Ash Brigade, to welcome your new crew member for a day!

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